

Chapter 4: Music in Europe: Toward an International Style, 1300–1500

I. Introduction

- A. European musical style of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries moved from distinct national styles (particularly of the Ars Nova and trecento) toward a more unified, international style.

II. English music and its influence

A. Fragmentary remains

1. English music had a style that was distinct from continental music of the Middle Ages.
2. English singers included the third among the consonant intervals.
3. The *Thomas gemma Cantuariæ/Thomas caesus in Doveria* (Ex. 4-3) includes many features associated with English music, such as almost equal ranges in the top two parts and frequent voice exchanges.

B. Kings and the fortunes of war

1. The Old Hall Manuscript contains the earliest English polyphonic church music that can be read today.
2. Copied for a member of the royal family, most of its contents belong to the Mass Ordinary.
3. Henry V, who is associated with the Old Hall Manuscript, holds a prominent place in the history of this period.
4. When Henry's army occupied part of northern France in the early fifteenth century, his brother John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford, was in charge. This brother included the composer John Dunstable (ca. 1390–1453) among those who received part of his estate when he died.
5. Dunstable's music influenced continental composers.

C. Dunstable and the “*contenance angloise*”

1. Dunstable's arrival in Paris caused the major composers to follow his style, known as *la contenance angloise*.
 - a) Major-mode tonality
 - b) Triadic harmony
 - c) Smooth handling of dissonance
2. Dunstable wrote in the old styles of the fourteenth century, including isorhythmic motets.
3. The smooth sound associated with Dunstable can be heard in *Quam pulchra es*.
4. Only nine dissonant notes appear in this piece.

D. Du Fay and fauxbourdon

1. Continental composers responded immediately to the English style, as demonstrated by Du Fay's *Vos qui secuti estis me*.
 - a) This work emphasizes sixths.
 - b) A rubric tells the performer that it is possible to make this a three-part piece by adding a voice singing the uppermost part down a fourth.
 - c) The result is called fauxbourdon.

E. Du Fay and Binchois

1. Du Fay and Binchois were the two leading song composers of the first half of the fifteenth century.
2. Du Fay's career took him to many places.
 - a) He wrote songs in all the *formes fixes*.
 - b) He based much of his sacred music on secular tenors.
3. Binchois spent his career at the court of Burgundy.
 - a) Of his chansons, the most admired are his ballades.
 - b) His *Deuil angoisseux* exemplifies several characteristics of his style.

F. The internationalism of the upper crust

1. Most of the fifteenth-century music studied in the course of music history was not heard by the average European of the period.
2. The theorist Tinctoris provides a list of the composers of note during his lifetime.
 - a) Tinctoris did not think any music written more than forty years before 1477 was worth hearing.
 - b) His preferred composers were Ockeghem and Busnoys.
3. Ockeghem wrote a lament on the death of Busnoys.
 - a) The Chigi Codex contains almost all of Ockeghem's known works and some of Busnoys's.
 - b) Busnoys may have studied with Ockeghem. He is the earliest composer for whom autograph manuscripts survive.
 - c) Both composers wrote music that demonstrate highly organized technical prowess in composition.

III. Organization and polyphony

A. The cyclic Mass

1. During the fifteenth century, the cyclic Mass was the genre into which composers poured the most intellectual and creative energy.
2. The cyclic Mass unified the entire service.

B. "Caput" and the beginnings of four-part harmony

1. Continental composers adopted the cyclic Mass from the English.
2. A long melisma on the word *caput* in the antiphon *Venit ad Petrum* became the basis for a group of masses known as Caput Masses.
3. The first of these dates from around 1440 and is English.

C. Patterns of emulation

1. An emulation is an homage to an earlier composer/composition that seeks to surpass it as well.
2. Ockeghem and Obrecht wrote Caput Masses.
3. Ockeghem composed several technically difficult pieces, including his *Missa Prolationum* and the *Missa cuiusvis toni*.

D. The Man at Arms

1. The most numerous group of Masses from this period are those based on the *L'Homme armé*.
2. Almost all the composers recommended by Tinctoris composed at least one, as did Tinctoris himself.
3. The *Missa L'Homme armé* was initially tied to the Burgundian court.

4. A cycle of six Masses on the *L'Homme armé* reflects an interest in numerical structures and highly technical compositional prowess.

E. "Pervading imitation"

1. In Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé*, some sections have places where the tenor is absent. The composer uses brief imitative entrances known as "pervading imitation."
2. The melodic lines of pervading imitation are known as "points of imitation" and are fitted to a phrase in the text.
3. Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* betrays a desire to tie the work closely to the Order of the Golden Fleece.
4. Du Fay also wrote a *Missa L'Homme armé*, and his is the oldest and most distinguished.
5. Petrucci published *Missa L'Homme armé* settings in 1502.
6. The first setting is the *Missa L'Homme armé super voces musicales*, in which Josquin begins the cantus firmus on ascending pitches throughout the Mass (beginning on C and ending on A).

F. High, middle, and low

1. Tinctoris set out three musical styles and associated them with genres.
 - a) *Magnus*, great (high-ranking) = Mass.
 - b) *Mediocris*, middle = motet.
 - c) *Parvus*, small (low-ranking) = vernacular chanson.
2. The Mass replaced the motet in ranking during the fifteenth century.
3. The motet evolved into a sacred song in Latin, more associated with devotion than ceremony.
4. Motets continued to address the Virgin Mary.

G. The English keep things high

1. At the end of the fifteenth century, English music epitomized the musical cult of Mary in High Church style.
2. This repertory is preserved in the Eton Choir Book.
3. Eton College choir was famous for its virtuoso singing.
4. The music, although astoundingly sonorous, is necessarily impersonal.

H. The Milanese go lower still

1. In the later fifteenth century, Milanese composers wrote substitute motets for the Mass, known as *motetti missales*.
2. Compère's *Ave Maria* exemplifies a low-style motet, which suggests a dual focus: both the Virgin Mary and Galeazzo Maria (his patron).
 - a) This piece can be seen as "humane" (as in for the humans listening) setting—in opposition to the high style of the Eton Choir Book music.

I. Love songs

1. The *bergerette* originated in the fifteenth century.
 - a) It combines two of the *formes fixes* (rondeau and virelai).
 - b) Ockeghem's *Ma bouche rit et ma pensée pleure* is an early example of the *bergerette*.

J. Instrumental music is printed

1. Instrumental arrangements of popular chansons led to a new genre.

- a) The fifteenth century saw their emergence in manuscripts.
 - b) Petrucci printed textless chansons in the *Harmonice musices odhecaton A* in 1501.
 - c) Abstract instrumental music, based on imitation and without a cantus firmus, derived from these textless chansons.
2. Henricus Isaac was the most prolific composer of these chansons.