

EXPLANATION 1.5: THE MUSIC OF THE TROUBADOURS

1. THE TROUBADOURS IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

The troubadours arise in the twelfth century in France in the area south of the river Loire and west of the river Rhone. Its music importance goes from 1140 to 1220. They were cultured, aristocrats or nobles especially from the area of Toulouse, Poitiers and Limoges. They created a literary and poetic style called "courtly love" that was adopted anywhere Provençal was spoken. This style was very successful and was imitated in other languages along Europe. Troubadours and their lyric poetry in the vernacular (language proper to an area) were possible because the area in which they sung was prosperous and relatively peaceful.

Language of the troubadours

The name troubadour (written in English with "b") comes from the Provençal language "trouver" meaning "to find" or "to compose in verse". The language spoken in the south of France was the "langue d'Oc" and differed from the "langue d'Oil" spoken up north. It is also often said that they "trouved" or sung in Provençal language, which is now called Occitan.

Ways of "trouver"

The two ways of "trouver" or singing were the easy and understandable for all people (trouver "leu") or, the difficult and incomprehensible for most people (trouver "clus"). With their refined poetry the troubadours influenced the Latin lyric of the 12th and 13th century as well as the songs in other vernacular languages of European regions.

Accompaniment of songs

Very little is known about how the instrumental accompaniment of the works was done because the scores only have the vocal part. There was probably an introduction as well as instrumental interludes between the verses. Free organum could also have been used if the interpreter had ecclesiastical knowledge. They used, among others, bow instruments, hurdy-gurdies, harps and lutes.

2. KNOWN TROUBADOURS

More than 2600 poems from more than 450 troubadours are known today. The melodies however are quite less, only 275 from 42 minstrels. Some notable troubadours were:

- The Count of Poitiers (William IX) who is the first known troubadour.
- Cercamon: his name comes from "globetrotter". He was one of the first known troubadours. Author of a plahn for the death of William X.
- Marcabru: was a jongleur of his own compositions, of humble origin. He "trouved" in clus.
- Jaufre Rudel: participated in the second crusade in which he died.
- Rimbaut de Vaqueiras: participated in the fourth crusade. Author of Kalenda Maia, one of the best known troubadour songs.
- Bernart de Ventadorn: great troubadour who popularized the style of courtly love.
- Beatriz de Dia: whose only "cansó" from a woman troubadour is preserved.

3. TROUBADOUR SONGS

Some types of songs were:

- Cansó: love songs.
- Sirventés: originally it was a song of a servant (the troubadour) towards his lord, in whose house he lived. Later the sirventés was any song that was not about love, like personal, moral or literary satires.
- Enueg: the name comes from "ennui", to get angry. It is a song where the troubadour shows his displeasure at situations that bother him.

- Plahn: song of lamentation for the death of someone famous in which grief is expressed in a very emotional way.
- Tense: it is a dispute between two minstrels who ridicule each other.
- Pastorella: song in which a nobleman finds a shepherdess and goes towards her with not very honorable intentions.
- Alba: song at dawn, when lovers separate.
- Balada or dansa: celebrations of spring, love and the joy of living. Kalenda Maia is one of them although it is a love song towards a woman whose husband (the poet) wants to make jealous.

4. COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS:

- 1. In what part of France do minstrels emerge?**
- 2. In what century were the troubadours boomed?**
- 3. What was the name of the poetic style that troubadours created?**
- 4. In what language did they sing and which were the two ways of “trouver”?**
- 5. What was the instrumental accompaniment of the songs of troubadours?**
- 6. What is the numerical relationship between poems and melodies of troubadours?**
- 7. Which troubadour was of humble origin?**
- 8. What were the songs of love called?**
- 9. Which two types of song shows displeasure and grief?**
- 10. What kind of work is Kalenda Maia?**