

## 19 Reception

LAWRENCE EARP

The following survey distinguishes three types of music – plainchant, vernacular song, and polyphony – each with a very different reception history. Plainchant enjoyed an active and constantly evolving reception even in the Middle Ages; its modern reception history dates from the efforts, beginning in the early nineteenth century, to restore the medieval shape of the chant, a project that would bear fruit in the early twentieth century. New interest in vernacular song came in the wake of philological and historical research into European languages strongly under way by the eighteenth century. The unaccompanied melodies, free from any religious association, were subject to a variety of adaptations, often tinged by nationalism and ideology. Medieval polyphony was completely lost until isolated fragments came to light in the late eighteenth century, and it was well into the twentieth century before its outlines became clear.

Most medieval music was improvised, and so is lost or only dimly discernible through performance directions in music theory treatises. Works transmitted in musical notations required an active generation-to-generation updating to remain current. Liturgical chant – a repertory not as stable as we might think – was retranslated, sometimes undergoing recomposition. Notations for secular monophony and polyphony tended to fall out of use, since each generation was sufficiently occupied with the cultivation of its own new music. By the time we reach the point when scholars took a modicum of interest in the remnants of medieval music – the mid eighteenth century – no one could read the sources any longer. The problem was particularly acute for polyphony, usually notated in separate parts. All told, it required around a century and a half to crack the various codes and to put the polyphony in score for study. If we add to this the need to reconstruct performance practices in music, we see how difficult and ramified the project has been.

### Medieval plainchant

Some of the most interesting yet intractable problems of reception in music history involve plainchant, a development that can be traced over 1,250 years.<sup>1</sup> At times the faithful have adapted liturgical chants to changing tastes and local needs; at other times, the church has taken care to maintain

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a venerable sacred tradition, as well as its own central authority. Here I will epitomize the many issues surrounding the reception of Gregorian chant in one moment: the legend of Saint Gregory as the codifier of ‘Gregorian’ chant. The legend holds out the promise of a repertory bequeathed *in toto* by a canonized pope, yet at the same time warns of the ease with which the repertory could be corrupted.

The period of the creation of Gregorian chant in the wake of the alliance between the Carolingians and the papacy came at a decisive moment in the emergence of northern and western Europe. For both the papacy and the Franks, the alliance filled urgent political needs. The papacy gained an ally against the resurgent Lombards, while the Franks, now defenders of the faith, gained liturgical uniformity based on the Roman rite to help hold their far-flung realm together, as well as papal legitimation of their royal blood line.

All this happened quickly. The Frankish church had reached a lamentable state of moral and disciplinary turpitude under Charles Martel. His son and heir Pépin (r. 741–68) was more open to Roman influence, and the pope immediately dispatched the English Benedictine missionary Saint Boniface, who consolidated the highly decentralized Gallican church, introducing archbishops and yearly synods. Through Boniface and later Chrodegang, who became Archbishop of Metz after the martyrdom of Boniface in 755, Pépin pushed for the adoption of the Roman rite. The indigenous Gallican chant either succumbed to Pépin’s order, or was absorbed into the new chant.

Strong ties with Rome also served to legitimize the Carolingian rulers as kings. Still nominally the mayor of the palace, Pépin ousted the last Merovingian king and was first anointed king of the Franks by his bishops in 751. The anointing was repeated in 754 by Pope Stephen II, who had come to consult Pépin on the matter of the Lombards. Pope Stephen’s trip to Francia, accompanied by Chrodegang, turned out to be decisive for Pépin’s design to institute the Roman usage throughout his realm. Stephen brought Roman singers and chant books, and Bishop Chrodegang went on to form a *schola cantorum* at Metz. Meanwhile, Remedius, Bishop of Rouen (and Pépin’s brother) was inculcating the Roman chant there. Pope Paul I (r. 757–68), who sent an ‘antiphonale’ and a ‘responsale’ (gradual and antiphoner?) to Rouen, indicates in a letter that the monks had not fully mastered the chant when he had to recall his emissary from the Roman *schola cantorum*, and so monks from Rouen came to Rome for further instruction. This incident may be the source of a story embellished in different ways some 125 years later by John the deacon and Notker Balbulus.

The programme of reform continued under Pépin’s son Charlemagne (r. 768–814). Charlemagne’s *Admonitio generalis* of 789 to the Frankish

clergy ordered that all clergy should learn and perform the Roman chant that Pépin had directed to be substituted for the Gallican chant, and further urged that books be carefully emended, including both *cantus* and *nota* (chants and signs?).<sup>2</sup> While we should not impugn the spiritual motives behind the Carolingian move to replace diverse Gallican usages with the Roman rite, there were also undeniable political advantages to the religious unification of the realm. Unity was maintained partially through the *missi*, a team of royal inspectors sent far and wide to assure broad-based loyalty and adherence to directives on diverse matters including chant.

The Carolingians introduced several means to establish liturgical fixity. Carolingian scholars were committed to careful verification and emendation of written texts. Not only did the Carolingians revise liturgical texts to conform to the scriptures, but whole services had to be filled in by the Franks, for the books sent from Rome only contained texts used by the pope on special occasions. To help fix music in the memory, chants came to be categorized by the eight modes, a system foreign to Old Italian chant dialects (Old Roman, Beneventan and Ambrosian). Our earliest extant tonary, a book organizing chants in modal order, is the St Riquier tonary (*F-Pn fonds lat.* 13159), datable to the late eighth century. Another means of establishing musical fixity for subsequent transmission was musical notation. Our first extant complete neumed source for the gradual is datable to the late ninth century; for the antiphoner, ca1000. Despite an enormous amount of recent research, there is no agreement on how far back the origin of neumes can be pushed. Were they applied to the chants already in the late eighth century, or did notation grow up piecemeal in the course of the ninth century, at first for special purposes, later systematically applied to the entire repertory?<sup>3</sup> Finally, and I will dwell on it because of its importance to reception, there was a third means of enforcing fixity in the chant: the legend associating the invention of Gregorian chant with Saint Gregory. This story lent a particular authority to the Roman chant, providing spiritual conviction to supplement the royal decree.

### **The legend of Saint Gregory**

Pope Gregory (r. 590–604) was indeed an important pope. Two hundred years before Charlemagne, he reasserted the primacy of Rome at a dangerous juncture in church history. Further, it was Gregory who undertook the conversion of England in 597 by dispatching Saint Augustine, later the first Archbishop of Canterbury. The Venerable Bede maintained favourable memories of Pope Gregory in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (finished 731), and the strong influence of English scholars such as Alcuin

of York at the Carolingian court may have been critical in maintaining the prestige of Pope Gregory as the inventor of plainchant.

Late-eighth-century sources indicate that both Rome and the Franks had already attached the authority of Saint Gregory to the chant, and two important narratives linking Gregory to the invention of the chant date from the ninth century.<sup>4</sup> Our principal source is the *Life of Saint Gregory* (ca873–5) by John the deacon of Monte Cassino. John credits Gregory as the founder of the Roman *schola cantorum*, and as the compiler of a ‘centonate antiphony’ (presumably texts for mass chants pieced together from Biblical citations). Though John describes Gregory as inspired by the dove of the Holy Spirit, he associates this anecdote with Gregory’s writings on theology, not music. John writes that efforts to transmit the Roman chant to Gaul were difficult due to the Gauls’ ‘natural rusticity’ and their horrible voices. Eventually Charlemagne left two clerics in Rome with Pope Hadrian I (r. 772–95) to learn the chant; they returned to teach at Metz, and from there the chant spread throughout Gaul. After their death, Charlemagne once again found the chant of churches outside Metz to be corrupt, whereupon Hadrian sent two more singers.

A further source for the story of the transmission of the chant has an entirely different perspective. According to the *Deeds of Charlemagne* (883–5) by Notker Balbulus of St Gall, Charlemagne obtained twelve singers from the pope. Jealous of the glory of the Franks, they sabotaged the effort by singing poorly. After Charlemagne discovered this, Pope Leo III (r. 795–816) suggested that Charlemagne infiltrate the papal *schola* with two trusted clerics in disguise. They returned to teach the chant, one at the imperial court in Aachen, the other at Metz. Finally, the last step in the formation of the legend of Saint Gregory, the association of the dove of the Holy Spirit with Gregory’s dictation of notated music, is first found in an illumination in the Hartker antiphoner (*CH-SG*: 390–391, ca980–1011), the first extant complete neumed manuscript of office chants.<sup>5</sup>

In the end the experiment, strictly speaking, failed. But in another sense, the vision succeeded in forming an enormous body of music that was indeed transmitted whole. We celebrate the Carolingians for their preservation of most of what remains of ancient literature, and we celebrate them for the Carolingian minuscule. Yet it appears that the reception, assimilation and transformation of the Roman chant resulted in the greatest artistic creation of the Carolingians, Gregorian chant. Eventually it drove out all regional chant dialects in Europe except the Ambrosian, which was maintained in Milan because of Saint Ambrose’s prestige there. Mozarabic chant survived until the eleventh century in Moorish Spain, and we have full manuscripts with music, unfortunately copied before the palaeographical revolution of heightened neumes. Beneventan chant, practised in south Italy, was finally

suppressed in the eleventh century. Rome itself fell before the onslaught of the imported repertory, though not until the thirteenth century. The notion of a uniform music – reproducible and transmissible, and guarded from change – was new, the invention of the Carolingians. It determined as no other single factor the subsequent development of Western music. The very notion of the ‘reception’ of music depends on it. Despite the long road before the full implications of an *opus perfectum* would be realized in Western music history, Pépin’s vision of imposing the Roman chant on the Carolingian realm effectively foreordained the path.

Gregory stands at the centre of a circumpolar history. Succeeding ages, in pruning accumulated abuses, often sought justification in Gregory for the changes, even when they were in no position to consult old manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> When finally the nineteenth century took on the restoration of the chant, the legend of Saint Gregory made it an ideal subject for scholarly investigation in nineteenth-century terms, since it taught that Gregorian chant was a coherent work of genius, the closed oeuvre of a saint and pope inspired by the Holy Spirit. Heeding the lesson of the myth, scholars sought the original state of the core repertory, ignoring decayed and peripheral later forms.

In 1889, with systematic, devastating logic, Gevaert showed that documentary evidence does not support the notion that Pope Gregory invented plainchant.<sup>7</sup> The Benedictine scholars at Solesmes immediately rejected Gevaert’s argument, and in the end it took generations of scholars working after 1950 to draw the full implications of this change of view. Just as it had been essential to scholarly progress in the nineteenth century to maintain the Gregory legend, the discarding of the legend was essential to open new avenues of research in the second half of the twentieth century.

That, and the discovery in 1886 of the ‘Old Roman’ chant, a complete repertory for the mass and office, virtually identical to Gregorian chant in terms of the texts set but utilizing different melodies, or, more precisely, melodies vaguely similar, but usually more florid and less sharply profiled.<sup>8</sup> Initially the Old Roman repertory was dismissed as a corruption of the Gregorian. By the 1950s, however, scholars had begun to confront the fact that our earliest extant chant manuscripts from Rome itself transmit the Old Roman rather than the Gregorian melodies. Further, these Roman manuscripts, which date from 1071 to the early thirteenth century, postdate by nearly 200 years the earliest northern manuscripts transmitting the familiar ‘Gregorian’ repertory. At first liturgists tried to place both chant dialects in Rome at the same time, associating one or the other with a special chant reserved for the pope. Many musicologists, however, realized that such a scenario, besides ignoring the curious manuscript tradition, also ignored common-sense issues of musical transmission. Until the twentieth century, scholars had assumed that Pope Gregory had fixed

the propers in writing around the year 600 by means of a letter notation.<sup>9</sup> Now, with no direct evidence of chant notation until around the middle of the ninth century, and no fully notated graduals until around 900, the *terra incognita* of a notationless culture loomed. It was simply impossible that two such distinct repertoires could have maintained themselves unchanged over centuries.

With the challenge of a Roman chant in a different melodic tradition, fresh scrutiny of the documents surrounding the legend of Saint Gregory took on new urgency. Indeed, the legend's salient point – the difficulty inherent in transmitting a chant dialect from one soil to another – was finally revealed. In a brilliant new synthesis, Helmut Hucke, a German musicologist not yet thirty years old at the time, proposed that what we call 'Gregorian' chant is actually a product of the Frankish reception of the Old Roman chant.<sup>10</sup> Authenticated by a newly concocted imprimatur of the Holy Spirit acting through Saint Gregory, the transformed chant conquered most of Europe, displacing the indigenous chant in Rome itself by the thirteenth century. While there remain quibbles with details of Hucke's theory, the outlines remain the dominant view.<sup>11</sup>

Through a series of articles starting in 1974, Leo Treitler has been the moving force behind a mode of inquiry hardly conceivable before the second half of the twentieth century, the effort to characterize a musical repertory operating through oral transmission.<sup>12</sup> Studies from the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century regarding compositional processes in chant, finding in some genres a restricted number of melody types, or in other genres a process of deploying mosaic-like formulas at beginnings, middles and ends of sections, now found a new context. It is no accident that the deposing of 'Homer' as 'the' poet who composed 'the' *Iliad* and *Odyssey* set the stage for Treitler's line of inquiry, in which the deposing of 'Gregory' as 'the' composer of 'the' Gregorian chant led to the study of oral processes in the early centuries of the church. The challenge has been in determining the constraints under which the Old Roman chant – in the shape it had 200 years before it was fixed in writing – was transformed into Gregorian chant, and how quickly this happened, and when it was written down.

Kenneth Levy has proposed that the Gregorian mass propers were recorded in the course of the late eighth century in Palaeo-Frankish neumes, a no-nonsense style of neumatation that directly traces the ups and downs of melody, lacking the beautiful ductus and performance indications of many of the later styles of neumatation. By ca800, a complete notated gradual – the 'Carolingian archetype' – was available for transmission throughout the realm.<sup>13</sup> This hypothesis explains the relative fixity and authority of the corpus as the Gregorian propers were transmitted abroad, and yet allows

time for the palaeographical richness of later regional neume families to develop. It argues that the *propers* were fixed in relatively short order after their transmission from Rome. Unfortunately, we lack unequivocal proof that such a document existed.

In any case, scholars today believe that Roman chant was transmitted to the north in an oral state (the vicissitudes witnessed by the Gregory legend confirm as much), but what connection either the Old Roman chant in its earliest extant written form ca1071 (in pitch-specific neumes) or Gregorian chant in its earliest extant written form ca900 (in unheighted neumes) might have had to what Chrodegang sang to his students at Metz ca775 is still untouchable. Further, there is the question of the Carolingian reception and adaptation of Byzantine modal theory, an aspect foreign to the Old Italian repertoires.

When fully notated *graduals* did finally appear on the scene, it was at a time when there was wholesale new composition of accretions to the core liturgy, including *ordinaries* with and without *tropes*, *tropes* to the core *propers*, and *sequences*. Perhaps it was the vast increase of service music that left overly taxed memories in need of notation.<sup>14</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that the accretions do not show the degree of fixity of the old core *propers*: they are malleable new materials added in and around the *propers*, which shine like jewels, the legacy of P<sup>é</sup>pin's bold experiment.

### **Chant reforms and late plainchant composition**

New religious orders, first the Cistercians and later the Dominicans, sought simplicity, pruning accretions to the chant, also calling for the reform of the melodies of the *propers* themselves.<sup>15</sup> Examination of early manuscripts at Metz proved disappointing in this goal; with melodies shaped by the sophisticated modal theory of the eleventh century in their ears, the Cistercians went about emending the chant according to the modern aesthetic understanding of the twelfth century.

Always in the service of clearing away layers of abuses of previous generations, countless later episodes of chant reform exhibit exactly the same tension, a tension between the allure of a mythical original state – vouchsafed by the divine transmission through Saint Gregory – and practical exigencies, among them the musical aesthetic values of the moment. Battles pitting the allure of an endangered 'Classical' past against the inexorable pull of modernism are nothing new.

From the perspective of the scholars of the late nineteenth century working like archaeologists to recover a mythical original layer of the chant, the reforms of the Cistercians held little interest; variants in a late manuscript represent a level of corruption easy to eliminate on philological grounds.

More recently, however, scholars have begun to historicize later plainchant, taking up repertories formerly considered peripheral. Myriad local idiosyncrasies touching the entire service, concerning saints venerated in newly assembled offices, the selection of accretions performed (tropes, sequences, liturgical drama), not to mention the diverse application of improvised polyphonic performance practices – all of this would have varied over time. Today, ongoing musicological projects are busy organizing and collecting the great corpus of medieval accretions to plainchant. After the Solesmes emphasis on graduals and antiphoners, one is beginning to see the publication of more and more facsimiles of troopers and prozers. Late chant also brings with it developments in rhymed poetry; it is here that the historical narrative links to that of vernacular monophony, which entered on the scene slightly later than rhymed Latin chant.

What had once appeared as a coherent historical development moving from freedom and variety towards schematic order – as in the case of the history of the sequence from Notker to Adam – is now challenged by the rehabilitation of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), a figure previously simply ignored in music history.<sup>16</sup> How the larger narrative will be adjusted to account for Hildegard's music is not yet clear. It may force us finally to acknowledge a vastly more complex narrative, with sharper geographical distinctions and a great richness of local practices.

## The Council of Trent

The crisis of the Protestant Reformations in the sixteenth century dealt the biggest blow to the ongoing cultivation of the chant rooted in the Frankish tradition of the Carolingian Empire. The Council of Trent (1545–63) quickly established the texts of a reformed liturgy, stripping off most of the accretions, publishing a Breviary in 1568 and a Missal in 1570. A more difficult task lay ahead, touching the shape of the ancient melodies themselves.

By the late sixteenth century, humanists cultivating a polished Latin style found their sensitivities offended by the ancient Gregorian chant, in which one was apt to find long melismas emphasizing unimportant syllables. The chant was surely corrupt and in need of reform. In 1577 Pope Gregory XIII engaged Pierluigi da Palestrina and Annibale Zoilo to revise the chantbooks for mass and office, which he found 'filled to overflowing with barbarisms, obscurities, contrarieties, and superfluties as a result of the clumsiness or negligence or even wickedness of the composers, scribes, and printers'.<sup>17</sup>

The new Gradual, the so-called *Editio Medicea* edited by Anerio and Soriano, finally appeared in 1614 (temporale) and 1615 (sanctorale). It is popularly thought that that was largely the end of the story until the late



nineteenth century, when the assiduous work of the Solesmes monks led to the publication of the *Editio Vaticana* in 1908, approximately restoring the readings of the oldest manuscripts. This view, however, is vastly oversimplified. Theodore Karp has recently catalogued over 650 Graduals printed in the period from about 1590 to 1890. Even his preliminary analysis shows not only that the Medicean Gradual was not universally adopted, but also that its music exerted little influence on subsequent reformed Graduals.<sup>18</sup> In general, post-Tridentine editors, responding to the humanist demands outlined above, made changes to provide clear prosody, but also to sharpen modal focus. Thus a chant already exhibiting good prosody and a strong modal profile, such as *Puer natus est*, introit of the Third Christmas Mass, was typically left with few emendations, but the very next proper chant in the same mass, the gradual *Viderunt omnes*, was subject to much revision. Nothing is systematic; anonymous editors made *ad hoc* decisions, and were even inconsistent in their adjustment of chants that are musically related.

### **Nineteenth- and twentieth-century chant reforms**

Nineteenth-century movements for the restoration of plainchant to its medieval state are so complex that no single study has yet encompassed the broad-based, multinational efforts, each with different coteries and motivations. The amount of space to cover, both from the perspective of scholarship and from the perspective of human consciousness, is enormous. Nostalgia for the Middle Ages and a concomitant Catholic revival were awakened partly in reaction to the anti-religious rationality of the Enlightenment, and, in France, partly by the destruction of religious monuments in the French Revolution. A political component is seen in the support for the revival of medieval chant lent by partisans for the restoration of the monarchy.<sup>19</sup> The project to recover the ‘original’ state of the chant through the application of the scientific principles of Lachmannian philology received confirmation in the Gregory legend, which promised that there was an original form. Confidence was particularly strong in the wake of the discovery and publication of new sources. In 1851 Lambillotte published the St Gall cantatorium (*CH-SGs* 359), considered to be the antiphoner of Saint Gregory himself, in a diplomatic facsimile (hand-drawn lithography).<sup>20</sup> Though written in unheighted neumes, the identity of neumes and later melodies was evident after the discovery of the ‘rosetta stone’ for neumatic notation, the tonary of St Bénigne of Dijon (*F-MOf* H.159), discovered in 1847 by Danjou and published by Nisard in 1851.

The inertia of custom, however, was strong, and it took the entire nineteenth century to bring about chant restoration, which occurred in two

stages. First, Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–78), after over 250 years of Vatican acquiescence to a variety of chant editions, gave exclusive recognition to the Catholic publisher Pustet in Regensburg to publish the official chant, a monopoly that would last thirty years. The 1871 Pustet Gradual, edited by the German scholar and church musician Franz Xaver Haberl, did not in any sense restore medieval chant, but instead presented the post-Tridentine melodies of the Medicean Gradual of 1614–15, and, since the Medicean lacked ordinaries, Haberl composed new ones. At this stage the pope supported uniformity of practice, but not yet the restoration of medieval melodies.

In the meantime, the scientific musicology of the Solesmes monks, under way since 1856, had borne fruit in Dom Joseph Pothier's *Liber gradualis* (1883), followed by a *Liber antiphonarius* (1891), the first *Liber usualis* (1895), and other books, all displaying a beautiful new typography modelled on thirteenth-century square notation.<sup>21</sup> To support Pothier's readings, Dom André Mocquereau launched in 1889 the *Paléographie musicale*, a series of photographic facsimiles of early chant manuscripts that present the evidence for the essential uniformity of the early readings for all to verify. Looking back from 1921, Mocquereau characterized the *Paléographie musicale* as a 'kind of scientific tank – powerful, invulnerable, and capable of crushing all the enemy's reasoning'.<sup>22</sup> The French team was aiming directly at the German edition and the papal privilege supporting it.

A second stage, the actual restoration of medieval melodies, came early in the new century. In 1901, Pope Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903) let Pustet's privilege lapse. Finally, on 22 November 1903, the famous *motu proprio* of Pope Pius X (r. 1903–14) approved the restoration of Gregorian chant following the principles of the Solesmes research:

These qualities [of sacred music] are found most perfectly in Gregorian chant, which is therefore the proper chant of the Roman Church, the only chant which she has inherited from the ancient Fathers, which she has jealously kept for so many centuries in her liturgical books, which she offers to the faithful as her own music, which she insists on being used exclusively in some parts of her liturgy, and which, lastly, has been so happily restored to its original perfection and purity by recent study.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the contentious commission charged with implementing the reforms accepted the earlier work of Dom Pothier over the most recent research of Dom Mocquereau (the commission was particularly dubious about Mocquereau's rhythmic theories and their overly fussy typographical presentation). The hierarchy of the church, not surprisingly, found it impossible to ally itself unconditionally with the forces of scientific research, with the promise (or threat) of rendering its authority obsolete tomorrow.

Despite its shortcomings, the Vatican edition should be recognized as a great achievement, characteristic of the nineteenth century. Yet after a century of effort, the reforms stood for less than sixty years. The Second Vatican Council (1962–5) revised the liturgy again, admitting vernacular languages and popular idioms of sacred song, and leaving the Latin mass and plainchant as a rarity. New service books of Latin plainchant continue to be published, however, and most recently, the church has adopted a new typography and rhythmic principles based on the work of Solesmes scholar Dom Cardine.<sup>24</sup>

### Secular monophony

Before secular music of the Middle Ages came into play as an area of scholarly research, Classical antiquity had to make room. Around 1700 a literary debate broke out concerning the relative merits of the ancients and moderns, pitting those who upheld the order, balance and rule-bound models of ancient Greece and Rome against those who argued for originality in form and flexibility of genre. One aspect of the debate – ongoing since Dante – defended the use of the vernacular languages, arguing that native poets in their native language were perfectly capable of rivalling the ancients. In France, the discussion led to the first serious efforts to recover the legacy of the Middle Ages. Medieval literature became a legitimate subject for scholarship, a sign of pride in a French civilization not indebted to the ancients. It was, after all, not Classical antiquity but the French antiquity – the *antiquité française* – that had produced the roots of the language and manners that eventually culminated in the refined taste of the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Such enthusiasm was not universal. To radical Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists, the Middle Ages truly were the Dark Ages. It was conservatives, such as the scholars associated with the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, a branch of the French Academy instituted in 1701 specifically for the study of the history and antiquities of France, who saw the Middle Ages as a heroic age of chivalry, as valid as the heroic age of ancient Greece. The historical record of the Middle Ages, preserved not only in charters but also in literature, provided the foundations for kingship, upholding the *ancien régime*. Particularly important were the troubadours, the first important secular culture since antiquity, who produced the first modern poetry, rooted not in ancient poetic metres, but in rhyme scheme and syllable count. Manuscripts of troubadour poetry were culled not only for philological study of the language and its relationship to Old French, but also for historical material on society and customs.

The most important of the eighteenth-century scholars was Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye.<sup>26</sup> Sainte-Palaye's enormous project of a glossary of Old French (left incomplete at his death in 1781 in sixty-one manuscript volumes) was path-breaking in its systematic use of original manuscripts as sources. Work on the dictionary contributed to the *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie* (1759) and the *Histoire littéraire des troubadours* (1774), well known throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe in English and German translations (Herder's knowledge of medieval culture rested on Sainte-Palaye's scholarship).

Sainte-Palaye was also among the popularizers of the Middle Ages, freely translating monuments of Old French and Provençal into modern French. His modernized edition of *Aucassin et Nicolette* (1752) was the source for Sedaine's libretto *Aucassin et Nicolette*, set as an *opéra-comique* by Grétry in 1779. Another collection of popularizations, the *Bibliothèque des romans*, attributed to the marquis de Paulmy, was the source for the story of the rescue of King Richard Lionheart by Blondel de Nesle, set by Grétry as *Richart Coeur-de-Lion* in 1784. Grétry used no medieval sources for the music of either of these *opéras-comiques*.

Attention turned only slowly to the musical aspect of the *trouvères* and *troubadours*. A stroke of good fortune led Burney to Gaucelm Faidit's *Fortz causa es*, a lament on the death of Richard Lionheart – of interest to his English readers – in a manuscript at the Vatican. It would remain the only troubadour melody published in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Music of the *trouvères* fared much better. The first publication of a *chanson* was Thibaut de Navarre's *Je me cuidois partir*, published in 1702 by Crescimbeni, and reprinted by Hawkins in 1776.<sup>28</sup> Several early-eighteenth-century French aristocratic book owners, royal servants and copyists were active as scholars, exchanging *chansonniers*, comparing readings of texts, even annotating the margins of the manuscripts they owned.<sup>29</sup> The most well known of these was the Châtre de Cangé, who owned three *chansonniers*, *F-Pn* fonds fr. 845, 846, and 847. Soon quite a lot of *trouvère* music became available.<sup>30</sup>

There was also much publication of 'romance' – songs evoking the style of the *trouvères* – for example, Moncrif's *Choix de chansons* (1755–6).<sup>31</sup> Further, Burney and Forkel were willing to supply accompaniments in the style of Moncrif to *trouvère* songs. By the addition of accompaniments, the songs obtained a form palatable to contemporary readers.<sup>32</sup> Neither Burney nor Forkel could have entertained the notion that he was subject to prejudice, to the limitations of his historical situation. For both, the goal was to master music as natural scientists were mastering the physical world. No eighteenth-century scholar had a true nostalgia for the Middle Ages. It went without saying that Enlightenment culture was superior.

## The revival of medieval music in the wake of the French Revolution

A very different feeling for the Middle Ages developed after the French Revolution, when various threads came together leading to the definitive revival of medieval music – chant, vernacular monophony, and, eventually, polyphony. The following points only touch on a few of the issues at play. Reacting to the anti-Christian scepticism of the Enlightenment, many in the early nineteenth century turned to Christianity – particularly to the mysteries of Catholicism. Chateaubriand's popular *Génie du christianisme* (1802) can be considered in this light, as well as the more general anti-intellectual tendencies of Romanticism, which in some circles found solace in the mysticism of the Middle Ages. This, of course, was important for the revival of Gregorian chant, as well as for the Palestrina revival, the first step in the recovery of early polyphony.

Further, the dissolution during the Revolution of the French *maîtrises*, the cathedral schools for the teaching of vocal music, required the founding of new institutions of music pedagogy, of which the Paris Conservatoire, founded in 1796, was the most important. At a time well before the establishment of musicology as an academic subject, the position of librarian at the Paris Conservatoire supplied a chair for many scholars of critical importance to the revival of early music, including Perne, Fétis, Bottée de Toulmon, and later Weckerlin. Fétis went on to head the new Brussels Conservatory and was followed there by Gevaert. Institutional support was still not the rule, however. Some armchair scholars important to the revival of medieval music in the first half of the nineteenth century include Thibaut, a jurist and law professor in Heidelberg, Kiesewetter, a government counsellor in Vienna, and Coussemaker, a lawyer in northern France.

In Germany reaction to the Enlightenment took on a strong anti-French flavour, an aspect of the growing nationalism in response to Napoleon's occupation forces. But even before this, Herder had set the stage with his emphasis on the genius of the common people (*Volk*) as the root of culture, having found the cultural orientation of late-eighteenth-century German princes too Frenchified for his taste. Herder's view strongly shaped a new approach to the reception of secular monophony in the early nineteenth century. He put the troubadours and trouvères in the position of folk singers, and included the texts of two trouvère songs in his collection of *Volkslieder* (Folksongs, 1778–9), thereby feeding the early Romantics' search for quasi-mythical roots of a nation's culture. The attribute of *Volkstümlichkeit* (a quality characteristic of the common people), formerly a liability, was now a positive virtue.<sup>33</sup>

The destruction of cultural monuments lamented by Victor Hugo in the preface to his novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* 1482 (1832) was among the factors

that fostered the preservation movement in nineteenth-century France, of which Viollet-le-Duc's reconstruction of the cathedral of Paris is the best-known monument. The analogous movement in Germany, which saw the completion of Cologne Cathedral during the years from 1842 to 1880, had a different emphasis. A growing consciousness of the power of a unified national state, awakened by the challenge of France and the Napoleonic wars, brought new interest in medieval German culture to the politically fragmented Germans. Cologne Cathedral thus became a symbol of German nation building.<sup>34</sup>

Long the cosmopolitan consumers of foreign styles, the Germans now focused on authentic German roots. But as with Herder's *Volkstümlichkeit*, early stages of this cultural programme were already in place in the late eighteenth century. Annette Kreuziger-Herr emphasizes the new aesthetic seen in Goethe's hymn to Strasbourg Cathedral (1772) as a watershed moment.<sup>35</sup> Here Goethe found himself unexpectedly awed, even dizzied, by the sheer grandeur of the medieval architectural setting. The new enthusiasm for German medieval ('Gothic') culture saw the publication of some seventy editions of Middle High German and Middle Low German poems between 1760 and 1800, as well as popular collections of folk poetry and fairy tales, the *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805) of Arnim and Brentano, and the *Märchen* (1813–14) of the brothers Grimm. By the end of the nineteenth century, German historical scholarship had outstripped that of all other countries, voraciously gobbling up records of the past and printing great collections of documents. Throughout Europe, the unaffiliated armchair scholar was replaced by research concentrated at universities. There was also an upsurge of French philological research, seen, for example, in the founding of the journal *Romania* in 1872, and the establishment in 1875 of the series of literary monuments published by the Société des Anciens Textes Français, founded, as Gaston Paris put it, so that 'Germany should no longer be the European country where the most monuments of our language and literature are printed'.<sup>36</sup>

### **Rhythm in secular monophony**

We have seen some of the ideological and national issues that attended the rediscovery of medieval monophonic song. Most of these issues were stimulated by the poetry. Musical rhythm, however, remained the sole domain of the music scholar. To eighteenth-century readers, publications of trouvère songs in loose diplomatic facsimile may have implied rhythms something along the lines heard in contemporary performances of plainsong, either an equalist approach or one distinguishing long, breve, and semibreve.<sup>37</sup> In any case, the first scholar to grapple seriously with the

problem of transcribing the rhythms of the trouvère sources was François Louis Perne (1772–1832). Perne's study of black mensural notation culminated in a complete transcription of Machaut's Mass presented to the French Institut royal in 1814, but unfortunately these materials never saw publication. Later an opportunity arose to collaborate with the philologist Francisque Michel on an edition of the chansons of the Châtelain de Couci, and Perne applied his mensural rules to an edition of twenty chansons, published in 1830.<sup>38</sup> A few years later, this mensuralist approach was given a firmer grounding by Coussemaker, whose study of the Montpellier Codex (*F-MOf*H.196) led him to identify several trouvères as composers of polyphony – *trouvères-harmonistes*.<sup>39</sup>

The French mensuralist approach had a certain logic because the note shapes used for chansons are the same as those used to notate motets. By contrast, the German sources of Minnesang offer nothing of the sort. Throughout the nineteenth century, there had been little attention to the musical component of Minnesang. Sources for the music of Minnesinger songs are comparatively meagre and very late, beginning over 200 years after the art they transmit. Even single manuscripts display a bewildering variety of notational styles, none of them providing consistent clues to scholars attempting transcription into modern notation.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Riemann seized upon text metre as the key to rhythm in Minnesang, and ranged all medieval secular monophony into an all-encompassing theory of metrical organization in music. The norm prescribed duple metre in regular periods comprising pairs of four-bar phrases, and Riemann adjusted note values as needed to force lines of varying lengths to fall into four- or eight-bar periods.<sup>40</sup>

Not long after Riemann proclaimed his theory as a universal truth, Pierre Aubry, Jean Beck and Friedrich Ludwig began to work on applying the rhythmic modes of Notre Dame polyphony to the problem of rhythm in the trouvères.<sup>41</sup> Music scholars justified the application of the system of the rhythmic modes to secular monophony because they found refrains incorporated into thirteenth-century motets. Refrains are short bits of text, sometimes found with music, that may appear in hybrid narratives or as parts of chansons or dance songs. Thus the refrains were considered crossovers between the trouvère repertory and the modal rhythm of the early motet. Before long, what we now know to be a very problematic link authorized wholesale adaptation of the principles of modal rhythm to all categories of monophonic song.

In the early twentieth century, the question of rhythm in secular monophony took on a life of its own, becoming the overriding issue for any musicologist engaged with this repertory. John Haines has traced the scholarly debate, which became particularly intense in the first decade of the

twentieth century, involving Riemann, Aubry, Beck and Ludwig.<sup>42</sup> Nationalist tensions lay close to the surface. Riemann had seen military service in the Franco-Prussian War, while Aubry considered it his mission to restore the glories of French musicology after France's political defeat. Beck was a bilingual Alsatian, a doctoral student at the newly established Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität at Strasbourg working in the high-powered Romance section under Gustav Gröber and studying musicology with Friedrich Ludwig. In the end the battle over credit for the initial formulation of the theory left Aubry shamed and hastened his death in 1910, a likely suicide, and discredited Beck.

Jacques Handschin raised important objections to the modal interpretation in reviewing Carl Appel's path-breaking 1934 edition of Bernart de Ventadorn, which gives the music in black note-heads.<sup>43</sup> But the allure of the fixity of modern notation in metre and barlines has been hard to resist. Hendrick van der Werf was almost alone among musicologists in his call in the 1970s for more refined views of genre and orality in the songs of the troubadours and trouvères, and in his admonitions against the use of refrains in motets as grounds for rhythmicizing the melodies.<sup>44</sup> After the refined work on genre by the French literary scholar Pierre Bec was applied by John Stevens and Christopher Page to musical questions, new views have begun to emerge.<sup>45</sup> Yet the fact that Hans Tischler could still publish fifteen volumes of melodies in 1997 transcribed according to principles of modal rhythm indicates the obstinate nature of the problem.<sup>46</sup>

The twentieth-century story of modal rhythm in monophonic song is a sad chapter in music history, and the question of the nature of rhythm in secular monophony is still unsolved. Unfortunately the nature of the sources precludes a definitive answer to the problem. Of all of the surviving monophonic repertoires from the Middle Ages, it is the Minnesang sources that present the question in the bluntest form. It would be easy to belittle the German manuscripts as inadequate to the task of transmitting the art of the Minnesinger. Burkhard Kippenberg states it well when he finds fundamental issues of composition, performance and transmission at stake in Minnesang: 'to what extent was medieval secular monophony in its essence – not considered merely by the level of the notation – notatable at all in its own time?'<sup>47</sup> The question could well be posed regarding any of the surviving monophonic repertoires, all of which were arts that resisted writing.<sup>48</sup>

### **Hearing medieval polyphony in the nineteenth century**

The turn to historiography around 1800 strongly affected scholarship on Gregorian chant and secular monophony, as we have seen, and soon these repertoires were harnessed for ideological projects that manifested



themselves throughout the nineteenth century. There was no urgency to the study of medieval polyphony, however. While chant fulfilled a function within the Catholic church, and secular monophony was adaptable to modern circumstances through the addition of a suitable accompaniment, medieval polyphony had been an embarrassment since Gerbert published examples from the *Musica enchiriadis* in 1774.<sup>49</sup> Despite Herder's appeal that understanding depends on history and cultural context, scholars still assumed the unchanging nature of human hearing, and thus only one of two conclusions was possible: either composers of polyphony were incompetent, or theorists were making up abstractions. Kiesewetter, for example, found it inconceivable that organum of the style described in the *Musica enchiriadis* (ascribed to Hucbald in Gerbert) was ever performed:

Even Hucbald must have renounced the organum, if he could ever have listened to it with his own ears; but the superior of his monastery would most probably have put an immediate stop to its use after trial of the first couplet, since, among the penances and mortifications in the rules of the order, one of a nature so painful to the senses could never have been inflicted.<sup>50</sup>

Until the twentieth century, scholars lacked a sufficient store of practical monuments to evaluate medieval music theory, tiptoeing around the incomprehensibility of medieval polyphony by evoking the gulf between the good and natural contributions of the folk and the crabbed and unnatural speculations of scholastic theorists. Paradoxically, one and the same composer, such as Adam de la Halle or Guillaume de Machaut, could embody both tendencies, the childlike simplicity of monophony and the 'scholastic rubbish' of polyphony.<sup>51</sup>

Coussemaker had no patience for this sort of thing. Already in 1852, he insisted 'that most of these pieces were conceived according to ideas different from those that prevail today, that it is necessary, in order to appreciate their value, to clear one's mind of the predisposition that one usually brings to the judgment of a piece of modern music.'<sup>52</sup> Coussemaker was a lawyer, and his approach was to adduce enough evidence to overwhelm earlier interpretations. But he only made a start.

Today Helmholtz is credited as the first to assert the variability of factors that go into musical perception, although in fact this insight was a fundamental precept of Fétis's philosophy of music history, which saw scale systems – the qualities and disposition of scale degrees – as the basis for musical expression, a mirror of society itself.<sup>53</sup> But neither Fétis nor Helmholtz immediately affected the historiography of medieval music. The theory of the folk origins of all that is good in music lived on in Riemann's all-encompassing project. He too held to the view of an unchanging human

faculty of hearing and put the *Musica enchiriadis* into the realm of an abstract theory reflecting no practice.<sup>54</sup>

Soon the sheer weight of the practical monuments Ludwig adduced provided the evidence to dislodge Riemann's fantastic theories, showing the links between theory and practice. By the 1920s, it is easy to ascertain a change in hearing as well, expressed in the views of Heinrich Bessler and Rudolf Ficker.<sup>55</sup> Karl Dèzes soon expounds a view completely in tune with our own time, and yet not so far from Coussemaker: 'If Machaut, as main representative of the "ars nova", amounts to nothing because he is as yet unable to fulfil the ideals of Palestrina, that is proof you are applying principles that were never valid for his work . . . the reason for the difficulties is not that the composer was incapable of finding the right path, but that we are incapable of following him on his path.'<sup>56</sup>

### **The Palestrina revival**

The modern periodization of music history, with its division between 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' as 'periods' does not fit the slow recovery of medieval polyphony over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An accurate account would start not with medieval music, but with the twin peaks of J. S. Bach and Palestrina, demonstrating that the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were being reclaimed at around the same time as the sixteenth and late fifteenth centuries. The situation had evolved very little by the late nineteenth century, when Ambros definitively recovered the late fifteenth century, reaching back to Obrecht, Josquin and Pierre de la Rue. He had little sympathy, however, for earlier music, and indeed polyphony of the early fifteenth century and before remained off limits except to the most diehard music historians, who demonstrated at best an impersonal interest; true sympathy for the music itself would have to await the cataclysms of the twentieth century.

Although the Palestrina renaissance of the early nineteenth century was only the first step in the recovery of what we would term 'medieval' polyphony, the historiographical issues raised at this time formed the backdrop as a handful of amateurs undertook the slow and specialized course of research into earlier periods. E. T. A. Hoffmann's essay 'Alte und neue Kirchenmusik' (Old and New Church Music) can stand as a guide. Some of Hoffmann's observations were hardly new as he wrote in 1814; others changed the direction of musical research, while still others remained controversial and have been open to different approaches to this day.<sup>57</sup>

Hoffmann's picture of a decayed state of church music was nothing new, as we have already seen in our consideration of Gregorian chant. But the question specifically of church polyphony had a broader resonance. With

actual relics of the Palestrina style largely confined to the Sistine Chapel since the beginning of the seventeenth century, more and more the church style in practical use had become indistinguishable from opera. Historicism answered the practical problem of religious expression at a time when the current art (which at least for Hoffmann was indeed technically superior to the old art) was not a suitable religious art.

What Hoffmann brings to the table is an explicit nationalist dimension. The issue had been latent in Herder. Now, in the wake of the first victory over Napoleon, Hoffmann explicitly blames the Enlightenment, in other words, the French, the enemies of religion, for the frivolousness affecting church music. From now on, nationalist agendas would colour the emerging narrative of medieval music history, as we have seen from the course of the recovery of medieval secular monophony, intimately associated with language. It would be a mistake, however, to overplay the nationalist card at this point in the recovery of medieval polyphony. Polyphony was so powerfully connected with the Italian tradition that it took a long time before even French scholars would acknowledge French contributions to medieval polyphony, mainly because the polyphony itself was not congenial to the nineteenth-century ear. Hoffmann pushed the origins of music back to Gregory the Great, confirming Italy as the traditional leader in music, and now he would draw upon the great Italian polyphonist Palestrina as a foil against the French. What Palestrina had to offer, first and foremost, was myth, the story of Palestrina as the ‘saviour of church music’. This single composer now stood as a monumental focal point for writing music history.<sup>58</sup> For Hoffmann, Palestrina was the beginning point for a magnificent 200 years of church music, while for others he stood at the end of the painfully slow development of polyphony since the *Musica enchiriadis*.

Hoffmann’s strategy takes on a special twist here, yielding a point critical to the recovery of medieval music: he dismisses the relevance of ancient Greece. Lacking both melody and harmony, the sort of music the Greeks cultivated was simply not music in the modern sense of the word. Murmurings to this effect are already present in Burney, who was not happy about having to rehearse the tedious details of ancient Greek theory, and soon the trend led to histories that omitted the Greeks entirely. Kiesewetter’s *History of the Modern Music of Western Europe*, for example, begins with the Middle Ages.

Hoffmann characterizes the *a cappella* Palestrina style as ‘simple, truthful, childlike, pious, strong, and powerful . . . Without any ornament, without melodic drive, mostly perfect consonant chords succeed one another, with whose strength and boldness the heart is seized with inexpressible power and raised up on high.’<sup>59</sup> Hoffmann thereby makes Palestrina a new classical antiquity of music, evoking Winckelmann’s characterization

of ancient art, epitomized in the famous expression ‘noble simplicity and serene grandeur’. As James Garratt has noted, Hoffmann, the great admirer of Beethoven’s Romantic instrumental music, thereby sets up Palestrina as a composer of absolute music, affirming the spiritual power of music as an autonomous art – texts are unimportant, for the music in and of itself is now an object of aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>60</sup> This brings up two final issues critical to the revival of early music, both still relevant to us today: the problem of the function of early music brought to performance in new contexts, and the problem of the appropriation of old music by composers in a new present. We will return to these questions after surveying some of the important scholars actually involved with research on medieval music in the nineteenth century.

### **Some nineteenth-century musicologists**

No myth comparable to Palestrina could champion the cause of medieval polyphony. The best available, an eighteenth-century invention associating Machaut’s Mass with the coronation of Charles V, did not live up to the promise of the small fragment of the Gloria made available at the beginning of the nineteenth century, still found replete with errors in Riemann’s 1891 revision of Ambros.<sup>61</sup> Two nineteenth-century transcriptions of the entire mass, one by Perne (ca1810), another by Auguste Bottée de Toulmon (ca1830), never saw publication.<sup>62</sup>

After the deaths of Kiesewetter and Bottée in 1850, Fétis and Coussemaker were left as the most important scholars with interests in medieval music. Twenty-one years older than Coussemaker, Fétis had already staked out positions he was unwilling to alter. In Fétis’s history, music up to the time of Palestrina utilized the ‘tonality of plainchant’, that is, the church modes. Since all but the F modes lack a leading tone, the basic character is perforce one of calm and serenity, a religious demeanour. Palestrina represented perfection in this line of development, the end point of a great historical arch.<sup>63</sup>

Fétis considered the period circa 1480–1590, what we tend to label the Renaissance, sufficiently well outlined in Burney and Forkel; the challenge was to fill the gap from the thirteenth century up to 1450. Schooled in the Winckelmannian organic model of origin, growth, change and decline, Fétis considered it the task of music history to show how early music prepared the high point of Palestrina. Fétis found the minimum number of practical monuments to fill the gap to his satisfaction: a single rondeau of Adam de la Halle at the early end and a single ballata of Landini at the later end.

The section of rondeaux in the Adam de la Halle ‘complete works’ collection, *F-Pn* fonds fr. 25566, provided ideal material: a series of short three-voice works notated in score, which facilitated vertical alignment of the sonorities despite Fétis’s rudimentary knowledge of mensural notation. Fétis printed one example in 1827, the rondeau *Tant con je vivray* (Figure 19.1 gives Fétis’s original transcription).<sup>64</sup>

Adam’s rondeau stands between parallel organum and fifteenth-century counterpoint. Fétis’s transcription generated considerable comment (spar- ing with Fétis was something of a sport for nineteenth-century musical scholars), and competing transcriptions of *Tant con je vivray* mark stages along the path towards full mastery of the Franconian system of notation by the 1860s.

Just a month after the first publication of *Tant con je vivray*, Fétis closed in on the last part of the gap in the practical sources, offering a transcription of Landini’s three-voice ballata *Non avrà ma’ pietà*, which he considered another milestone in the history of harmony, the origin of the counterpoint that would be perfected in the sixteenth century.<sup>65</sup> The work confirmed the superior role of the Italian trecento for the progress of music, an idea carried into the twentieth century by Riemann and Wolf. By 1835, when Fétis published his ‘Résumé philosophique de l’histoire de musique’, the 254-page general history of music prefacing the first volume of the first edition of the *Biographie universelle*, a few additional pieces had assumed supporting roles in his narrative, and from this point on Fétis dismissed all challenges to his views.<sup>66</sup>

## Function and appropriation of early music in the nineteenth century

Let us conclude our survey of nineteenth-century historicism by returning to a consideration of the two questions raised by Hoffmann’s essay: the function of early music brought to performance, and the appropriation of early music in new compositions. We can distinguish a variety of functions for the performance of early music (not yet encompassing medieval music) in the nineteenth century. For the early Romantics, early music induced a sublime and ineffable *schwärmerei*, a mood expressed in Wackenroder, Tieck and Hoffmann. More or less explicit efforts to reform culture lie behind performances of early music, usually the church style, by musicians in several German-speaking regions, such as Zelter in Berlin, Thibaut in Heidelberg, and Kiesewetter in Vienna. Choron’s concerts in Paris were a bit different, because they were public, and therefore cultivated an aesthetic appropriate to entertain the Parisian audience. Fétis’s *concerts historiques* in Paris and Brussels had a different focus still, namely pedagogical inculcation,

ser qui me tient en joie

M. 10.  
trop de - sir a - voir ce que j'aime

M. 11.  
tant con je vi - vraï ha - me - l'hoï

zai au - - - trui que vous ja

non par - ti - zai

Figure 19.1 Adam de la Halle, *Tant con je vivray* (rondeau) (transcribed by F.-J. Fétis [ca1827], B-Bc X 27.935 [unnumbered folio]). With permission of the Conservatoire royal – Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussels.

a function to which I will return shortly. None of these instances, of course, is true to the original function of the music.<sup>67</sup>

Hoffmann himself was not in favour of the actual restoration of early church music, believing that young composers should simply find

inspiration from the old masterworks. Echoing Herder, Hoffmann considered it impossible for a contemporary composer to write like Palestrina or Handel. His view was an early salvo in a long and continuing debate concerning the degree and manner of incorporating the old into the new.<sup>68</sup>

The same debate occurred in France, and it is this less studied side that I would like to dwell on, for potentially the most promising answer to the problem of reconciling early music and a contemporary compositional style was Fétis's doctrine of eclecticism, which dealt at the same time with both function and appropriation. In essence, Fétis's eclecticism stems from his urge to put historical research in the service of the present, as a way forward for composers facing the many crises that he perceived in the music of his time, such as the exacerbated materialism brought on by the end of the patronage system, the decline of taste as composers catered to a new public, and the end of the reign of tonality as new harmonic possibilities were almost exhausted. The answer to the many crises lay in the selective use of past masters to reinvigorate present-day composition:

the simplicity and the majesty of the style of Palestrina, the scientific and elegant forms of Scarlatti, the poignant expression of Leo, of Pergolesi, of Majo, and of Jomelli, the dramatic force of Gluck, the incisive harmony of Johann Sebastian Bach, the massed power of Handel, the richness of Haydn, the passionate accents of Mozart, the independent spirit of Beethoven, the suavity of Italian melodies, the energy of German songs, the dramatic decorum of French music, all the combinations of voices, all the systems of instrumentation, all the effects of sonority, all the rhythms, all the forms, in short all resources, will be able to find their place within a single work, and will produce effects all the more penetrating in that they will be employed apropos.<sup>69</sup>

Eclecticism reveals the point behind Fétis's famous *concerts historiques*, practical efforts to demonstrate the palette of genres and affects available to the composer for the purpose of revitalizing music.

The ultimate failure of this plan is symptomatic of one moment in the ongoing historicist debate. Looking back from our vantage point, one might attribute its failure to the fact that the affects Fétis attributes to various early musics are not hard-wired into human consciousness (nor would later research find his characterization of the affects accurate). But in the context of the nineteenth century, the plan failed for ideological reasons.

Fétis saw an ideal representative of his music of the future in Meyerbeer. That composer was eminently suitable to French taste, cosmopolitan and sure of itself after centuries of development. But Meyerbeer horrified the German nation builders, who resisted foreign influence in an effort to

forge a national taste. Herder, Hegel and Hoffmann all agreed that form and content must reflect the *Zeitgeist* authentically.<sup>70</sup> Meyerbeer – a German Jew who followed a pan-European career not unlike that of the great Handel or Mozart – was incompatible with the new demands for originality, a fact brutally exposed by the spokesmen Robert Schumann and Richard Wagner. Eventually their view won out over public taste itself.

Following several more years of diligent archaeology, a new medieval world revealed itself once scholars again occupied themselves with forming a narrative. Fétis's research, exposed as factually insufficient by Kiesewetter and especially by Coussemaker, would no longer be cited by musicologists, but by then it had stamped the narrative subliminally.

### **The twentieth century: Friedrich Ludwig**

Already in the 1902–3 volume of the yearbook of the International Musical Society, Friedrich Ludwig sketched out a survey of fourteenth-century music that is the sort of account one still reads, covering sources, genres, major figures and style history.<sup>71</sup> Ludwig's treatment of fourteenth-century music history weighs the significance of national developments according to political history. French music receives pride of place, because it was the most broadly based and most influential musical art of the fourteenth century: 'The world of tones in these masterpieces – at that time experienced as such – had unified the entire western cultural world in common admiration and enjoyment . . . Italian music . . . lacked this sounding board which French art enjoyed throughout the West.'<sup>72</sup> It is clear why Ludwig later began publication of practical monuments with Machaut's works: it was a matter of historical balance. Yet Ludwig is unequivocal in stating that he finds the aesthetic rewards of the Italian trecento superior to the 'clear-headed' French, trusting his ear in this matter:

We would certainly find among the sonorities sufficient asperities and all manner of progressions whose impossibility and deficiency later belong to the elementary rules of compositional technique and which we no longer encounter from the mid fifteenth century on, but alongside these there is also a wealth of passages that prove how often the Italians dared to follow the ear against the conventions of the school and thereby to obtain effects that we seek in vain among the French.<sup>73</sup>

Having transcribed virtually the entire repertory (almost none of which, incidentally, would have been accessible to his readers), Ludwig saw the possibility of writing a history without drawing on invented influences, 'before we proceed further on shaky ground, going in quest of the influence of so-called folk music and instrumental music, questions that have more



frequently led researchers in medieval music astray.<sup>74</sup> Even simple Latin-texted two-voice polyphony receives an airing in Ludwig's survey, since it is found throughout the Western cultural sphere in that period, even on the periphery.<sup>75</sup> Without evoking the label 'Renaissance', the survey ends with a glance towards the very different circumstances of the fifteenth century, to the 'great invasion' of foreign musicians into Italy, when the national forms cultivated in the fourteenth century disappear in a lively exchange of artists of different nations.

Ludwig's fundamental contribution was his exhaustive knowledge of the sources and repertory of polyphony and secular monophony, from the twelfth to the early fifteenth century. Not relying on music theory treatises to organize medieval historiography, as had been done from Gerbert to Johannes Wolf, Ludwig shifted the balance, seeking his point of departure in the music itself. Ludwig carried out not just the first step of positivist historiography – to ascertain the facts – but also the second, rarely seen at the time – to formulate a general picture based on just that evidence.

### **Rudolf Ficker and *Geistesgeschichte***

From around the last decade of the nineteenth century through the first third of the twentieth, many German historians in reaction to positivism pursued *Geistesgeschichte* – the history of the intellect – an approach to history that seeks to demonstrate how the *Zeitgeist*, the unifying inner spirit that characterizes an age, manifests itself in the cultural phenomena of that age.<sup>76</sup> The approach was highly influential at the time, and though unfamiliar as a concept today, to some extent it continues to colour music history writing. A sketch of medieval music history by Rudolf Ficker, published in 1925 and dedicated to Guido Adler, can stand as an example.<sup>77</sup> The following extended paraphrase of Ficker's imaginative narrative – a succinct, though complete history of medieval polyphony – is warranted in order to understand other twentieth-century trends in historiography.

Ficker begins by staking out a new point of departure. In the past, he avers, medieval music had been branded as primitive, aesthetically foreign to a nineteenth-century ideal of music imprinted in our ears since childhood. It is now clear, however, that this ideal is only one of many musical and aesthetic possibilities, none of which have universal validity, but which are determined by context: 'today we listen completely differently than we did even ten or twenty years ago, when for example we suddenly hear the monotonous song of a savage South Sea islander from a gramophone. Today the laughter that formerly accompanied our feelings of superiority over such a song has passed.'<sup>78</sup>

In this survey, the developmental stages do not so much trace a progression as they document artistic responses to cultural clashes rooted in deep-seated intellectual propensities of north and south. There are, according to Ficker, only three fundamental driving forces of music: the melodic, the ‘sonorous-chordal’, and the rhythmic. Melody, a sinuous and sensual microtonal improvised melody that originated in the Orient, epitomizes the culture of the south.<sup>79</sup> Nordic musical culture is epitomized by the ‘sonorous-chordal’, a dubious concept that Ficker supports by citing the nineteenth-century discovery of the lur, a 3,500-year-old brass instrument found in Denmark.<sup>80</sup> (Writing in the 1920s, Ficker associates the term ‘Nordic’ as much as he can with the German orbit, but often and somewhat reluctantly it refers to the French – as one would think it must, given the facts of the development of medieval polyphony – and in one instance even to the English.) Since lurs were always found in pairs, this is proof enough, he concludes, that Ur-Germanic peoples practised a polyphony of diatonic overtone combinations.

Under these dialectical circumstances, a first confrontation is not long in coming. It brought about a number of milestones, including diatonicism in the chant, staff notation, the earliest polyphony, and the concept of the *cantus firmus*. In earlier music histories, singing in parallel fifths or fourths had always been considered an indication of the musical barbarity of ‘our Germanic ancestors’.<sup>81</sup> In Ficker’s new interpretation, the diatonic chant chafed against the northerners’ fundamental musical orientation toward the sonorous, and so they further transformed it, building a fundamental sonority on each pitch, each sonority a world unto itself.

A second conflict between north and south produced the Gothic, and with it rhythm as a third constituent element of music. The most decisive development took place in France, for the Crusaders left from France in the eleventh century, and contact with the ‘strange fairy-tale land of the Orient’ stimulated a new music. Instead of the weighty chords above chant pitches seen in ‘Romanesque’ organum, Gothic organum exhibits a lively, freely composed, naturalistic melody, juxtaposed with the intellectual symbol of the supporting *cantus firmus*.<sup>82</sup>

A comparison of Romanesque and Gothic architecture provides Ficker with numerous analogies to musical practice. While the Romanesque church presents a unified conception of space, weighty and powerful, the Gothic church has a multitude of complementary parts, banishes forces of weight, and places structural elements in full view. Similarly, while Romanesque organum had exhibited spatial and chordal unities, Gothic organum and motet dissolve these into a multiplicity of lines. The new feeling for life expressed in Gothic art transformed music, placing a new structural element in full view: rhythm.

Ficker's stylistic analysis of an early motet is highly charged.<sup>83</sup> The tenor cantus firmus, the symbolic foundation, fragments the melodic sense of the chant, analogous to the visible skeleton of Gothic cathedrals. Different texts gloss the basic idea in the two upper voices, which appear to have been created independently, and later forcibly welded together, resulting in some harsh dissonances at points of overlap. The aesthetic of the French motet is even more difficult for moderns to comprehend, an extreme confrontation of 'unbridled naturalism' in the vernacular texts of the upper voices with 'religious-dogmatic subordination' in the chant tenor.<sup>84</sup> The result resembles a French Gothic cathedral bristling with grotesque gargoyles. Although perplexing to the modern observer, the mixture of the sacred and the secular expresses the Gothic ideal of linking religion to all aspects of the natural world.

Soon intellectual values lose control over secular naturalism, and a third conflict between north and south signals the early Renaissance (ca1300), the first and only time that Ficker posits an initiative from the south. Significantly, it will fizzle out. Italy had already displayed an ambiguous reception of northern Gothic architecture, transferring stylistic elements into a 'more earthbound' spatial conception. Similarly, Italian trecento composers borrowed the outward stylistic forms of instrumentally accompanied French secular vocal music in their madrigals, but the musical results were uniquely Italian. Now divergent forces are reconciled in a more unified complex eschewing religious symbolism. Melody is freely rhythmicized and set in a sonorous harmony exhibiting a sense of progression. Unfortunately, later composers, especially the last great Italian of the fourteenth century, Francesco Landini, yield too much to French influence.

Ficker pauses here in recounting the epoch-making struggles of medieval music history to pick up the late Gothic art of fourteenth-century France. Too little of the *Ars Subtilior* was known at the time to be of any use to Ficker; for him, the most extreme tension between the old and new, the Gothic and the emerging Renaissance, is found in Burgundy, and it is in this context (drawing upon a new book by Johan Huizinga) that Ficker considers an excerpt from a Machaut motet, *Tous corps / De souspirant / Suspiro*.<sup>85</sup>

It appears completely senseless to us that a completely unintelligible and free rhythmic scheme, lacking any causal melodic relationship, could determine the structure, and that all harmonic and melodic activity should be completely dependent on this schema, even imputed to mere chance. Nowhere does the purely constructive treatment of form manifest itself with such naked and unjustifiable candour as in the fourteenth-century isorhythmic motet. If we recall the immeasurable rigidity of, say, the Burgundian court ceremony, with its boundless formalism, its extravagance

of class distinctions, and the frequently grotesque pomp of its dress, then we must indeed admit that this *Zeitgeist* found a congenial musical expression in the isorhythmic motet.<sup>86</sup>

The fourth conflict between north and south comes after 1400, when ‘the Nordic Gothic attempts to summon all its powers once again to subdue the forces awakened in the south.’<sup>87</sup> Emotionally detached yet exhibiting a kind of mystical rapture, the new musical style resembles the spirit of early Netherlandish painting, like the panel of *a cappella* singers in the Ghent altarpiece, ‘filled with secret symbols that are neither audible nor visible.’<sup>88</sup> English composers, and Burgundian masters working from the example of the English, reconciled apparently incompatible demands by joining a flowing melos, sensual and individualistic, with the religious symbolism of the rigid *cantus firmus*, which is now invisible and inaudible, for the individual pitches fall ‘arbitrarily’ along the course of a new melody.

A fifth and final confrontation between north and south comes in the second half of the fifteenth century, and this time the Netherlanders obtained a definitive synthesis, settling the two-centuries-long tension between the Renaissance call for individual emotion and the medieval propensity for the intellectual and for musical construction. Here, free or borrowed musical motives are subject to repetition and development throughout the texture, and according to Ficker this principle characterizes music to the present day.

Ficker’s survey synthesizes the history of music, art and architecture to distinguish five periods: the Romanesque, the Gothic, the early Renaissance, the later-Gothic, and the Renaissance, each with a logic of its own. His new hearing, aided by art-historical analogies, for the first time affords an essentially positive (if curious) assessment of ninth-century organum. The Gothic is treated most thoroughly in Ficker’s account, sympathetically accompanied by numerous vivid analogies from architecture.<sup>89</sup> The placement of a French ‘late Gothic’ after the discussion of an early Renaissance highlights the perplexity with which a scholar in 1925 greeted the discovery of isorhythm. Tempted by the outrageous images of Huizinga’s court of Burgundy, Ficker alters the chronology by about a hundred years in order to call up an analogy between society and art to explain it.

Most troubling to our sensibilities is our knowledge of the future of Ficker’s north/south dichotomy. As Leech-Wilkinson puts it, ‘Ficker’s Nordic reading of so much medieval music . . . was itself warped, regardless of how it may later have been used.’<sup>90</sup> Writing in 1936, Collingwood saw the roots of such readings in the proto-anthropology of Herder, attributing different natures to different races, whose individual character depends on

geography and environment. There were dire consequences: ‘Once Herder’s theory of race is accepted, there is no escaping the Nazi marriage laws.’<sup>91</sup> It is ironic that in the nineteenth century Herder’s attribution of the diversity of human nature was an essential factor in opening people’s minds to other musics, including medieval music.

The density of interrelationships between music and art seen in Ficker’s narrative continued to provide a compelling model for large-scale music history. For example, it reappears in the structure and in the detail of Paul Henry Lang’s account of the same periods in his *Music in Western Civilization*. Compare the following passage, characterizing the upper voice in trecento polyphony, one example of many close paraphrases of Ficker: ‘This melody was a happy medium between Nordic rigidity and the contourlessness of Oriental melismatic flow, and, free from the shackles of modal meter, it obeyed a natural sense of free symmetry and articulation.’<sup>92</sup> In textbooks, Ludwig’s drier, more sober account has tended to prevail, one richer in factual material and illustrative examples, but now and again musicologists have found images of the sort Ficker evokes irresistible to provide a splash of cultural context or local colour.

### **Edward Lowinsky and the historiography of medieval music**

As knowledge of early music grew, musicological training beginning around the 1930s tended more and more to produce specialists. Particularly after the Second World War, this usually led to source studies and edition making, biography and style analysis, but some scholars were capable of a broader view. I would like briefly to consider one example, Edward Lowinsky, a specialist in music of the Renaissance. Trained at Heidelberg under Bessler, Lowinsky was one of the many Jewish scholars who found their way to the United States in the wake of Nazi social policy of the 1930s. Although one might not expect to see Lowinsky figuring in a sketch of the historiography and reception of medieval music, the positioning of the Middle Ages in his influential essay ‘Music in the Culture of the Renaissance’ (1954) is worth reviewing, for Lowinsky’s stark formulations continue to frame questions that occupy musicologists.<sup>93</sup> The overall approach shares the concern for cultural context and the long-range perspective of *Geistesgeschichte*, but Lowinsky’s specialist’s viewpoint finds only one historical moment of any consequence, the one focused on the creation of the Renaissance that he so loved.

The dominant force characterizing the Renaissance for Lowinsky was the ineluctable urge to individual freedom, and he links this cultural force to musical developments. For example, Lowinsky relates the hold of the cantus firmus on the medieval motet to the hold of the church on the

individual. The advent of the Renaissance saw emancipation from a whole host of shackles. Critical to the evolution of vocal music, in Lowinsky's estimation, was its delivery from 'ready-made patterns', including the pre-existing melodies of Gregorian chant subject to the old church modes, the straitjacket of the cantus firmus, the fixed forms, and fixed rhythms (the rhythmic modes). Further, medieval music was constructed in layers by successively adding voices over a cantus firmus, while Renaissance composers could think in harmonies and conceive of voices simultaneously. The imitative style developed in vocal music then contributed to the evolution of instrumental music, emancipating it in turn from vocal models, and pointing the way towards the ultimate perfection of absolute music to come. Once again, essential qualities of north (Flanders) and south (Italy) were locked in a struggle, this time between northern polyphony and southern harmony, reaching a first synthesis in Josquin des Prez. The dialectical struggle, always between these two poles – sensuous sound (material, body) and linear counterpoint (intellect, spirit) – sums up the rest of music history, reaching perfect balance in Viennese Classicism (especially in Mozart), only to shift emphasis to the material in the nineteenth century and to the intellect in the twentieth.<sup>94</sup>

Lowinsky devotes a special segment of his argument to the *Ars Nova*, which he delimits as the period 1300–1450. In Lowinsky's scenario, this period does not merit the term 'Renaissance', though a few of the Renaissance's formative aspects are put in place at this time. For example, the break-up of the rhythmic modes and the new short note values available around 1300 imply a new rhythmic freedom, but composers did not take advantage of their accomplishment: 'As if bewildered and frightened by the onrush of so many novel rhythmic possibilities, the musician of the *ars nova* immediately imposed severe restrictions on them.'<sup>95</sup> In the event, the strict and at the same time arbitrary constraints of isorhythmic periodicity would postpone for a century the realization of full freedom of rhythmic invention.

In my view the most pernicious thread running through the three samples of twentieth-century historiography of medieval polyphony that I have surveyed here is the rigorous propensity to label, expressed as a distinction between 'medieval' and 'Renaissance'. This is the sort of history writing that Collingwood characterized as 'apocalyptic'.<sup>96</sup> Originally an aspect of early Christian historiography in which the birth of Christ was viewed a climactic dividing point between a period of darkness and light, of preparation and revelation, the 'apocalyptic' approach was later applied to all sorts of decisive events, such as the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. It leads to rigorous periodization. It is least present in Ludwig. It essentializes periods in Ficker, reaching a moment of near-religious revelation in Lowinsky, and

continues to maintain a hold on historiography today. More recently, however, Reinhard Strohm has realized both a new periodization and new views of musical centres in his history of late-fourteenth- and fifteenth-century music.<sup>97</sup>

### **Instrumental accompaniment of late medieval song**

Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has traced the curious origins of the practice, common through much of the twentieth century, of accompanying voice with instruments in the performance of late medieval songs. His research points to Riemann who, on the basis of a remark in the 1898 Stainer edition of works from *GB-Ob* Can. misc. 213, shifted his view of the late medieval chanson from an *a cappella* conception to one treating the chanson as accompanied melody, a view that conveniently served Riemann's account of a long historical development culminating in the German Lied.<sup>98</sup> Soon Riemann's editions of late medieval chansons strongly encroached on the sources, rearranging texting to set off melismatic segments as instrumental preludes and interludes. Slightly later, Schering offered a hypothesis even more distant from the original sources, proposing that songs in the manuscripts are actually organ pieces embellishing a simple melody, whose original shape is adumbrated by the text underlay of the source.<sup>99</sup> Despite the less dogmatic views of Adler, Kroyer and Handschin, and some half-hearted misgivings of Reaney and Harrison, it was Riemann's view that prevailed, and so performance practice rested on dubious premises for a good seventy-five years before Christopher Page returned to the *a cappella* conception, demonstrating first in 1977 that it was typical medieval practice to perform songs of Machaut and Du Fay with voices on all parts.<sup>100</sup> The circumstances surrounding the origin of the voices-and-instruments hypothesis and the long adherence to it do not, in Leech-Wilkinson's view, paint a favourable picture of the workings of musical scholarship: 'Judgements about history, therefore, depended on assumptions specific to a particular group at a particular time. Evidence (of which there was only a little) played only a small part in the process, and what it meant changed.'<sup>101</sup>

I am a bit less pessimistic in looking back at this episode, one that so effectively sums up the twentieth-century recovery of medieval polyphony. In one sense Riemann did arbitrarily change a prevailing nineteenth-century conception of late medieval song as *a cappella* music. But in another sense he did not, because there was no active performance tradition of late medieval music in the nineteenth century. Riemann in effect prepared the way for the very first serious tries at performing medieval polyphony at all. From his time to the present, the scholarly aspect and an aesthetic aspect would proceed in a more or less reciprocal relationship.

Numerous factors came together to lend support to Riemann's hypothesis. All of them, of course, are explicable given the circumstances and personalities of the early twentieth century. Yet enough of them resonate with the state of the evidence as it stood at the time to make me feel that the approach to performance was not an arbitrary encroachment.

A prerequisite to any aesthetic engagement with early polyphony was the new hearing, the ability to regard non-tonal music with equanimity. Assaults on tonality, either through extreme harmonic instability or through exploitation of non-functional colouristic harmony, as well as exposure to exotic cultures at world expositions and ongoing ethnomusicological research, led to a new openness to give this music a chance that it had never before enjoyed. Harmony had killed the prospects for medieval polyphony from its first rediscovery; now, changes in the musical world offered a new possibility for understanding.

In fact the new understanding came not so much through harmony as through counterpoint. Writing in 1912, Schering explicitly related the contrapuntal complexity of early-twentieth-century music to that of a Machaut ballade: 'the attention is not so much on the sounding together of the voices as on their horizontal stretching-out . . . For at the time of Machaut chords are not bound one to another but rather only "voices", a peculiarity in which the compositional technique of this time in many ways touches that of the present.'<sup>102</sup> The emphasis on linearity (a genuine quality of this music) made the music less strange to the modern ear. Theoretical authorization of this tack lay in the concept of 'successive composition', traced back to Johannes de Garlandia in the mid thirteenth century.<sup>103</sup>

Both literary and iconographical sources seemed to support the use of instruments. Besides vague popular conceptions of the wandering troubadour, some more concrete material justified the notion of instrumental accompaniment, such as the following passage from a letter in Machaut's *Le Livre dou Voir Dit* (1363–5), in which Machaut provides some valuable yet curious indications of performance practice of the ballade *Nes qu'on porroit* (named in the letter by its refrain):

I am sending you my poem entitled *Morpheus*, also called *The Fountain of Love*, along with 'The Great Desire I Have to See You', on which I have made the music as you have ordered, and in the German style [a la guise d'un rés d'Alemangne<sup>104</sup>]. And by God, it has been a long time since I composed anything good that pleased me this much. And the tenor parts are as sweet as unsalted porridge. And so I beg you to be willing to hear and learn the piece exactly as it has been written without adding to or taking away any part, and it is intended to be recited with a quite long measure, and whoever could arrange [it] for the organ, the bagpipe, or other instruments that is its very nature.<sup>105</sup>



It would be easy to interpret the letter to mean that one performs the work as written, most effectively by assigning instruments to the lower voices. This was the performance practice before the 1980s. Today, however, even in light of our best scholarship, the passage resists interpretation. On the one hand, the composer wants the work to be learned precisely as written, which we believe to mean voices on all three parts; on the other hand, he claims that the work's true nature lies in instrumental arrangement, presumably without voices. In our current view, this does not mean an ensemble of instruments literally playing the written music, but some kind of creative rearrangement, and thus not 'exactly as it has been written', because that segment of the musical practice was carried on in a largely unwritten tradition.

From the beginning of modern performances, performers tended to score pieces with dissimilar instruments. Contrasting sonorities not only highlighted the linear aspect of the music, but also helped to mask unusual vertical combinations.<sup>106</sup> Musicologists justified a piebald instrumentarium with a variety of evidence. Iconography, such as the panel of the Ghent altarpiece showing angel musicians playing different instruments (this time not the panel of a *cappella* angel singers), or, better, Memling's angel musicians of the Najera Triptych, confirmed literary evidence known since the eighteenth century, such as the two long lists of miscellaneous instruments in Machaut.<sup>107</sup> Bottée de Toulmon had imagined in 1832 a large orchestra of instruments (the list in Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*) in unison with voices, and this was the image, supported also by the colourful soundscape implied by Huizinga, that Ficker realized in sound in his 1927 concerts at the Beethoven centenary festival conference in Vienna.<sup>108</sup> In sum, to performers and scholars of the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, iconographical, literary, and historical evidence sufficiently supported then-current practical realizations of medieval polyphony.

At least three new interdisciplinary points of departure of the 1970s contributed to the discarding of the voices-and-instruments approach in favour of the *a cappella* approach. First, a revolution in French studies brought a new focus on late medieval poetry. New literary sources, as well as new interpretations of old literary sources, were brought to bear on the issue of music performance.<sup>109</sup> Second, renewed scrutiny of historical archives sharpened our knowledge of the actual performing forces available to various institutions.<sup>110</sup> Finally, detailed codicological studies of late medieval manuscripts found evidence of scribal practice bearing on text entry and thus indirectly on performance practice.<sup>111</sup>

Some aspects of the new performance practice deserve more attention. For example, highly refined experiments in tuning by the professional voices required for a *cappella* scoring reveal an unsuspected dynamic.<sup>112</sup> The

ramifications are enormous, particularly if Page's view of a Pythagorean Continental tuning on the one hand, and a mean-tone English tuning on the other, can be maintained. Now, for example, the degree of instability of the sonorities categorized by Sarah Fuller needs to be evaluated in both tunings, and the actual compositional practice re-examined in this light.<sup>113</sup>

The new sound, utilizing voices alone instead of voice accompanied by contrasting instruments, focuses on uniform sonorities, a chordal flow, instead of counterpoint, a network of lines unfolding linearly. Riemann had already laid out the stark contrast of vertical as against linear construction in 1905, and the two twentieth-century performance practices seem to represent just these two approaches to the music.<sup>114</sup> I hope that my presentations of Ficker's 1925 article and Lowinsky's 1954 article sufficiently warn of the danger of playing one concept against its opposite. To do so makes for a powerful narrative, but runs roughshod over the complexity of the material. Ficker's opposing concepts are oversimplified, and thus his syntheses do not convince. Lowinsky omits synthesis entirely, leaving (in his mind) a set of bad choices and a set of good choices. Unfortunately it is Lowinsky's stark conceptual contrast of 'simultaneous composition' with 'successive composition' that has remained the most common shorthand for these two views, a gross oversimplification in both cases.

Kevin Moll has brought historiographical material to bear on this question, demonstrating that German writings on the question of compositional process in the early fifteenth century are actually more nuanced than Anglo-American writings, which have been too prone to emphasize the polar opposites of 'successive' and 'simultaneous'.<sup>115</sup> Moll's examination of repertory and quibbles with Bessler's anachronistic premises led him to support a new refinement of Ernst Apfel's work, which argues for composers' continuing dependence on a two-voice contrapuntal framework up to ca1500, a view long argued by Margaret Bent as well.<sup>116</sup> If we accept this analysis, we still need to explain a question posed by reception history, namely, what was the sonorous quality in Du Fay that Bessler perceived that led him to explain it in terms of emerging tonality, and by what strategies did composers obtain it?

One might imagine a way forward – or at least some new questions to pose – through the recent emphasis on musical hearing. Citing examples from Ciconia's *Doctorem principem / Melodia suavissima*, and quoting work of Peter M. Lefferts and Julie Cumming, Richard Taruskin characterizes the late medieval motet using terms such as 'monumental' and 'grandiose', music in the service of despots.<sup>117</sup> To my modern ear, the most grandiose moments in several of Ciconia's motets are the passages at the ends of sections, sustained in harmonic rhythm but active in rhythmic and motivic vitality. This texture was initiated about thirty years earlier in another

Example 19.1 Philippe Royllart, end of first *talea* of motet, *Rex Karole / Leticie, pacis / Virgo prius ac posterius*

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system includes the following parts and lyrics:
 

- Contratenor: - te, pe - sti - fe - ro gre -
- [Tenor]: te - sta - men - to quam si - gnat
- Solus Tenor: (no lyrics)

 The second system includes:
 

- Contratenor: - gis in - no - cu - i
- [Tenor]: ve - te - ri dul - cis He - ster
- Solus Tenor: (no lyrics)

 The music is characterized by rhythmic animation, with frequent eighth and sixteenth notes and rests.

political motet, Philippe Royllart's widely transmitted *Rex Karole / Leticie, pacis / Virgo prius ac posterius*, which concludes its five *taleae* with rhythmically animated sections of a style directly analogous to those in *Ciconia* (Example 19.1).<sup>118</sup>

It would seem that Royllart's purpose was the sonically monumental, a visceral effect that moves the listener on a grand scale. Composers continued to cultivate Royllart's procedure for a period of about fifty years in motets and mass ordinaries. At some point however, this awesome sonority gave way to a different awesome sonority, that of comparatively unanimated, ringing chords. Were the harmonic asperities occasioned by overlapping motifs now old-fashioned, or was hyperanimation not suitable to the acoustics of certain architectural surroundings, or did English pieces heard at church councils in a different tuning demonstrate the effectiveness of chordal sonorities? This is the new sound that Bessler heard, although he was unable to find a suitable analytical model to express it appropriately.

For our part, in moving ahead, we must learn to separate a potentially useful insight from its presentation, the baggage of a particular moment in history. After all, our present views are subject to the same strictures, and they too will be found wanting. I agree with Dahlhaus that ‘not all insights into the past are possible at all times’, but by now it ought to be possible to cumulate insights, even if we must concede that we will always have only a partial answer.<sup>119</sup>