CHAPTER XVII

Guillaume de Machaut

Important as Philippe de Vitry was in establishing both the mensural principles of the Ars Nova and the structural principles of the isorhythmic motet, he still stands in the shadow of his somewhat younger and considerably more prolific contemporary Guillaume de Machaut. In large part, the relative positions of the two men must be the result of their personal interests and preferences. To some degree, however, those positions reflect the superficially similar, but in reality profoundly different, circumstances of their lives. It will be useful, therefore, to review those circumstances before we examine the music of the greatest French poet and composer in the fourteenth century.

Both men came from the province of Champagne, where Philippe was born—presumably in one of six villages named Vitry—on October 31, 1291, according to his own account. The date of Machaut's birth is generally believed to have been around 1300.[1] Almost nothing is known about the childhood and early youth of either man. Documented evidence of Vitry's life begins with his appointment as a canon of the Church in 1323 and his service to the French kings from the time of Charles IV (1322–28) until 1351. As a responsible and trusted official of the royal household, Vitry twice went on diplomatic missions to the papal court in Avignon, where he became a friend of Petrarch. Two letters from the Italian poet to Philippe praise him as a musician, poet, and man of inquiring spirit. In 1351, probably in recognition of his services both to the French kings and to the papacy, as well as for his other merits, Philippe was appointed Bishop of Meaux by Clement VI (the subject of Philippe's motet *Petre clemens—Lugentium*; see p. 366). This high position Philippe held until his death on June 9, 1361.

How much of Philippe de Vitry's poetry and music has been lost we do not know, nor can we be sure to what extent his contemporary reputation rested on his position and personal qualities. Certainly the motets attributable to him do not belie that reputation, but it is strange indeed

that more did not survive from the creative output of a man so important and so esteemed. It is also strange that more than half of the motets as well as the theoretical treatise must have been completed by the time Philippe was about thirty years of age.[2] That poetry and music did not occupy a primary place in Philippe's concerns during the last forty years of his life seems an inescapable conclusion.

With Guillaume de Machaut the situation is quite different. He too appears in historical documents in the service of a king—John, Count of Luxembourg and King of Bohemia—and ends his life in the Church, but in the less exalted position of canon at Reims Cathedral. Apart from these similarities, the activities and interests of the two men seem scarcely to correspond at all. Throughout his life, Machaut remained a practising musician, a composer, and a prolific poet who supervised the preparation of several manuscript collections of his works.

Documentary evidence of Machaut's existence dates from a series of papal bulls of 1330 that identify him as a "clerk, secretary, and familiar" (i.e., in the household) of John of Bohemia. At the request of King John, these bulls granted Machaut various church benefices and canonicates with the expectation of a prebend when a vacancy occurred. By this common medieval practice, popes sought to gain the loyalty and support of powerful noblemen who, in turn, found it a convenient means of providing supplemental income and future social security for their protégés. In one of the most important bulls, Pope Benedict XII made Machaut a canon of Reims—still in expectation—and allowed him to retain a canonicate at St. Quentin and a chaplaincy in the diocese of Arras. This bull also states that Machaut had been in John of Bohemia's household for about twelve years and thus establishes 1323 as the approximate date of Machaut's entry into the king's service. That service continued for some time after the vacancy of a prebend led to Machaut's installation by procuration (*in absentia*) as a canon of Reims late in January, 1337. Being in the service of the king, Machaut was not required to live in Reims, but he seems to have established a residence in that city by 1340. From then until John's death in 1346, Machaut probably remained on call and may sometimes have rejoined the king for short intervals.

The duties and restrictions imposed on the seventy-two canons of Reims were far from onerous, although around 1350 they were forbidden to wear long hair. Their primary function was to sing in the Offices, and each canon was also expected to sing for a minimum number of Masses during the course of a year. For fulfilling these duties they received a regular stipend plus a fee for each service in which they took part. In addition, their prebends provided daily or periodic dis-

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1. A. Machabey, in his two-volume study *Guillaume de Machault* (Paris, 1955), adopted the modern spelling of the town in Champagne for Guillaume's surname. This attempt to replace the spelling long accepted by historians of both literature and music has not been generally successful.

2. Five of the fourteen motets Schrade attributes to Vitry appear in the *Roman de Fauvel* (1316). Three more (Nos. 6, 9, and 10) are mentioned in the *Ars Nova* treatise (c. 1320).

tributions of bread, wine, vegetables, and wood. The canons did not have to be ordained priests, and Machaut seems never to have been more than a tonsured clerk. Moreover, he did not live in the cloister but had his own house, where he was later joined by his brother Jean de Machaut, who also became a canon at Reims after serving with John of Bohemia. In theory, canons were to be in residence at all times, but Machaut's position as secretary to John of Bohemia permitted him to be absent at the king's pleasure and perhaps also at his own. After the king's death, connections with other members of the highest nobility still gave Machaut freedom to travel, a freedom of which he did not fail to take advantage.

The exact nature of Machaut's relationships with his later patrons remains somewhat conjectural. Most of our information comes from Machaut's poems rather than from official records and often fails to describe the way in which he "served" these patrons. Nevertheless, we know that Machaut was first associated with Bonne of Luxembourg, John of Bohemia's daughter, who married the son of Philippe VI, King of France. After Bonne's death in 1349, Machaut found a new Maecenas in the person of Charles, King of Navarre and pretender to the French throne, who came to be known in history as Charles the Bad. Machaut was apparently not involved in Charles's intrigues and conspiracies with the English against the French royal house. Instead, the poet remained
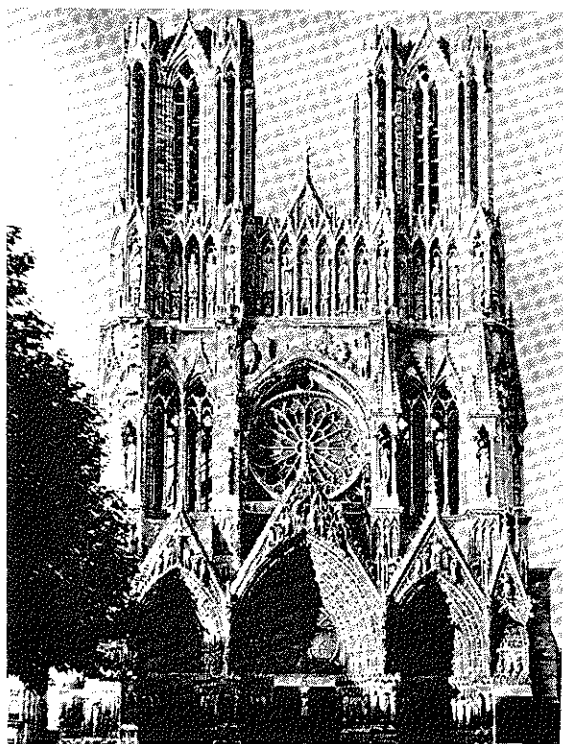
Machaut is depicted writing at his desk (from a fifteenth-century manuscript in the Morgan Library).

on good terms with both parties and later served King Charles V of France (1364–80) as well as his brother John, Duke of Berry.

In addition to revealing much about Machaut's associations with his royal patrons, his poetry gives many details about himself and the life he led in Reims. We learn, for example, of his infirmities—gout and blindness in one eye; of his personal experiences in more universal afflictions such as the great plague, the Black Death that ravaged Europe in 1348–49; and of the hardships that resulted from the English invasions and siege of Reims in the early part of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). In a happier vein, Machaut's poetry reveals his enthusiasm for falconry, his delight in horseback riding, and his pleasure in the beauties of the French countryside. Somewhat surprisingly, Machaut tells next to nothing about his activities in connection with the Church. We can only conclude that those activities occupied but little of either his time or his thoughts. Instead, as the most celebrated poet and composer in France, Machaut led a rather worldly life. Almost without interruption throughout his career, he enjoyed the confidence and patronage of kings and shared their pleasures.

THE COMPLETE WORKS

One of the most complete and reliable of the Machaut manuscripts begins with an inscription that reads in translation "Here is the order that G. de Machaut wishes to have in his book." A listing of Machaut's works as they appear in this manuscript will therefore reveal both the scope of his creative activity as he wished it to be presented and the place of music in his total output (Table 14).[3] Of all Machaut's pieces that have been preserved, only five are missing in this manuscript. Presumably, they are his last musical compositions. With some exceptions, the other Machaut manuscripts arrange his works in much the same order and for this reason are thought to have been prepared under his direct or indirect supervision.

3. The numbering of musical works in Table 14 and throughout this chapter is that of Schrade in PM, 2 and 3. Ludwig's numbering of the lais and virelais differs because he included the poems without music. Rondeau 16 has no music in any source (see fn. 33 below).

The Cathedral at Reims where Machaut spent many years as a canon.

Table 14: *Machaut's Works in the Order They Appear in Paris, Bibl. Nat., f. fr. 1584*

Poetry

1. *Prologue* (1371?) on 4 of 6 unnumbered leaves added at beginning
2. *Le Dit du Vergier* — fol. 1
3. *Le Jugement du Roi de Behaigne* (before 1346) — fol. 9v
4. *Le Jugement du Roi de Navarre* (1349) — fol. 22v
5. *Remède de Fortune* (1342–49?) — fol. 49v
6. *Dit du Lyon* (1342) — fol. 80v
7. *Dit de l'Alerion* (before 1349) — fol. 96v
8. *Confort d'Ami* (1357) — fol. 127
9. *Dit de la Fonteinne Amoureuse* (c. 1361) — fol. 154
10. *Dit de la Harpe* — fol. 174
11. *La Louange des Dames* (268 lyric poems) — fol. 177v
12. *Dit de la Marguerite* — fol. 213v
13. *Les Complaintes* (8 texts) — fol. 214v
14. *Livre du Voir Dit* (c. 1365) — fol. 221
15. *La Prise d'Alexandrie* (not before 1369) — fol. 309
16. *Dit de la Rose* — fol. 365v
17. *Les biens que ma dame me fait* — fol. 366

Musical compositions

18. Lais (22—6 without music; Nos. 17 and 18 missing) — fol. 367
19. Motets (23) — fol. 414v
20. The Mass — fol. 438v
21. *Hocket David* — fol. 451v
22. Ballades (38; Nos. 39 and 40 missing) — fol. 454
23. Rondeaux (19; Nos. 16 and 21 missing) — fol. 475
24. Virelais (38—6 without music) — fol. 482–94v

In compiling his collected works, Machaut appears to have arranged his longer poems in approximately chronological order except for the *Prologue*, the final version of which, fittingly enough, was written last. He then completed the collection with his musical works grouped according to formal types. It is generally assumed that within each type the pieces again appear in more or less chronological order, and comparative studies of the different manuscripts confirm this view to some extent. At any rate, the more complete Machaut manuscripts generally repeat the series of pieces in the different groups before adding new and presumably later compositions to each group. Further information as to the chronology of Machaut's music is extrapolated from stylistic considerations and the relationships between musical compositions and
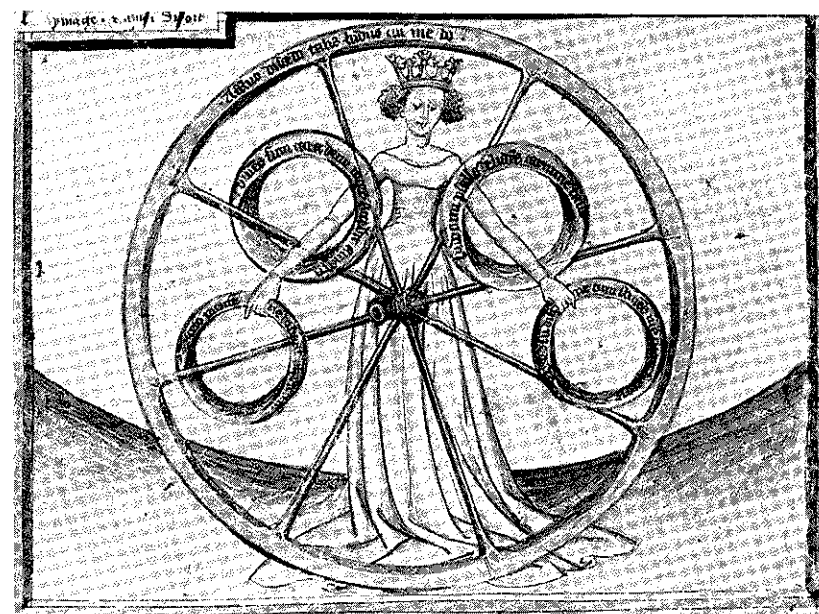
Fortune and her wheels, a persistent medieval theme (from a fifteenth-century manuscript in the Morgan Library).

datable poems. Yet even when all these factors are taken into account, the results are somewhat disappointing.[4] Only a relatively small number of pieces can be dated with any precision. For the rest, any assigned dates remain conjectural and must allow for a wide margin of error. It is not very helpful, for example, to suspect that the first sixteen ballades were written before 1349, when Machaut was nearly fifty. Linking stylistic development with precisely dated works adds something to our knowledge of chronology, but the results must always be accepted with great caution. New stylistic features in a dated composition do not necessarily mean that they were first used in that piece or that all subsequent pieces abandon older procedures. Because of differing styles in the different musical types, moreover, determining dates and chronology for one type yields little or no information about the others. Interesting and important as they are, questions of chronology can therefore be dealt with only incidentally in discussing the different types of Machaut's musical compositions. Before doing so, however, we must mention several of the poetic works that in one way or another are particularly related to music.

Written about 1371, the *Prologue* in its complete form was apparently Machaut's last important poem. In 184 lines and four ballades, the poet sets forth his artistic principles and, despite the absence of music for the ballades, lays more stress on music's importance than in any other work except the *Remède de Fortune*. The latter is a typical medieval treatise on Love and Fortune that Machaut enlivened by framing it in a realistic nar-

4.   See G. Reaney, "Towards a Chronology of Machaut's Musical Works," MD, 21 (1967), pp. 87–96 and the references there given in notes 1 and 2.

rative of a personal love affair.[5] This narrative provided an opportunity for the introduction of songs; but, true to his didactic purpose, Machaut illustrated the style, poetic construction, and musical setting of seven different lyric forms. Four of the songs are monophonic: a lai, a virelai, and the less common forms of *complainte* and *chanson royal* (see below). The three polyphonic pieces illustrate the rondeau and two forms of the ballade. The date of the *Remède de Fortune* has been much discussed, but there now seems to be general agreement that it must have been completed before 1349, possibly even by 1342. At any rate, the poem stands among Machaut's first major works, and the illustrative pieces must be among his earlier compositions. That Machaut regarded music as an essential part of the *Remède de Fortune* is indicated by the fact that all manuscripts place the pieces within the poem rather than at the end with the other musical works.

The *Remède* is also noteworthy for its detailed description of a day of pleasure that included singing and dancing, both out of doors and in the manor after dinner. At this latter time, the entry of minstrels gave Machaut an excuse for naming more than thirty different musical instruments.[6] Medieval poets took naïve delight in catalogues of this sort, and Machaut compiled an even longer list of instruments in his extended narrative poem *La Prise d'Alexandrie* (The Taking of Alexandria).[7]

Another long and important work directly related to Machaut's own music is *Le Livre du Voir Dit* (The Book of the True Story). In this book we learn of a love affair—largely conducted by correspondence—between the sexagenarian canon of Reims and Peronne, a rather madcap girl in her late teens. Peronne had become enamored of the aging poet after hearing her friends sing his praises and after reading his ballades and rondeaux. Flattered by the girl's interest, Machaut answered her initial letter and thus began an association that lasted for three or four years, from about 1362 to 1365. During these years the "lovers" saw each other only on rare occasions, but they continued to correspond until, after the usual recriminations and reconciliations, the affair dwindled to an amicable conclusion. Meanwhile, Machaut had begun Peronne's "book," the *Voir Dit,* in which over 9000 lines of poetry link together forty-six of their letters in prose. In addition to providing a narrative background for the letters, the poetry includes eight musical compositions—one lai, four ballads, and three rondeaux—that Machaut sent to Peronne or at least included in the *Voir Dit.* Of a missing rondeau (see Ludwig, *Machaut,* 2, p. 56, letter 31), Machaut says that he wrote the text and melody long ago but has now added tenor and contratenor parts—an interesting comment on his method of com-

5.   Machaut himself called the *Remède* a "traitic" (line 4257).
6.   Lines 3960–98. Reprinted in Ludwig, *Machaut,* 1, p. 102.
7.   M. L. de Mas Latrie (ed.), lines 1140–77. The passage is also published in Ludwig, *Machaut,* 2, p. 53*.

posing secular songs. Except for one rondeau (No. 4) that is probably an earlier work, the pieces present in the *Voir Dit* appear to have been written for enclosure with Machaut's letters to Peronne and can thus be dated with unusual accuracy. In the rondeau *Dix et sept, cinc, trese* (No. 17), it is interesting to note, the numbers in the text produce an anagram of Peronne.[8]

THE MUSIC

The succession of types and forms that Machaut himself prescribed (Table 14, above) seems to provide the most satisfactory means of organizing any discussion of his music. Machaut's reasons for this arrangement remain somewhat obscure, and all other manuscripts differ from it to some degree. Despite a few irregularities, however, most of the manuscripts present the important musical types and the individual pieces within them in approximately the same order. In so doing, they reveal to us the extraordinarily wide range of Machaut's musical accomplishments.

THE LAIS

As we have seen, the trouvères cultivated the lai continuously, if not extensively, throughout the thirteenth century. Four more complete lais appear among the monophonic secular songs in the *Roman de Fauvel,* and in these later examples Machaut found models for some of his own compositions. Because of these and other links with the past and also because later composers abandoned the form, Machaut's nineteen lais are often said to be his most backward-looking musical works. The judgment may be accurate enough, but it should not obscure the developments—both poetic and musical—that made his lais representative of their time. They also represent one of the high points of medieval song and, as models of melodic construction, are worthy of detailed and individual analysis. We must be content, however, with pointing out their general and more salient characteristics.

POETIC AND MUSICAL FORM OF THE LAIS

In Machaut's treatment of the lai as poetry, he characteristically systematized earlier procedures in order to make it almost a fixed form, at least in its larger outlines. The number of stanzas became set at twelve, and Machaut made it a principle that each stanza should have a different po-

8.   With no *j* in the alphabet, numbers 17, 5, 13, 14, and 15 correspond to the letters *r, e, n, o, p.*

Dame Nature presents her three children, Sense, Rhetoric, and Music, to Machaut (from a fifteenth-century manuscript in the Morgan Library).

Within the limits imposed by the standardized poetic structure of the lai, Machaut achieved an astonishing diversity of musical styles and forms. For his first two lais, he apparently had yet to establish that standardized structure, and each is irregular in a different way. Lai 1 has the usual twelve stanzas, but they all have approximately the same poetic form and were meant to be sung to the same melody. Lai 2 more nearly approaches Machaut's normal treatment of the form but has only seven instead of twelve stanzas. Of the seventeen lais with the standard twelve-stanza form, four are polyphonic and will be dealt with separately. That Machaut deliberately sought diversity of form in the remaining thirteen monophonic lais is shown by the fact that no two have the same distribution of stanzas with duple and quadruple subdivisions. One lai (No. 6) has nothing but quadruple subdivisions with fourfold statements of each melody. Several have no more than one or two stanzas in which the two halves are sung with only one melodic repetition.[9] And no monophonic lai is without quadruple subdivisions in some of its stanzas. It is clear, therefore, that the usual designation of lai form as *aa bb cc dd . . . aa* is misleading and incomplete. It suggests a resemblance to the sequence that both the poetic structure of the lai and the many fourfold melodic repetitions contradict, and it implies a structural simplicity never found in Machaut's lais and rarely, if ever, in any other examples of the form.

MELODIC AND RHYTHMIC STYLE OF THE LAIS

The aspects of melodic and rhythmic style that distinguish Machaut's lais from his other musical works result in the main from the nature of their texts. Twelve stanzas with many lines in each almost force the adoption of a nearly syllabic setting with occasional melodic ornaments of no more than four or six notes. As a natural result of such a setting, rather short and clearly defined musical phrases correspond either with a single longer line of text or with a group of two or three shorter lines. Thus the different stanzaic forms in Machaut's lais produce equally various phrase patterns that are welded together and unified with astonishing ingenuity. Indeed, one of Machaut's chief distinctions as a composer of lais comes from the many ways in which he shapes individual stanzas into complete and self-sufficient musical entities. This achievement results in part from skillful manipulation of both rhythmic and melodic motives, in part from careful attention to contrasts of pitch level and melodic direction in successive phrases. Melodic movement within phrases is largely by step, and the occasional skips rarely exceed the intervals of a fourth or fifth. Both large and small skips occur more

etic structure except the twelfth, which returned to the form and rhymes of the first stanza. Structural differences resulted from changes in the number and lengths of lines, and in the rhymes and rhyme schemes. These changes did not affect the normal practice of dividing stanzas into structurally equal halves, and Machaut further subdivided many stanzas into structurally equal quarters. By forming stanzas only in these two ways, Machaut eliminated the irregularity of earlier lais without sacrificing the variety achieved by giving each stanza a different internal structure.

It is obvious that the poetic structure of the lai must determine the larger aspects of its musical form. The different stanzaic forms require different music, and only the last stanza can, and does, repeat the melody of the first. Similarly, the melodic structure of each stanza reflects the division of the text in equal halves or quarters. In the former case, the two halves are sung to the same melody, usually with no change in the final cadence. With fourfold statements of a melody, Machaut almost invariably used open and closed endings in the pattern $a_o a_c a_o a_c$. He thus distinguished the four sections of text and at the same time emphasized the customary half-stanzas.

9. In the lai from the *Remède*, only stanzas 1 and 12 have the duple division; in Lai 2, only stanzas 1 and 7; in Lai 5, only stanza 10; and in Lai 7, only stanzas 10 and 11.

often between phrases, where their use facilitates the creation of bal-
anced structures within the stanza as a whole. Of the innumerable ex-
amples that might illustrate these characteristics, one of the simplest is
the fifth stanza of the *Lay mortel* (Example XVII–1). For the text of this
stanza, Machaut wrote twenty lines of three, four, and five syllables
with only a single rhyme, a virtuoso performance that cannot be dupli-
cated in translation. In the musical setting of these lines, Machaut's use
of rhythmic motives, transposed phrases, contrasts of pitch level, and
balance of upward and downward motion can all be easily discovered.
Also to be noted is the rhythmic identity of the melody's two halves.
Machaut often set lines or groups of lines of equal length to the same
rhythmic pattern and thus gave many stanzas a structure that is partially
or completely isorhythmic. Yet he always managed to avoid monotony
in these lengthy pieces—and to match the rhythmic variety of their
texts—by his skillful distribution of similar and contrasting rhythmic
patterns within single stanzas and from stanza to stanza.

Example XVII–1: *Stanza 5 of Machaut's* Lay mortel *(No. 8)*
(Paris, Bibl. Nat., f. fr. 1584, fol. 388v)

5a. "Do-lans cuer   las,   Di moy que fe - ras,
b. Bien mis se - ras   De si haut si   bas;

Que di - ras,   Ou   i - ras   Ne que de- ven - ras
La plor-ras   Les maus qu'as, Do-le-reus et   mas;

Quant tu ver - ras   Qu'on ne te vuet   pas?
La cre - ve - ras   Ou tu par - ti - ras.

Plus n'a-ras   De sou - las   Que de dire 'He - las!'
S'en mor-ras   Sans res - pas En l'a-mou-reus las."

5a. "Sorrowing, unhappy heart, tell me, what will you do, what say,
where go, when you see that you are unwanted? You will have no
other solace than to say 'Alas!'
5b. You will be brought down from the heights to the depths. There you
will lament your poignant sorrows. There you will break, wherever
you may go. So shall you die without relief in the bonds of love."

Changes of pitch level perform similar functions in organizing and
contrasting successive stanzas, with the added peculiarity that lais often
end on a higher pitch level than they began. All of Machaut's display
the characteristic use of the same melody for the first and last stanzas,

but in eleven lais that melody is transposed up a fifth when it returns in
stanza 12. In one lai (No. 6), the transposition is up a fourth, and in the
polyphonic Lai 18 it is down a fourth (see p. 409). Only five lais in ad-
dition to the first begin and end at the same pitch level (Nos. 2, 3, 8,
12, and 17). The last two of these are polyphonic and are therefore un-
usual in other ways as well.

Transposition of the final stanza is by no means the only contrast of
pitch level in Machaut's lais. Even those that begin and end at the same
level have internal stanzas at different levels and with different final
notes. Typically, Machaut seems to have deliberately sought a new and
different succession of pitch levels and final notes for each lai. Only in
Lai 5 and in Lai 19 from the *Remède de Fortune* is that succession the
same. Every other lai is unique in its arrangement of these contrasting
elements.

Different pitch levels within a lai and the transposition of the melody
for its final stanza raise questions as to the manner of its performance.
Single stanzas have a normal range of an octave or a ninth, but the
changes of pitch level give the lais a total range that often falls only one
or two notes short of two full octaves. Pieces with such a wide range
and of such length are so exceptional, either in polyphony or in other
forms of monphonic songs, that one wonders whether Machaut in-
tended his lais to be sung by only one performer. Literary sources
abound in references to lais played on instruments alone or sung to the
accompaniment of a harp.[10] Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that
two performers spelled each other in singing a lai, each taking the
stanzas best suited to his voice while the other improvised a simple ac-
companiment in discant style. That two of Machaut's seemingly mono-
phonic lais are in reality polyphonic increases the plausibility of this
suggestion. It would at least make the lais easier for modern singers and
more attractive for modern audiences.

THE POLYPHONIC LAIS

Four of Machaut's lais prove to be polyphonic, although their appear-
ance in the manuscripts differs not at all from the monophonic pieces. It
has long been recognized, however, that Machaut called for canonic per-
formance of Lais 11 and 12, which are found together in all manuscripts.
In the first of these pieces, each even–numbered stanza is prefaced by the
designation *Chace* and followed by the remark "a second time without
pause" (*iterum sine pausa*). As a result of the canons, which are assumed
to be for three voices in the manner of the French chace (see Chapter
XV), monophonic and polyphonic stanzas alternate throughout the lai.
This procedure has another and more unexpected result: the single mel-
ody of stanza 1 becomes a three-voice canon when it returns transposed

10. Machabey, *Machault*, 1, pp. 100–06.

up a fifth in stanza 12.[11] None of the stanzas in Lai 12 is called a chace, but canonic performance is implied by a remark that the second half of the first stanza, like all the others, is to be sung at once and without pause.[12] Unfortunately, the manuscripts give no hint as to the number of canonic voices or where they should enter, and in some stanzas, at least, unusual and inexplicable dissonances suggest that the published transcriptions as three-voice canons may not have correctly realized Machaut's intentions.

The other two polyphonic lais, Nos. 17 and 18, appear in only one manuscript and are presumed to be Machaut's last compositions in the genre. The *Lay de Consolation* (No. 17) is unique in having different melodies for the two halves of each stanza. The first stanza (Example XVII–2) will suffice to illustrate the simple, almost note-against-note style that prevails throughout the lai when the two melodies for each stanza are combined in two-part polyphony.[13] Seven more stanzas, including the last, end on a unison **c'**, while four have closed endings on the fifth **g–d'** (stanzas 5 and 8–10). The effect is almost modern in its shift to the dominant and subsequent return to the tonic.

Example XVII–2: *Machaut,* Un Lay de Consolation, *Stanza 1*
(*Paris, Bibl. Nat., f. fr. 9221, fol. 125v*)

1a. Because one more properly speaks of his own feeling than of others' thoughts, I should like, Love, lovingly to make a lai of what is in my heart, if it pleases you.
1b. And if I do this clumsily, my lady, may you graciously pardon the work as sincerely as my heart is devotedly all yours without demur.

11. Schrade errs in indicating that stanza 12 lies an octave below the written pitch.
12. Schrade, PMC, 2 and 3, p. 66.
13. Both Ludwig and Schrade published this lai as a monophonic piece. For the polyphonic transcription, see R. Hoppin, "An Unrecognized Polyphonic Lai of Machaut," MD, 12 (1958), pp. 93–104.

Also published as a monophonic piece by Ludwig and Schrade, the "hidden polyphony" of Lai 18 is produced in still another way.[14] Here, the melodies of the first three stanzas combine in three-part polyphony, a procedure which is repeated in groups of three through stanza 12. Thus the melody of stanza 1 is combined with two different melodies when it returns, transposed down a fourth, in stanza 12.

The four polyphonic lais raise further questions as to the manner of performance. We need only note here that the required performing group might well include instrumentalists to play the accompanying polyphony while the melodies of the stanzas are sung in the proper order. The resulting repetitions would take no longer than a normal monophonic lai.

If we assume that Machaut's polyphonic lais represent an effort to revitalize and modernize the form, we must admit that the effort was unsuccessful. The lais themselves stand out as high points of Machaut's creative activity, but they inspired no successors. In the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, treatises on the art of poetry describe the form of the lai much as Machaut established it, and poets continued writing lais. As far as we know, however, none of these later poems was ever set to music. The lai as a musical form was evidently the victim of changing times and tastes. Monophonic song was no longer palatable in large-scale works, and poets who could write lais lacked the knowledge and technical skill to provide them with polyphonic settings. Composers, on the other hand, preferred the shorter lyric forms for their polyphonic songs. As specialists in music they were no longer capable of writing the text of a lai, and they may well have shrunk from the difficulty of providing one with an adequate musical setting. Few composers, certainly, could have matched the supreme artistry with which Machaut accomplished this task.

COMPLAINTE AND CHANSON ROYAL

Machaut's lyric poems include a number of complaintes and chansons royaulx, but he provided musical settings only for the one example of each type that he included in the *Remède de Fortune*.[15] The primary interest of these monophonic songs lies in the evidence they provide, together with the older lais, of Machaut's links with the past. His *Complainte* bewails the trickery of both Fortune and Love in no fewer than thirty-six stanzas, all of which have the same sixteen-line form and are sung to the same melody.

Although the implication of the title *Chanson royal* is uncertain, its

14. The discovery was announced, with a transcription, in M. Hasselman and T. Walker, "More Hidden Polyphony in a Machaut Manuscript," MD, 24 (1970), pp. 7–16.
15. Schrade, PM, 2, pp. 106–07 and Ludwig, *Machaut*, 1, pp. 96–97.

connection with the trouvère tradition is obvious. Indeed, it proves to be a typical "solemn and majestic" song in praise of love with five stanzas and an envoy. The melody of the chanson is also typical in its use of the *aab* form in which thirteenth-century trouvères cast most of their love songs. Conversion of this poetic and musical form into a ballade required only a reduction to three stanzas and the addition of a refrain. The melodic form of Machaut's *Complainte, $a_0a_cb_0b_c$,* also turns up, but as a less common structural pattern, in his and other composers' ballades. This fusion of chanson and ballade seems to have occurred early in the fourteenth century, at least as far as composers were concerned. The characteristic features of the ballade now prevailed, and the true chanson had almost ceased to exist as a separate musical form. Perhaps Machaut gave a sly hint that such songs were outdated when he allowed "the lover" to confess that he dozed a bit during the lady's singing of the *Chanson royal* ("un petitet m'i endormi"—line 1980). One wonders if the lady may not have slept even more soundly during the lover's lengthy *Complainte.*

THE MOTETS

Like the lais that precede them in the manuscripts, Machaut's twenty-three motets are often said to represent the more conservative aspects of his musical output. This judgment can be accepted only with reservations. By the time of Machaut, the motet had existed as a musical form for more than a hundred years, and its traditional and identifying characteristics were well established. Neither Machaut nor any other fourteenth-century composer would have considered abandoning the structural and stylistic elements then regarded as appropriate for the motet. To say that this was being conservative as opposed to the "progressive" treatment of polyphonic secular songs is to overlook the essential differences between the two musical types. It is a measure of Machaut's greatness as a composer that he could adopt different musical styles and even different compositional techniques while remaining unmistakably a child of the French Ars Nova.

The one respect in which Machaut does seem to look backward in his motets is his striking preference for French secular texts. Only six of the twenty-three pieces are Latin motets, and two more have a Latin duplum and French triplum. Of the fifteen entirely French motets, three even have secular French tenors. All other tenors have Latin incipits that suggest plainchant origins, although the specific sources of some melodies have yet to be discovered. Although much of the contemporary motet literature may have been lost, it seems probable that Machaut's concentration on French secular texts reflects his own preference rather than the common practice of his time. Latin motets far outnumber French in the *Roman de Fauvel,* and they account for more than half of the motet repertory in the Ivrea Codex (see Chapter XV). Later collections usually contain a few French motets with texts that sing the praises of an unnamed lady who sometimes turns out to be the Virgin Mary. More and more, however, the motet dissociates itself from secular song in the vernacular. Its Latin texts tend to have some liturgical, or at least religious, connection or to celebrate important persons or historical events. Machaut himself foreshadowed this trend in his most elaborate and presumably latest motets (Nos. 21–23). It may well be, indeed, that Machaut's contributions to the development of a polyphonic style more appropriate for secular song led him and those who came after him to turn away from the French motet and to adopt the newer and more popular forms of the ballade, rondeau, and virelai.

If Machaut's motets may be conservative and even backward-looking in their use of French texts, the same cannot be said of their musical style. Without exception, they follow fourteenth-century notational procedures and use the different combinations of mensurations described by Philippe de Vitry and Johannes de Muris. They also follow and develop the structural procedures established by the "modern" motets in the *Roman de Fauvel* and the works of Vitry.

Nineteen of Machaut's motets have the typical three-voice arrangement of a duplum and triplum with different texts above a tenor. The remaining four (Nos. 5 and 21–23) add a textless contratenor to this arrangement. Except for one motet with a rondeau tenor, all of these pieces display the contrasts of mensural organization that we noted in the works of Vitry and that remain characteristic of the isorhythmic motet throughout its subsequent history. Tenors, and contratenors when present, normally move in the longer note values of mood and time, while the upper voices use one of the possible combinations of time and prolation. We find all four of these combinations in Machaut's motets, but imperfect time with major prolation (6/8) occurs in fifteen of the pieces. This predominance of 6/8 mensuration was so characteristic of French polyphony in the fourteenth century that contemporary Italians applied the adjective *gallica* to the corresponding mensuration in their own notation (see Chapter XVIII). Just as 6/8 predominates in the upper voices of Machaut's motets, so is perfect mood by far the most common mensuration of their tenors. It too occurs in fifteen pieces, with only four in imperfect mood.[16] In three of the four-voice motets, the tenor and contratenor combine perfect and imperfect mood in various ways.

16.   The four in imperfect mood are Nos. 3, 4, 7, and 13.

MACHAUT'S ISORHYTHMIC STRUCTURES

All of Machaut's motets are isorhythmic with the exception of the three that use secular French tenors, and even these reveal the influence of isorhythmic techniques. Any analysis of those techniques must consider both the structure of the lower voice or voices and the relation of that structure to the appearance of isorhythmic passages in the upper voices. Machaut's closest approach to the use of strict isorhythm in all voices occurs in Motet 4, but every motet has some repeated patterns in the duplum and triplum that clarify the structure of the tenor or create a structure that the tenor by itself leaves undefined. For the most part, isorhythmic passages in the upper voices introduce hocket or some other device, such as syncopation or rhythmic sequences, that will stand out against the normal rhythmic and melodic flow of the motet as a whole. Such passages are often framed by conspicuous cadences—long notes and full-measure rests—that also recur in the same place above each succeeding talea in the tenor. This use of isorhythm in the upper voices, of course, makes the structure of a motet more perceptible to the ear, which was undoubtedly the reason for its introduction.

In devising his isorhythmic tenors, Machaut invented no new procedures, but he applied the old ones with astonishing variety and ingenuity. Moreover, he seems to have preferred devices that rarely appeared in the motets of Philippe de Vitry and the *Roman de Fauvel.* Exactly half of Machaut's isorhythmic motets, for example, close with a repetition of the tenor color and taleae in strict diminution. Another device that appears with increasing frequency in Machaut's motets is the use of a color that does not divide into a whole number of taleae. In several tenors, a color one and one-half times as long as the talea creates a structure that may be expressed by the formula 2C = 3T. The complete formula may be repeated in diminution—as it is in Motets 4 and 7—or it may be repeated unchanged. Three statements of the formula in Motet 9, for example, give an overall form of 6C = 9T.

In some motets, the repeated rhythmic patterns of the tenors are so short and simple that they seem to differ scarcely at all from thirteenth-century practices. By introducing isorhythmic passages in the upper voices, however, Machaut groups two or more statements of a simple pattern into a longer talea and thus creates musical forms of considerable subtlety and sophistication. One of the most striking examples of this procedure occurs in Motet 8, *Qui es promesses—Ha! Fortune—Et non est* (AMM, No. 61). In the manuscript sources, the tenor of this motet is written out once with a sign indicating threefold performance, and its division into four statements of a short rhythmic pattern also suggests a simple and somewhat primitive isorhythmic form (Example XVII–3a). The upper voices decide otherwise, however. By treating *three* of the rhythmic patterns as one talea, they make the form of the tenor become

3C = 4T (Example XVII–3b). The resulting taleae consist of twenty-seven measures, of which the last twelve are rhythmically identical each time. In this case, the isorhythmic passages in the upper voices introduce syncopation rather than hocket and close with an obvious cadence on the final tenor note of each talea. It should also be remarked that the triplum always uses the same rhythmic and melodic figure to lead into the next statement of the talea. In some of Machaut's motets, even larger amounts of melodic repetition increase the perceptibility of his isorhythmic structures.

Example XVII–3: *Tenor Structure in Motet 8 of Machaut*

a. AS WRITTEN IN MANUSCRIPTS★

b. AS DETERMINED BY UPPER VOICES

★ ♩ = one measure of 2/4.

Another aspect of Machaut's motets that deserves detailed study is the internal symmetry and balance of the taleae themselves.[17] One of his common procedures was to divide the talea into equal halves with identical or related rhythmic patterns. In two of the four motets with an added contratenor (Nos. 5 and 23), Machaut applied this procedure to the combination of the two lower voices rather than to the tenor alone. The tenor and contratenor use black and red notes in each of these pieces to produce passages of perfect mood in one voice against imperfect mood in the other. In Motet 23, these passages alternate in rhythmic, but not melodic, voice exchange, so that the combination of the two parts creates a talea with rhythmically identical halves (Example

17. An interesting, if somewhat controversial, study of internal symmetry in the motets as well as the Mass may be found in O. Gombosi, "Machaut's *Messe Notre Dame,*" MQ, 36 (1950), pp. 204–24.

XVII–4a).[18] Motet 5 refines on this procedure by presenting the exchanged rhythms in reverse or retrograde order (Example XVII–4b). The result of these combined rhythmic palindromes, the same when read backward or forward, is a talea with symmetrical rather than identical halves. (The oldest verbal palindrome, obviously, is Adam's self-introduction to Eve: "Madam I'm Adam.")

Example XVII–4: *Tenor and Contratenor Taleae in Two Motets of Machaut*

a. MOTET 23

b. MOTET 5
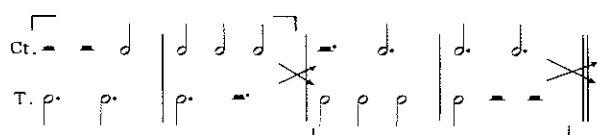
Further discussion of Machaut's motets cannot be undertaken here, but the above examples and citations should give some idea of his ingenuity in devising new and unexpected isorhythmic structures. Like composers before and after him, Machaut evidently regarded motets as music for connoisseurs who could understand and appreciate the subtleties of their construction. In the variety and complexity of their architecture and in the increasing penetration of isorhythmic organization into the upper voices, his motets surpass the works of earlier composers and pave the way for further developments in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

LA MESSE DE NOSTRE DAME

Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame* is unique for a number of reasons. It is his largest single musical work and the only one with a strictly liturgical function. As we noted in the previous chapter, it is the first complete setting of the Ordinary that is known to have been written as a unit by one composer. In length it far exceeds any of the compilations of individual movements that make up other Masses in the fourteenth century. Machaut's Mass was the only one of its kind, and not until some fifty

18. Apel, NPM, pp. 360–61, gives the original notation of the tenor and contratenor in color with the beginning of a transcription. For a complete facsimile of Motet 23, see Parrish, NMM, Pl. LII and LIII.

years after his death did complete Masses begin to appear in the works of early Renaissance composers.

The *Mass of Notre Dame* provides polyphonic settings for all the chants of the Ordinary, including the *Ite, missa est,* which almost never forms part of the later polyphonic Mass. All six movements are written for four voices, but in two distinctly different styles. The Kyrie, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and *Ite, missa est* are isorhythmic motets in all but their use of the same text for each voice.[19] To their complexity, the Gloria and Credo contrast simultaneous style with short, clearly defined phrases in note-against-note counterpoint and a nearly syllabic setting of the text. Each of these movements ends, however, with a long melismatic Amen that returns to motet style and thus establishes a relationship with the rest of the Mass.

A further contrast between the movements in different styles is less readily apparent to the ear. The Gloria and Credo seem to make no use of preexisting melodies, but each of the other movements takes a corresponding chant of the Ordinary for its tenor melody.[20] Machaut's choice of chants on which to base his isorhythmic movements may have determined, or been determined by, the overall modal scheme of his Mass. The first three movements, at any rate, are all in the Dorian mode ending on **D**, while the last three have Lydian or Hypolydian tenors and end on **F**.

MUSICAL FORMS IN THE MASS— GLORIA AND CREDO

The longer texts of the Gloria and Credo undoubtedly influenced Machaut's choice of simultaneous style for these two movements. That style, in turn, demanded methods of formal organization quite different from those used in isorhythmic structures. Machaut's solution was to divide each movement into large sections of approximately equal length, as shown in Table 15. Cadences on long notes followed by double bars mark the end of each section, and they all close on **D** except the one that precedes the Amen of the Credo. In each movement Machaut organized and related the sections by similar arrangements of open and closed internal cadences and by the placement of one-measure textless interludes in the tenor and contratenor with rests in the two upper

19. The manuscripts do not give the complete text for the contratenor in the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, and it may be questioned whether this part (and perhaps the tenor too) should be vocal or instrumental in the isorhythmic sections.

20. With some variants these melodies appear in LU as follows: Kyrie IV (p. 25); Sanctus and Agnus Dei XVII (pp. 61–62). Typically, the *Ite, missa est* uses part of another Ordinary chant, but Machaut chose the opening phrase of a different Sanctus (No. VIII, p. 38).

parts.[21] As was noted in Chapter XVI, such interludes are a character istic feature of Glorias and Credos in simultaneous style. In Machaut's hands, however, they take on greater formal significance and reveal once again his concern for structural balance and clarity. In the Gloria, the same interlude appears once in each section except the introductory five measures and the concluding Amen. The Credo has two interludes in each of its first three sections, but in this case no two are exactly alike. A further aspect of the Gloria and Credo that deserves mention is Machaut's occasional use of maximas (duplex longs) in chordal style. Such passages occur on the opening phrase of the Gloria, "Et in terra pax," and twice on the words "Jesu Christe." In the Credo, only the phrase "Ex Maria Virgine" receives this special treatment. When these passages interrupt the normal rhythmic flow of the movements, the stress they place on the text could hardly be more emphatic.

Table 15: *Subdivisions of the Gloria and Credo in Machaut's Mass*

Incipits of sections	Number of measures	Incipits of sections	Number of measures
Et in terra pax	5	Patrem omnipotentem	51
hominibus	25	Qui propter nos	59
Domine Deus, Rex	26	Et in Spiritum	47
Qui tollis	27	Amen	37
Quoniam tu solus	22		
Amen	26		

The melismatic Amens of the two movements also introduce striking contrasts of style and completely different methods of formal organization. The Amen of the Gloria is not isorhythmic, but it resembles the musical style of a motet in every other way. Its twenty-six measures divide into almost equal halves, the second of which is marked by hocket, syncopation, and rhythmic sequences in the contratenor as well as in the upper voices. The Amen of the Credo, on the other hand, is strictly isorhythmic in all four voices.

THE ISORHYTHMIC MOVEMENTS

Machaut's general procedure in the Mass was to divide the original form of each chant into a number of taleae without introducing any melodic repetition. Moreover, he seems to have devised his taleae in such a way that they disguise any repetitions within the chants themselves. Almost always, the contratenor is completely isorhythmic and the upper voices partially so. The isorhythmic passages in the duplum and triplum are

21.   For more detailed analyses of these forms and of the isoryhthmic movements, see the article of Gombosi cited in fn. 17 above.

particularly interesting for their use of syncopation and hocket and for their frequent grouping of patterns in rhythmic sequences.

Some differences in the overall forms of the isorhythmic movements result from the nature of the plainchant melodies and their liturgical texts. The plainchant Kyrie has four melodic sections arranged in the characteristic pattern $A \times 3$ $B \times 3$ $C \times 2$ C'. Machaut gives each of these sections its own isorhythmic setting and indicates the repeats needed to produce the traditional nine acclamations. As written, the four parts of Machaut's Kyrie provide extended melismatic settings of the text with a total of 95 measures.[22] Performance of the indicated repeats would bring this figure to 210 measures and would make the Kyrie the longest movement in the Mass.

The Sanctus is only one measure shorter than the Kyrie without repeats, but it is one continuous movement, with a complete statement of the plainchant Sanctus in the tenor. Machaut set the opening three "Sanctus" in five-measure phrases arranged in the *aba* pattern of the chant melody. He then began his isorhythmic structure with the words "Domine Deus" and continued for ten statements of an eight-measure talea. For the most part, the taleae fall into groups that reflect the major divisions of the text. It is noteworthy, however, that they present the many melodic repetitions of the chant in constantly changing rhythmic patterns.

The three acclamations of the plainchant Agnus Dei are melodically identical except that the second has a contrasting intonation on the first two words. Machaut took advantage of this form to use the same music for his first and third settings, with the necessary change of text from "miserere nobis" to "dona nobis pacem." He thus composed only two settings, in which the opening invocations on the words "Agnus Dei" obviously had to be different. These invocations are not isorhythmic, but the identical tenors for the rest of each setting are both divided into two taleae. The taleae of the two settings differ in rhythm and length, however, so that once again melodic repetition is disguised by a change of rhythmic arrangement (Example XVII–5).

Example XVII–5: *Different Taleae in the Agnus Dei of Machaut's Mass*

AGNUS I AND III, TALEA I

AGNUS II, TALEA I

22.   The individual sections have 27, 22, 17, and 29 measures.

The final movement of the Mass has a simple isorhythmic form of two eight-measure taleae plus a final measure. The manuscripts give the two texts, *Ite, missa est* and *Deo gratias,* beneath the music, which must therefore be sung twice to complete the work. If this repeat and the repeats of the Kyrie are made, the entire Mass attains a grand total of 730 measures. No composer has left a more imposing monument of medieval music.

Whether the *Mass of Notre Dame* can be called a cycle, in the sense that its movements are musically related, has been a subject for some debate. Certainly Machaut did not anticipate the characteristic unifying devices of the fifteenth century. No single melody serves as the tenor for all the movements, and no opening motive or "motto" begins every movement in the same way. The Mass is not modally unified, as we have seen, but splits into two sections in the Dorian and Lydian modes. And the contrast provided by the Gloria and Credo suggests a deliberate effort to achieve diversity rather than unity of musical style. Much has been made of a melodic figure that appears occasionally in the Mass (Example XVII–6), but to call this motive the "generating cell" of the entire work is surely an exaggeration. The same motive appears frequently in the Mass of Toulouse (see Example XVI–6, mm. 3–5) and in many other pieces by Machaut, his contemporaries, and his followers in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Thus it proves to be part of the vocabulary of melodic figures common to all music of the period. Machaut could have used the motive as an integrative device if he had placed it consistently and conspicuously at important structural points in the Mass. This he did not do. Instead, it seems to appear at random, rather frequently in some movements or sections, rarely if at all in others. We should probably regard the motive as one of several clichés that Machaut used, almost without thinking, as a normal part of his melodic vocabulary. In a sense, of course, these clichés do contribute to the stylistic unity of the Mass, but it is a unity that we should be surprised not to find in a long work by one composer.

Example XVII–6

Given Machaut's interest in rhythmic organization, it is curious that this element has often been overlooked as a unifying factor in the Mass. Yet the use of imperfect time with minor prolation throughout the entire work can only reflect a conscious effort to achieve rhythmic unity. Machaut treated this mensuration in a rather old-fashioned way that limits minims to short ornamental figures and makes the breve seem to be the unit on which the beat should fall. The consistent grouping of breves in all voices into units of perfect or imperfect mood confirms this judgment. Measures of 3/2 (♩ = o.) and 2/2 (♩ = o), with the breve always equal to a half note, therefore become the most appropriate mod-

ern equivalents of the original mensurations.[23] The prevailing mood in the Gloria and Credo is imperfect (2/2), but occasional phrases with a value of three breves and cadences on perfect longs introduce short passages in 3/2 meter. Measures of 4/2 result when maximas are used for word emphasis.

The Gloria and Credo thus provide rhythmic variety by their departure from the perfect mood that is used exclusively in all the isorhythmic movements as well as in their own melismatic Amens. Within the limitations imposed by this mensuration (3/2), the upper voices are remarkably varied in their rhythmic patterns, while the tenor and contratenor display an even more remarkable unity. As we might expect, no two of the nine sections have identical taleae in either the tenor or contratenor parts. When the two voices are considered as a unit, however, we find that their various combinations of notes and rests produce only three arrangements of note values within a measure— | ♩ ♩ ♩ |, | ♩ o |, and | o. |. Curiously enough, the contratenor introduces the only exceptions to this statement in three measures of the talea in Kyrie I and in one measure of the talea in the *Ite, missa est.* It should also be remarked that, except in Agnus II, all of the taleae end with the three arrangements of note values in the order given above. (The final long of the pattern is sometimes the last note of one talea, sometimes the first note of the next.) Machaut's ingenuity in devising new combinations of the lower voices to produce such a limited number of rhythmic patterns should not be allowed to obscure the consistency of their use or the importance of their function. Like the basic structure of a Gothic cathedral, the rhythmic unity of Machaut's Mass provides an unobtrusive but unshakable support for its wealth of decorative detail.

We do not know for what occasion Machaut composed his one great liturgical work. The baptism of Clovis at Reims in 496 had won the cathedral its privilege of conducting the ceremonies at which French kings were crowned, and Machaut's Mass is often said to have been written for the coronation of Charles V on May 19, 1364. No shred of historical evidence supports this assertion, and the strict traditions of the ceremony made any such innovation unlikely. Machaut himself spoke of the coronation and the presence of King Peter II of Cyprus but said nothing about the music for the Mass.[24] Perhaps a clue to the time of its composition lies in the extraordinary emphasis placed on the words "et in terra pax" and their equally extraordinary separation from the continuation of the phrase, "hominibus bone voluntatis" (see above, p. 416 and Table 15). In the Hundred Years' War with England, the French military position was at low ebb discouragingly often, but for Machaut the

23. Both Ludwig and Schrade transcribe in this way.
24. *La Prise d'Alexandrie,* lines 799–817.

fighting came closest to home when the English laid siege to Reims it-self in the winter of 1359–60. It is now generally agreed that the Mass is one of the composer's late works, and there can surely have been no more appropriate time for him to stress the need for peace on earth. We do not know whether Machaut or someone else provided the title "La Messe de Nostre Dame," which appears in only one of the manuscript sources. Yet a dedication—or appeal—to the Virgin Mary would also have been appropriate for a canon of Reims Cathedral, another Notre Dame in which feasts of the Virgin would have been celebrated with particular solemnity. Machaut himself left other evidence of his devo-tion to Mary. He and his brother were buried side by side in the cathe-dral, and their epitaph recorded their establishment of a fund for the weekly performance on Saturday of a "Mass of the Virgin." A docu-ment of 1411 mentions such performances "for the late Guillaume de Machault," and the tradition seems to have persisted, with its founders still remembered, as late as the eighteenth century.[25] Once again, we do not know how long Machaut's music was used for these Masses or even if it was used at all. Nevertheless, we shall probably not be far wrong in regarding the *Messe de Nostre Dame* as Machaut's own memorial to his years of service in the Church of Our Lady of Reims.

THE *DAVID HOCKET*

Machaut often introduced hocket passages, as we have seen, in his motets and the motetlike portions of the Mass, but he wrote only one work that he specifically called a hocket. In reality, the *David Hocket* is nothing more than a textless isorhythmic motet for three voices. The manuscripts identify these voices as "David Tenor," "David Hoque-tus," and "David triplum," but the designation *David* belongs by rights only to the tenor melody, the plainchant melisma on that word that completes the verse of *Alleluia: Nativitas*. In liturgical performance, this conclusion of the verse was sung by the choir and was therefore not in-cluded in Perotin's setting of *Alleluia: Nativitas* in three-voice organum (see above, Chapter IX). The suggestion that Machaut deliberately set out to rival the great Parisian discantor by completing his work seems somewhat fanciful. The *David Hocket* is archaic enough, but it resembles the so-called instrumental motets of the Bamberg Codex more than the clausulae of Perotin. Whether the work can be called liturgical, or even religious, also seems doubtful. Its intended function remains unknown, and it follows the Mass only in the one manuscript that purports to ar-range the pieces according to Machaut's wishes. This arrangement prob-

25. Machabey presents the historical evidence in *Machault*, 1, pp. 69–70. See also his dis-cussion of the Mass, 2, p. 113 ff.

ably came after the fact because of the derivation of the *David* tenor from a chant in honor of the Virgin Mary. In the other three manuscripts that contain the hocket, it comes at the end of the musical collection. Perhaps Machaut wrote it only to provide at least one example of a musical type described by contemporary theorists.

THE SECULAR SONGS

Machaut's polyphonic songs—the ballades, rondeaux, and a few vire-lais—are often regarded as his most progressive works, the ones that ex-ercised the greatest influence on his successors. This, like most general-izations, is only partially true. It is also misleading because it overlooks the state of development of the different musical types at the time Ma-chaut began to compose. Long-established traditions determined the es-sential characteristics of both the lai and the motet, and Machaut needed only to bring both forms up to date by applying to them the technical devices and procedures of the Ars Nova. No such traditions provided Machaut with a starting point for the polyphonic settings of shorter lyric poems. Earlier examples known to us are limited to the sixteen conductus-like "Rondels" of Adam de la Hale and the one rondeau in similar style by Jehan de Lescurel. If Machaut knew these songs at all, he failed to imitate their style. Instead, having no other models, he devel-oped his own method of providing lyric poetry with an appropriate polyphonic setting. Writers in the later fourteenth century credited Vitry and Machaut with inventing or beginning the new lyric forms. Since we possess none of Vitry's secular songs, we cannot assess his contributions, but we know that neither he nor Machaut invented the poetic and musical forms of the ballade, rondeau, and virelai. What Machaut did invent was an arrangement of vocal and instrumental parts that itself established a tradition, one that remained in force for a century or more after his death. In that arrangement, textless tenor and contra-tenor parts support an upper voice (cantus) that alone sings the words of the song. Thus the so-called polyphonic secular song of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance is in fact a solo song with an accompaniment provided by two contrapuntal parts that presumably were played by in-struments.

It is not to be expected that Machaut's invention came suddenly with his first secular songs. It came, rather, as one of several experiments in which Machaut not only created a new style but also developed a new process of composition. Instead of beginning with the tenor, as for a motet, he apparently composed the melody of the cantus and then added one or more other parts, as he told Peronne in the *Voir Dit* he had done for a rondeau. In the early stages of his search for an appropriate poly-

phonic setting, Machaut added only a tenor part, perhaps in the way a skilled instrumentalist might have improvised an accompaniment to a trouvère chanson. The tenor usually has a greater number of long notes than the cantus and is thus a slower-moving part, but both voices move at the same level of mensural organization. In modern transcriptions, therefore, the two parts have measures of equal length, and the tenor does not group the measures of the cantus in units of two or three as in the motet. The basic harmonic structure of the two voices consists of a series of perfect and imperfect consonances in note-against-note counterpoint. Melodic figuration then breaks up the notes of this structure, particularly in the cantus, to give it rhythmic vitality and harmonic interest. The figuration naturally introduces many dissonances, most of which can be explained in modern terms as suspensions, anticipations, passing and neighboring notes, and appoggiaturas (see the ballade *Dous amis* [Gentle friend]; AMM, No. 62). Even in pieces for only two voices, a high dissonance level is one of the most characteristic features of Machaut's style.

The two-part framework established by the cantus and tenor provided the basis for all of Machaut's further experiments in the development of secular polyphonic song. The framework itself shows little influence of the older techniques of motet composition, but that influence is clearly evident in the ways Machaut expanded the polyphony to include a third and even a fourth voice. One way, perhaps the first that Machaut tried, was to add a textless triplum to the two-part framework. Except for its lack of words, this third part combined with the cantus to form a pair comparable to the two upper voices of a motet. This solution to the problem of creating three-part polyphony seems to have been less satisfactory than the other, which augmented the basic unit of tenor and cantus by adding a contratenor part. The resulting texture, quite different from that of the three-voice motet, provided a more solid support for the cantus and did not force it to compete with another upper voice. These satisfying acoustical properties undoubtedly account for Machaut's preference for the combination of cantus, tenor, and contratenor and for its acceptance by succeeding generations of composers. The creation of four-part secular polyphony is somewhat more problematical. Several of Machaut's songs have both a triplum and a contratenor, and four-part performance of some pieces was certainly intended. In other pieces, however, the triplum and contratenor do not seem to have been designed for use together. Instead, they provide alternate possibilities for performance in three-part polyphony. This situation is sometimes clarified and sometimes obscured by the songs that appear with a different number of voices in different manuscripts. Nevertheless, the stages of Machaut's development of the standard three-voice texture are clearly discernible in his three groups of polyphonic songs, and particularly in the ballades.

THE BALLADES

Machaut provided music for forty-two of his ballade texts, including the two in the *Remède de Fortune*. The collection of forty ballades is presumably arranged in more or less chronological order, and it is therefore significant that the first sixteen pieces were originally for cantus and tenor alone. (Nos. 3 and 4 have an added contratenor in one of the late Machaut manuscripts.) A textless triplum appears in eight of the forty-two ballades, but only No. 19 still has the arrangement of triplum, cantus, and tenor. In most of the others, the later addition of either a contratenor or the triplum itself seems intended to provide an alternate combination of three-part polyphony. Ballades 21 and 22 are perhaps the only ones originally composed as four-part pieces, for they alone have triplum, cantus, tenor, and contratenor parts in all sources. What was to become the standard three-part arrangement of cantus, tenor, and contratenor is now found in fifteen ballades, four of which also exist in ear-

The ballade *De toutes flours,* by Machaut (Morgan Library MS 396).

lier two-part versions. In the four-voice Ballades 31 and 41, however, the triplum may be a later addition.

It is noteworthy that the one Machaut manuscript in which most of the added parts appear is the copy prepared for the Duke of Berry. This manuscript is the least reliable in its transmission of both texts and music, and we may question whether Machaut himself made all of the additions to the ballades. In some of the later "repertory" manuscripts—collections of pieces by various composers—his songs continue to appear either with an added contratenor or with a new one in place of the original.[26]

A few of Machaut's ballades depart in one way or another from the two-, three-, and four-voice arrangements just discussed. Curiously, the only monophonic ballade comes late in the collection (No. 37). Ballade 34, on the other hand, is a four-voice piece of the type known as a *double ballade,* one in which the two upper voices sing different texts but with the same form, rhymes, and refrain. Machaut presumably maintained, or pretended to maintain, a literary practice when he said in the *Voir Dit* that he wrote one text of Ballade 34 in answer to the other, which had been sent him by a friend. He left no explanation, either fictional or real, for his two triple ballades, Nos. 17 and 29. The first, strangely enough, is a three-voice canon with a different text for each voice.[27] The second is also for three voices, but each now has a different melody as well as text. One more ballade (No. 1) should be mentioned here because of its exceptional introduction of isorhythm in both voices. The experiment apparently showed Machaut that ballade form was unsuited for isorhythmic treatment. At any rate, he never applied it again, either in his ballades or in his other secular songs.

POETIC AND MUSICAL FORM IN THE BALLADES

In their poetic and musical forms, Machaut's ballades offer little that is new. For the most part, his texts are conventional love songs that differ from older trouvère chansons only in having a refrain and in being reduced to three stanzas.[28] The envoy has also been eliminated, although it continues to appear in literary ballades throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Because the ballade is strophic, its three stanzas are identical in form, have the same refrain, of course, and usually use the same rhymes. The stanzaic structures may vary considerably from one ballade to another, but in Machaut's hands they did become standardized to a degree. Most of his ballades have stanzas of seven or eight lines with

26. See PMC, 2 and 3, notes to Ballades 18, 22, and 23, and Rondeau 7 (AMM, No. 63)

27. The canon of Ballade 17 is incorrectly solved in the editions of Ludwig and Schrade. The third voice should enter in the 5th, not the 2nd, measure of 6/4 meter.

28. All the ballades have three stanzas except No. 10, which has only one.

rhyme schemes such as ababbcC, or ababccdD. Also evident is a tendency to use longer lines of eight or ten syllables and to make all the lines of equal length. This tendency becomes almost a rule for later composers, most of whom use only a few stereotyped patterns of stanzaic construction in their ballades. Whatever poetic form Machaut chose for a ballade, it always fit one of two musical forms. The one usually called ballade form—$a_o a_c bC$—is by far the more common and occurs in 37 of Machaut's 42 ballades. In the other five pieces, the second section of music is also repeated with open and closed endings to give the pattern $a_o a_c b_o b_c$.[29] Machaut illustrated both ballade forms in the *Remède de Fortune,* where he introduced the less common type as a "baladelle." At the end of the song, however, it is called a "balade."[30] Machaut seems to have used the word *baladelle* merely to rhyme with *nouvelle* and did not mean it as a designation of the form. The technical terms for the two forms in the fourteenth century were *ballade simplex* and *ballade duplex.* These terms provide convenient distinctions so long as we do not confuse the ballade duplex with the double ballade, which has two different texts and may be in either form. Indeed, Machaut's double and triple ballades all have the form of ballade simplex.

Use of the ballade duplex form obviously depends on the presence of a particular stanzaic structure in the text. The last section of the stanza, like the first, must subdivide into equal halves that can be sung to the same music (see AMM, No. 62). It is particularly noteworthy that the refrain of a ballade duplex does not have a separate musical setting of its own but is sung to music that has already served another line of text. Perhaps this lack of musical emphasis on the refrain was one reason for the infrequent appearance of the form in the ballades of Machaut and other fourteenth-century composers.

Even in ballades with the more common $a_o a_c bC$ form, however, the separate setting of the refrain is not always entirely new. With few exceptions, the closed ending of the first section establishes the "key" in which the piece will end, and to this tonal unity Machaut often added structural unity by introducing musical rhyme. Although the device is rare in his early ballades, the later pieces almost always end with an exact repetition of music that closed the first section. Ballade 28, *Je puis trop bien* (I can too well [compare my lady]), is exceptional in repeating only the cadential progression of the closed ending.[31] More often the repetition includes the complete closed ending and sometimes even more of the first section. One of the longest repetitions occurs in *Mes esperis* (My

29. No melodic refrain can be indicated in this schematic pattern because the poetic refrain is sung to the final phrase of section *b,* which has already been used for an earlier line of the stanza. The form occurs in Ballades 6, 19, 38, 40, and 41 (*Remède de Fortune*).

30. Lines 2851 and 2893.

31. HAM, No. 45.

spirit, No. 39).[32] Here, the last twelve measures of the first section return to complete the five measures that begin the setting of the refrain. Such extended settings of a single line of text illustrate a process of expansion already begun in the songs of Jehan de Lescurel and carried much further in Machaut's three- and four-part ballades. To take the most extreme example, the eight-line stanzas in the upper voices of the double ballade *Quant Theseus—Ne quier veoir* (No. 34) are spread over 119 measures of 2/4 meter. The refrain alone extends for 21 measures, with a melisma of 14 measures on the penultimate syllable, and its last 12 measures repeat the end of an even longer melisma that closes the first section of the ballade. Pieces of such length and complexity could scarcely be further removed from any association with the dance. Even the poetry sometimes seems to be nearly forgotten in the exuberance of musical development that turned the ballade into the most elaborate and extended form of polyphonic secular song in the fourteenth century.
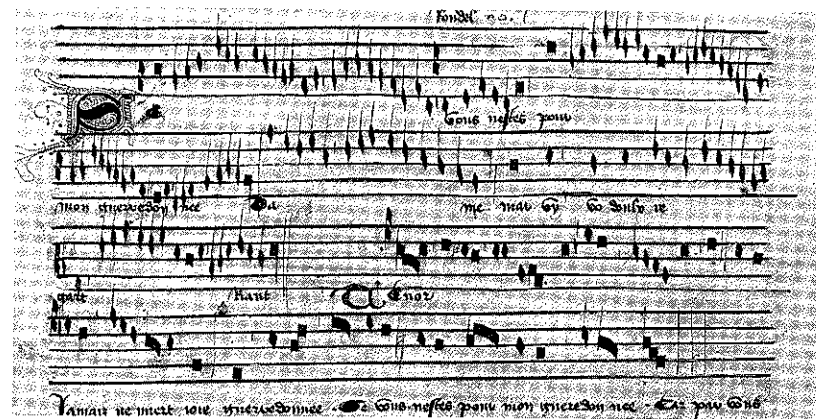
THE RONDEAUX

Almost all of the characteristics we have observed in Machaut's ballades reappear in the twenty-one rondeaux he set to music.[33] The poetic and musical forms are different, of course, but we find the same combinations of two, three, and four voices, and the same melismatic expansion that leaves little trace of an origin in simple dance songs. In describing the musical style of Machaut's rondeaux, therefore, we need do little more than document the various ways in which they resemble his ballades.

In the matter of voice combinations, we find that two-part settings again predominate in the early part of the collection. The seven rondeaux for cantus and tenor alone occur as Nos. 2–6, 12, and 20. Two pieces, Nos. 1 and 22, add a triplum to the two-part framework, and two more add both a triplum and a contratenor (Nos. 9 and 10). The remaining ten rondeaux have the "standard" arrangement of cantus, tenor, and contratenor parts. These combinations of voices are less subject to variation in the rondeaux than in the ballades, but four pieces do appear in different arrangements in the manuscript sources.[34] In all of the rondeaux, only the cantus sings the text, and Machaut did not experiment with canonic writing or with multiple texts as he did in the

32. Gleason, EM, p. 85.

33. Both Ludwig and Schrade give 21 numbered rondeaux plus the one in the *Remède de Fortune*. Rondeau 16 is without music, however, and merely provides the clue for finding the name Isabel that is only slightly disguised in the strained rhymes on "visabel" in the preceding Rondeau 15.

34. Nos. 7, 9, 10, and 21. In the notes on these pieces (PMC, 2 and 3), Schrade lists the different combinations of voices in various manuscripts.

The rondeau *Se vous n'estes,* by Machaut, is a two-voiced version of AMM No. 63 (Morgan Library MS 396).

ballades. It is ironic, therefore, but perhaps typical, that Machaut's best-known composition should be the rondeau *Ma fin est mon commencement* (No. 14), the only one of all his works with retrograde motion in all parts. The manuscript sources give one melody that produces both upper voices of this rondeau. One performer reads the melody forward, while the performer who sings the text must read the melody backward. In this way, as the poem says, "My end is my beginning and my beginning, my end." The lower part, which the manuscripts label variously as tenor or contratenor, is only half as long and must be performed forward and then backward, so that it too ends with the beginning and begins with the end. As a result of these procedures, the second section of the rondeau is a retrograde repetition of the first, but with the upper voices interchanged. Machaut showed astonishing skill in achieving this playful parallel between words and music, but the piece must not be regarded as a representative work. Retrograde motion in all parts of a polyphonic complex is rare in music generally, and its appearance in this rondeau is unique in the music of Machaut.

Machaut both standardized the poetic form of the rondeau and foreshadowed its future development. Some earlier rondeaux had lines of unequal length and number in the two sections of the refrain. Machaut abandoned this practice in favor of an eight-line rondeau with lines of equal length. Seventeen of his rondeaux with music are of this type, for which the formula *ABaAabAB* expresses the poetic form and its rhyme scheme, as well as the musical form. Rondeau 5 is unique in having groups of three four-syllable lines for each musical section. The overall form of the music remains unchanged, but the poem now has twenty-four lines arranged in eight groups, all of which use the same two rhymes in the pattern aab. Machaut's other three rondeaux, Nos. 10, 11, and 13, expand the eight-line rondeau in another way. They all add one line to the first section of the refrain and therefore must add other lines for each repeat of that section. The result is a thirteen-line rondeau that still uses only two rhymes in lines of equal length. Again the musical

form remains unchanged, but the poetic form must now be expressed by another formula:

| Poetic form: | AB B ab AB ab b AB B |
| Musical form: | *A B a A a b A B* |

Later composers continued this process of expansion by adding a line to the second section of the refrain to produce a sixteen-line rondeau. By the end of the fourteenth century, this longer form had become standard for the rondeau, but the development did not stop there. Further expansion created the rondeau of twenty-one lines with a five-line refrain (divided three and two) and the rondeau of twenty-four lines with a six-line refrain. The terms *rondeau quatrain, rondeau cinquain,* and *rondeau sixain* then came into use to identify each of these larger forms by the number of lines in the refrain.

None of these expansions affected the basic musical structure of the rondeau. Its two sections might vary in length, but they continued to be repeated in the pattern established by the old eight-line form. Machaut consistently distinguished the two sections of his rondeaux by giving the first an open ending, usually a normal cadence but on some degree of the mode other than the final. In two rondeaux, however, the last chord of the open ending is a full triad on the final instead of the empty fifths and octaves that signaled completion to fourteenth-century ears. The rondeau *Se vous n'estes pour mon guerredon née* (If you were not born to be my reward; No. 7, and AMM, No. 63) will give the modern listener a chance to adjust his own ears to this medieval subtlety.[35] Rondeau 7 also provides a characteristic example of the way a contratenor might be added to the two-voice framework established by the cantus and tenor parts.[36] Textually, too, the piece is characteristic in its use of long rhymes of several syllables that are broken up to form different words: "guerredon née," "guerredonnée" (rewarded), and "guerre donnée" (war given). Poets seem to have enjoyed increasing the considerable technical difficulty of the rondeau as a poetic form by adding to it this kind of word play. Fortunately, perhaps, the elaborate and rather forced punning is impossible to reproduce in English translation.

Apart from the parallel forms of music and poetry in the rondeau, the style and length of the musical setting appear to be independent of either the length or meaning of the text. Two of Machaut's eight-line rondeaux, Nos. 1 and 18, have very short settings, with twelve measures of 3/4 and seven measures of 3/2 respectively. On the other hand, another eight-line rondeau, No. 21, has the longest setting of all: 74 measures of

35. The other rondeau with an open ending on a full triad is No. 11.
36. As may be seen in AMM, No. 63, one repertory manuscript preserves Rondeau 7 with a different contratenor. Another manuscript once had an added triplum, of which only a fragment survives (see Schrade, PMC, 2 and 3, p. 127).

2/4, with melismas of more than 25 measures on the penultimate syllable of each section. It should be remembered that the number of measures in these pieces indicates only the length of the refrain. Performance of the complete text roughly quadruples that length. When all eight lines of Rondeau 21 are sung, for example, its 74 measures expand to 298. It thus becomes longer than many ballades with three stanzas of seven or eight lines. Why Machaut should have so extended some of his rondeau settings is an interesting but unanswerable question. Other composers rarely followed his lead in this direction, and on the whole the rondeau remained a shorter and less elaborate form than the *grande ballade* of fourteenth-century secular polyphony.

THE VIRELAIS

The pieces that complete the collection of Machaut's music present the curious and wholly unexpected anomaly of a return to monophonic song. Of the 33 virelais that Machaut set to music, no fewer than 25 are monophonic. Seven are in two parts, for cantus and tenor (Nos. 24, 26, and 28–32), and only one (No. 23) has both a tenor and a contratenor in addition to the cantus. The collected musical works thus end as they began, with a group of pieces that seem to look back to the older traditions of the trouvères. Whether Machaut intended this arrangement as an acknowledgement of his musical ancestry or whether he merely took pleasure in its superficial symmetry we cannot say. That the symmetry was superficial becomes apparent, however, when we consider the historical positions of the lai and virelai in Machaut's time. The lai, as we know, had a long tradition behind it, but its history as a musical form ended with Machaut. On the other hand, the virelai did not acquire its fixed form and distinguishing name—of which Machaut disapproved— until after the beginning of the fourteenth century. There may have been no prophetic implication in Machaut's placement of the virelais at the end of his musical works, but the form did have a future as a polyphonic secular song.

Machaut's preference for the designation *chanson baladée* instead of *virelai* may have stemmed in part from his consistent use of texts with three stanzas, as in the ballade. He may also have liked the adjective *baladée* for its implication of the origin and continued function of these songs as accompaniments for dancing. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Italian ballata, with the same form as the virelai, was also a monophonic dance song that developed into an important form of fourteenth-century secular polyphony (see Chapter XVIII).

Evidence that the virelai was just emerging as an independent but not entirely fixed form can be found in Machaut's own works, which we may henceforth call virelais in the usual defiance of his wishes. Included

in the collection are two pieces (Nos. 13 and 14) that do not follow the fixed forms of either the virelai or the ballade. Each of them does have three stanzas with a refrain, however, and in their poetic and musical style they resemble the simple monophonic virelais with which they appear. All of the other poems in the collection, including the six that Machaut did not set to music, display the form that we now regard as being standard for the virelai. A refrain of several lines begins the poem and then returns to conclude each of its three stanzas.[37] The stanzas themselves subdivide into three sections, of which the first two have the same form and are sung to the same melody. The third section returns to the form and melody of the refrain. Within this fixed pattern, the structure of Machaut's poems varies to a much greater degree in the virelais than in his ballades and rondeaux. The refrains, and therefore the third sections of the stanzas, range in length from three to eight lines, but the longer forms with six or more lines occur in over half of the poems. Each of the first two sections of the stanzas is shorter and usually consists of two or three lines. Further variety of poetic structure results from the characteristic use of lines of contrasting lengths combined with nearly complete freedom in the disposition of rhymes.

Machaut took full advantage of all these opportunities for creating different poetic forms within the basic structure of the virelai. He evidently liked the form of the example in the *Remède de Fortune,* for he reproduced its every detail in Virelais 24, 28, and 29.[38] The common scheme of these four pieces is as follows:

Poetry: $A_7A_7B_4B_7A_4A_7B_4$ $b_7b_7a_4$ $b_7b_7a_4$ $a_7a_7b_4b_7a_4a_7b_4$ $A_7A_7B_4B_7A_4A_7B_4$

Music: A b b a A

All of the other virelais differ to a greater or lesser extent in their rhyme schemes and in the lengths and number of their lines. This structural variety, which must reflect a conscious effort of the poet, makes designation of the virelai as a fixed form seem a paradox. Yet the larger formal pattern remains unchanged, however much the size and shape of its components may differ from one virelai to another. Moreover, the fixed disposition of those components determines the fixed musical form. Thus the overall form of any virelai with three stanzas can be expressed by the reduced formula *A bba A bba A bba A.*

Machaut's treatment of the virelai's musical form is not quite as standardized as we might expect. He did not change the fixed pattern of repetitions, of course, but he did follow different procedures in constructing the two musical sections and in relating those sections to each other.

One difference involves the ending of the melody for the first two parts of the stanza. In eleven of the true virelais, this melody (*b*) is repeated exactly with no change in its final cadence. In the other twenty virelais, the *b* section is provided with open and closed endings, which later composers made an almost invariable feature of the form. A more unexpected procedural difference occurs in Machaut's settings of some refrains. As a rule, both musical sections reflect the poetic structure of the text but with no internal repetitions of melodic phrases. In eight of the virelais, however, the refrain is set as a repeated melody with open and closed endings.[39] This subdivision makes the form of the first musical section correspond with the two statements of the second section $(A_oA_cb_ob_ca_oa_cA_oA_c)$. Machaut's use of this procedure seems to be independent of the poetic structure. It is true that seven of the refrains divide into formally equal halves, but others that do the same are set in the normal manner as a nonrepetitive form.[40] Moreover, in Virelai 10 (*De bonté;* With goodness, AMM, No. 64), the five lines of the refrain are divided three and two between the repeated sections. This kind of repetition in the first section of the virelai does not occur in Machaut's polyphonic settings or in the works of later composers. Indeed, it usually goes unmentioned in descriptions of the virelai. It is common in the Spanish *Cantigas,* however, and its presence in the works of Machaut is important as another indication that the French form was still in the process of becoming fixed.

Poetic and musical forms and a predominance of monophonic songs are not the only aspects of Machaut's virelais that set them apart from his ballades and rondeaux. One contrast, perhaps the most obvious, is the difference in melodic style. Many virelais are like No. 10 in being almost completely syllabic. Others introduce a few vocal ornaments of two or three notes to a syllable without losing their simple, almost folklike quality. Longer melismas occur once or twice in a small number of pieces, but they rarely extend beyond two or three measures. Even the polyphonic virelais do not stray far from this simple melodic style. Virelai 28 is characteristic in using ornaments of no more than three notes to a syllable.[41] Only Virelai 31 points toward future developments in having longer melismas that correspond with its unusually extended musical rhyme. Nowhere in the virelais do we find the spun-out phrases, the frequent and lengthy melismas that are typical of the rondeaux and later ballades.

Taken as a whole, Machaut's secular songs bring his collected musical works to a fitting close. Not only do they include some of his most attractive music, but they also represent his most original contribution to

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37.   Schrade's edition of the virelais is misleading in its suggestion that the refrain is sung twice between the stanzas.

38.   Virelai 28 is also available in HAM, No. 46b.

39.   In Virelais 7, 10, 12, 17–20, and 27.

40.   E.g., Virelai 4, HAM, No. 46a.

41.   HAM, No. 64b.

the development of musical forms and styles. Starting with the monophonic songs of the trouvères, Machaut himself created the accompanied solo song. In so doing, he developed the compositional techniques and the arrangement of vocal and instrumental parts that remained in use for more than a century. Beyond their revelation of this creative process, Machaut's songs illustrate the transformation of simple music for dancing into highly elaborated art forms. It is especially significant to note that the coexistence of all stages of this transformation rules out undeviating progress from the simplest to the most complex secular songs. Machaut apparently moved with ease from the dense four-part polyphony of the double ballade (No. 34) to the dancelike tune of the monophonic Ballade 37. Moreover, we cannot assume that the virelais belong to an earlier period than the ballades and rondeaux or than the motets, for that matter. Indeed, it is an important measure of Machaut's greatness that he could range at will between the extremes of intellectual constructivism and folklike simplicity. No other medieval composer left proof of such versatility. No other wrote with equal success in all the forms and styles of his time. Not until the beginning of the Renaissance do we find composers of comparable universality. Even then, few could match and fewer still surpass Machaut's towering achievements.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Italian Ars Nova

Italian secular polyphony suddenly appeared and flourished in the fourteenth century with no apparent antecedents. It is sometimes argued, therefore, that the term *Ars Nova* should not be applied to music that seems to have developed independently of the musical forms and the notational system that characterize the French Ars Nova. Italian music, it is true, does not form part of the new art described by Philippe de Vitry and Johannes de Muris. Moreover, it was not new in the sense of being contrasted with an older musical practice that could be called an *ars antiqua*. For this very reason, however, it was a far more radical innovation than any of the new developments in France and fully deserves to be called an *Ars Nova*.

Attempts to find the ancestry of this new polyphony in the conductus or in melismatic organum seem strained and generally lacking in credibility. A more plausible hypothesis sees the beginnings of Italian polyphony in an indigenous art of solo song with an improvised instrumental accompaniment.[1] This art has left no earlier monuments, but its existence is well documented. As we have seen in Chapter XI, the Albigensian Crusade (1209–29) drove many troubadours and jongleurs to find refuge at courts in Spain and Sicily or with members of an emerging aristocracy in northern Italy. Even before this time, moreover, the poetry of southern France had been known in Italy and emulated by Italian poets who continued to write in Provençal throughout most of the thirteenth century. Only with the coming of Dante (1265–1321) and his less well known contemporaries did Italian begin to be accepted as a proper language for lyric verse in the *dolce stil nuovo* (sweet new style). Strongly influenced by the forms and spirit of troubadour poetry, this new style was cultivated by a host of fourteenth-century poets of whom Petrarch (1304–74) is deservedly the most famous. Through the works of these poets, then, as well as through many literary references to music, we can trace a continuing tradition of monophonic song that

1. K. von Fischer, "On the Technique, Origin, and Evolution of Italian Trecento Music," MQ, 47 (1961), pp. 41–57.