

Study Guide – Medieval & Renaissance History

Terminology & Definitions

- *Hocket*: A compositional technique that was used in the late Medieval and throughout the Renaissance era; the melody is being carried by two or more voices trading off every few notes; from the French word for 'hiccup'
- *Renaissance*: A time of artistic rejuvenation, when the Western world made giant leaps forward; actually started with people trying to rediscover the past (ancient Greece & Rome); from the French word for 'rebirth'
- *Isorhythm*: a long, repeated rhythmic pattern; started in *ars nova* and used throughout Renaissance; a way to reuse and build on older *cantus firmi*
- *The Music of the Spheres*: the unheard music that Plato believed was produced by the revolutions of the planets; this music was believed to govern the functioning of everything in the universe, including the human soul
- *Tibia/ Aulos*: an ancient double-reed instrument (like an oboe); a single player would simultaneously play two of them
- *Lyre*: an ancient handheld harp; in Greek mythology, Orpheus played one to lead Eurydice out of the underworld
- *Cantus Firmus*: An older melody/ text that is reused to create new music; usually a Plainchant melody but, by the end of the Renaissance, composers were reusing old madrigal and motet melodies as well
- *Ars Nova*: A movement in France that radically changed the future; defining feature is isorhythm; from the Latin 'New Art'
- *Organum*: An early harmony technique, where a second voice would be added above or below the *cantus firmus*; two types (parallel = 2nd voice moves with main voice, always a set interval away, usually a 4th or 5th; florid = 2nd voice moves much more than main voice, usually 3-4 notes for every note of the *cantus firmus*)
- *Fauxbourdon*: An evolution of organum, which features two additional voices, almost always moving in parallel, a 4th and a 6th below the *cantus firmus*
- *Consort*: a group of like instruments; for example, a recorder consort would include 5 different sizes of recorder
- *Sacred*: Music that is used exclusively for religious purposes
- *Secular*: Music that is used in non-religious contexts

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Important Forms

- *Gregorian Chant (Plainchant)*:
- *Motet*: Appeared towards the end of the Medieval; polyphonic vocal music; 3 voices, **each singing a different text**; the lowest voice is always an older *cantus firmus* melody
- *Madrigal*: The most important **secular** form in the Renaissance; polyphonic vocal music; 4–6 distinct voices; all singing the same text (sometimes moving together, sometimes not)

Historical Implications, Sample Questions & Other Important Stuff

- *How did the Renaissance era begin?*
 - Hundred Years' War + corruption in Catholic Church + Black Death = everyone is very disillusioned; disillusioned people always try to return to an earlier (presumably better) time, so people tried to recreate the glory days of ancient Greece and Rome
 - *Ars Nova* movement rejected the increasingly complex forms of the late Medieval (the motet, with its 3 different texts, for example)
 - The advent of movable type meant that people could print and distribute music much more easily
- *What happened to most of the early Greek & Roman music? Why?*
 - It was almost all destroyed by the Catholic Church because:
 - It was associated too much with secular pleasures, something the Church frowned on
 - It was written for the enjoyment of people, rather than the exultation of God
 - It reminded people of the Pagan religions they had only recently abandoned (or been forced to abandon...)
- *What is imitation?*
 - A compositional technique wherein a melody (a collection of intervals) is repeated in different voices **starting on different pitches**, to create harmony