

Medieval Polyphony: Organum and Motet



Announce

- Office hours- by appointment (send email to request meeting)
- Please ask questions in class!
- Canvas assignments
 - Please do not share materials outside of class
 - In discussion responses, refer to pieces by title/composer/genre for specificity
 - Answer the question fully
- A little more about me



Style Periods in the Western tradition:

Middle Ages / Medieval (5th-14th century)

Some terms related to Medieval music:

Monophony - musical **texture** involving a single melodic line

Melisma - many notes to one syllable of text (**melody**)

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Genre:

Gregorian Chant / Chant

Organum

Motet

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New terms related to Medieval music:

- Trope: a new text added to a pre-existing chant melody
- Polyphony - musical *texture* with more than one melodic line

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In sacred music:

Chant -

a genre characterized by

monophonic texture

often sung a cappella (unaccompanied voices)

free-flowing or unmetered

melodies built on scales (collection of pitches)

called modes

Style Periods in the Western tradition:

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Our examples of chant from Class 1a:

“Agnus dei” by an anonymous composer (mass ordinary)

“Haec dies” by an anonymous composer (gradual/mass proper)

“Pange lingua” with a text attributed to Thomas Aquinas (hymn)

“O eterne deus” by Hildegard of Bingen in the 12th century
(antiphon)

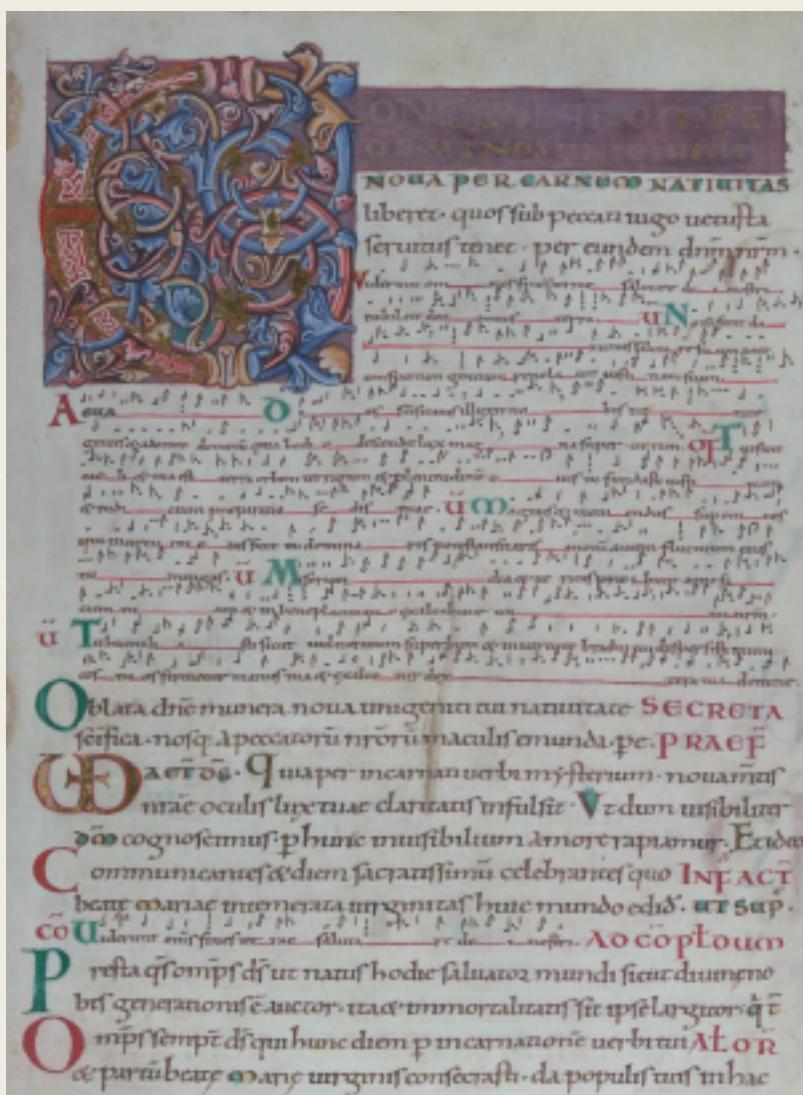
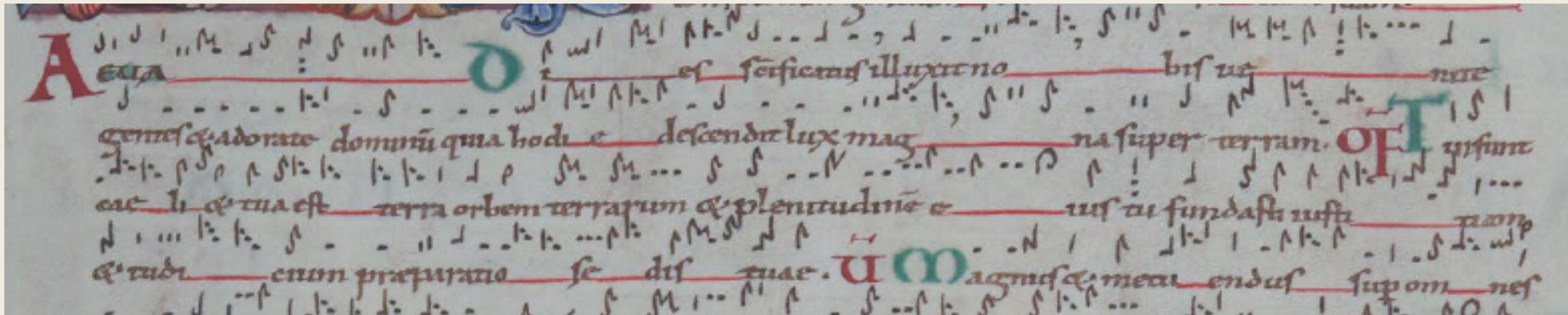
conform to the definition of chant (each fits the genre description), but each are also distinctive compositions

Hildegard von Bingen (c. 1098-1179)

O eterne Deus nunc tibi placeat
ut in amore illo ardeas ut membra illa simus
que fecisti in eodem amore
cum Filium tuum genuisti
in prima aurora ante omnem creaturam
et inspice necessitatem hanc que super nos cadit
et abstrahe eam a nobis propter Filium tuum
et perduc nos in leticiam salutis.

*O eternal God, now may it please you
to burn so with love, that we may become the limbs
that you made in that same love
with which you begot your son
in the first dawn, before every other creature;
and consider the need that falls to our lot:
take it from us for your Son's sake,
and lead us into the joy of salvation.*

Chant: from an oral to a written tradition



St. Denis Missal, British Library (mid-11th century)

Chant: a foundational part of Western music

Chant, a way to elaborate a text, becomes the basis for other types of compositions in the Middle Ages:

- places with long melismas get new texts added to the music (tropes)
- the chant is changed
 - sung in **VERY LONG** note values over which
 - a new melody (or melodies) are sung
 - as with chant, these new melodies were at first part of an oral tradition then written down

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works:

TROPE: adding new words to a pre-existing chant melody

Old Chant text from the Ordinary of the Mass:

Kyrie eleison (3 times)

Christe eleison (3 times)

Kyrie eleison (3 times)

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy

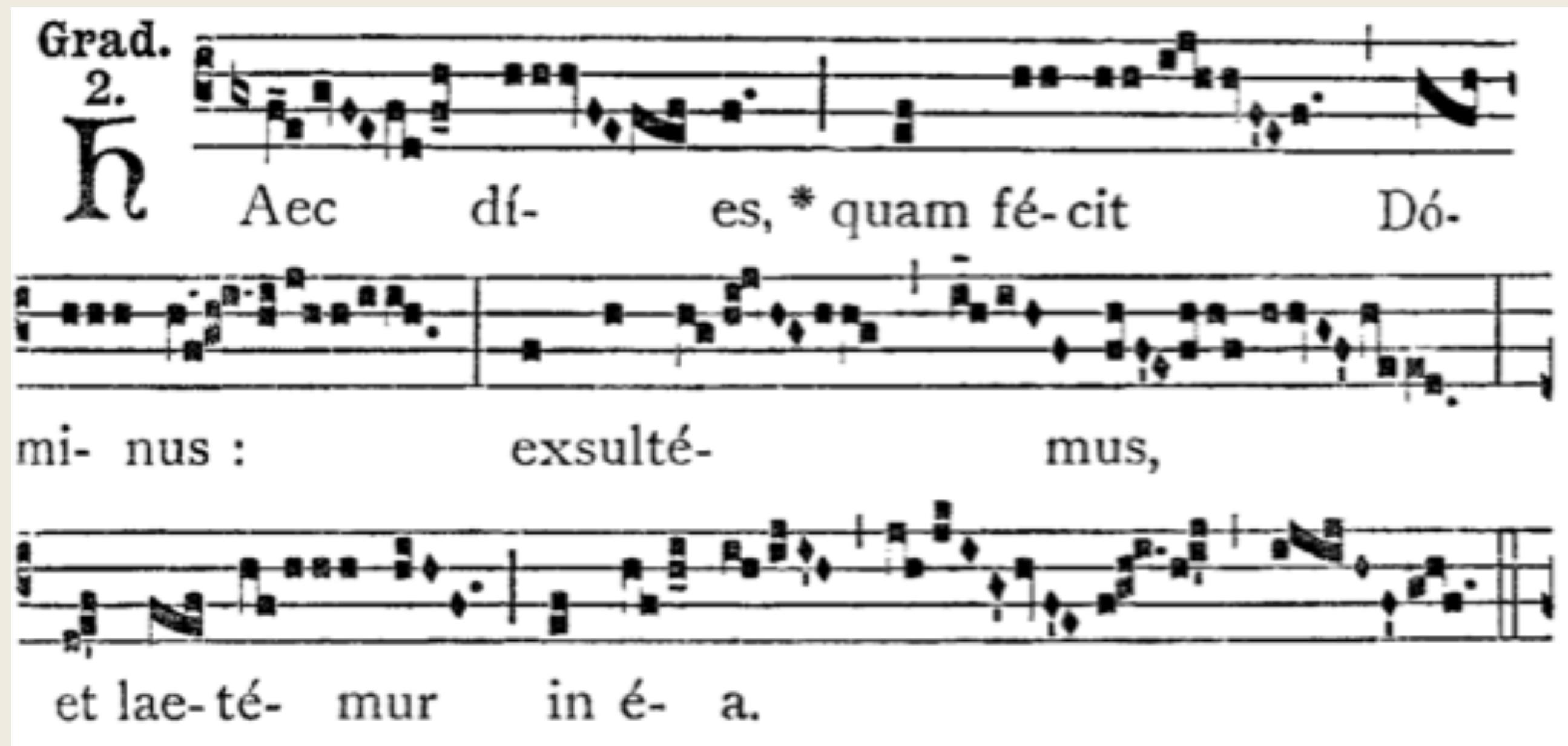
Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works:

NEW text added to pre-existing chant melody:
the 3 iterations of “Lord have mercy” become:

1. Thou Light and the very source of light, God, have mercy.
 2. At Whose will everything hath its being, O merciful One, have mercy.
 3. Who alone canst have mercy on us, have mercy.
-

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works:

Grad.
2.
h Aec dí- es, * quam fé- cit Dó-
mi- nus : exsulté- mus,
et lae- té- mur in é- a.



Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works:

ORGANUM

“Haec dies” becomes basis for new genre that elaborates/embellishes existing chant melody

Chant in the lowest voice part (tenor - “to hold”)

- sung in loooong notes

Newly composed music above the long notes of the chant

- metered

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works: Organum

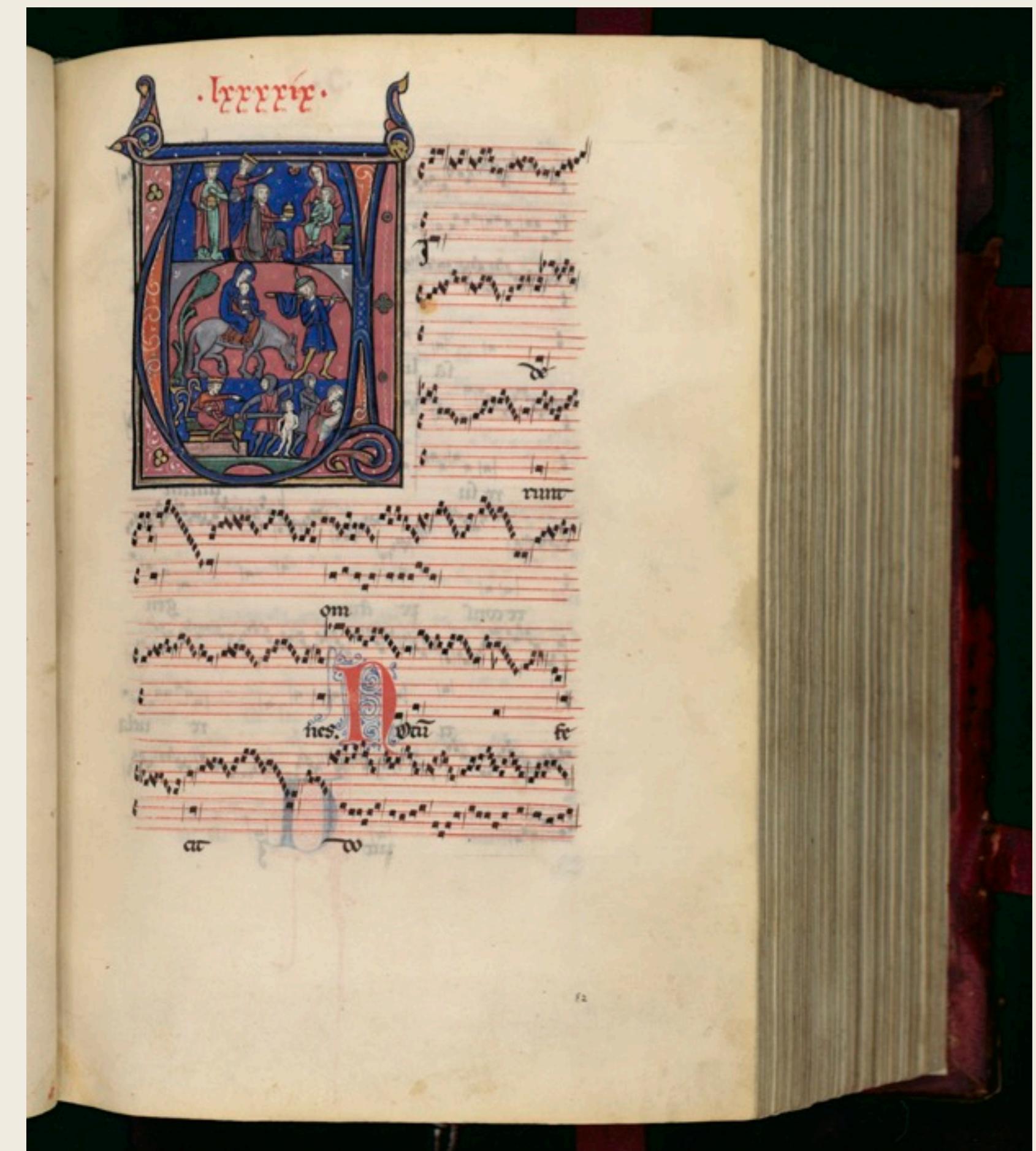
The image displays two musical staves. The top staff shows a Gregorian chant in two voices, labeled [Sole] and [Sole]. The bottom staff shows a setting of the same chant as organum, with a soprano line and a basso continuo line. Red dots mark specific notes in the chant, which are connected by blue arrows to corresponding notes in the organum setting below. The lyrics are written in Latin.

Grad. 2.
h Aec dí- es, * quam fé- cit Dó-
mi- nus : exsulté- mus,
et lae- té- mur in é- a.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imQeDKcltBA>

Early Polyphony: Organum

- addition of more voice parts to embellish or elaborate pre-existing chant melodies
- began as unwritten (usually improvised) practice side-by-side with written tradition of chant
- ca. 900- unwritten practice mentioned in a music treatises
- ca. 1000- first written down (notated) appearance of polyphonic treatment of chant
- this type of polyphony is called organum (plural- organa)



Development of Organum

- Added melody sung in parallel (note against note) with chant melody; this type is called parallel organum
- Later, the organum part gained independence (could sometimes go up when chant goes down, vice versa)
- Next, singers decorated organum part with elaborate melismas (multiple notes per single chant note)
- These melismas became so complex that the chant notes had to be slowed down considerably to accommodate
- Then, additional organum voices were added
- Two part organum (*organum duplum*) tends to be unmetered like plainchant
- Addition of more parts required rhythmic organization
- Developed new system of rhythmic notation called **modal rhythm**
- Fairly simple, mostly consists of patterns of long and short durations
- Can sound bouncy because of alternation of long and short durations

Notre Dame School

- Refers to organa composed at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris from the 12th to 13th centuries
- Two main composers:
 - (Master) Léonin
 - Pérotin (the Great)
- Much of their music was anonymous but we know about them through the writings of Anonymous IV, an English student at the University of Paris in the 13th century
- According to Anonymous IV, Léonin wrote down the *Magnus Liber Organi* (great book of organum)
- Did he compose the organa in it or just notate them?
- His student Pérotin supposedly came along and revised the *Magnus Liber* and added some of his own more complex compositions
- None of this has been verified
- Léonin has been identified as a canon (church official) and teacher at Notre Dame
- Pérotin's identity remains a mystery
- Attributions according to Anon IV are traditionally kept in lieu of more hard evidence

Two Settings of Viderunt Omnes

- Setting of Psalm 98 in Latin
- Two part (duplum) setting- Léonin
- Four part (quadruplum) setting- Pérotin
- Listen and compare the differences

Vīdērunt omnēs fīnēs terræ
salūtāre Deī nostrī.

Jubilāte Deō, omnis terra.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the prosperity of our God.
Rejoice in the Lord, all lands.

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works: Motet

- Another genre that uses preexisting chant as the basis for a new composition
- Motet- comes from French *mot* (word)
- Generally defined as sacred polyphonic piece for voices in Latin
- Polytextual- multiple sets of words (texts) sung by different voice parts
- Like organum, chant melody is stretched out
- New voices composed with new words above chant (triplum, motetus)
- Could have different functions– church service, devotional services, private chapels
- Often text relating to the Virgin Mary

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works: Motet

Top voice (tripsum):

O mitissima Virgo Maria posce tuum filium ut nobis auxilium det et remedium contra demonum fallibiles astacias et horum nequicias.

Oh, meekest virgin Mary, ask your son to give us help and remedy against the cunning stratagems of the demons and their wickedness.

Middle voice (motetus):

Virgo virginum, lumen luminum, reformatrix hominum,
quæ portasti Dominum: per te, Maria, detur venia, angelo
nunciante virgo es post et ante.

Virgin of all virgins, light of lights, reformer of mankind, who bore the Lord: thanks to you, Mary, was forgiveness granted, as the angel announced that you were to be virgin before, and after.

Lowest voice (tenor):

Haec dies

This is the day

Chant used as the foundation or starting point for new works: Motet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h10tDgxb4tA>

b. O mitissima (Quant voi) — Virgo — Hec dies

Ma. Quant voi' re- ve- nir D'es- té la sati- son, Que le bois font ne- ten-
Ba. O mi- tis- si- ma Vir- go Ma- ri- a, Pos- ce hu- um fi- li-
Vir- go vir- gi- num, Lu- men lu- mi- num, Re- for- ma- trix ho- mi-
HEC DIES
[Hec di-
tir Tuit cil oi- sil- lon, A- donc pleur et sou-pir Pour le grant de-
um ut no- bis au- xi- li- um Det et re- me- di- um Con- tra de- mo-
num, Que por- ta- sti Do- mi- num, Per te. Ma- ri- a, De- tur ve- ni-
sir es Hec
Quai de la bel- le Ma- ri- on, Qui mon cuer a en pri- son.
num Fal- li- bi- les as- tu- ci- as Et ho- rum ne- qui- ci- as.
a, An- ge- lo nun- ci- an- te, Vir- go es post et an- te.
di - es]

The 14th Century: Ars Nova

- after 1300, “new art” or “new technique” exemplified by the complex motet
- Notre Dame school organum was considered outmoded and called “ars antiqua” or “ancient art”
- isorhythm- structural technique of complex rhythmic patterns (*talea*) that repeated multiple times while combined with repeating pitch patterns (*color*)
- leading composers were Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361) and Guillame de Machaut (1300-1377)
- Sometimes seen as response to the existential threat of the Black Plague
- But also facilitated by increasing literacy rates and developments in music notation