

Troubadours, Trouvères, and Jongleurs

The vast majority of music in the beginning of the Middle Ages was written and performed for the religious services of the Roman Catholic church. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, however, a substantial amount of secular, or music that could be sung outside of the church, appeared. This music was performed by groups of musicians known as troubadours, trouvères, and jongleurs.

The troubadours and trouvères were active in France, the troubadours to the south and the trouvères to the north. They were medieval poet musicians that catered to the upper class, or the nobility. These musicians presented original and new material that was vastly different from the music sung in the churches of the day, and their names, *troubadour* and *trouvère*, even meant “finder” or “inventor”. Poems of the troubadours and trouvères ranged from simple ballad love songs to political moral tunes, from war songs to laments and dance songs.

Jongleurs were a class of musicians who wandered from town to town and were very versatile entertainers. Many play instruments, sang and danced, juggled, showed tricks and animal acts, and performed plays. To the common folk of the Middle Ages, the jongleurs functioned as a sort of traveling newspaper, passing on gossip and news to each new town. The jongleurs, however, were viewed as vagabonds and lived on the fringe of society.

To medieval court life, secular music was very important. It provided entertainment before, during, and after dinner – and also accompanied dancing. It was also important to the ceremonies that welcomed visiting dignitaries and helped strengthen the spirits of warriors departing on the Crusades.



Question: Troubadours, Trouvères, and Jongleurs

1. What do the terms *troubadour* and *trouvère* mean?
2. What type of music did the troubadours and trouvères perform?
3. The vast majority of music in the Middle Ages was written and performed for which church?
4. What class of musicians wandered from town to town as versatile entertainers?
5. What type of music was important to medieval court life?
6. How did music affect the spirits of warriors departing on the Crusades?
7. What were some of the things jongleurs did as entertainers?
8. To the common folk of the Middle Ages, what was the function of the jongleurs?
9. How were the jongleurs viewed in society?
10. What were some of the different topics covered by the poems of the troubadours and trouvères?