

French Connections



2. Cultural Crossroads

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CHARLEMAGNE, THE FIRST HOLY ROMAN EMPEROR, united virtually the whole of Europe. Two generations later, however, his empire broke into three parts, of which the westernmost was called Francia. This was not yet the single country we know today, but a number of regions with different rulers, different traditions, and in some cases different languages—a cultural melting-pot.

In the second hour, we focus on the Duchy of Burgundy, created by the French King as a feudal dependency and eventually reassumed into France. But in the meantime, it built up territories in the Low Countries and trade in the rest of Europe, making it France's rival in both territory and wealth—and the greatest nursery for art and music outside Italy. *rb.*

A. Father of Europe

By a combination of faith and force, Charlemagne united virtually the whole of Western Europe under the banner of the Christian Church. He made his capital at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) into a meeting-place for scholars from all over the empire, and a beacon of learning.

♪ **Video:** Kenneth Clark on Charlemagne and Alcuin of York

B. A Sense of Sens

French culture in the Gothic era reached a pinnacle with the building of its cathedrals, and the sculpture, glass, and music within them. The town of Sens in the middle of France held the first of these, and became a source from which the great cathedrals of England would spring.

Sens, Cathedral, 1135–76

Paris, *Nôtre Dame* Cathedral, 1163–1250

Paris, *La Sainte-Chapelle*, 1238–48

♪ **Video:** Canterbury Cathedral, Choir and Trinity Chapel

C. Christianity Sets Sail

French leadership in the Crusades became the first great export of its culture abroad. But there was brutality behind the chivalry, and the Albigensian Crusade wiped out a Christian culture in France itself.

♪ **Émile Signol:** *Saint Bernard preaches the Second Crusade in 1146*

♪ **Delacroix:** *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (1840, Louvre)

♪ **Theobald of Navarre:** "Sachiez, seigneurs," video montage

♪ **Theobald of Navarre:** "Commencerai à faire un lai"

♪ **Berenguer de Palou:** "Tant m'abélis"

♪ **Video:** *Trail of the Troubadours*

D. That Italian Woman

Christine de Pizan was born in Italy but brought to the French court by her scholar father, who was astrologer to the King. When both he and her husband died in the same year, she was forced to make her living as a writer, becoming a powerful advocate for the rights of women.

♪ **Christine de Pizan:** "Sage Seroit Qui Se Saroit Garder"

♪ **Christine de Pizan:** illustrations to *La Cité des Dames* (1405)

♪ **Binchois/Pizan:** *Deuil angoisseux* (Sylvia Rhyne, Eric Redlinger)

E. A Year with the Berrys

The *Très Riches Heures*, a lavishly illustrated prayer book, gives us a brilliant insight into the lives of both nobles and peasants in the early Fifteenth Century. The work of three brothers from Holland, it is also the first great incursion of Netherlandish realism into French art.

♪ **Limbourg Brothers:** *Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry* (c.1414, Chantilly, Musée Condé), montage with music by Guillaume du Fay, and various details

F. A Death in the Family

Philip the Bold of Burgundy commissioned a Dutch sculptor, Claus Sluter, to create a tomb for him. The unprecedented realism and passion of his

work in stone might be a preview of the many artists from the Low Countries who would flourish under the Duke's successors.

♪ **Sluter:** *Sculpture at the Monastery of Champmol* (c.1400)

♪ **Campin:** *Madonna with Firescreen* (1440, London NG)

♪ **Van Eyck:** *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* (c.1435, Louvre)

♪ **Van der Weyden:** *Philip Accepting the Chronicles of Hainaut* (1447)

♪ **Van der Weyden:** *The Last Judgment* (Beaune Altarpiece, 1451)

♪ **Memling:** *God the Father with Angel Musicians* (1489, Antwerp)

♪ **Ockeghem:** *Deo Gracias*, canon for 36 voices

G. Crossing the Alps

Burgundy flourished in part because it handled the textile trade between the Netherlands and Italy. And where cloth went, art went also—including the many innovative Franco-Flemish composers who found themselves in demand all over Europe.

♪ **Van der Goes:** *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1475, Florence, Uffizi)

♪ **Ghirlandaio:** *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1476, Florence, Sta Trinità)

♪ **Dufay:** *Nuper Rosarum Flores* (1436), opening and closing

♪ **Josquin:** *El Grillo* (Alaskan Chamber Singers)

♪ **Josquin:** "Mille regretz" (Profeti della Quinta)

♪ **Berenguer de Palou** (–1207, *Catalan troubadour*), Gilles **Binchois** (1400–60, *Franco-Flemish composer*), Filippo **Brunelleschi** (1377–1446, *Italian architect*), Robert **Campin** (1375–1444, *Netherlandish painter*), Eugène **Delacroix** (1798–1863, *French painter*), Guillaume **du Fay** (1397–1474, *Franco-Flemish composer*), Domenico **Ghirlandaio** (1449–94, *Italian painter*), **Josquin** des Prez (1450–1521, *Franco-Flemish composer*), **Limbourg** Brothers, Herman, Paul, and Johan (about 1385–1416, *Netherlandish painters*), Hans **Memling** (1430–94, *Netherlandish painter*), Johannes **Ockeghem** (1410–97, *Franco-Flemish composer*), Christine de **Pizan** (1364–1430, *Italian-French writer*), Claus **Sluter** (1340–1405, *Netherlandish sculptor*), **Theobald** of Navarre (1201–51, *French troubadour*), Hugo **van der Goes** (1430–82, *Netherlandish painter*), Jan **van Eyck** (1390–1441, *Netherlandish painter*), Rogier **van der Weyden** (1399–1474, *Netherlandish painter*), **William** of Sens (–1180, *French architect*)