

## ANCIENT MUSIC

- Early cultures believed that music had mysterious powers (healing, rain, etc.)
- Ancient music was not written down. It was improvised and passed down from person to person by way of mouth (oral tradition).
- **Improvisation** - (to improvise) make up as you go along; freely create
- **The Greeks:**  
**Muse** – one of the nine sister goddesses of the arts and sciences; root of “music”  
**Pythagoras** – “Music and mathematics are inseparable.”  
vibration = pitch; time = rhythm. This can all be expressed purely mathematically.

### **Plato & Aristotle –**

“Music and gymnastics are necessary disciplines of the mind and body.”  
Music was the ultimate discipline of the mind  
Gymnastic (fitness) was the ultimate discipline of the body  
Those who mastered both = complete, well-rounded individuals

### **Doctrine of Ethos –**

Music affects character; it imitates the passions and states of the soul  
Listen to the right kind of music = become the right kind of person  
Listen to the wrong kind of music = become the wrong kind of person

- **Sacred / Secular / Instrumental**

**Sacred** – Intended for devotional or worship purposes (religious). Words.

**Secular** – Intended for social/entertainment purposes. Words.

**Instrumental** – music without words. Played by instruments only.

- Ancient Hebrew psalms (song) were improvised by the cantor (leader of song) and used a **call and response** pattern. These psalms eventually changed musically and evolved into **chant**.
- **Chant** - Liturgical music of the early Christian church; plainsong, plainchant.
- **Characteristics of Chant**  
**Monophonic** (monophony) – pure melody, 1 pitch at a time, no harmony  
**Free flowing rhythm, no strict meter**  
**Smooth melodic lines** (few skips/leaps)  
**Little dynamic contrast**  
**Acappella** – unaccompanied voices (from Italian for “from within the chapel”)  
**Sung in Latin**  
**Sung by male voices**

Chant was originally passed down orally, but as the number of chants increased (to nearly 3,000!) singers needed help to remember melodic direction. They got this help through **neumes** – little curved lines placed above the text to suggest melodic direction.

- **Pope Gregory I (540-604)**

The pope who ordered that all chants be assembled and saved by being written down in some way. This is the beginning of **music notation**. Because of his contribution, the chants became known as **Gregorian Chant**. The process of evolving into what we see as music today takes about 1000 years.

- **Types of Chants (Chant Forms)**

**Through Composed** – no repetition of stanzas (ABCDE)

**Strophic** – repetition of the same melody in each stanza (AAAAA)

**Repetitive** – alternates stanzas (ABABA) or (ABACABA) etc.

- **Melodic Styles of Singing Used in Chant**

**Syllabic** – one pitch per syllable

**Group Style** – frequent groupings of 2-3 pitches per syllable

**Melismatic** – groups of 10-20 or more pitches per syllable

When analyzing the melodic style of a chant, look at the ENTIRE chant before making a decision. Go with the style that is repeated the most throughout the chant.

### **EXAMPLES:**

#### **SYLLABIC**



#### **GROUP STYLE**



#### **MELISMATIC**



- **Organum**  
Simple beginning of organized harmony. A 2<sup>nd</sup> **voice** (line of melody) was added above or below the original chant melody. This new voice moved *parallel* to the original melody, at an interval of a 4<sup>th</sup> or a 5<sup>th</sup>. This was the first attempt to improve the chant and represents the earliest steps of harmony. As the organum ceased to be parallel to the chant and became almost an “echo” part, **polyphony** began to develop.
- **Polyphonic (polyphony)**  
Several independent parts of equal interest and importance.  
Begins to develop and be refined throughout the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- **Music of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century**  
**Ars Antiqua**  
“Old Art” based on chant and organum  
many restrictions and rules about how to compose music still in effect  
developing rhythmic and melodic independence  
triple meter prevails  
3 part polyphony prevails; 2 part popular; 4 part being developed  
**Motet** – short, sacred, acappella, polyphonic choral composition sung in Latin  
Sounds “chant like” due to its solemn, sacred nature. Very melismatic.  
**Mass** – Various texts (prayers, Bible passages, statements) set to music.  
Five parts of the Ordinary of the Mass:  
Kyrie (Lord have mercy...)  
Gloria (Glory to God...)  
Credo (Creed)  
Sanctus (Holy)  
Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)
- **Music of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century**  
**Ars Nova**  
“New Art”  
free from restrictions  
introduced duple meter  
more independence of parts  
trouble in church leads to development of secular and instrumental music
- **Renaissance 1400-1600**  
**Acappella Vocal music dominates**  
**Madrigal** – short, secular, acappella, polyphonic choral composition sung in vernacular (language of the land).  
Similar to motet on paper, but VERY different in performance.  
Sounds festive, Christmas carolish, nonsense syllables (fa la la, etc.)

- **16<sup>th</sup> Century (1500s)**  
Vocal polyphony reaches its peak, near perfection.  
Sacred Music is still being fostered by the *church*.  
Secular Music is now being fostered by *nobility*.

Instrumental music begins to rise in importance through serious study of the instruments. Instruments are also starting to be used in choral music as they were sometimes used to imitate the vocal parts from motets and madrigals.

The Protestant Reformation encouraged participation of the congregation during church services. This led to the development of the **CHORALE** (hymn). The Chorale was a piece of music that was designed around a simple melody that anyone could sing. The vocal parts to a motet, for instance, were impossible for anyone but a trained singer to perform. The chorale had to be simple if untrained people were to perform it. The chorale enabled the entire congregation to participate through its basic, simple melody. The chorale is comparable in musical importance to the chant. The chorale is the first example of **HOMOPHONIC** music.

**Homophonic (homophony):** Melody of primary interest with an accompaniment to support it.

In the Middle Ages (Ars Antiqua, Ars Nova) the church was the only real support for musicians. **MUSIC EXISTED TO PRAISE GOD.** Music was being advanced through the careful study and support of the church.

Secular music did exist, but it was highly unorganized. The most visible secular musicians were wandering minstrels called **TROUBADORS**. These musicians traveled the land performing music for people. They often used instruments to accompany their song, particularly the lute (a small, hand held harp). Since they performed secular music, the songs would have been sung in the vernacular.

**Monophonic example (chant) Salve Regina**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAmydVsNMqM>

**Homophonic example (Chorale) Now Thank We All Our God**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6OA6YL-EIs>

**Polyphonic example (Motet)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwCtYOb2OA4>