

CHAPTER XIX

Transition to the Renaissance

Periods of transition from one historical age to another are always complex and difficult to define. The various aspects of human life that characterize an age—political, economic, social, and cultural—do not change overnight. Neither do they all change at the same time. Some fundamentals never change. The Middle Ages may have “waned” during the fifteenth century, but they had already contributed many ideas and institutions that were to persist for centuries. It is wholly arbitrary, therefore, to take the year 1500 as the “time-honored boundary between the medieval and modern periods.”¹ The division may be convenient and workable for historians who are primarily concerned with the political, economic, and social aspects of Western civilization. It does not work for cultural historians, who insist on following the Middle Ages with a Renaissance. The impetus for this Renaissance came in the field of literature with a new and passionate concern for the “more humane letters” of classical antiquity. Beginning with Petrarch and some of his fourteenth-century contemporaries, Italian humanists scorned both the vernacular language and the “barbaric” Latin of the Middle Ages. Instead, they devoted themselves to the rediscovery and reinterpretation of classical literature and learning. That they themselves could think of their activities as a “rebirth” implies a supercilious disdain for the achievements of the immediate past. And the continued use of the term *Renaissance* implies that the Middle Ages were much darker than they really were. Humanism was an intellectual movement that became an academic fad. As such, it profoundly changed the course of university studies both for good and for ill. Its influence on the arts was less direct and often long delayed. Vernacular literature not only survived but flourished. Architecture, painting, even sculpture showed the effects of humanism in their secondary, much more than in their primary, characteristics. In all fields of artistic endeavor it is not the slavish imitations of classical models that we remember and most admire.

Music, of course, had no classical models at hand to imitate. There can



A scene of aristocratic music making portrayed in this fourteenth-century Gobelin tapestry (Paris, Musée de Gobelins).

be no question, therefore, of a renaissance that abruptly changed the course of musical development. Music in the fifteenth century continued the practices it had inherited from the past, while transforming itself at the same time by the introduction of new compositional procedures and techniques. Even less direct than on the other arts, the influence of humanism on music made itself felt scarcely at all before the beginning of the sixteenth century. How then can we justify the common practice of making the first decades of the fifteenth century the dividing line between the music of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance? The answer to this question lies in the attitude of fifteenth-century musicians themselves toward the music of their own time. The most explicit statements of that attitude appear in the dedications of two treatises by Johannes Tinctoris (c. 1435–1511), a practicing musician, mathematician, and the first author who deserves to be called a Renaissance musical theorist. In his treatise on musical proportions, written no later than 1476, Tinctoris remarked that “the possibilities of our music have been so marvelously increased that there appears to be a new art, if I may so call it, whose fount and origin is held to be among the English, of whom Dunstable [d. 1453] stood forth as chief.”² According to Tinctoris, the “moderns” of his own time followed directly on Dunstable’s contemporaries Dufay (c. 1400–74) and Binchois (c. 1400–60). Now, however, it is the French who “contrive music in the newest manner for the new times.” In the dedication of *The Art of Counterpoint*,

1. C. Stephenson and B. Lyon, *Medieval History: Europe from the Second to the Sixteenth Century*, 4th ed. (New York, 1962), p. 399.

2. Strunk, SR, p. 195.

which is dated October 11, 1477, Tinctoris reaffirmed the excellence of contemporary composers who had learned their art from Dunstable, Dufay, and Binchois. He also made the surprising statement that no music composed more than forty years earlier was regarded as worth hearing.³

From these remarks we may draw a number of important conclusions. Composers in the latter part of the fifteenth century were evidently aware that their music was a new art, that it represented, in other words, a new period in the development of musical forms, techniques, and styles. For Tinctoris, at least, that period began about 1435. He perhaps overstated his case when he assigned the origin of the new art to the English, but he obviously recognized the importance of English contributions to the formation of that art. He also recognized its continuing development by composers who were chiefly French by culture, if not always so by birth. Tinctoris himself came from Nivelles, near Brussels, and wrote his treatises in Naples, where he was attached to the court of Ferdinand, King of Sicily.

Modern historians generally agree with Tinctoris's evaluation of the state of music in the fifteenth century. They may find the beginnings of the new art to be less sharply defined and to occur somewhat earlier than Tinctoris suggests, but they too regard it as the starting point for the development of what has been called "the central musical language of the Renaissance."⁴ Whatever name we may give to this new style period in the history of music, its continuation through the sixteenth century and the amount of music it produced make it the proper subject of another book. The task of the present chapter will be to survey the transitional period from the death of Machaut in 1377 to the years 1420–25 when Dufay and Binchois became active as composers.

THE MANNERISTIC STYLE OF THE LATE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The final decades of the fourteenth century witnessed one of the strangest developments in the entire history of music. Characterized primarily by extremes of notational and rhythmic complexity, this development resulted in what are now usually known as *mannered notation* and *manneristic style*. To counter any derogatory implications in these terms it has been suggested that, compared to the earlier subtlety of the French *Ars Nova*, the music of the late fourteenth century should instead be called an *ars subtilior* (more subtle art).⁵ With regard to the his-

3. See *ibid.*, pp. 193–99, for English translations of both dedications.

4. Reese, MR, Part I is entitled: "The Development of the Central Musical Language of the Renaissance in France, the Low Countries, and Italy."

5. See U. Günther, "Das Ende der *Ars Nova*," *Die Musikforschung*, 16 (1963), pp. 105–20.

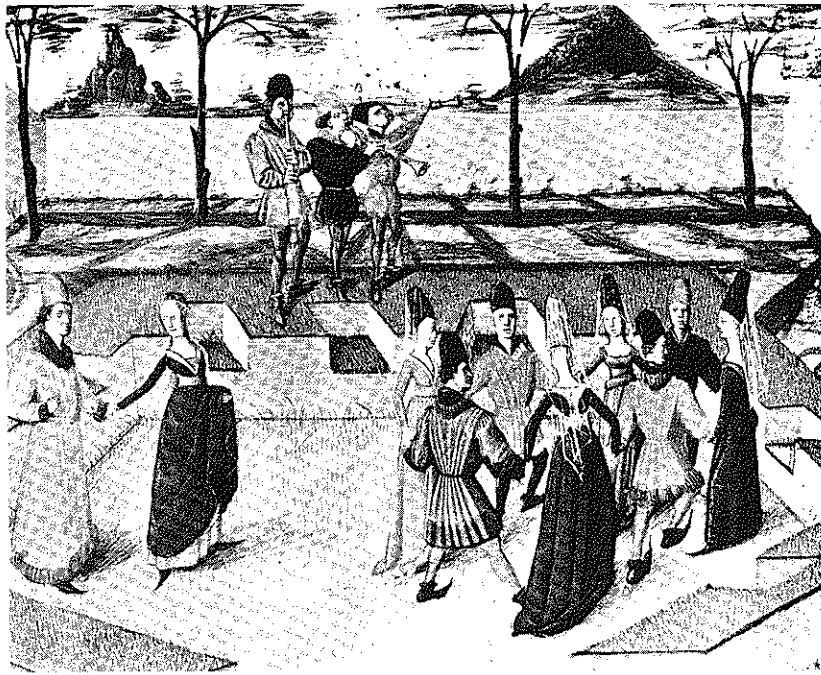
tory of Western music as a whole, we might more appropriately use the superlative, *ars subtilissima*. Not until the twentieth century did music again reach the most subtle refinements and rhythmic complexities of the manneristic style.

Before describing this end-of-the-century phenomenon, we should pause to note the geographical regions and centers in which it flourished. We have already seen that, during the "Babylonian captivity" of the papacy (1309–77), Avignon was the most important center for the cultivation of sacred polyphony (see Chapter XVI). That importance continued after the Great Schism (1378–1417) produced rival popes in Avignon and Rome, but now we find that the city on the lower Rhone had also become a center for the composition of French secular songs. Two other centers with close musical ties to Avignon were situated just south and north of the Pyrenees: the courts of Peter IV (1335–87) and John I (1387–96), Kings of Aragon, and of Gaston Phebus, Count of Béarn and Foix (1343–91).

Our chief source for the secular repertory of Avignon, Aragon, and Foix in the last quarter of the fourteenth century is a manuscript from Chantilly.⁶ Only a few of the thirteen motets and one hundred secular songs in *Ch*, including three ballades by Machaut, came from northern France or from the older Avignon repertory of the Ivrea Codex. Most of the newer pieces that can be dated with some precision refer to historical events or persons connected with one of the three courts during the papacy of Clement VII (1378–94). Taken as a whole, the collection may be said to exemplify the complex manneristic style cultivated and prized at both ecclesiastical and secular courts in southern France and Spain.

Although it tended to be simpler and more restrained, the music of northern France and even of England (see Chapter XX) did not escape the influence of southern mannerism. When composers from northern France became attached to one of the southern courts, however, they wholeheartedly adopted the manneristic style. So too did a number of Italians who devoted themselves to the composition of French secular polyphony of extreme rhythmic complexity. In all likelihood some of them came in contact with the manneristic style in Avignon, but the style itself seems to have been transplanted to northern Italy in the first decades of the fifteenth century. In part, at least, this development is related to the election of still a third pope by the Council of Pisa in 1409. Intending to bring the Great Schism to an end by deposing both the Roman and Avignonese popes, the Council chose as their successor Pietro Filargo, cardinal archbishop of Milan and patron of the composer Matteo da Perugia (see below). The other two popes—as might have been expected—refused to step down, and Filargo, who took the name Alexander V, died less than a year after his election. His place was im-

6. Musée Condé, 564 (formerly 1047)—*Ch*.



In this fifteenth-century miniature, instrumental accompaniment is provided for a round dance in the garden (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale).

mediately filled, however, by the election of Cardinal Baldassare Cossa as John XXIII. (Because the Church considers this first John XXIII an antipope, there could be another in the twentieth century.) Established primarily in Bologna, the court of these northern Italian popes became the focal point for an already flourishing musical life in such other cities as Genoa, Milan, Venice, and Padua. Even after the Council of Constance successfully disposed of all three papal contenders, the newly elected Martin V (1417–31) stayed in Florence and Bologna as much as in Rome itself. It is undoubtedly to the widespread and continued musical activity in all of these cities that we owe the many manuscripts of northern Italian origin in which so much of western Europe's music from the waning Middle Ages and the early Renaissance has been preserved.

Our concern with these manuscripts must be limited to the one source in which we can see both the flowering and fading of manneristic style on Italian soil, a manuscript now in Modena.⁷ In the kinds of music it includes, the repertory of *Mod* is unusually diverse. French secular songs account for exactly 66 percent of the 100 complete pieces—17 rondeaux, 18 virelais, and 31 ballades. Five more songs in ballade form and one virelai have Latin texts. Italian secular songs are sparsely represented by two madrigals, one caccia, and six ballate. Two three-voice canons—one with Latin text, one with French—complete the secular

7. Biblioteca Estense, α, M. 5, 24 (formerly Lat. 568)—*Mod*.

polyphony. More unexpected is the presence of religious and liturgical polyphony in the form of five motets, the Christmas hymn *Puer natus in Bethleem* (A Boy is born in Bethlehem), and eleven Mass movements (eight Glorias and three Credos). This motley collection reflects the diverse origin of both the music and the composers who are represented. The preponderance of French songs, which include twelve concordances with *Ch*, and the presence of three texts in honor of Pope Clement VII suggest an origin in Avignon for some of the repertory, if not for the manuscript itself. Yet many of the French texts were set to music by Italian composers who are not known to have been outside of Italy. Much of the music, moreover, must date from the first ten or fifteen years of the fifteenth century. A good deal of evidence—both documentary and circumstantial—connects this later music and its composers with Genoa, Milan, Padua, and the courts of Alexander V and John XXIII. It seems probable, therefore, that the compilation of *Mod* began in Bologna around 1410. Presumably, all the music in the manuscript had been composed by the time the Great Schism came to an end in 1417.⁸

Having briefly introduced the two largest and most typical collections of music in manneristic style, the Chantilly and Modena manuscripts, we may now examine the constituent elements of that style in some detail. One of its goals (or results) was the creation of polyphony in which the individual lines achieved a maximum of rhythmic independence. In this respect, French secular songs, the primary vehicle for displaying the full measure of manneristic complexity, recall the motet style of Pierre de la Croix at the end of the previous century. The tenor of a chanson was newly composed; but, by maintaining the basic mensuration with few metrical changes and with relatively simple rhythmic patterns, it provided the same kind of stable foundation as the plainchant tenors of the earlier motets. This foundation enabled the cantus to indulge in a wide variety of rhythmic complications, sometimes to the point of destroying all feeling of a consistent metrical organization. Neither as complex as the cantus nor as simple as the tenor, the contratenor established its own distinctive character and moderated the contrast between the two extremes. It seems clear that the differentiated lines in manneristic style resulted at least in part from the practical necessity of supporting a virtuoso singer who could read and perform the most extravagant notational and rhythmic complexities that composers could devise. In addition to the mensural stability of the tenor, however, counterpoint based on progressions of consonant intervals also holds the seemingly independent voices together. Almost without exception, the rhythms of

8. A supplemental essay will deal more fully with the schismatic popes and their relationships with composers represented in *Ch* and *Mod*. See also the discussion of Matteo da Perugia below.

all voices converge in strong cadences at the end of phrases. In between, the tenor and cantus still constitute a two-voice framework that can be reduced to traditional progressions of perfect and imperfect consonances. As in the music of Machaut, ornamentation of these consonances by a variety of nonharmonic tones often disguises the intervallic structure and creates a highly dissonant effect. Devices such as syncopation and the lateral displacement of an interval's constituent tones raise the dissonance level to even greater heights and sometimes make the individual lines seem as independent harmonically as they are rhythmically. Yet despite all appearances, the traditional consonances and mensurations of the French Ars Nova provide the twin bases on which the intricacies of the style depend.

Overemphasis on the manneristic exaggerations of a few composers has tended to bring the artistic movement as a whole into disrepute. To some extent, this judgment must be regarded as a survival of the nineteenth-century romantic notion that a composer's primary function was to express his emotions and to arouse similar emotions in the listener. In dealing with medieval music, we must remember that its composers were at least equally concerned with stimulating the mind. Some may have gone too far in their search for intellectual *subtilitas*, but the music they produced was by no means all bad. Listened to without prejudice, many songs in manneristic style prove to be both fascinating and attractive. Moreover, they provide one of the clearest reflections of the sophisticated society for whose amusement and delight they were created. Finally, the experiments with notational and rhythmic complexities developed many of the devices that were to become the common property of Renaissance composers. For its own sake, then, as well as for its historical importance, the music of the mannerists deserves close scrutiny.

As was suggested in connection with the music of Paolo Tenorista (Chapter XVIII), composers drew on both Italian and French practices in their efforts to notate the rhythmic complexities of manneristic style. They have been accused, indeed, of greater interest in notational puzzles than in rhythmic complexity for its own sake. It is true, certainly, that relatively simple rhythms were often notated in needlessly complex ways. By thus presenting the performer with problems that did not affect the musical result—unless the performer solved them wrongly—the notation itself deserves the epithet “mannered.” Yet the music too presents problems that only a virtuoso in the performance of difficult rhythms could solve. Notational devices that affect only the performer and most of those that affect the music need not concern us here. It is more important to classify and illustrate the kinds of rhythmic complexities that characterize the manneristic style. To do so will deepen our understanding and appreciation of the ways medieval *subtilitas* expressed itself in music. It will also explain why the products of this *ars subtilissima* are so rarely performed today.

RHYTHMIC COMPLEXITY WITHIN THE NORMAL MENSURATIONS OF FRENCH NOTATION

One of the most common means of achieving rhythmic complexity involved the combination of patterns that suggest different mensurations. Perhaps the simplest manifestation of this practice is the fluctuation, either apparent or specifically indicated, between imperfect time with major prolation ($6/8$) and perfect time with minor prolation ($3/4$). Fluctuation of this sort had already appeared in some pieces by Machaut, and may have stimulated later composers to seek even greater contrasts between individual melodic lines. In a few cases, they wrote each voice in a different mensuration, sometimes with shifting combinations as the composition progressed. More often they exercised their ingenuity in devising independent or conflicting rhythms and meters while remaining within one basic mensuration.

The variety of their achievements in this regard makes illustration difficult, but we may single out the repetition of conflicting rhythmic patterns as a particularly characteristic device. In many cases only the note values of the pattern are repeated in what may be called a rhythmic sequence. It is not uncommon, however, to find that one or more voices also repeat the intervallic progressions at different pitch levels to create a melodic or even harmonic sequence. The seven measures from Trebor's ballade *Hélas, pitié* (Example XIX-1) present an unusual concentration of sequences with different and unexpected rhythmic patterns. Although the basic mensuration is perfect time with minor prolation ($3/4$), the contratenor seems to be in $6/8$ throughout the passage. It states the pattern of the first measure four times in a purely rhythmic sequence before becoming a series of undifferentiated dotted quarter notes. The syncopated pattern of the cantus in the first measure shifts to the tenor for a three-measure rhythmic sequence and then back to the cantus for another three-measure sequence that is both rhythmic and melodic. Still another sequence begins in the cantus on the second half of measure 2. This sequence too is both melodic and rhythmic, but the pattern has a value of only four eighth notes and thus suggests $2/4$ instead of $3/4$ meter.⁹

If the concentration of sequences in Example XIX-1 is unusually dense, the passage nonetheless typifies the mannered achievement of complexity within essentially simple mensurations. Particularly in the first four measures, indeed, any feeling for the original mensuration is almost totally lost. To obtain this effect in a variety of ways seems to have been one of the tests of a composer's skill. One of the favorite devices was the sequential repetition of figures longer or shorter than the units of mensuration. Such a figure in the cantus of Example XIX-1

9. For complete transcriptions of *Hélas, pitié*, see Apel, FSM, No. 42, and FSC, 1, No. 109.

Example XIX-1: *Trebor*, Hélas, pitié, measures 48–54 (*Ch*, fol. 42).



(mm. 49–51) merely creates a temporary change of mensuration in that one voice. If the figure is of irregular length, however—say, five or seven minims—the effect is more disturbing and more complex. Still further complexity results when patterns in all voices are of different and irregular lengths.

A particularly instructive example of the complexity possible in even the simplest mensuration—imperfect time and prolation (2/4)—occurs in the ballade *Le point agu* (The sharp point) from the French repertory of the Court of Cyprus (Example XIX-2). Using only breves, dotted and undotted semibreves, and minims, the unknown composer created completely independent rhythms in all three voices. Only the tenor maintains a strict sequence of a rhythmic pattern that Bartók might have notated as $\frac{3+2+3}{8}$. The other two voices have shifting patterns of irregular lengths that finally return to rhythmic stability with a cadence on

Example XIX-2: *Rhythmic Complexities in the Ballade*
Le point agu (measures 21–33)

F at the close of the tenor's sequence. Transcription of such a passage in 2/4 facilitates reading the score but obscures the rhythmic structure of the individual lines. A "modern" barring according to the rhythmic patterns, on the other hand, could be done in several ways but would make the score extremely difficult to read. Perhaps the original notation in separate parts without barlines was the best solution after all. Apart from rhythmic problems, it should be remarked that both the tenor's descent through a full octave and the progression from a C-major triad to a cadence on **F** are characteristic tonal procedures in music of the early fifteenth century.¹⁰

DISPLACEMENT SYNCOPATION

The rhythmic complexities illustrated thus far are also characteristic in their introduction of syncopated notes in both 2/4 and 3/4 meters. Syncopation of this sort differs in no way from later practices and was already a normal procedure in the works of Machaut. For fourteenth-century theorists, however, *syncopa* included a special device that has no modern counterpart. This involved separating the notes of a triple unit or "perfection" by the insertion of one or more perfections. In relation to the other voices, they would thus be displaced from their normal position by one or two notes. This displacement syncopation was first described—in somewhat enigmatic terms—by Philippe de Vitry and Johannes de Muris.¹¹ It first appears in its simplest form in a few pieces by Machaut, although his modern editors sometimes failed to recognize its existence. A characteristic pattern that occurs several times in Machaut's Motet 20 may be seen in the third measure of the duplum, Example XIX-3a. Here, a minim (♪) displaces two perfect semibreves (♩ ♩) before its perfection is completed by an imperfect semibreve (♩).

Example XIX-3: *Displacement Syncopation in Machaut*

a. MOTET 20, MEASURES 1–4

10. The passage occurs near the close of the ballade's first section (mm. 21–33) and returns in the refrain (mm. 76–88). Complete transcription in Hoppin, CFR, 3, p. 80 (No. 47).

11. See Apel, NPM, p. 395.

b. LAI 12, MEASURES 501-06



(♩) at the end of the measure. Two similar but longer passages, each with five displaced semibreves, occur in the tenth stanza of the canonic Lai 12 (Example XIX-3b).¹²

Compared with later developments, Machaut's treatment of displacement syncopation was simple in the extreme. It was characteristic, however, in applying this kind of syncopation to the triple units of perfect prolation. Machaut's successors generally followed the same practice and only rarely applied it to the larger units of perfect time with imperfect prolation ($3/4$). What they did do was to extend the length of the displaced passages and to include all the note values and normal rhythmic patterns of the basic mensuration. The result is one of the most common and distinctive features of late fourteenth-century mannerism. It is also one of the most difficult to indicate clearly in a modern transcription. We may illustrate the problem with the opening phrase of a rondeau, *Dame gentil* (Gentle lady), by Anthonello da Caserta (Example XIX-4). The excerpt is particularly complex because both the cantus and contratenor have displaced passages but at different time intervals above the tenor, which, as is usually the case, maintains a stable rhythmic foundation to support the syncopations. To notate all three voices within the $6/8$ measures of the tenor gives the false impression that the displaced passages have syncopations within themselves. The alternate barring and notation above the staves indicates the way performers would have understood the rhythmic organization of their melodies. As in Example XIX-2, the three voices of Anthonello's rondeau resolve their differences on the final chord of the cadence that completes the phrase. The cantus immediately begins another displacement, however, and the entire piece becomes a prime example of the way this kind of syncopation could be used to achieve extremes of medieval subtilitas.¹³

12. The passages are incorrectly transcribed in Schrade, PM, 2, Lai 12, but are correct in Ludwig, *Machaut*, 4, Lai 17 (mm. 248-49, 251-52).

13. Complete transcriptions in Apel, FSM, No. 29, and FSC, 1, No. 10; facsimile of the original notation in Apel, NPM, p. 415.

Example XIX-4: *Displacement Syncopation in Dame gentil*
by Anthonello da Caserta



PROPORTIONS

The devices for achieving rhythmic complexity that we have thus far examined have all depended for their effect on the equality of the minim (♩) in the four mensurations of French notation. This equality provided a stable basis for the performance of rhythmically independent lines, including those created by displacement syncopation or by the simultaneous use of mensurations with measures of different lengths. Composers in the latter half of the fourteenth century added another dimension to the subtlety of their art by introducing combinations of mensurations that replaced equality of the minim with proportional values. Medieval theorists had developed an elaborate system for classifying and naming what they called proportions and what we would call ratios. In earlier centuries, these ratios had been put to musical use primarily to determine and describe intervals such as the octave (2:1), fifth (3:2), fourth (4:3), and so on. Now, the ratios began to be applied in a so-called proportional notation that continued in use throughout most of the Renaissance.¹⁴ We need not concern ourselves with theoretical excesses that constructed proportions far beyond the limits of musical practicality. Nor need we consider such simple proportions as 2:1, which merely called for the written note values to be diminished by half in performance.

As their most common audible result, proportions reduce to equal length mensural units that are normally unequal. This use of proportions obviously contrasts with the combination of mensurations in which the minims remain of equal value, although both procedures may have been suggested by the mensurations that produce $3/4$ and $6/8$ meters. In these mensurations, the six minims in each breve create measures of the same length, but three imperfect semibreves in $3/4$ equal two

14. See Apel, NPM, p. 145 ff.

perfect scmbreves in 6/8. The combination of these mensural units, because it was so easily achieved and because the minim remained a constant value, is not usually regarded as an example of proportions. Yet it played an essential part in developing the rhythmic complexities of manneristic style, and it remained a characteristic feature of music throughout much of the fifteenth century.

If the alternation and combination of patterns in 3/4 and 6/8 seems to have been primarily a French procedure, the principles of Italian notation gave rise to a similar treatment of 2/4 and 6/8, *but in measures of equal length*. As was indicated in Chapter XVIII, three minims in senaria imperfecta () were the equivalent of four minims in octonaria (). Or, stated another way, the dotted quarter in 6/8 and the quarter in 2*/4 covered the same span of time. Similarly, of course, units of novenaria (9/8) and duodenaria (3*/4) were also equal in length. The theoretical examples given by Marchettus of Padua already imply this relationship, and one of its earliest practical applications appears in the madrigal *Nascoso el viso* (With my face hidden), by Giovanni da Firenze, who belonged to the first generation of Italian trecento composers (Example XIX-5a). Here, the upper voice shifts from duodenaria to novenaria and back, while the lower continues with unchanging values in duodenaria. The later composer Bartolino da Padova frequently exploited this equality of mensural units in more complex ways. In his three-voice ballata *Per un verde boschetto* (Through a green wood), for example, the shifts between senaria imperfecta and octonaria occur in all voices, sometimes together, sometimes separately. As a result, the contrasting metrical patterns of the two mensurations appear in simultaneous combination as well as in successive alternation (Example XIX-5b).¹⁵ Although Bartolino did not here use minims in the passages in octonaria, there can be little doubt that the 4:3 proportion of minims was an Italian contribution to the complexities of manneristic style. It did not take long, however, for composers of all nationalities to make equal measures of 6/8 and 2/4 one of the hallmarks of that style.

Example XIX-5: Proportional Mensurations in Italian Polyphony

a. GIOVANNI DA FIRENZE, *Nascoso el viso*



The score shows three staves of music. The top staff has lyrics 'So - pr'u - na fon - te' and mensural symbols 'd.' and 'n.' above the notes. The middle and bottom staves have lyrics 'So - pr'u - na fon - te' below the notes. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern of minims and crotchets.

15. Facsimile in Parrish, NMM, Pl. LV. The confused discussion and erroneous conclusion (p. 175 ff.) could have been avoided by checking the version in the Squarcialupi manuscript where the alternations between senaria imperfecta and octonaria (not quaternaria, as Parrish says) are specifically indicated.

b. BARTOLINO DA PADOVA, *Per un verde boschetto*



The score shows three staves of music. The top staff has lyrics 'vo - ce qua - si hu - ma - na' and mensural symbols 'Cum' and '3' above the notes. The middle and bottom staves have lyrics 'vo - ce qua - si hu - ma - na' below the notes. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern of minims and crotchets.

- Above a spring
- With an almost human voice

A second commonly used proportion (3:2) replaces two minims with three to produce measures of 9/8 against either 3/4 or 6/8. This proportion completed the devices that permitted writing the four mensurations of French notation in measures of equal rather than different lengths. Composers rarely combined all four at the same time, however, probably because they reserved the extremes of manneristic style, as has already been noted, for the cantus in three-voice secular songs.

Without being excessively complex, the anonymous ballade *Medee fu en amer veritable* (Medea was true in loving) illustrates the common proportions as well as the other features of mannered style that have previously been discussed (AMM, No. 68). The tenor has unusually simple rhythms and remains in 6/8 from beginning to end. The contratenor changes a few times from 6/8 to 3/4 or 2/4 with equal minims and also makes extensive use of the 4:3 proportion. For the most part, the units of this proportion correspond with, and thus emphasize, the divisions of the tenor's imperfect time, but unusual rhythms and syncopations in measures 12-14 produce a more complex effect. In a longer passage (mm. 28-33), the cantus makes equally complex use of the same proportion. This voice also introduces the 3:2 proportion of minims, usually in the normal rhythms of 9/8 meter. In measure 9, however, displacement syncopation adds to the subtlety of the proportion. The same

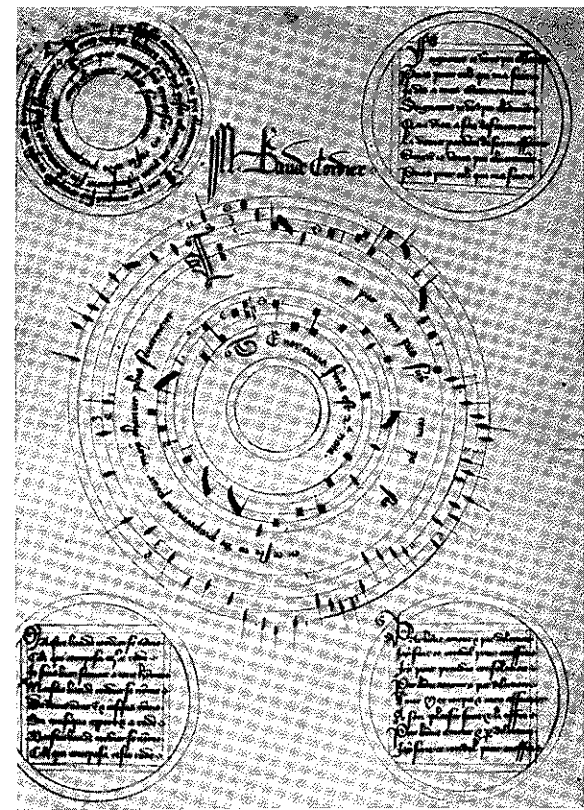
kind of syncopation occurs in normal 6/8 meter (mm. 2–4), and in combination with irregular rhythmic patterns of various sorts (see especially mm. 25–26 and 55–59). In addition, the cantus illustrates a problem that frequently arises in connection with the use of proportions. In this voice, all of the measures in the modern transcription that have sixteenth notes in 6/8 meter were written in duple proportion—that is, with a minim equal to ♩ instead of ♪. Where we find nothing but minims, as in measure 23, their rhythmic organization in groups of two or three remains ambiguous. In measure 34, on the other hand, the use of displacement syncopation proves that the composer thought of duple proportion as producing two units of 6/8 in the time of one. Whenever he used this proportion, therefore, a correct transcription and performance would be in measures of 6/16 (or 12/16). The distinction is slight, perhaps, but it adds one more subtlety to this typical example of a most subtle art. It is interesting to note that the text of this ballade—like many others in the later Middle Ages—introduces characters from classical Greek and Roman stories to exemplify the conventions of courtly love.

From the foregoing examples of manneristic style it is obvious that composers freely combined the various rhythmic devices we have been discussing. Unusual and conflicting rhythmic patterns, syncopations of duple note values, and displacement of triple units occur in both normal and proportional mensurations. Moreover, different proportions often appear in combination or successively in a single voice. Not content with these seemingly limitless possibilities, a few composers achieved even greater complexity by introducing unusual proportions—such as 9:8, 5:2, 7:3—or by applying the more common proportions to unexpected mensurations. An example of the latter practice occurs in the first measures of the rondeau *Amans, ames secretement* (Lovers, love secretly) by Baude Cordier.¹⁶ In perfect time and prolation (9/8), a duple proportion in the cantus results in two measures of 9/16 (Example XIX–6). In other words, it divides a 9/8 measure into equal halves! At the same time, the contratenor is written in triple proportion (3:1), which produces no

Example XIX–6: *Amans, ames secretement*, by Baude Cordier, measures 1–4 (O, fol. 123)

16. HAM, No. 48a.

The famous perpetual canon *Tout par compas* *suy composé* by Baude Cordier (Chantilly).



visible effect in a modern transcription and no audible effect in performance. The rondeau is very short, but, in the equivalents of fourteen measures of 6/8 and four of 2/4, its three voices manage to introduce all four basic mensurations in their normal values as well as in six different combinations with duple and triple proportions.¹⁷

The concentration of proportions in Cordier's rondeau is almost unparalleled and contrasts strikingly with his much simpler rondeau *Belle, bonne* (Beautiful, good [lady]). The more flowing melodic line of this rondeau and its opening bit of imitation in all three voices probably reflect the Italian influence that helped to bring manneristic excesses under control at the beginning of the fifteenth century. At any rate, the relative simplicity of *Belle, bonne* points toward a new musical era and makes it one of Cordier's most attractive songs.¹⁸ Its chief claim to fame, however, arises from its original notation in the form of a heart, a symbol of the poet-composer's gift to his lady of his own heart together with his "new song."¹⁹ Visual representations of this sort were more common in poetry than in music, and they must be regarded as another, if rare, manifestation of manneristic tendencies. Cordier himself provided another example when he used circular staves to notate the perpet-

17. For a facsimile and explanation of the proportions, see Apel, NPM, p. 175.

18. Cordier's known works—1 ballade, 9 rondeaux, and 1 Gloria—are published in Reaney, EFCM, 1, pp. 1–18.

19. Facsimiles in Apel, NPM, p. 427, and Grout, HWM, p. 135.