

## EXPLANATION 1.4: MEDIEVAL POLYPHONIC STYLES

### 1. POLIFONY IN SAINT MARTIAL OF LIMOGES (AQUITAINE - FRANCE)

In the Saint Martial abbey in Limoges (France) in the 12<sup>th</sup> century two styles of organum were distinguished: the flowery, also called melismatic, and the discantus.

- The flowery or melismatic organum is characterized by having several notes in the organalis voice (the new voice) for each note of the main voice (vox principalis). The "**Ora pro nobis**" is an example.
- The other style, the discantus style, has the characteristic that there is a note or a neuma (with several notes) for each syllable, but not necessarily the 2 melodies have note against note, there may be 2, 3 or 4 notes against one, 3 against 2, or 4 against 2 or 3. Also, at the end of the work, in the penultimate syllable there is usually a long melisma. The "**Omnis curet homo**" is an example.

### 2. POLIFONY IN SANTIAGO OF COMPOSTELA (GALICIA, SPAIN)

In the Codex Calixtino (1140), one of the most valuable medieval books available, we find several polyphonic works in discantus style, such as "**Congaudeant catholici**", the first composition with three voices.

Another one of them, the "**Huic Jacobo**" alternates polyphony with monophony. By alternating organum with plain chant (Gregorian chant) a fundamental characteristic of medieval music is shown: it is music for a small group of soloists who have the exclusivity of singing the polyphony and thus show their improvisation and virtuosity.

### 3. POLIFONY IN NOTRE DAME (PARIS, FRANCE)

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century Paris becomes the cultural centre of Europe. With the construction of the cathedral of Notre Dame, since 1160 and for more than 40 years of construction, two generations of composers produced large quantities of polyphonic music over there. Two composers stand out from the anonymity of others: **Leonin and Perotin**. They created a style in which - in addition to the two styles of San Martial - rhythm and metre is used.

The organum for three voices is called **organum triplum**. The one for four voices was, of course, the **quadruplum**. This was done to distinguish it from the **organum duplum** for two voices. Apparently, the voices were composed one by one, following an order, so that if we remove the third voice of a triplum, a duplum would remain and would be self-sufficient as composition. In this style of discantus done in Paris there are more dissonances than in other styles since not all the voices sound consonantly with other voices. The intervals that continue to dominate are the fifths and octaves above the low note, but also some thirds. An example is the work "**Viderunt omnes**".

## 4. COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS:

1. **What are the two styles of Saint Martial?**
2. **What is the difference between melismatic and discantus style?**
3. **What is the Codex Calixtino and which two important works has?**
4. **What is the style of Santiago de Compostela?**
5. **What two musicians worked in the Cathedral of Notre Dame?**
6. **What are the two fundamental characteristics that have the style of Leonin and Perotin?**
7. **Make a list of medieval polyphonic works with their corresponding style.**