

AHWM 10 Background info  
Metre and rhythm

## THE RHYTHMIC MODES

Musicians at Notre Dame developed the first notation since ancient Greece to indicate duration, a step of great importance for later music. In its final form, their system was described in a thirteenth-century treatise attributed to Johannes de Garlandia. Instead of using note shapes to show relative durations, as in modern notation, they used combinations of note groups, or *ligatures*, to indicate different patterns of *longs* (long notes) and *breves* (short notes). According to Garlandia, there were six basic patterns called “modes,” known today as the *rhythmic modes*. These were identified by number and are shown here both as patterns of longs (L) and breves (B) and in modern transcription:

- |        |   |          |  |          |   |
|--------|---|----------|--|----------|---|
| 1. L B |  | 3. L B B |  | 5. L L   |  |
| 2. B L |  | 4. B B L |  | 6. B B B |  |

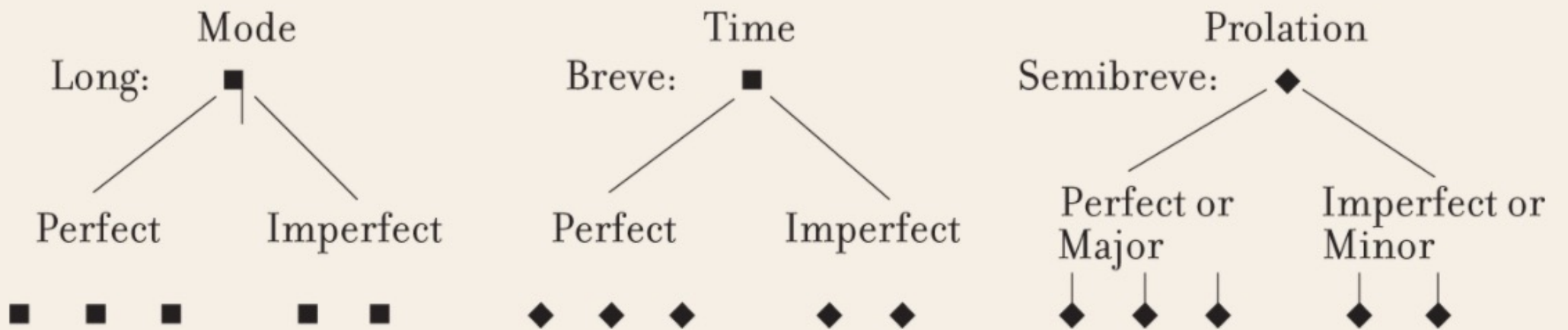
**EXAMPLE 5.5** *Use of ligatures to indicate a rhythmic mode*

a.



b.





**FIGURE 6.3** *Divisions of the long, breve, and semibreve in Ars Nova notation.*

	Breve		Semibreves		Minims
Perfect time, major prolation	⊙ ■	=	◆ ◆ ◆	=	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
	9/8 ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Perfect time, minor prolation	○ ■	=	◆ ◆ ◆	=	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
	3/4 ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Imperfect time, major prolation	⊕ ■	=	◆ ◆	=	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
	6/8 ♩	=	♩ ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩
Imperfect time, minor prolation	⊖ ■	=	◆ ◆	=	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
	2/4 ♩	=	♩ ♩	=	♩ ♩ ♩ ♩

**FIGURE 6.4** *The four combinations of time and prolation, with modern equivalents.*

- Isorhythm
- Talea
- Color
- Name to remember: Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361)