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The Court of Burgundy : A Musically Fluent Society

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The Court of Burgundy



A Musically Fluent Society

Musically Fluent Society?

- Why was the Court of Burgundy so important in music history?
 - The Court of Burgundy had unique characteristics that made it a wonderful place for music to grow and flourish in culture. They had a large landmass with safe trade and travel, dukes who supported the arts, and an economy that was stable enough to invest in music.
- The people who lived in the Court of Burgundy were very familiar with music and had it as a part of their daily lives.

The court of Burgundy supported music in daily life for reasons spanning from religious practice to showing off the wealth of the duke.

The importance of hearing different styles of music and of contributions made by the patrons to music were emphasized through the court of Burgundy. The practice and performance of music were supported in the daily routine through the church and organizations that patrons sponsored.

The court of Burgundy exemplifies this well through their unique situation, integration of music in society, and prolific composers.

Unique Situation

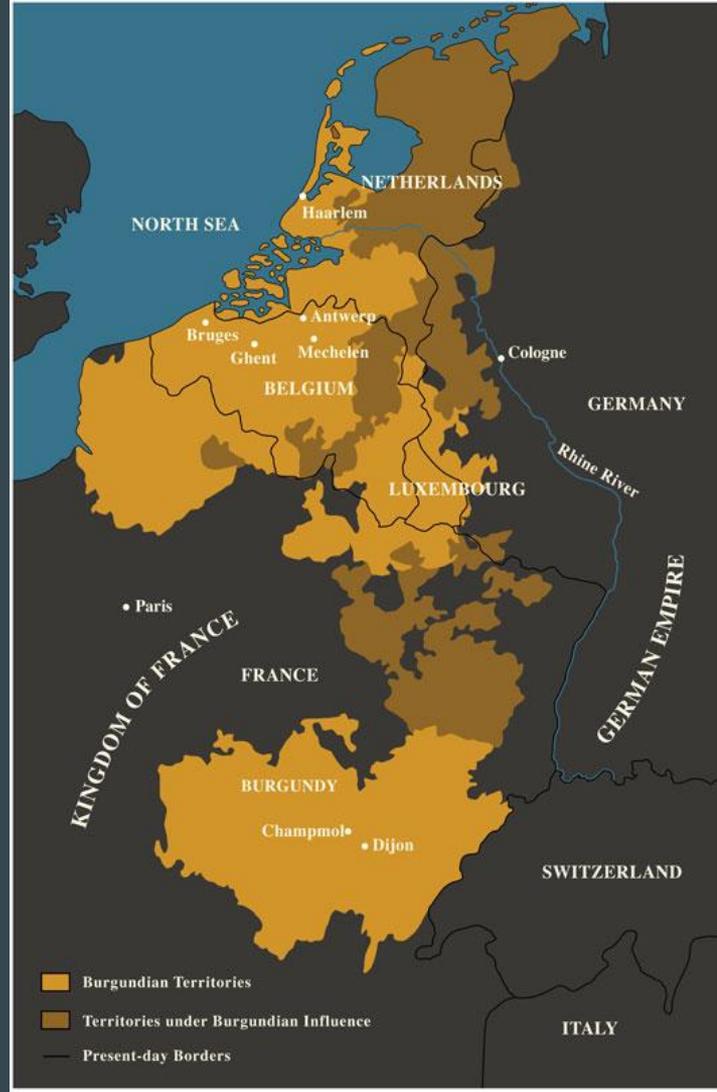
1. The Burgundian territory was very large.
2. The dukes all supported music in the court and put emphasis on it
3. Economically and politically sound territories

Territory

Where is the Burgundian Territory?

The territory of Burgundy included **Belgium, Netherlands, northeastern France, Luxembourg, Lorraine, and Holland.**

Since many normal concerns such as **economic status, safe travel within territories, and political status** were not an issue in Burgundy, the leaders were able to put emphasis on music literacy.



The Dukes of Burgundy

- Philip the Bold - 1363 - established the chapel in 1386
- John the Fearless - ruled until 1419
- Philip the Good - ruled until 1466 - very extravagant court
- Charles the Bold - ruled 1467 - 1477

No male heir? What happens next?

- After Charles the Bold died in 1477, there wasn't a male heir to continue the line so France took over. However, France still let **Mary of Burgundy, Charles the Bold's daughter**, rule the territories with her son, Philip the Fair.
- Mary of Burgundy married Maximilian who supported the arts and let Mary take control of the music in the territories.
- When Mary died, Maximilian took control until **Philip the Fair was old enough to rule in 1494.**
- **Maximilian** took this knowledge and love of music from Burgundy with him when he became the **Holy Roman Emperor in 1493.**

Integration of Music in Society

- One way music was integrated into society was through the court chapel under the reign of Philip the Bold in 1384. By 1445, Philip the Good had 23 singers in the chapel choir which was the second largest of its time.
- The chapel does not refer to a building in this case.
 - “Because the courts of the period were often itinerant, moving from one residence to another within their own territory and visiting on occasion the domains of neighboring lords as well, the term ‘chapel’ signified not so much the room or building in which the services could be held (even though that was the current meaning) as the choir of clerics who officiated for the church, regardless of where the liturgy was celebrated.” (Leeman L. Perkins, *Music in the Age of the Renaissance* (NY: Norton, 1999), 90.)
- Musicians usually moved around a lot.

Clerics of the Chapel

- The Court of Burgundy was the first to make a cleric ranking system
- Chapelmaster - 1 - ordained priest who organized everything
- Chaplin - 10 - 15
- Clerks - 5 - 6
- Butlers - 1 or more - took care of the chapel with proper liturgical decorations
- There was even a Quartermaster who took care of the horses for the court.
- Choirboys were trained to later be clerks or chaplins
- All of these people were able to read music and sing well - music was introduced to them at a young age

Philip the Good... and extravagant!

- Made his court extravagant like he wanted his land to be
- “ Magnificence is an attribute of expenditures of the kind which we call honorable. The expenditure should be worthy of his means and suit not only the results but also the producer.” - Aristotle
- 1445 - 23 chapel singers - made a living through music

Instrumental Music in Society

- Harp, lute, fiddle, recorder, and chamber organ were usually used to play just for the Duke in a quieter setting.
- The trumpet and shawn were used for outside celebrations. Mostly fanfares. The music for these instruments was not written down for a while.
- “Philip's band apparently did not include slide trumpets, but the record of his payment to a *menestrel de trompette* in the entourage of a visiting bishop in 1386 is one of the earliest references to the new instrument. The splendor of Burgundian court life caught the attention and imagination of other courts all over Western Europe. Many of the most important developments in music over the course of the fifteenth century can be traced to its influence.” (Gleason, 25)

Guillaume DuFay

- 1400 - 1474 - one of the greatest composers of the 15th century
- First composer of the “First Netherlandish School” for music
- His style of writing evolved very heavily over time because he had so many influences from different cultures.
- Taught the rudiments of music in Cambri and was a choirboy by 1409
- He moved around for while after that and then in 1428 was in the papal chapel in Rome until 1437
- It was when Dufay wrote the music for Louis of Savoy’s marriage celebration in 1434 that the Duke of Burgundy and his chief composer, Binchois, heard his music

...

- By 1446, DuFay was referred to as a chaplain of the court of Burgundy though he didn't actually live in the Burgundian territories.
- He wrote many masses. Chansons, and motets
- DuFay was not satisfied with the mass cycle so he put the Ordinary together as one.
- He was a leader in bringing the cyclic cantus firmus mass into the mainstream Franco-Netherlandish polyphony

Gilles Binchois

- The head composer for the court of Burgundy
- Mostly known for his secular works
- He uses more direct and shorter melodies than DuFay.
- “Binchois’s avoidance of the isorhythmic motet may stem from the demands of his position rather than lack of technical mastery: the Burgundian court had no use for elaborate ceremonial sacred music other than the Mass.” (Brown, 47.)
- Height of his career was in 1430 when he worked for Philip the Good.

The Court of Burgundy - Overview

- Economic Status - many cleric positions and safe trade and travel
- Political Status - stable leaders who wanted their land to flourish
- Musical Status - Guillaume DuFay and Gilles Binchois

The court of Burgundy was musically fluent because of their unique situation, their integration of music in society, and their prolific composers.

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