

and the second voice line differed rhythmically as well as melodically. An added melody on top moved in shorter notes, it was melismatic and it served as the foundation for an independent melody. All these methods were the first steps towards future counterpoint.

4.5 Ars Antiqua

The first forms of early polyphony were the products of improvisation. The singers read the constant cantus firmus and created the other voices, respecting the rules, manners and schemes, used in those days. The first written documents of noted polyphony are from the 11th century. When the early polyphony style began to flourish, the first problems of notation appeared. The early composers could use the notes without measuring their length. But later, two or more lines of voices considerably differed, usually the chant was sung in very long notes, while the top melody moved in shorter ones. At the end of the 12th century the first changes of a new measurable notation had been created. Many composers of the *Ars Antiqua* (dated from 1250 to the beginning of the 14th century) remained anonymous. The personalities we do know are, for example, the trouvères *Adam de la Halle*, *Petrus de Cruce*, and *Johannes de Garlandius*, who wrote the first tract called “De Musica Mensurabili”

In the 12th century (from about 1150 to 1200), a great contribution to polyphonic music and measured rhythm was brought about by the School of Notre Dame. Two choirmasters of this cathedral *Leoninus* and *Perotinus* are the first notable composers known by name and referred to as representatives of this famous school. They usually used measured rhythm with exact time values and defined meters. They wrote precise rhythm as well as pitches. The “Great” Leoninus was a choirmaster in a newly built church. He composed “The Large Book of Organum” (*Magnus Liber Organi*), made up of two voices organum for the purposes of various masses. His successor Perotinus was known as an expert in descant technique.

Around the year 1250, the best-known theoretician in the field of the measurable notation was *Franco of Cologne*, the author of the book *Ars Cantus Mensurabilis*. He is considered as the inventor of a new measured notation, an accurate system of music registration. He used such choral notes as: maxima, longa, brevis and semibrevis. This system was called

tempus perfectus when the longa was divided into three brevis (the symbol of the Saint Trinity), tempus imperfectus was represented by two brevis in one longa and there arose some other specific rules. This notation also used so called punctum divisionis, a sign, dividing two neighbouring perfectio structures, which anticipated the future bar line. Also very important was the system of ligatures, prescribing a special way of combining the notes.

Until this time the choral had never been measured, and therefore we differentiate *musica plana* from *musica mensurata*. Later, there arose the first forms which enriched liturgical music with measured notation and polyphony. At first it was the *measured organum*, a polyphony composition based on the original chant, sung in very long notes and called cantus firmus. Adding another upper melody to the chant, simple polyphony was built by duplum, respectively triplum and quadruplum. The parallel character of strict organum disappeared later in the free organum. The voices accompanying the plainsong began to move in an opposite melody, having its own motion. The second form was *conductus*, a measured composition, founded on the artificial cantus firmus, not the authentic one. The second voice (or voices) duplicated its melody in the same length of notes, in the ways of certain “punctum contra punctum”. The most complicated and deeply organised form of polyphony was brought by *motet*. The fragment of chant in the tenor had to be repeated after the pause. Above this voice a second voice called motetus was composed. The words of its text were different from what the tenor sang. If a third voice was added, it used quite another text, though somehow related with the theme of the other singing parts. Each voice was distinguished from the others in the sense of melody, rhythm and language. At first the upper two voices were in Latin, but later French texts were used. We must mention that the French motet became very secular in its character during future artistic development. It replaced the sacred cantus firmus with folk song melodies. Besides motet the form of *rondell* was composed and performed in the secular music of *Ars Antiqua*. The same melody was sung by individual voices, fluctuating in the form of a canon.

Some important theoreticians had been working together with the composers of that time. Let us recall *Hieronymus de Moravia*, who was interested in instrumental music, *Johannes de Grocheo* who wrote about secular music and *Walter Odington* who examined the consonance of triad. He determined the consonance of the thirds and sixths and – for the first time – the dissonance of the fourths and fifths.

4.6 Ars Nova

Ars Nova includes the time from the beginning of the 14th century to the mid-15th century. This epoch was created and typified by new musical forms, by polyphony, by new notation and mainly by the new secular atmosphere of music. This corresponded with the social situation and the development of arts in general. A great flourish of poetry is connected with the important names of writers and poets who left Latin as an international medium of understanding, and began to use the languages of their own countries as the instrument of world communication. The feudal system and domination of the Church had been weakened by this time. A lot of tragic events (such as The Hundred Years War and the Black Death) brought suffering to Europe's population, and on the other hand initiated a longing for entertainment. Sacred music became a little less important in the 14th century and secular music began to flourish.

Where did the term *Ars Nova* appear? First it was used by *Philippe de Vitry* as a title of his book, describing the new manners of composing music (1322). This work advocated the use of duple as well as triple time, more rapid tone values and recommended thirds and sixths as harmonic consonance. For the second time the term *Ars Nova* was noticed in a bull which was written by *Pope John XXII* in the year 1325. He criticised unusual interpretation using decorations, flourishes and polyphony in masses, and he spoke about *Ars Antiqua* and *Ars Nova*.

Ars Nova enriched music with some innovations. Primarily they affected rhythm. Until this time the duple meter had been called imperfect; only number three (and triple meter) were revered in association with the Holy Trinity. From the time of *Philippe de Vitry*, they were equal. Also isorhythm appeared as a consequence of the repetition of the same rhythmic patterns throughout the work. (When two repeated elements were of different length, they caused a mixture of the rhythm.) Syncopation became an important rhythmic element which was only rarely used earlier.

The new technique of composing demanded a more comprehensive and serviceable system of notation. *Philippe de Vitry* and *Johannes de Muris* were the authors of a perfectly measured notation which has been used from the year 1320. It was able to fulfil the complicated demands of composers. They tried to imitate the sounds of nature, to illustrate its sonic colours. They tried to express bird calls, dog's barking, hunting shouts,

storms and battle. Secular music also produced many drinking songs, as can be seen in the texts of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

When we want to follow the localities of *Ars Nova* in the 14th century Europe we must travel to France, Italy and England. Speaking of the main signs of music in France we must repeat: the polyphony technique was used, the rhythm was measured, the themes of music were often secular. There was often used discantus as a melody going opposite to the main voice, and delays as a form of enriching the leading singing part. Five staff lines were used, some of them were in colour.

The main representatives of *Ars Nova* in France were: *Philippe de Vitry* († 1361), bishop, composer and theoretician, author of many motets and liturgical music. *Guillaume de Machaut* († 1377) was a priest, poet, diplomat and civil servant. Born in Champagne to a noble family around 1323, he became a secretary to John – King of Bohemia, whom he accompanied in his travels and in military service throughout Europe. After the King's death he served the royal family in the court of Charles V in France. The last years of his life he spent mainly in Reims. Travelling to many courts, he gave many copies of his music to noble patrons, and therefore he became the first great composer whose work has survived. The best-known of Machaut's compositions are secular songs and the Notre-Dame Mass (Mass of Our Lady).

Though there have been some discussions about the superiority of *Ars Nova*, we know that the Italian *Ars Nova* had been deeply influenced by the French model. Later it developed very originally from the angle of the form and plots. Its main representative was a blind organist, instrument-maker, poet and composer *Francesco Landino* († 1397). There were also three generations of authors in this epoch called the Italian trecento; among them were *Paolo* and *Andrea Firenze* or *Zacharias*. They used forms similar to the French ones – as ballata – identical with virelai. Some of their works can be found in *Codex Squarcialupi*. The greatest personality of English *Ars Nova* was *John Dunstable* († 1453) whose artistic heritage included masses, hymns, antiphons and chansons.

The musical forms, genres and techniques which arose from *Ars Nova* were very original and inventive. Well-known was *caccia*. The word translated from the Italian language means the term for hunting. Usually it was a composition for two voices using a technique of imitation. Sometimes it had an instrumental accompaniment. Typical *caccias* were written for example by *Gherardello da Firenze*. Usually he prescribed one

line for instruments and two vocal parts. (He could express the hunter's awakening, the calling out of the dogs, the capture of the deer, shouting and horn fanfares). The *Ballata* used in Italy was similar to French virelai. It was a composition where the upper voices were vocal, the lower instrumental. For the next one hundred years it became a main form of secular polyphonic music. The mood was inspired by nature, often illustrated by singing birds and hunter's signals. Also the *madrigal* – later called a song of the Renaissance – was used in Ars Nova. In its primary form it was a poem of two or three stanzas, illustrating the beauty of nature, and considering feelings of love.

Ars Nova evoked a significant progress in the measured system. It solved the timing of dual and triple division of notes, it acknowledged the thirds and sixths as consonant intervals and it simplified notation. These changes had broken the strict rules of authentic organum and discantus (descant) and prepared the way towards the dazzling scores of future polyphony.