

# Early Polyphony

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History and Genres

# Parallel Organum

- Earliest notated forms of polyphony
- *Organum* was the term used from the 9th century onwards to describe polyphonic liturgical works.
- *Organum* can refer to the singing voice -- the vocal *organ*, and doesn't therefore imply a musical instrument.
- Gregorian chant with an added voice at the octave, fifth, and/or fourth

# Parallel Organum

- 1: Chant line alone (monophony)
- 2: Chant doubled at the octave (very early)
- 3: Chant doubled at the upper and lower fifth

# Parallel Organum

- *Domine labia mea aperies/Deus in adiutorium meum*
  - Opens with responsorial style
    - Soloist intones one line
    - Response (from chorus)
  - At *Deus in adiutorium meum* enters parallel organum

# Florid (Melismatic) Organum

- Probably somewhat later style than parallel
- *Melisma*: passages with many notes set to a single syllable of text. Plural *melismata*; adjective *melismatic*.
- The strict note-against-note disappears
- How the two voices fit together is a matter of modern interpretation: the notation isn't clear

# Florid Organum

- *O primus homo coruit*
- From St. Martial, in Limoges (part of Aquitaine)
- Two voices, both in a relatively free style

# Notre Dame School

- A great singing school was founded at Notre Dame in the 12th century.
- Out of this comes the “Notre Dame School”, which refers specifically to three composers who were active at Notre Dame
  - Magister Albert
  - Magister Leoninus (Leonin) (mid-12th c.)
  - Magister Perotinus (Perotin) (early 13th c.)

# Notre Dame School

- Leonin: *Propter veritatem*
- From the collection called the *Magnus Liber Organi* (Great Book of Organa)
- Melismatic organum in two parts
  - Original plainchant is slowed down dramatically
  - Upper line is a freer melisma on a vowel

# Notre Dame School

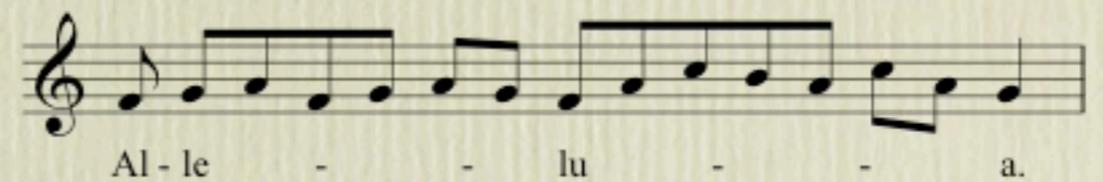
- Perotin: *Alleluia. Diffusa est gratia*
- Structure:
  - Chant: Alleluia
  - Organum: Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis;  
*(propterea benedixit te)* deus  
(Grace has been poured out upon your lips; therefore, God (has blessed you) eternally.)
  - Chant: in aeternam
  - Chant: Alleluia

# Chant: Alleluia

Phrase 1



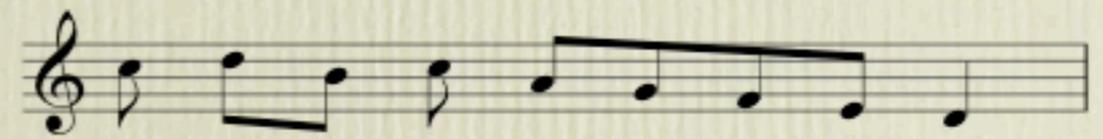
Phrase 1 (Repeated)



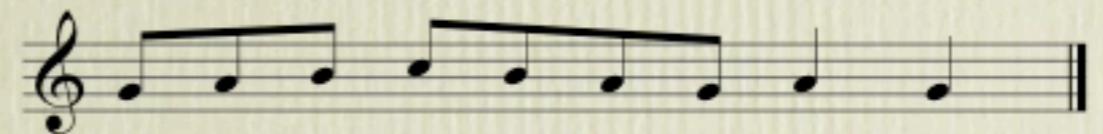
Phrase 2



Phrase 3



Phrase 4



# Sumer is icumen in

- Popular medieval melody
- In this performance, sung as a *round* —like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”

# Modern Days

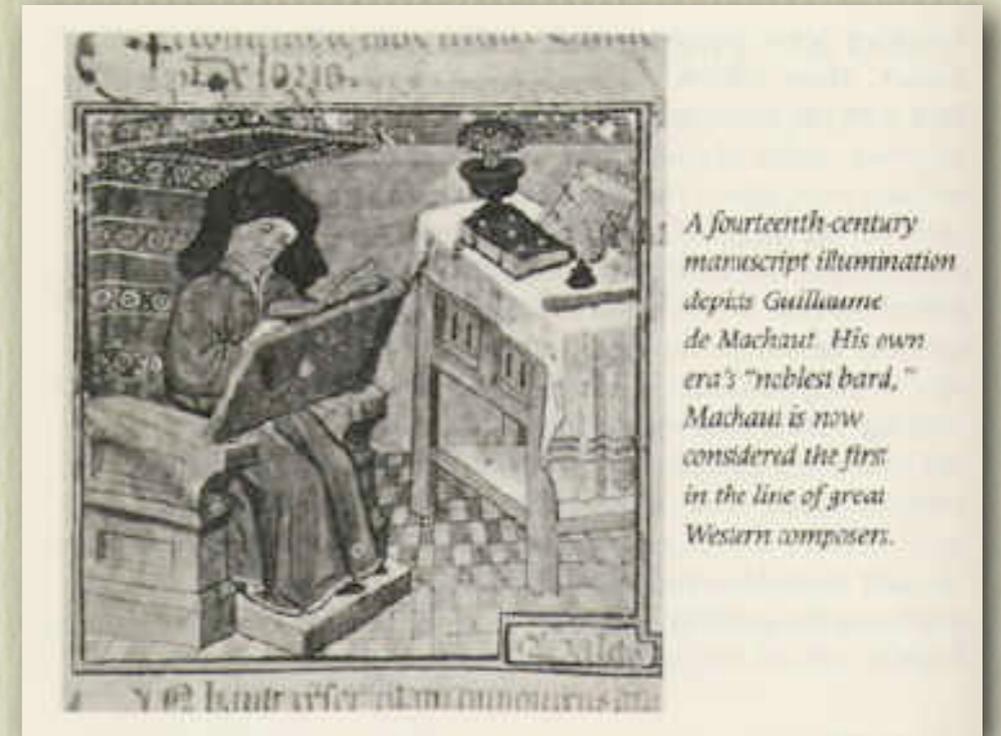
- “Sumer is icumen in” would be familiar to any English schoolboy from the 13th century to the present.
- So much so, in fact, that 20th century English composer Benjamin Britten incorporated it into his *Spring Symphony* of 1949.
- From the finale, a rich tapestry of choral lines. Listen for the boy’s chorus.

# The Ars Nova

- The 14th century in France
- Called the “Trecento” in Italy
- Extremely troubled era
  - 100 years war
  - Papal Schism
  - First major outbreak of the plague

# Guillaume de Machaut

- Leading figure of Ars Nova
- c. 1300 - 1377
- Contemporary with Geoffrey Chaucer



# Isorhythm

- A technique of writing successive passages in music using identical rhythms but different melodies
  - The melody is the *color*
  - The rhythm is the *talea*
- Sometimes the music was written so that the start of the melodies and the rhythmic patterns didn't happen at the same point.

# The *Chanson*

- A “song” (*chanson*) is a secular polyphonic composition
- A *chanson* can be simple or elaborate
- Machaut’s *chansons* were generally meant for a sophisticated audience, so they tend to be extremely elaborate.

# *Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient*

- Machaut *chanson*
- Each line is treated with long melismas and elaborate underlying non-imitative polyphony
- The form is simple: a a' b -- typical of most secular music of this period.

Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient



Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300-1377)

# Guillaume de Machaut: "Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient"

**Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient**

Je ne vous puis trop amer et chierir

N'assés loer, si com il apartient

Servir, doubter, honorer n'obeïer

Car le gracious espoï,

Douce dame, que j'ay de vous vëoir,

Me fait cent fois plus de bien et de joie

Qu'en cent mille ans desservir ne porroie.

**Lady, source of all my joy,**

I can never love or cherish you too much,

Or praise you as much as you deserve,

Or serve, respect, honor, and obey you.

For the gracious hope,

Sweet lady, I have of seeing you,

Gives me a hundred times more joy and boon

Than I could deserve in a hundred thousand years.

