

# Music at Court: Song and Dance



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# Announcements

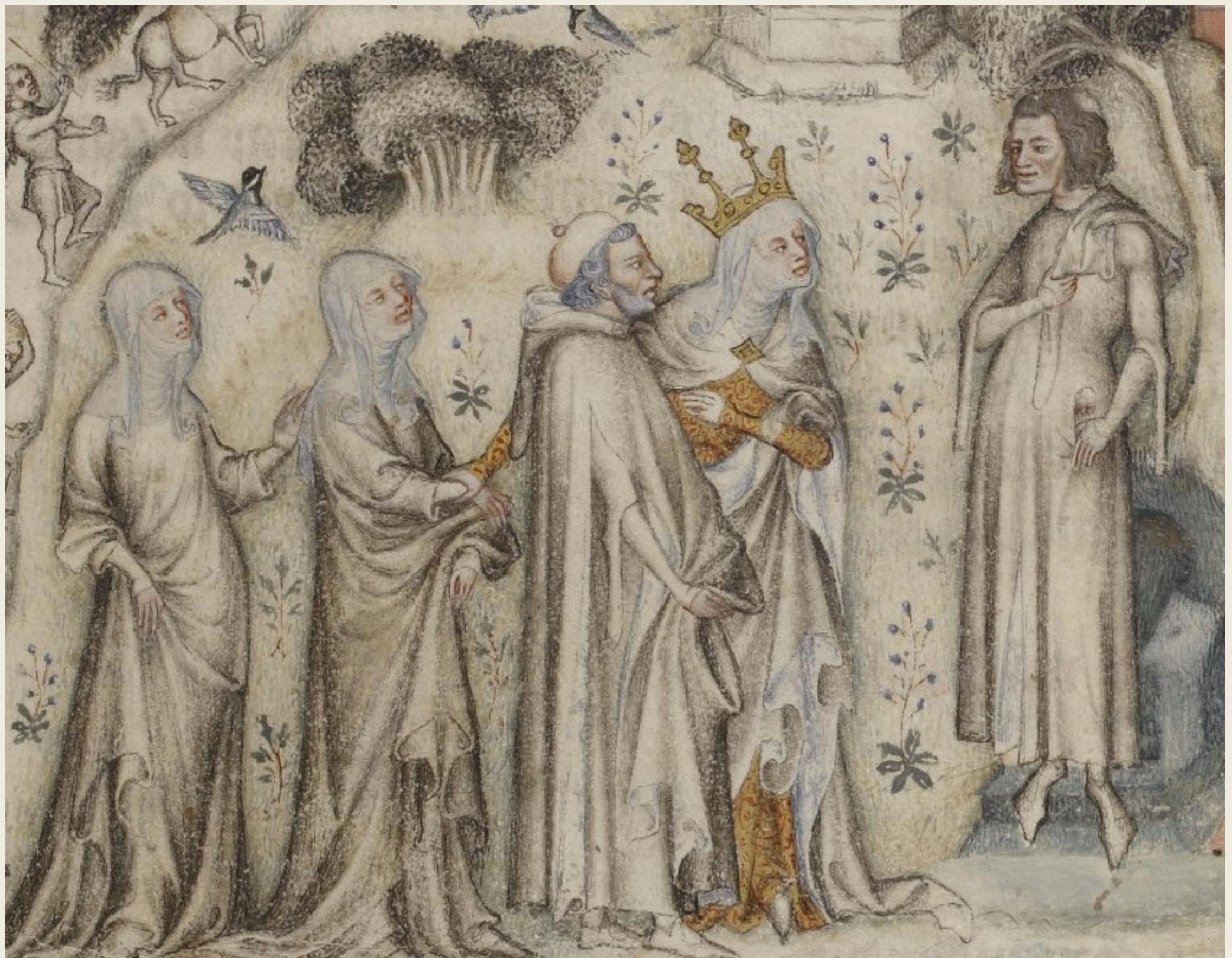
- Welcome to those who have recently added the course!
  - Handouts on table in front
  - Please review syllabus and other materials on Canvas
  - Especially terminology/definitions
  - What to know about Canvas assignments
  - Listening Quiz 1 in Week 4
  - Attendance
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# 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

# Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377)

- Poet-composer, first named composer with international recognition
- By 1323- in service of King of Bohemia
- By 1340- canon (member of clergy) at Reims Cathedral (France)
- Ars Nova, established standards in a number of genres both sacred and secular
- First known polyphonic setting of Mass Ordinary
- First known composer to self-reflect on role as artist in society



# Secular Music in Context

- We know what was written down, not what was transmitted orally
- Writing was restricted to those with the resources for education: members of the clergy, members of the nobility, or educated scribes paid for their work
- Professional musicians provided entertainment to courts
- Troubadours were more aristocratic and “authorial”
- Amateur music-making was common among all classes, not always written down
- Secular songs sung monophonically with an improvised accompaniment, to present narratives or ideas
- Ideals of “courtly love” (gendered, hierarchical, symbolic/coded) and chivalry
- Written down to preserve, not to prescribe, the texts and tunes
- Later, polyphonic settings of poetry (e.g. chansons)
- Instrumental music was improvised to suit (indoor, outdoor, type of event) and was more ephemeral (not written down)

# Evidence for Performance Practice

- Historians try to figure out how music was performed in the absence of textual evidence (e.g. a fully realized accompaniment in music notation).
- Traces may be found in resources such as preserved instruments and places; paintings and illustrations; descriptions and narrative accounts; but we will always have a lot to guess.
- Modern people learn how to build or maintain and perform on historic instruments (lute, mandolin, vielle, pipe, dulcimer, psaltery, shawm, sackbut, tabor)



# Troubadours

- Troubadours (southern France)
- Trouvères (northern France)
- Minnesingers (Germany)
- Associated with aristocratic courts, could be noble or lowborn
- Troubadours wrote in Provençal, a now almost extinct language which has elements of Old French and Old Spanish
- Troubadour comes from Provençal word, trobar, meaning to find, hence a troubadour is one who finds/disCOVERS the poetry
- Earliest of these troubadour songs came from Duchy of Aquitaine in south/central France where Provençal was spoken
- Wrote about courtly love or chivalric love
- Thought to originate in Arabic sung poetry
- Both emphasized secret/forbidden love and sexual attraction using coded language
- A respectful distance between usually male lover and female beloved
- Frequently involved forbidden love (love for a married woman)
- Usually accompanied by lute, which is related to the oud, a Middle Eastern plucked string instrument, or a harp
- Accompaniment was often improvised (not written down)

# Bernart de Ventadorn (1135-1194)

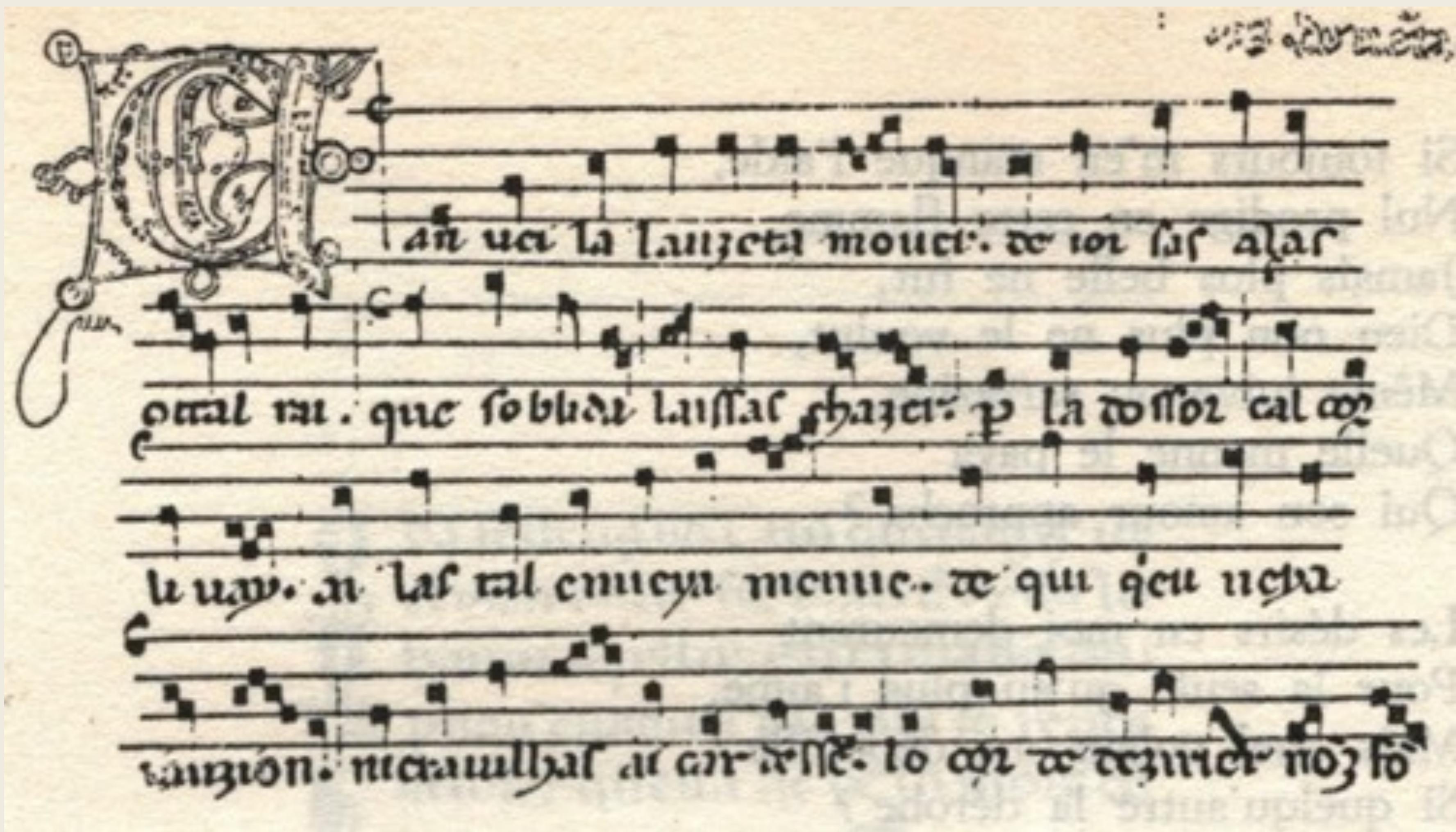
- One of the most famous troubadours
- Started out as a minstrel, a low-born musician
- Eventually served Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of Henry II of England and mother of Richard the Lion-Hearted
- Due to her patronage of him, his music became a standard for many other troubadours and trouvères



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# Bernart de Ventadorn: “Can vei la lauzeta mover”

- **Strophic form**- each stanza uses same melody (A A' A'' ...)
- **Bar form**- within each stanza, the phrases follow the pattern a a' b, where b is usually the length of a and a' combined



Bernart de Ventadorn, "Can vei la lauzeta mover," copied in the chansonnier known as "Manuscript R"

# Comtessa (Beatriz?) de Dia (c. 1140-1212)

- Troubairitz
- Noble troubadour
- Little known about her life, even name is uncertain
- Only surviving song with music by troubairitz
- As noble, likely wouldn't have performed her songs (due to social class not gender)





# Contessa de Dia: “A chantar”

F-Pn Français 844,  
fol. 204r

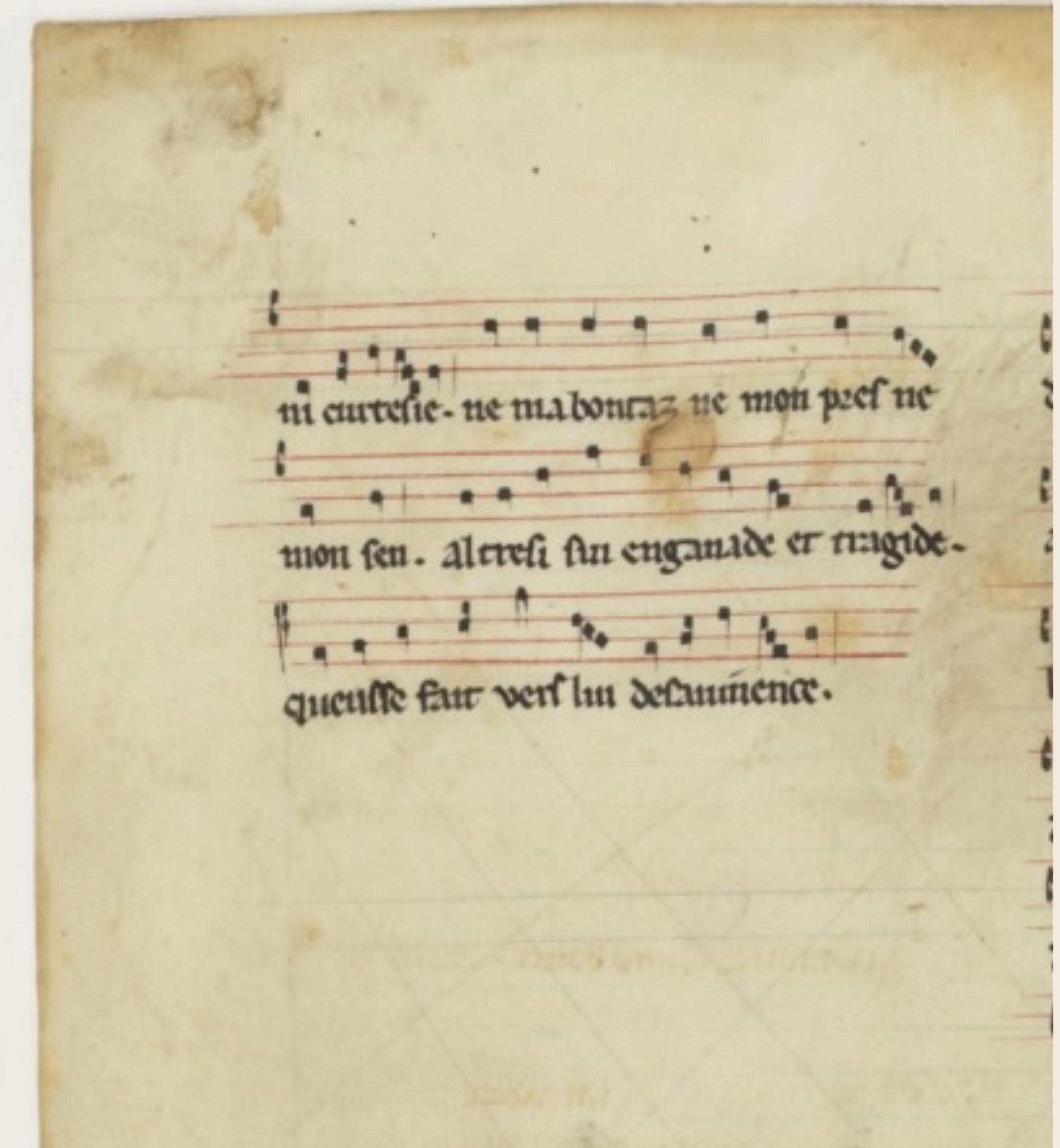
Bibliothèque National de France (Paris)

Copied around 1270 (composed earlier)

# Contessa de Dia: “A chantar”

F-Pn Français 844,  
fol. 204v

Note the AAB form,  
both in poetry and in music  
within a larger strophic form



# Medieval Instrumental Music

medieval violin (vielle) and lute (left)

Pipe and drum (tabor) (right)



Illustrations from the [Cantigas de Santa Maria](#),  
late 13<sup>th</sup> century, Codex E

# Medieval Instrumental Music

Medieval harp



Traverso (transverse flute)

# Estampie

- Most purely instrumental music from Medieval period is not written down and little of it survives
- Some instrumental dances called estampies from Medieval courts survive
- Derived from troubadour songs also called estampies
- Some instrumental music began as vocal music
- Consist of one-line melodies (monophonic) which repeat many times with variations
- Suggest they might have been written down improvisations
- Modern recordings often add percussion or use different instrumental timbres to provide contrast
- Form: AABBCDD etc.
- Open (x) vs. closed (y) endings to phrases
- AxAy BxBy CxCy etc.

# La quinte estampie royal

- From the Medieval manuscript known as the *Manuscrit du Roi* or the *Chansonier du Roi*
- Manuscript of the King or Songbook of the King
- French 13th century manuscript of monophonic songs and instrumental melodies
- Ours is the fifth of eight estampies
- Only a single monophonic melody is notated
- But other evidence suggests that in practice accompaniment might be improvised, especially percussion

• F  
• A  
• N  
• K  
• F  
• n  
• n  
• C  
• C  
• n

maistre Villaines li viniuers. 105.

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veut donter. bon los afermer. riez  
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sonnance ouie - damourous  
penser. tient mon cuer et lie. qui  
me fait pener. volentez hardie. qui  
est abatue - de moi sotmener. pour  
tant conquerster. q lost le roi de thur  
sie - en demoit estre esbalue.

faire enuie - fait bien a douter.  
ou mes cuers sortie. qui deust gux  
der - moi et ma partie. dame lor folie.  
ne doi compater. deigne vous mem  
bier. queen pour qui sumeche. croist  
bonous. et seignourie.

maistre  
Villau  
mes li  
viniuers.

vi merci et merci  
dor auoit. bone du  
me prece lai oï dire. atendu a  
lone tanz en bon esport. or est me  
stres quilegiez mon martyre. en  
tel maniere que vous nen soiez  
pate - quart ne vous vuell fausser