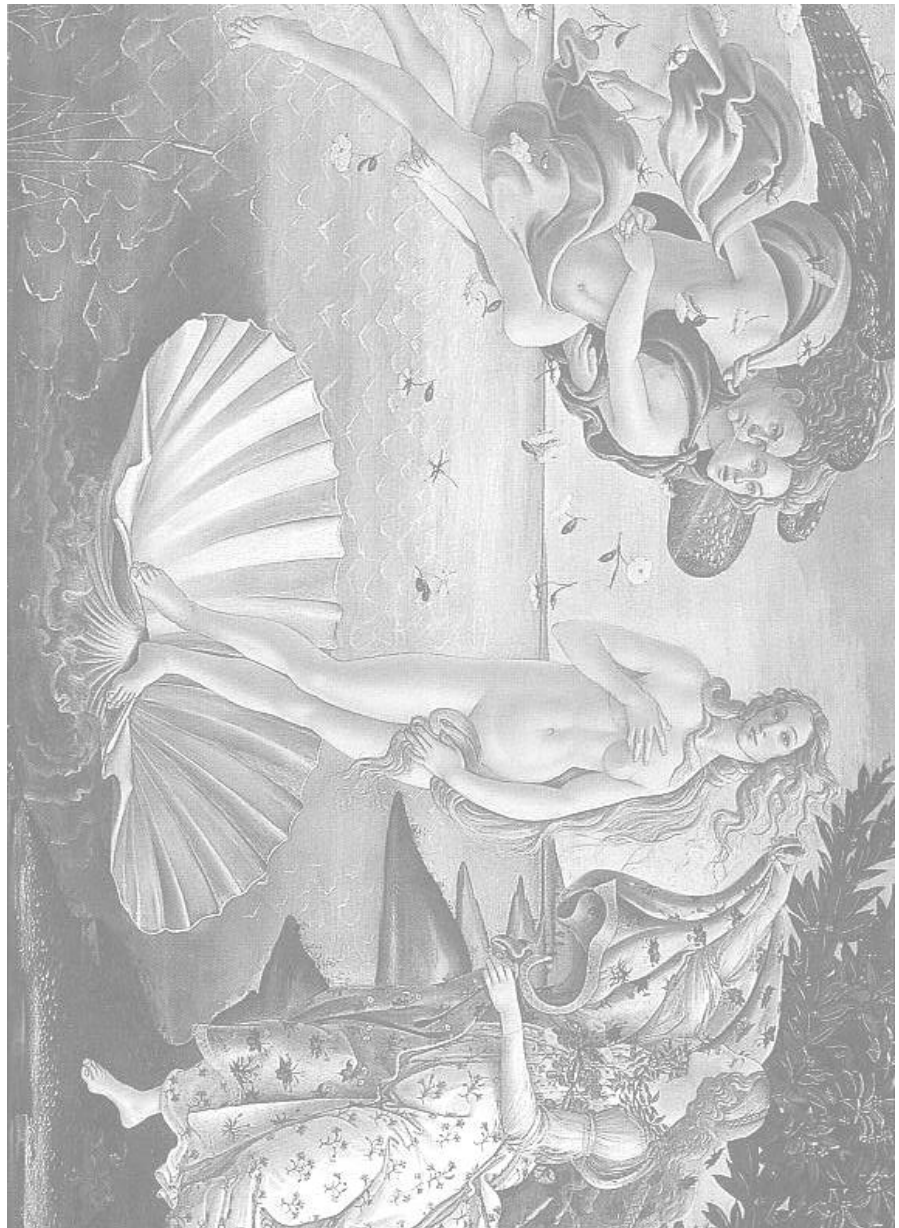


Renaissance literally means “Re-birth”, especially the rediscovery of the artistic and philosophical ideals of Ancient Greece after “the Dark Ages”. The Renaissance brought an explosion of new ideas and advancements in art, architecture, science and philosophy. It was a time during which art, literature and music was brought to prominence and was a time of renewed interest in exploring all aspects of life on earth. Musically, vocal music was the most important. The greatest composer of the period was Palestrina. He wrote in almost every style available to him, and his works were often used as models by other composers. Palestrina is credited with ‘saving’ music when its appropriateness and value was questioned by the hierarchy of the Church.

The Polyphonic music (where many melodies are combined and overlapped by entering and leaving at various times) of the Renaissance was not all religious, however. Secular (non-religious) music became an option for serious composers in contrast with the sacred (religious) music which had, to this point in history, been the only ‘serious’ or ‘acceptable’ music. Secular music was generally livelier and more rhythmic than the music

of the Church. The Madrigal was one of these early types of secular music. Instruments were organized into ‘Consorts’ – families of instruments (e.g. recorders) which played together. A ‘Broken Consort’ was a group of instruments from different families (so that the sameness of sound was ‘broken’) that played together (like a chamber group).

Wind Bands, by the late 1400s, were a part of every major court and important city providing music for a wide variety of civic functions. They occasionally combined with singers for church services, and would play transcriptions of vocal pieces regularly. Three to six musicians playing for dances, processions and other community events were common. Each wind player was expected to be able to play multiple instruments (and change when it suited the piece). The most common instruments were shawms, pipes and drums; although a slide instrument called the sackbut (a predecessor of the trombone) was added in the early 1400s. However, wind bands had their prominent artistic positions challenged by the new popularity of string instruments at the end of the 1500s.



Some general characteristics of Renaissance Music

MELODY:	Melodies based primarily on modes. Accidentals are gradually introduced.
RHYTHM:	Use of ISORHYTHM (a lengthy, repeated rhythmic pattern) and HOCKET (literally means ‘hiccup’) where the syncopated rhythm of the melody is broken up into very short phrases, even separate notes, with rests in between, shared by two or more voices.
TEXTURE:	Richer, fuller texture. Blending, rather than contrasting strands, usually in four or more parts, with a greater concern with the flow and progression of chords
TIMBRE:	Instruments were formed into CONSORTS (families of instruments); A Cappella singing

Some Important Definitions

PRINTING PRESS	A mechanical device, invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1453, which made mass production of books possible, affordable and fashionable! This led directly to increased literacy and, in the opinion of many scholars, is the greatest invention of all time!
A CAPPELLA	Vocal music which is unaccompanied (Italian: “for the chapel”)
ANTIPHONAL	A technique in which the performing ensemble is split into sections which perform separately and together, usually placed in different locations
MADRIGAL	Secular song of the Renaissance for one or more voices, sometimes accompanied by the lute; words were often poems about life or beauty
MOTET	Sacred version of a Madrigal for two or more parts, performed A Cappella
CHROMATICISM	The use of notes outside of the prevailing key
WORD PAINTING	The musical depiction of words in text. Using the device of word painting, the music tries to imitate the emotion, action, or adjectival description in the text. This device was used often in madrigals and other works of the Renaissance
MASS	A Catholic Church service
MONOPHONY	Music with one single melody
HOMOPHONY	Music in which each voice is rhythmically similar but has different notes
POLYPHONY	Music with two or more independent voices

Some Important Composers

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina	(1525 -- 1594)
John Farmer	(1570 – 1601)
Orlando di Lasso	(1532 – 1594)
Thomas Tallis	(1505 – 1585)