

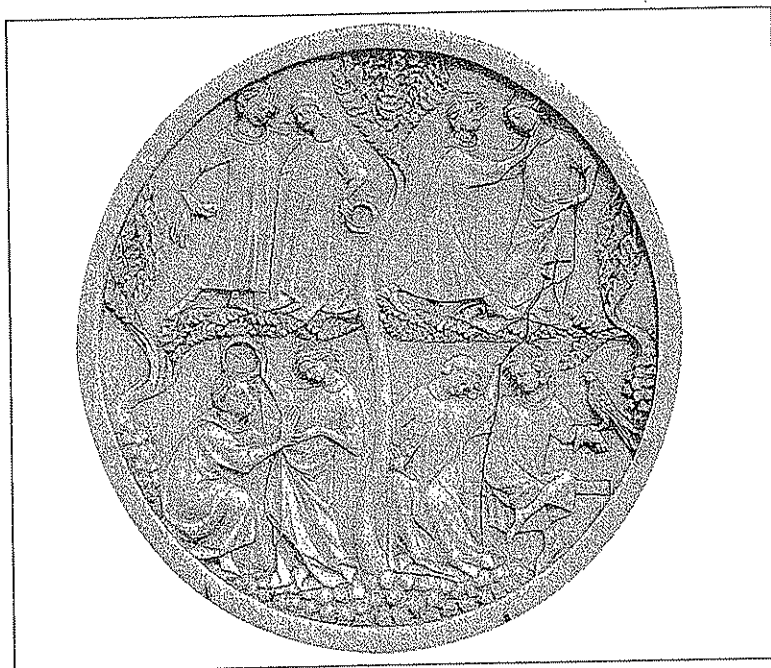
World Art and Music Activity 10



Troubadours

Sometime during the mid-1000s, poet-musicians called troubadours began to appear in southern France. Most were male members of the nobility. Some wrote songs, some sang, and some both wrote and sang. Occasionally, troubadours accompanied themselves on stringed instruments. Their songs—which were sung in the everyday language of the people—were at first taught orally and memorized. It was not until much later that these songs were written down. What this meant was that a troubadour could easily change the words of a song to suit his circumstances. Amazingly, more than 2,500 songs survive.

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage below about these travelling musicians. Then answer the questions in the space provided.



Bas relief scene of medieval troubadours

Troubadour music was composed by and for the upper classes. Knights possessed vast wealth and leisure time, both of which they liked to display. In addition to giving lavish banquets, they pursued the arts in order to gain a reputation for being cultured. Around this time, upper-class women began to be revered and referred to as “ladies.”

The words in a troubadour’s song were of foremost importance. The music was simple so that it would not

interfere with the poetry. The poems tended to be about courtly and chivalrous love, in which a lady was worshiped from afar with great respect and dignity. The object of the troubadour’s affection was depicted as so perfect that she was unobtainable. These were not despondent poems, however—the troubadour was content never to possess his beloved. Often the troubadour would imply that he would be disappointed or disillusioned if she accepted his offers.

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In addition to the worshipful ballads, there were "rescue" ballads called *pastourelles*. All *pastourelles* told one of two stories. In one version, a knight wooed a shepherdess who, after initial resistance, responded. In another version, she called for help, and her brother or lover came to her rescue, driving the knight away. The *pastourelle* began as a dialogue

between the knight and the shepherdess. Soon it began to be acted as well as sung. Later other characters were added, along with other songs and dances, to create a musical play.

Troubadour music was very popular. Before long, it spread to England and throughout Europe, as far away as Hungary.

*Will you love me, O sweetheart,
to whom I have given my love?*

*Night and day I think of you.
Will you love me, O sweetheart?*

*I cannot endure without you,
so much does your great beauty please me.*

*Will you love me, O sweetheart,
to whom I have given my love?*

*King Theobald, Sire, advise me:
For a long time I have dearly loved a lady
With a loyal heart in good faith,
But I dare not tell her my secret,
Because I am so afraid that she will reject
The love which so often ravages me.
Tell me, Sire, what do true lovers do in such cases?
Do they really suffer a pain as intense as they say,
On account of the anguish which comes from love?*

*Young man, I sincerely beg you to be calm;
Do not ask why she hates you,
But be her servant and make sure
She knows what you need in your heart.
For much love is given you to help you serve.
You must proceed by allusion
And knowing looks and signs,
So that she is aware of the suffering and pain
That a true lover feels night and day on her account.*

These two songs represent two different forms popular among troubadours. "Will you love me" is called a *rondeau*, referring to the specific rhyme scheme of its original French lyrics. "King Theobald" is a *jeu-parti*, or a dialogue between two characters, often with differing viewpoints. The authors are unknown, but "King Theobald" is based on the real King Thibault of Navarre in France.

Reviewing the Selection

1. Who were the troubadours and what did they do?

2. What were troubadour's songs usually about?

Critical Thinking

3. **Recognizing Ideologies** What set of beliefs about women influenced the songs' "plots"?

4. **Determining Relevance** Do the lyrics above help you understand the information in the passage? Do they illustrate the points made about the troubadours' love poems? Explain.
