

1 | Repertories, Chronology and Style

The *Conductus*: Poetry and Music

A *conductus* is a song.¹ It consists of a Latin poem of a non-liturgical nature, with monophonic or polyphonic music composed in either a through-composed or strophic fashion. Cultivated across Europe between the middle of the twelfth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, the genre contrasts with almost all other kinds of monophonic and polyphonic music. A genre that apparently depends on little or no shared musical material, the *conductus* stands apart from those that borrow from liturgical chant and its accretions and from vernacular song. As an identifiable form of Latin song, it seems to emerge at the same time – around 1160 – as the chant-based Parisian two-part *organum* on which the related genres of motet and *clausula* are based and appears to continue to be composed, perhaps only sporadically, until the middle of the thirteenth century; it was clearly cultivated – recopied, modified, rearranged – until the beginning of the fourteenth century at least. Together with the song of the *langue d’oil* and the *langue d’oc*, the *conductus* represents the first coherent and sizeable repertory of music – one with works that share a range of characteristics in sufficient numbers to make them identifiable – composed independently of liturgical chant in the history of music. The end of the *conductus* tradition is as opaque as its beginning. Of course, settings of Latin *rithmi* continued to be made after 1300, especially in the domain of the rhymed office and sequence; what seems to have fallen into decline after 1300 was the complex, polyphonic work that has claimed scholarly attention as the *conductus*, and this marks a logical point of historiographical and scholarly repose.

To claim that the *conductus* is a ‘song’, however, risks invoking a number of anachronistic ways of thinking about the relationship between words and notes, poets and composers. And it is complicated by the fact that

¹ The term is declined as second, fourth and both second and fourth by medieval authors. See Leonard Ellinwood, ‘The Conductus’, *The Musical Quarterly* 27 (1941) 169–170. It is taken as second declension here, following the majority of medieval usages.

medieval Latin song sits alongside vernacular traditions with their own canons and their own historiographical traditions. A view of medieval song that consists of poetry and melody, or words and notes, alone does not do justice to the wide range of engagements with musical and poetic materials that have survived to the present day. Even to talk about ‘setting’ a song is problematic.² For example, when a named poet – Philip the Chancellor, say – is credited with the words of a *conductus* – ‘Beata viscera’ perhaps – whose music is attributed to Perotinus, can it be certain that Perotinus is ‘setting’ a text by Philip? The latter very likely also wrote a large number of Latin *contrafacta* – new Latin poems to pre-existing melodies with French or Provençal words, so the idea of writing words *after* the composition of the melody cannot be ruled out. And although the number of *contrafacta* that affect the *conductus* repertory is small in comparison with other genres (the motet in particular), the overall penetration of intertexts within the *conductus* is larger than its physiognomy – as a repertory of songs with little or no borrowing of pre-existent material – is great.

The nature of *conductus* poetry – *rithmus* – that is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 very much gives the impression that it is designed to be sung, whether or not it survives with music. The focus on number – of stanzas, syllables, rhyme and end-accent – aligns the poetry with musical delivery in ways that will become clear. And this helps with understanding the creative process in the *conductus* as something other than a ‘setting’ of a pre-existing lyric.³ The idea of a medieval ‘song’ – whether a Latin song like the *conductus* or a *trouvère grand chant* – needs to be conceived as something much more flexible: where the roles of poet and composer are considered as significantly more permeable than in the cases of Schubert setting Mayrhofer or of Berio setting e. e. cummings.

Not only is the question of the relationship between word and note in the *conductus* one that requires interrogation but the genre is enmeshed in the history of other polyphonic genres in the long thirteenth century. The tale of chant-based polyphony is thought to be well known and easily

² But the terminology is the common coin of the study of medieval song (although not of the motet or other genres). See, for example, Susan Rankin, ‘Close Readings: Some Medieval Songs’, *Early Music* 31 (2003) 327–344: ‘the musical setting of Latin lyrics’ (ibid., 327); ‘monophonic settings of lyric songs’ (ibid.); ‘setting an exceptionally virtuosic lyric text’ (ibid., 342); ‘setting learned and elegant lyrics’ (ibid.).

³ While explaining – and attempting to resolve – the question in terms of ‘interdisciplinary dialogue’, as suggested in Emma Dillon, ‘Unwriting Medieval Song’, *New Literary History* 46 (2015) 595–622, finds great sympathy in *Discovering Medieval Song*, it is perhaps so evident – and a way of working that is by now so venerable – that it hardly needs restating.

told. Individual notes of the plainsong served as the contrapuntal basis for polyphonic music that by the late twelfth century was beginning to divide into two main compositional resources: sustained-tone *organum* in which single notes of the liturgical chant serve as the basis – the tenor – for a rhapsodic, freely composed upper voice in two-voice writing or for metrically organised upper voices in three- and four-part composition; and *discantus* in which all voices were metrically conceived, including the chant-derived tenor. Sustained-tone *organa* were usually used for the solo – syllabic or neumatic – sections of the liturgical chant, whereas *discantus* was employed for solo melismatic passages.⁴ *Discantus* then served as the basis for the motet via the exchange of *clausulae* between different works in a complex history that is still in the process of being written but that involves the addition and subtraction of texts and voices, with experimentation with voice combinations and manuscript formats.⁵

⁴ The entire repertory of two-part Parisian *organa* is edited in vols. 2–4 and 6–7 of the series *Le Magnus Liber Organi de Notre Dame de Paris*. See Thomas B. Payne (ed.), *Les Organa à deux voix du manuscrit de Wolfenbüttel, Hertzog [sic] August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1099 Helmst.*, 2 vols, *Le Magnus liber organi de Notre-Dame de Paris 6A-6B* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, 1996); Mark Everist (ed.), *Les Organa à deux voix pour la messe (Noël jusqu'à la fête des Saints Pierre et Paul) du manuscrit de Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Plut. 29.1*, *Le Magnus liber organi de Notre Dame de Paris 3* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau Lyre, 2001); Mark Everist (ed.), *Les Organa à deux voix pour la messe (Assomption jusqu'au commun des saints) du manuscrit de Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Plut. 29.1*, *Le Magnus liber organi de Notre Dame de Paris 4* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau Lyre, 2002); Mark Everist (ed.), *Les Organa à deux voix pour l'office du manuscrit de Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Plut. 29.1*, *Le Magnus liber organi de Notre Dame de Paris 2* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau Lyre, 2003); Edward H. Roesner (ed.), *Les Organa et les clausules à deux voix du manuscrit de Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 628 Helmst*, *Le Magnus liber organi de Notre Dame de Paris 7* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau Lyre, 2009). Introductions to the repertory may be found in Fritz Reckow, 'Das Organum', *Gattungen der Musik in Einzeldarstellungen: Gedenkschrift Leo Schrade*, ed. Wulf Arlt et al. (Berne: Francke Verlag, 1973) 434–96, and in the introduction to volume 2 of *Le Magnus Liber Organi de Notre Dame de Paris*. The sketch of discursive modes in two-voice *organum* given here takes no account of the *copula*, for which see Fritz Reckow, 'Die Copula: Über einige Zusammenhänge zwischen Setzweise, Formbildung, Rhythmus und Vortragstill in der Mehrstimmigkeit von Notre-Dame', *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur: Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1972* 13:609–70.

⁵ For the motet, see Mark Everist, *French Motets in the Thirteenth-Century: Music, Poetry and Genre*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; R 2005); for recent investigations of the relationship between motet and *clausula*, see Catherine Bradley, 'Re-Workings and Chronological Dynamics in a Thirteenth-Century Latin Motet Family', *Journal of Musicology* 32 (2015) 153–97; Bradley, 'Comparing Compositional Process in Two Thirteenth-Century Motets: Pre-Existent Materials in *Deus omnium/REGNAT* and *Ne m'oubliez mie/DOMINO*', *Music Analysis* 33 (2014) 263–90; Bradley, 'New Texts for Old: Three Early Thirteenth-Century Motets', *Music and Letters* 93 (2012) 149–69; Bradley, 'The Earliest Motets: Musical Borrowing and Re-Use' (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2010).

Although the biographies of named poets of the *langue d'oc* – the so-called *troubadours* – suggest that the earliest exponents of the art were active significantly earlier than their northern colleagues – the *trouvères*⁶ – the zenith of composition in both languages is largely coterminous with that of the *conductus*: from the middle of the twelfth to the beginning of the thirteenth centuries.

There are examples of overlaps between the *conductus* repertories and those of *organum*, *clausula*, motet and vernacular song. Some *conducti* share their music with both French and Provençal song in a process of what is known as *contrafactum*, although the direction of travel – from Latin to the vernacular or from the vernacular to Latin – is often difficult to determine (Chapter 8). The overlap – in the very earliest phases of the motet in the first third of the thirteenth century – between the motet and the *conductus* is slight but revealing (discussed in Chapter 7) in a late thirteenth-century world where experimental combinations of word, note and format were appearing and disappearing with some regularity.

But the key connection between the *conductus* and other genres lies in the domain of *discantus*. The *clausulae* that played such an important role in the history of *organum* and motet consisted of polyphony in two or more parts, based on a liturgical tenor fragment, that was governed by a combination of the rhythmic modes.⁷ One of the principal discursive modes in play in the polyphonic *conductus* – the *cauda* – has much in common with the *clausula* in that it consists of polyphony in two or more parts governed by a combination of the rhythmic modes; the difference is that the tenor in a *conductus cauda* was freely composed and not based on chant, and this has implications for the different types of repetition and

⁶ The songs of the *troubadours* have been edited in Hendrik van der Werf, *The Extant Troubadour Melodies: Transcriptions and Essays for Performers and Scholars* (Rochester, NY: Author, 1984), and discussed in Elizabeth Aubrey, *The Music of the Troubadours* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). The music of the *trouvères* is edited in Hendrik van der Werf (ed.), *Trouvères – Melodien 1*, Monumenta monodica medii aevi 11 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1977); van der Werf (ed.), *Trouvères – Melodien 2*, Monumenta monodica medii aevi 12 (Kassel etc.: Bärenreiter, 1979). Van der Werf's pathbreaking study on vernacular monody notwithstanding (*The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and Their Relation to the Poems* [Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1972]), a study of the music of the *trouvères* to match Aubrey's is still awaited.

⁷ The classification of the *clausula* repertory underpins the typology of the genre in Rebecca A. Baltzer, 'Notation, Rhythm, and Style in the Two Voice Notre Dame Clausula', 2 vols. (PhD diss., Boston University, 1974). The entire repertory is edited in Baltzer (ed.), *Les clausules à deux voix du manuscrit de Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Pluteus 29.1, fascicule V*, Le Magnus liber organi de Notre-Dame de Paris 5 (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, 1995) and in Roesner (ed.), *Les Organa et les clausules à deux voix*, 219–296.

differences in counterpoint found in the tenors of *caudae* and *clausulae*.⁸ *Discantus* was originally defined in opposition to sustained-tone *organum* and also involved the use of a tenor borrowed from plainchant; theoretical descriptions of the *conductus* never went beyond definitions limited by the terms *conductus* and *cauda*.

The very few examples of overlap between the *conductus* and other repertoires – with numbers of examples rarely exceeding single figures – need to be set in the context of the dimensions of the repertory as a whole, which in turn depend on how the repertory is identified and what is included. Eduard Gröninger's 1939 initial census of the genre⁹ – largely followed by Robert Falck in 1970¹⁰ – took a fairly narrowly defined view, largely based on the contents of what were then considered 'central' or 'Notre-Dame' manuscript sources. Gordon Anderson's catalogue, dating from after Falck's but probably compiled largely at the same time, widened the scope of the enquiry,¹¹ and the works that he included in his subsequent edition of the repertory enlarged its scope still further.¹² The most recent assessment of the *conductus*, the online database 'Cantum pulcriorem invenire', documents this scope and determines the field of enquiry for the present study.¹³

The repertory of the *conductus*, as defined here, consists of 957 poems of which 867 are furnished with music. Of these, 439 are monophonic, 236 for two voices, 136 for three voices and 11 for four voices. The remainder

⁸ The terms 'counterpoint' and 'contrapuntal' are used throughout this study in the full knowledge that the contemporary terms *discantus* and *contrapunctus* are also available. The wider range of meanings inherent in the modern terms is helpful in this discussion, and the ambiguity in the multiple meanings of the term *discantus* is important to avoid.

⁹ Eduard Gröninger, *Repertoire-Untersuchungen zum mehrstimmigen Notre-Dame Conductus*, Kölner Beiträge zur Musikforschung 2 (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1939).

¹⁰ Robert Falck, 'The Structure of the Polyphonic and Monophonic Conductus Repertoires: A Study of Source Concordances and Their Relation to the Chronology and Provenance of Musical Styles' (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1970); the catalogue and parts of the text were reprinted as Robert Falck, *The Notre Dame Conductus: A Study of the Repertory*, Musicological Studies 33 (Henryville, Ottawa and Binningen: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1981).

¹¹ Gordon A. Anderson, 'Notre-Dame and Related Conductus: A Catalogue Raisonné', *Miscellanea musicologica* 6 (1972) 153–229; 7 (1975) 1–81.

¹² Gordon A. Anderson (ed.), *Notre-Dame and Related Conductus: Opera omnia*, 11 vols. [Institute of Mediaeval Music] Collected Works 10 (Henryville, Ottawa and Binningen: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1979–) [all but vols. 7 and 11 have appeared]. Some of the supplementary material in the edition is also recorded in Anderson's own annotated copy of his 'Notre-Dame and Related Conductus: A Catalogue Raisonné', now preserved in Prof. Gordon Athol Anderson, private library, housed in the Library of the University of New England, without shelfmark.

¹³ Mark Everist and Gregorio Bevilacqua, 'Cantum pulcriorem invenire: Latin Poetry and Song, 1160–1330', 2012, consulted 28 January 2016; <http://catalogue.conductus.ac.uk>.

includes monodies that form the basis of canons, some works that mix monophonic and two-voice writing, the five ‘variable-voice’ *conducti*, that consists of sections for three and four voices,¹⁴ and a large number of pieces where stave lines were prepared for notation that was never entered (these exist for works for one, two and three voices).¹⁵

One fundamental distinction needs to be drawn between monophonic and polyphonic *conductus* repertories, between what medieval theory called *musica cum littera* and *musica sine littera*, and what is today termed syllabic/neumatic and melismatic music.¹⁶ For both polyphonic and monophonic *conducti*, the syllabic sections – *musica cum littera* – are always notated in unmeasured notation, and any performer, editor or scholar needs to establish a coherent position on how to handle the rhythm of these sections (this is discussed in Chapter 3). For *musica sine littera*, the position is different in polyphonic and monophonic *conducti*: as has already been outlined, *musica sine littera* – the *cauda* – in a polyphonic *conductus* has much in common with the rhythm of *clausula* or motet: notated in modal rhythm, its transcription and performance are not open to significant dispute. For the monophonic *conductus*, however, the position is different insofar as the melismas (no medieval theorist describes melismas as *caudae* in monophonic works) are copied in the same unmeasured notation as the *cum littera* sections and are therefore subject to the same interpretational latitude as exists in the syllabic sections of those pieces.

Monophonic and polyphonic *conducti* exhibit two forms: a first type in which the entire piece is made up of *musica cum littera* and a second that consists of a combination – often an alternation – of *musica cum littera* and *musica sine littera*. These are referred to by the perhaps misleading short-hand ‘syllabic’ and ‘melismatic’ *conducti*, respectively: the term ‘syllabic’

¹⁴ See Everist, ‘Le conduit à nombre de voix variable (1150–1250)’, *Les nocces de philologie et musicologie: texte et musique au moyen âge*, ed. Christelle Cazeaux-Kowalski, Christelle Chaillou-Amadiou, Anne-Zoë Rillon-Marne and Fabio Zinelli, *Rencontres-Civilisation médiévale* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018) 329–344.

¹⁵ Among the many examples that could be cited are those in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds latin 1086; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. Guelf. 1099 Helmst. (hereafter *D-W 1099*), Cambridge, Jesus College, QB 1; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fonds français 12786.

¹⁶ John of Garland was the first to adumbrate the terms *sine littera* and *cum littera* (Erich Reimer [ed.], *Johannes de Garlandia: De mensurabili musica: kritische Edition mit Kommentar und Interpretation der Notationslehre*, 2 vols., Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 10–11 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972) 44, 51 and 63). See Ernest Sanders, ‘*Sine littera* and *Cum littera* in Medieval Polyphony’, *Music and Civilisation: Essays in Honor of Paul Henry Lang*, ed. Edmond Strainchamps, Maria Rika Maniates and Christopher Hatch (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984) 215–231.

Table 1.1 Relationship between stanzaic structure and number of voice parts in the *conductus* repertory

Voice parts	Monostanzaic	Stanzaic	Stanzaic with refrain	Through composed	Through composed with refrain	Undetermined	Total
1	35	212	40	97	3	8	395 (439)
2	14	66	3	126	1	2	212 (236)
3	15	42	1	41	0	5	104 (136)

to describe a *conductus* that consists entirely of *musica cum littera* is clear; what needs to be remembered is that a ‘melismatic’ *conductus* will also consist of sections *cum littera* and sections *sine littera* (*caudae*). The balance of syllabic and melismatic varies according to number of voices. For example, in three-voice compositions, syllabic and melismatic are almost equal in number (54 of the former, 72 of the latter); for the two-voice *conductus*, however, there are nearly double the number of melismatic works as syllabic ones (152 as opposed to 84). In the case of the monophonic *conductus*, the balance is tilted even more in favour of syllabic works with 311 examples as opposed to 90 melismatic works.

The *conductus* repertory is divided according to the way in which strophic/stanzaic poetry relates to the music. Broadly speaking, the stanzaic structure of *conductus* poetry falls into three groups: simple strophic poetry (in which the structure of each stanza is identical); through-composed poetry (in which the stanzas are different) and structures based on paired lines based on the sequence on Latin *lai*.¹⁷ A fundamental compositional question is posed at the very beginning of the process of composition: is the music to repeat for each stanza, or is there to be new music for all stanzas in the *conductus*? Table 1.1 sets out the proportions of the repertory for *conducti* in one, two and three voices and prompts a number of observations.

First of all, the totals in the right-hand column do not quite match the overall numbers of monophonic, two-voice and three-voice works. As noted earlier, this is because these figures take account of works exclusively with these numbers of voice parts and exclude canons, mixed monophonic and two-voice writing, the ‘variable-voice’ *conductus* and so on; the larger figure that takes account of these other works is given in

¹⁷ Thomas B. Payne, ‘Datable “Notre Dame” Conductus: New Historical Observations on Style and Technique’, *Current Musicology* 64 (2001) 107–112.

parentheses. The striking point of variance here, however, relates to the balance between stanzaic and through-composed works. In the case of the three-voice *conductus*, there are more or less equal numbers of each. In the monophonic *conductus*, stanzaic works outnumber through-composed ones by more than two to one, but the reverse is the case for two-voice *conducti*, for which twice as many pieces are through composed as are stanzaic.¹⁸

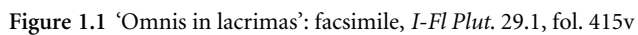
A final qualification of the opposition between the terms ‘syllabic’ and ‘melismatic’ is important. These terms are used in a generic sense to distinguish between different kinds of *conductus*, as the preceding paragraph makes clear, but they also identify different relationships between word and note. Conventionally, ‘syllabic’ means one note to a syllable, whereas ‘melismatic’ means more than one note to a syllable. The inadequacy of this opposition is clear when we examine a single piece. Consider the first stanza of the anonymous monophonic *conductus* ‘Omnis in lacrimas’, given here in facsimile and modern edition (Figure 1.1; Example 1.1).

This piece is found in two of the best-known sources for the *conductus* repertory: Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteus 29.1 (hereafter *I-Fl* Plut. 29.1) and Oxford Bodleian Library, Add. A. 44 (hereafter *GB-Ob* Add. A. 44 [its poetry alone]).¹⁹ In the former it is copied among other monophonic *conducti*, and in latter among other poetry without music. The piece is classed in catalogues of the repertory as syllabic (without melismas) and through composed (new music for each stanza).²⁰ In fact, ‘Omnis in lacrimas’ is one of a group of pieces in which each pair of stanzas is given the same music, so the facsimile gives the words and notes to the stanza beginning ‘Omnis in lacrimas’ and ending ‘solem Campanie’ but also the poetry alone to the second stanza (beginning ‘O dies funebris’ and ending ‘exsolvit debitum’). The third (fully notated), fourth (poetry alone) and the beginning of the fully notated fifth stanza are also visible on the facsimile. All the music in ‘Omnis in lacrimas’, then, is what medieval theorists would call *musica cum littera*, and its notation is unmeasured, as may be seen from the facsimile. The modern edition here provisionally assumes that the unmeasured notation carries no rhythmic significance

¹⁸ The large proportion of monophonic stanzaic *conducti* with refrain is largely a result of the inclusion of the Latin *rondelli* in the eleventh fascicle of *I-Fl* Plut. 29.1. What is also significant is the large proportion of monostanzaic three-part *conducti* (about 14 per cent of the repertory, as opposed to 8 per cent of the monophonic repertory and 6 per cent of the *conducti* for two voices).

¹⁹ *I-Fl* Plut. 29.1, fols. 415v–416; *GB-Ob* Add. A 44, fol. 130r.

²⁰ Falck, *The Notre Dame Conductus*, 228.



The image displays a musical score for a Latin song, specifically the first stanza of 'Omnis in lacrimis'. It consists of six staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The lyrics are: 'Om - nis in la - cri - mis U - ber - ri - mus va - tur', 'O - cu - lis Fun - dant - que pa - ri - a Sus - pi - ri - a Cle -', 'rus et po - pu - lus Par sit do - lor', 'par est cau - sa Mors li - cen - ter ni - mis au - sa Nu - be tris - ti - ti -', 'e Ter - ras op - pe - ru - it Dum no - bis', and 'ra - pu - it So - lem Cam - pa - ni - e'. The music features various note values, including minims, crotchets, and quavers, with some notes beamed together. There are also some unstemmed noteheads and ligatures indicated by square brackets and dotted slurs.

Example 1.1 ‘Omnis in lacrimis’ stanza 1 edition and facsimile; *I-Fl* Plut. 29.1, fol. 415v. Translation: ‘In tears / Overflowing / Let every eye be loosed / And may both clergy and people / Equally pour out in abundance / Gasps of dismay; / Let sorrow be equal to the cause; Death openly daring too much / With a cloud of sorrow, / Has cleft the lands / When from us it snatched / The sun of Campania’

and is accordingly presented in unstemmed noteheads.²¹ Comparison of the edition with the facsimile shows how conventional diacritical marks are used. Ligatures are indicated by a square bracket (the first syllable of ‘est’), and *conjuncturae* – descending rhomb shapes usually preceded by a square are indicated by dotted slurs (the middle syllable of ‘paria’, for example). *Plicae* are indicated by small notes with a slur to the notated

²¹ For an explanation of the noncommittal approach to the transcription of the *cum littera* sections of the *conductus*, both monophonic and polyphonic, see Chapter 3.