Notation and Time in Music

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Images, clockwise from upper left (all public domain): “Iubilate deo universa terra” (Wikipedia); Dunstable “Quam pulchra es” (15th c.); Chopin, “Prelude #7 in A major” (from IMSLP), Baude Cordier “Belle, bon, sage” from The Chantilly Manuscript (ca. 1350-1400) (Wikipedia)
Early Notation and Staffless Neumes

- Unheightened neumes (9th C.) – St. Gall
- Difficult to decipher

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See MS 1670 at The Schoyen Collection.
Early Notation and Staffless Neumes

- Unheightened neumes (9th C.)
  - St. Gall
  - Difficult to decipher

- Beneventan neumes (11th C.)
  - Relationship between pitches
  - Some early notation of duration

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From Neumes to Square Notation

- Neumes take more defined shape
- *Liber Usualis* a well known example of square notation (still in print today)
The Ars Nova and the Ars Subtilior

- New *figurae* (de Caserta)
  - Different proportions of minims give greater control over the duration of notes.
- Exploration of “polymeter” in the Ars Subtilior

Image (public domain): Baude Cordier, “Belle, bon, sage” from The Chantilly Manuscript (ca. 1350-1400) (Wikipedia)
Problems with Duration and Tempo

- General progression
  - Before the 12th century
    - Lack of rhythmic notation
  - Before the 15th century
    - Notated duration all relative
  - Before the 17th century
    - No tempo markings
  - Before the 19th century
    - No exact BPM prior to metronome
Modern Notation (and beyond)

- Early Baroque music
- Tempo markings

- Proliferation of notation software
  - Standardizing effect

- Innovation still occurs
  - Crumb, Jazz, etc...

Top two images public domain: Bach Prelude manuscript; Chopin, "Prelude #7 in A major (from IMSLP).
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