The Renaissance

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, strategems and spoils.

— William Shakespeare

During the Renaissance, music was an important leisure activity; every educated person was expected to play an instrument and read musical notation. *A Concert,* by the Italian painter Lorenzo Costa (1460–1535), shows a man playing a lute accompanying himself and two other singers.

Renaissance (1450–1600)

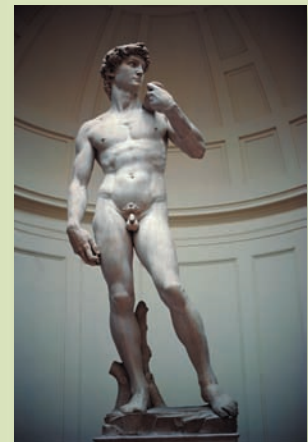|	1450–1500	1500–1600
Historical and Cultural Events	**1453** Fall of Constantinople **1456** Gutenberg Bible **1492** Columbus reaches America	**1517** Martin Luther's ninety-five theses, start of the Reformation **1545–63** Council of Trent **1558–1603** Elizabeth I, queen of England **1588** Spanish Armada defeated
Arts and Letters	**1482** Botticelli, *La Primavera*	**c. 1503** Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa* **1504** Michelangelo, *David* **1505** Raphael, *School of Athens* **c. 1570** Titian, *Venus and the Lute Player* **1596** Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*
Music	**c. 1475** Josquin Desprez, *Ave Maria . . . Virgo Serena*	**1563** Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass* **c. 1600** John Dowland, *Flow My Tears* **1601** Thomas Weelkes, *As Vesta Was Descending*

THE RENAISSANCE (1450-1600)

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe have come to be known as the Renaissance. People then spoke of a "rebirth," or *renaissance,* of human creativity. It was a period of exploration and adventure—consider the voyages of Christopher Columbus (1492), Vasco da Gama (1498), and Ferdinand Magellan (1519–1522). The Renaissance was an age of curiosity and individualism, too, as can be seen in the remarkable life of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), who was a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist—and a fine musician as well.

During the Renaissance, the dominant intellectual movement, which was called *humanism,* focused on human life and its accomplishments. Humanists were not concerned with an afterlife in heaven or hell. Though devout Christians, they were captivated by the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. They became intoxicated with the beauty of ancient languages—Greek and Latin—and with the literature of antiquity. Humanism strongly influenced art throughout the Renaissance. Painters and sculptors were attracted to subjects drawn from classical literature and mythology. Once again they depicted the nude human body, which had been a favorite theme of antiquity but an object of shame and concealment during the Middle Ages. Medieval artists had been concerned more with religious symbolism than with lifelike representation. They had

During the Renaissance, the Virgin Mary was depicted as a beautiful, idealized young woman. Renaissance painters emphasized balance and used perspective to create an illusion of depth. *Madonna del Granduca* (c. 1505) by Raphael.

Renaissance sculptors and painters once again depicted the nude human body, which had been an object of shame and concealment during the Middle Ages. *David* (1504) by Michelangelo.

Classical mythology was an important source of inspiration for Renaissance art. *La Primavera* (*Spring;* c. 1482) by Sandro Botticelli depicts Venus (center); the Three Graces and Mercury (left); and Flora, Spring, and Zephyrus (right).

conceived of a picture as a flat, impenetrable surface on which persons or objects were shown. Renaissance painters like Raphael (1483–1520) and Leonardo da Vinci were more interested in realism and used linear perspective, a geometrical system for creating an illusion of space and depth. During the Renaissance, painters no longer treated the Virgin Mary as a childlike, unearthly creature; they showed her as a beautiful young woman.

The Catholic church was far less powerful during the Renaissance than it had been during the Middle Ages, for the unity of Christendom was exploded by the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther (1483–1546). No longer

did the church monopolize learning. Aristocrats and the upper middle class now considered education a status symbol, and they hired scholars to teach their children. The invention of printing with movable type (around 1450) accelerated the spread of learning. Before 1450, books were rare and extremely expensive because they were copied entirely by hand. But by 1500, 15 million to 20 million copies of 40,000 editions had been printed in Europe.

Renaissance artists were strongly influenced by the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. *The School of Athens* (1505) by Raphael, showing the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato (center). Plato is painted in the likeness of Leonardo da Vinci.

1 Music in the Renaissance

(1450–1600)

The Renaissance in music occurred between 1450 and 1600. (Some historians place the beginning of the Renaissance as early as 1400.) As in the other arts, the horizons of music were greatly expanded. The invention of printing widened the circulation of music, too, and the number of composers and performers increased.

In keeping with the Renaissance ideal of the "universal man," every educated person was expected to be trained in music. "I am not pleased with the courtier if he be not also a musician," Castiglione wrote in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528). Shakespeare's stage directions call for music more than 300 times, and his plays are full of beautiful tributes to music:

> The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.
> *(The Merchant of Venice)*

As in the past, musicians worked in churches, courts, and towns. Church choirs grew in size. (The papal choir in Rome increased from ten singers in 1442 to twenty-four in 1483.) Although polyphonic church music in the Middle Ages was usually sung by several soloists, during the Renaissance it was performed by an entire (male) choir. The church remained an important patron of music, but musical activity gradually shifted to the courts. Kings, princes, and dukes competed for the finest composers. A single court might have ten to sixty musicians, including singers as well as instrumentalists. Women functioned as virtuoso singers at several Italian courts during the late Renaissance. A court music director would compose secular pieces to entertain the nobility and sacred works for the court chapel. The nobility often brought their musicians along when traveling from one castle to another.

Renaissance town musicians played for civic processions, weddings, and religious services. In general, musicians enjoyed higher status and pay than ever before. Composers were no longer content to remain unknown; like other artists, they sought credit for their work.

Many leading Renaissance composers came from the Low Countries (Flanders), an area which now includes parts of the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France. These Flemish composers were regarded highly and held important positions throughout Europe, but especially in Italy, which became the leading music center in the sixteenth century. Other countries with a vibrant musical life in the Renaissance were Germany, England, and Spain.

Characteristics of Renaissance Music

Words and Music In the Renaissance, as in the Middle Ages, vocal music was more important than instrumental music. The humanistic interest in language influenced vocal music, creating a close relationship between words and music. Renaissance composers wrote music to enhance the meaning and emotion of the text. "When one of the words expresses weeping, pain, heartbreak, sighs, tears and other similar things, let the harmony be full of sadness," wrote Zarlino, a music theorist of the sixteenth century. By contrast, medieval composers had been relatively uninterested in expressing the emotions of a text.

Renaissance composers often used ***word painting,*** musical representation of specific poetic images. For example, the words *descending from heaven* might be set to a descending melodic line, and *running* might be heard with a series of rapid notes. Yet

despite this emphasis on capturing the emotion and imagery of a text, Renaissance music may seem calm and restrained to us. While there *is* a wide range of emotion in Renaissance music, it is usually expressed in a moderate, balanced way, with *no* extreme contrasts of dynamics, tone color, or rhythm.

Texture The texture of Renaissance music is chiefly polyphonic. A typical choral piece has four, five, or six voice parts of nearly equal melodic interest. Imitation among the voices is common: each presents the same melodic idea in turn, as in a round. Homophonic texture, with successions of chords, is also used, especially in light music, like dances. The texture may vary within a piece to provide contrast and bring out aspects of the text as it develops.

Renaissance music sounds fuller than medieval music. The bass register was used for the first time, expanding the pitch range to more than four octaves. With this new emphasis on the bass line came richer harmony. Renaissance music sounds mild and relaxed, because stable, consonant chords are favored; triads occur often, while dissonances are played down.

Renaissance choral music did not need instrumental accompaniment. For this reason, the period is sometimes called the "golden age" of unaccompanied—*a cappella*—choral music. Even so, on special occasions instruments were combined with voices. Instruments might duplicate the vocal lines to reinforce the sound, or they might take the part of a missing singer. But parts written exclusively for instruments are rarely found in Renaissance choral music.

Rhythm and Melody In Renaissance music, rhythm is more a gentle flow than a sharply defined beat. This is because each melodic line has great rhythmic independence: when one singer is at the beginning of his or her melodic phrase, the others may already be in the middle of theirs. This technique makes singing Renaissance music both a pleasure and a challenge, for each singer must maintain an individual rhythm. But pitch patterns in Renaissance melodies are easy to sing. The melody usually moves along a scale with few large leaps.

2 Sacred Music in the Renaissance

The two main forms of sacred Renaissance music are the motet and the mass. They are alike in style, but a mass is a longer composition. The Renaissance *motet* is a polyphonic choral work set to a sacred Latin text other than the ordinary of the mass. The Renaissance *mass* is a polyphonic choral composition made up of five sections: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.

Josquin Desprez and the Renaissance Motet

Josquin Desprez (about 1440–1521), a contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci and Christopher Columbus, was a master of Renaissance music. Like many Flemish composers, he had an international career. Josquin was born in the province of Hainaut—today

part of Belgium—and spent much of his life in Italy, serving in dukes' private chapels and in the papal choir at Rome. In his later years, he worked for Louis XII of France and held several church posts in his native land.

Josquin's compositions, which include masses, motets, and secular vocal pieces, strongly influenced other composers and were praised enthusiastically by music lovers. Martin Luther, for example, remarked: "God has His Gospel preached also through the medium of music; this may be seen from the compositions of Josquin, all of whose works are cheerful, gentle, mild, and lovely; they flow and move along and are neither forced nor coerced and bound by rigid and stringent rules, but, on the contrary, are like the song of the finch."

Ave Maria . . . virgo serena (Hail, Mary . . . serene virgin; c. 1475)

Basic Set:

CD 1 76

Brief Set:

CD 1 56

Josquin's four-voice motet *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena* is an outstanding Renaissance choral work. This Latin prayer to the Virgin is set to delicate and serene music. The opening uses polyphonic imitation, a technique typical of the period.

The short melodic phrase on *Ave Maria* is presented by the soprano voice and then imitated in turn by the alto, tenor, and bass. The next two words, *gratia plena* (*full of grace*), have a different melody, which also is passed from voice to voice. Notice that each voice enters while the preceding one is in the middle of its melody. This overlapping creates a feeling of continuous flow. Josquin adapted the melody for the opening phrases from a Gregorian chant, but the rest of the motet was not based on a chant melody.

Josquin skillfully varies the texture of this motet; two, three, or four voices are heard at one time. In addition to the imitation among individual voices, there is imitation between pairs of voices: duets between the high voices are imitated by the two lower parts. Sometimes the texture almost becomes homophonic, as at the words *Ave, vera virginitas*. Here, also, is a change from duple to triple meter, and the tempo momentarily becomes more animated. But soon the music returns to duple meter and a more peaceful mood. *Ave Maria* ends with slow chords that express Josquin's personal plea to the Virgin: *O Mother of God, remember me. Amen.*

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JOSQUIN, *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena*

76 **56** 0:00	Each soprano phrase imitated in turn by alto, tenor, and bass. Duple meter.	*Ave Maria gratia plena dominus tecum, virgo serena.*	Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, serene Virgin.
0:49	High duet imitated by three lower voices.	*Ave, cuius conceptio,*	Hail, whose conception,
	All four voices. Increased rhythmic animation reflects "new joy."	*solemni plena gaudio, coelestia terrestria nova replet laetitia.*	full of great jubilation, fills Heaven and Earth with new joy.
1:32	High duet imitated by low duet. Soprano phrase imitated by alto, tenor, and bass.	*Ave, cuius nativitas nostra fuit solemnitas, ut lucifer lux oriens verum solem praeveniens.*	Hail, whose birth brought us joy, as Lucifer, the morning star, went before the true sun.
2:17	High duet imitated by low duet. High duet. Low duet.	*Ave, pia humilitas, sine viro fecunditas, cuius annuntiatio nostra fuit salvatio.*	Hail, pious humility, fruitful without a man, whose Annunciation brought us salvation.
77 **57** 2:50	Triple meter.	*Ave, vera virginitas, immaculata castitas, cuius purificatio nostra fuit purgatio.*	Hail, true virginity, immaculate chastity, whose purification brought our cleansing.
78 **58** 3:16	Duple meter, high duets imitated by lower voices.	*Ave praeclara omnibus angelicis virtutibus, cuius assumptio nostra glorificatio.*	Hail, glorious one in all angelic virtues, whose Assumption was our glorification.
	Brief pause. Sustained chords.	*O mater Dei, memento mei. Amen.*	O Mother of God, remember me. Amen.

Palestrina and the Renaissance Mass

During the sixteenth century, Italian composers attained the excellence of such earlier Flemish musicians as Josquin Desprez. Among the most important Italian Renaissance composers was Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (about 1525–1594), who devoted himself to music for the Catholic church. His career was thus centered in Rome, where he held important church positions, including that of music director for St. Peter's.

Palestrina's music includes 104 masses and some 450 other sacred works; it is best understood against the background of the Counter-Reformation. During the early 1500s, the Catholic church was challenged and questioned by the Protestants and,

A miniature showing a mass at the court of Philip the Good in Burgundy.

as a result, sought to correct abuses and malpractices within its structure, as well as to counter the move toward Protestantism. This need to strengthen the church led to the founding of the Jesuit order (1540) and the convening of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which considered questions of dogma and organization.

During its deliberations, the council discussed church music, which many felt had lost its purity. Years before, the scholar Desiderius Erasmus (about 1466–1536) had complained: "We have introduced an artificial and theatrical music into the church, a bawling and agitation of various voices, such as I believe had never been heard in the theaters of the Greeks and Romans. . . . Amorous and lascivious melodies are heard such as elsewhere accompany only the dances of courtesans and clowns." At the council

sessions, church music was attacked because it used secular tunes, noisy instruments, and theatrical singing. Some complained that complex polyphony made it impossible to understand the sacred texts; they wanted only monophonic music—Gregorian chant—for the mass. The council finally decreed that church music should be composed not "to give empty pleasure to the ear," but to inspire religious contemplation.

The restraint and serenity of Palestrina's works reflect this emphasis on a more spiritual music. For centuries, church authorities have regarded his masses as models of church music because of their calmness and otherworldly quality. Even today, the technical perfection of his style is a model for students of counterpoint.

Pope Marcellus Mass (1562–1563)

Palestrina's *Pope Marcellus* Mass, his most famous mass, was long thought to have convinced the Council of Trent that polyphonic masses should be kept in Catholic worship. While we now know that this work did *not* play that role, it does reflect the council's desire for a clear projection of the sacred text. It is dedicated to Pope Marcellus II, who reigned briefly in 1555 while Palestrina was a singer in the papal choir.

The *Pope Marcellus* Mass is written for an a cappella choir of six voice parts: soprano, alto, two tenors, and two basses. We'll focus on the first section of the mass, the Kyrie.

Kyrie

Basic Set:
CD 1 79

Brief Set:
CD 1 59

The Kyrie has a rich polyphonic texture. Its six voice parts constantly imitate each other, yet blend beautifully. This music sounds fuller than Josquin's *Ave Maria,* in part because six voices are used rather than four. The elegantly curved melodies summon the spirit of Gregorian chant. They flow smoothly and can be sung easily. Upward leaps are balanced at once by downward steps, as in the opening melody:

The Kyrie of the *Pope Marcellus* Mass is written in three different sections:

1. *Kyrie eleison.*   Lord, have mercy.
2. *Christe eleison.*   Christ, have mercy.
3. *Kyrie eleison.*   Lord, have mercy.

This text is short, and words are repeated with different melodic lines to express calm supplication. The rhythm flows continuously to the end of each section, when all voices come together on sustained chords. Each of the three sections begins in a thin texture with only some of the voices sounding; but as the other voices enter, the music becomes increasingly full and rich. In our recording, the third section sounds climactic because it is performed in a somewhat faster tempo and at a louder dynamic level than the first two sections.

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PALESTRINA, *Kyrie* from *Pope Marcellus* Mass

79 **59** 0:00	Tenor quickly imitated in turn by three other voice parts; remaining two voice parts join. Voices imitate each other and repeat words. Sustained chord, pause end section.	1. *Kyrie eleison.* Lord, have mercy.
80 **60** 1:35	Three voice parts begin at same time; other three voice parts join in turn. Voices imitate each other. Sustained chord, pause.	2. *Christe eleison.* Christ, have mercy.
81 **61** 3:29	Soprano phrase quickly imitated in turn by three lower voice parts; two other voice parts join. Voices imitate each other.	3. *Kyrie eleison.* Lord, have mercy.
4:35	Sustained chord ends *Kyrie.*	

3 Secular Music in the Renaissance

Vocal Music

During the Renaissance, secular vocal music became increasingly popular. Throughout Europe, music was set to poems in various languages, including Italian, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, and English.

The development of music printing helped spread secular music, and thousands of song collections became available. Music was an important leisure activity; every educated person was expected to play an instrument and read notation. The Elizabethan composer Thomas Morley describes the embarrassment of being unable to participate in after-dinner music making: "But supper being ended, and Musicke bookes (according to the custome) being brought to the tables, the mistresse of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing. But when, after many excuses, I protested unfainedly that I could not: every one began to wonder. Yea, some whispered to others, demanding how I was brought up."

Renaissance secular music was written for groups of solo voices and for solo voice with the accompaniment of one or more instruments. Word painting—musical illustration of a text—was common. Composers delighted in imitating natural sounds such as birdcalls and street cries. In a famous piece entitled *La Guerre* (*The War*), the Frenchman Clément Janequin (about 1485–1560) vividly imitated battle noises, drumbeats, and fanfares. Secular music contained more rapid shifts of mood than sacred music. As Morley advised one composer, "You must in your music be wavering like the wind, sometimes wanton, sometimes drooping, sometimes grave and staid; . . . and the more variety you show the better shall you please."

The Renaissance Madrigal An important kind of secular vocal music during the Renaissance was the *madrigal,* a piece for several solo voices set to a short poem, usually about love. A madrigal, like a motet, combines homophonic and polyphonic textures. But the madrigal uses word painting and unusual harmonies more often.

The Renaissance madrigal originated in Italy around 1520, during a creative explosion in Italian poetry. Madrigals were published by the thousands in sixteenth-century Italy, where they were sung by cultivated aristocrats. Among the many Italian madrigalists were Luca Marenzio (1553–1599) and Carlo Gesualdo (about 1560–1613), the infamous prince of Venosa who had his wife and her lover murdered after finding them together in bed.

In 1588—the year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada—a volume of translated Italian madrigals was published in London. This inspired a spurt of madrigal writing by English composers, and for about thirty years there was a steady flow of English madrigals and other secular vocal music. The time of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was as much a golden age in English music as it was in English literature. The impetus for both arts arose in Italy. But the English madrigal became lighter and more humorous than its Italian model, and its melody and harmony were simpler.

As Vesta Was Descending (1601), by Thomas Weelkes

Basic Set:
CD 1 82

Brief Set:
CD 1 62

Among the finest English madrigalists was Thomas Weelkes (about 1575–1623), an organist and church composer. Weelkes's *As Vesta Was Descending* comes from *The Triumphes of Oriana* (1601), an anthology of English madrigals written to honor Queen Elizabeth, who was often called Oriana. The text of this six-voice madrigal pictures Vesta (the Roman goddess of the hearth) coming down a hill with her attendants, "Diana's darlings." (Diana was the Roman goddess of chastity, hunting, and the moon.) At the same time, the "maiden queen," Oriana (Elizabeth), is climbing the hill with her shepherd gallants. Vesta's attendants desert her and race down the hill to join Oriana.

As Vesta Was Descending has the light mood typical of English madrigals. Word painting is plentiful. For example, the word *descending* is sung to downward scales, and *ascending* to upward ones.

Alto
a
As   Ves - ta   was   de - scend -   -   -   ing,

Alto
b
She   spied   a   maid-en Queen the   same a - scend   -   -   -   ing,

When Vesta's attendants run down the hill, "first *two* by *two,* then *three* by *three to-gether,* leaving their goddess all *alone,*" we hear first *two* voices, then *three* voices, then *six* voices, and finally a *solo* voice. In the extended concluding section, "*Long* live fair Oriana," a joyous phrase is imitated among the voices. And in the bass this phrase is sung in long notes, with the longest note on the word *long.*

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WEELKES, *As Vesta Was Descending*

82 **62**

Descending scales.	As Vesta was from Latmos hill *descending,*
Ascending scales.	she spied a maiden queen the same *ascending,*
Rapid descending figures.	attended on by all the shepherds swain, to whom Diana's darlings came *running down* amain.
Two voices,	First *two* by *two,*
Three voices; all voices.	then *three* by *three together,*
Solo voice.	leaving their goddess *all alone,* hasted thither, and mingling with the shepherds of her train with mirthful tunes her presence entertain. Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana,
Brief joyful phrase imitated among voices; long notes in bass.	*Long* live fair Oriana!

The Renaissance Lute Song

A simpler type of secular music than the madrigal is the song for solo voice and lute. The **lute,** which derives from the Arab instrument known as the ʿūd (literally, *the wood*), is a plucked string instrument with a body shaped like half a pear. The lute's versatility—like that of the guitar today—made it the most popular instrument in the Renaissance home. It could be used for solos or for accompaniments; to play chords, melodies, and rapid scales; and even in polyphonic music.

In England the lute song was widely cultivated from the late 1590s to the 1620s. In contrast to much Renaissance music, lute songs are mostly homophonic in texture. The lute accompaniment is secondary to the vocal melody. During the Renaissance, singers could accompany themselves, or have the lute accompaniment played by another musician.

Flow My Tears (about 1600), by John Dowland (1563–1626)

Basic Set:
CD 1 83

Brief Set:
CD 1 63

The leading English composer of lute songs was John Dowland, a virtuoso performer on the lute famous throughout Europe. His lute song *Flow My Tears* was extraordinarily popular in Shakespeare's time, and in our own day it has been recorded by many singers, including the rock star Sting.

Flow My Tears expresses the intense melancholy of someone whose happiness has been abruptly shattered. Such emotionally charged words as *tears, despair, woes, sighs, groans, fear, and grief* dominate the song's text, a poem that may have been written by Dowland himself. The expression of melancholy was a prominent feature of English literature and music in the time of Elizabeth I and Shakespeare. Dowland, especially, seems to have cultivated a melancholy public image, and he composed many pieces with sad titles such as *Semper Dowland semper dolens* (*Always Dowland, Always Sorrow*).

Flow My Tears consists of three brief musical sections (A, B, C) that are each immediately repeated: AA (stanzas 1 and 2), BB (stanzas 3 and 4), CC (stanza 5 repeated to the same melody). Dowland's music heightens the mood of grief through its slow

tempo, minor key, and descending four-note melodic pattern that represents falling tears. This descending pattern appears throughout the song with variations of pitch and rhythm.

The opening four-note descent, in minor, on *Flow my tears,* is immediately repeated—with greater emotional intensity—on higher, slower notes to the words *fall from your springs.*

Part B begins with a contrasting major-key version of the four-note descent on the words *Never may my.*

Dowland creates variety by opening part C with a stepwise *ascent,* turning the four-note pattern upside down on the words *Hark you shadows.*

In much of the song, the lute accompaniment is subordinate to the voice. However, in part B, the lute momentarily gains prominence as it imitates the voice's gasping upward skips on *and tears, and sighs,* heightening the agitated mood.

As Sting has observed, even though *Flow My Tears* is "a song about hopelessness, it is strangely uplifting."

VOCAL MUSIC GUIDE

DOWLAND, *Flow My Tears*

83 **63** 0:00	A	Minor key.	Flow my tears, fall from your springs,
			   Exiled for ever: Let me mourn
			where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,
			   there let me live forlorn.

0:38	A	Minor.	Down vain lights, shine you no more,
			   No nights are dark enough for those
			That in despair their lost fortunes deplore,
			   light doth but shame disclose.

1:18	B	Major.
		Minor.
		Lute imitates voice.
			Never may my woes be relieved,
			   since pity is fled,
			and tears, and sighs, and groans my weary days,
			   of all joys have deprived.

1:55	B	Major.
		Minor.
		Lute imitates voice.
			From the highest spire of contentment,
			   my fortune is thrown;
			and fear, and grief, and pain for my deserts,
			   are my hopes since hope is gone

2:31	C	Minor.	Hark you shadows that in darkness dwell,
			   learn to condemn light,
			Happy, happy they that in hell
			   feel not the world's despite.

3:13	C	Minor.	Hark you shadows that in darkness dwell,
			   learn to condemn light,
			Happy, happy they that in hell
			   feel not the world's despite.

Instrumental Music

Though still subordinate to vocal music, instrumental music did become more important during the Renaissance. Traditionally, instrumentalists accompanied voices or played music intended for singing. Even in the early 1500s instrumental music was largely adapted from vocal music. Instrumental groups performed polyphonic vocal pieces, which were often published with the indication *to be sung or played.* Soloists used the harpsichord, organ, or lute to play simple arrangements of vocal works.

During the sixteenth century, however, instrumental music became increasingly emancipated from vocal models. More music was written specifically for instruments. Renaissance composers began to exploit the particular capacities of the lute or organ for instrumental solos. They also developed purely instrumental forms, such as theme and variations.

Much of this instrumental music was intended for dancing, a popular Renaissance entertainment. Every cultivated person was expected to be skilled in dance, which was taught by professional dancing masters. Court dances were often performed in pairs. A favorite pair was the stately *pavane,* or *passamezzo,* in duple meter, and the lively *galliard,* in triple meter. Dance music was performed by instrumental groups or by

A wide variety of instruments were used during the Renaissance. Hans Burgkmair's woodcut of the emperor Maximilian with his musicians (1505–1516) shows (left) an organ and a cornett; (center) a harp; (on floor) a drum, a kettledrum, a trumsheit (string instrument), and a sackbut; (on table) a viola da gamba, an oblong keyboard instrument, a flute, recorders, a cornett, and a krummhorn.

soloists like harpsichordists and lutenists. A wealth of dance music published during the sixteenth century has come down to us.

Renaissance musicians distinguished between loud, outdoor instruments like the trumpet and the *shawm* (a double-reed ancestor of the oboe), and soft, indoor instruments like the lute and the *recorder* (an early flute). The many instruments used in the Renaissance produced softer, less brilliant sounds than we hear from instruments today; most came in families of from three to eight instruments, ranging from soprano to bass. Among the most important Renaissance instruments were recorders, shawms, *cornetts* (wooden instruments with cup-shaped mouthpieces), *sackbuts* (early trombones), lutes, *viols* (bowed string instruments), organs, *regals* (small organs with reed pipes), and harpsichords. Often several members of the same instrumental family were played together, but Renaissance composers did not specify the instruments they wanted. A single work might be performed by recorders, viols, or several different instruments, depending on what was available. Today's standardized orchestra did not exist. Large courts might employ thirty instrumentalists of all types. On state occasions such as a royal wedding, guests might be entertained by woodwinds, plucked and bowed strings, and keyboard instruments all playing together.

Much instrumental music of the Renaissance was intended for dancing. This illustration is from a book of hours produced in Tours, France, c. 1530–1535.

Passamezzo and Galliard, by Pierre Francisque Caroubel, from *Terpsichore* (1612), by Michael Praetorius

This passamezzo and galliard illustrate the Renaissance practice of pairing contrasting court dances in duple and triple meter. These dances come from *Terpsichore,* a collection of over 300 dance tunes arranged for instrumental ensemble by Michael Praetorius (1571–1621), a German composer and theorist. (Terpsichore was the Greek muse, or goddess, of the dance.) A few dances in the collection, including the passamezzo and galliard studied here, were composed by the French violinist Pierre Francisque Caroubel (1576–1611). Both dance types originated in Italy and were popular during the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century.

Basic Set:
CD 2 `1`

The passamezzo is a stately dance in duple meter and the galliard is a quick dance in triple meter. The dance-pair studied here is written for five unspecified instrumental parts. In our recording the two dances are performed by a Renaissance string ensemble including violins, violas, and bass violins (ancestors of the cello), lutes, and harpsichord. Both the passamezzo and galliard are made up of three brief sections (a, b, c). The two dances can be outlined as follows:

Passamezzo: aa bb cc abc
Galliard: aa bb cc

Basic Set:
CD 2 `2`

The music of the galliard is a variation of the preceding passamezzo, but sounds very different because its tempo is faster and its meter is triple rather than duple.

Passamezzo, section a

Galliard, section a

Gentile Bellini (c. 1429–1507), *Procession in St. Mark's Square.* The focal point for music in Venice was St. Mark's Cathedral.

In each dance, section b brings greater rhythmic animation. Section b of the passamezzo introduces quicker note values (eighth notes).

Section b of the galliard brings delightful rhythmic irregularity because $\frac{6}{4}$ meter alternates with the prevailing $\frac{3}{2}$ meter. That is, six fast pulses divide alternatively into *two* groups of three pulses (**1**-2-3 *4*-5-6) and *three* groups of two pulses (1-2 3-4 5-6).

A similar alternation can be heard in *America,* from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story,* studied in Part IX, Music for Stage and Screen.

4 | The Venetian School: From Renaissance to Baroque

During the sixteenth century, Venice—an independent city-state on the northeastern coast of Italy—became a center of instrumental and vocal music. Venice is a seaport built on tiny islands separated by canals; it was a thriving commercial center for trade between Europe and the near east. Venice proclaimed its importance both by means of magnificent processions and through its architecture and painting. Venetian painters

such as Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese were inspired by the city's special light and used rich, brilliant colors.

The focal point for music in Venice was St. Mark's Cathedral. The cathedral was colorful and wealthy, and it employed up to twenty instrumentalists and thirty singers for grand ceremonies within the cathedral and in St. Mark's Square. The music directors and organists at St. Mark's, such as Adrian Willaert (about 1490–1562), Andrea Gabrieli (about 1520–1586), and Andrea's nephew Giovanni Gabrieli, were among the finest composers of the Renaissance. They and their colleagues are called the **Venetian school.**

Venetian composers were stimulated by an architectural feature of St. Mark's Cathedral—two widely separated choir lofts, each with an organ—and wrote much music for several choruses and groups of instruments. Unlike most Renaissance choral music, Venetian choral music of the late sixteenth century often contains parts that are written exclusively for instruments. This conscious use of instrumental color brings some works of the Venetian school close to the early baroque style. Another early baroque feature of some Venetian music is a tendency toward homophonic texture, rather than the polyphonic texture typical of Renaissance music.

Giovanni Gabrieli and the Polychoral Motet

Giovanni Gabrieli (about 1555–1612), a native of Venice, was the most important Venetian composer of the late Renaissance. He studied with his uncle Andrea Gabrieli and was an organist at St. Mark's from 1585 until his death. His compositions include organ and instrumental ensemble works and **polychoral motets:** motets for two or more choirs, often including groups of instruments. Gabrieli's *Sonata pian e forte* (1597) is famous as one of the earliest instrumental ensemble pieces in which dynamics and instrumentation are specified by the composer. His polychoral motets for two to five choirs call for an unprecedentedly large number of performers and brilliantly exploit contrasts of register, sonority, and tone color.

Plaudite (Clap Your Hands; 1597)

Basic Set:

CD 2 `3`

Giovanni Gabrieli's spectacular polychoral motet *Plaudite* was intended for a joyful ceremony at St. Mark's Cathedral. Its Latin text calls for praise of God. The motet is written for a large vocal and instrumental ensemble of twelve voice parts divided into three *choirs,* or performing groups, that contrast in register. It has one low choir, one choir in a middle register, and one high choir. The choice of instruments is left to the performers. In our recording, some voices are reinforced by three sackbuts, three cornetts, or an organ.

Gabrieli exploits the "stereophonic" possibilities of St. Mark's by rapidly tossing short phrases among the three separate choirs. Often the choirs combine to produce splendidly massive sonorities. Gabrieli unifies the motet by using the same music (A) for each of four short *alleluia* sections. These sections are in triple meter and contrast with the prevailing duple meter of the motet. With its homophonic texture and its flamboyant use of contrasting sonorities, *Plaudite* is at the border between the Renaissance and early baroque styles.

VOCAL MUSIC GUIDE

GIOVANNI GABRIELI, *Plaudite*

3 0:00   *Plaudite, Psallite,*   Clap your hands, sing praises,
                         Jubilate Deo   sing joyfully to God,
                         omnis terra: all the earth.

0:14   **A**   *alleluia,*   Alleluia.

                         benedicant Dominum   Let all the nations
                         omnes gentes,   bless the Lord,
                         collaudantes eum: together praising Him.

0:50   **A**   *alleluia,*   Alleluia.

                         quia fecit nobiscum Dominus   For the Lord hath acted in His
                         misericordiam suam: mercy with us.

1:28   **A**   *alleluia,*   Alleluia.

                         et captivam duxit captivitatem,   And led captivity captive.
                         admirabilis et gloriosus   Admirable and glorious
                         in saecula: He is forever.

2:21   **A**   *alleluia.*   Alleluia.

Climactic section in   *alleluia.*   Alleluia.
duple meter ends *Plaudite.*

The Renaissance: Summary

Music in Society

- The Renaissance in music occurred between 1450 and 1600.
- The invention of printing widened the circulation of music.
- Music was an important leisure activity, and every educated person was expected to be trained in music.
- Renaissance musicians worked for churches, courts, and towns. Musical patronage gradually shifted from the church to the courts.
- As in the Middle Ages, vocal music was more important than instrumental music, though instrumental music increased in importance during the Renaissance.
- Women were not permitted to sing in church, but they could make music in convents, where they also could receive musical training.
- Secular music and dance thrived outside the church.

Important Style Features

Mood and Emotional Expression
- Renaissance composers wrote vocal music to enhance the meaning and emotion of a text.
- Renaissance madrigals express a wide range of emotions and imagery through word painting.
- Secular vocal music contains more rapid shifts of mood than sacred music.

Rhythm
- Rhythm is more of a gentle flow than a sharply defined beat, particularly in a cappella choral music.
- Each line of music has great rhythmic independence.
- Secular music, both vocal and instrumental, usually has a more clearly defined beat.

Dynamics
- Dynamics are not indicated in Renaissance manuscripts or printed music.

Tone Color
- In Renaissance music, instruments may or may not accompany vocal music by doubling one or more of the parts.
- Even in purely instrumental music, the specific instruments are rarely specified.

Melody and Harmony
- Compared with music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance music sounds mild and relaxed because stable, consonant chords occur frequently; triads are favored over dissonances.
- Melodies usually move stepwise along a scale, with few large leaps.
- The bass register was used for the first time, resulting in a fuller sound and richer harmonies.
- In Renaissance vocal music especially, each melodic line has great independence; phrases often overlap to create a seamless flow of sound among the parts.

Texture
- The main musical texture of Renaissance vocal music is polyphonic, with a typical choral piece having four to six different parts of nearly equal melodic interest.
- Imitation among voices is common, particularly in a cappella choral music.
- The bass register is used for the first time.
- Homophonic texture is also used, especially in light music, like dances.
- Secular music written for solo voices and for solo voice with accompaniment of one or more instruments was popular.

Performance Practice

- Sacred choral music was sung by an a cappella male choir; women were excluded from participating in liturgical services, although nuns could perform music in convents.
- In courts, the number of musicians could be from ten to as many as sixty, and women functioned as virtuoso singers in several Italian courts during the late Renaissance.
- Renaissance music does not indicate tempos and dynamics, or the specific instruments or number of performers on a part.

Beyond the Classroom

The Renaissance period produced music, both sacred and secular, that modern audiences and performers find enjoyable. Renaissance fairs, at which one can hear music presented by performers wearing period clothing and using authentic instruments are held in many communities throughout the year. Watch plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries to observe how they often include songs and dance music. Madrigal dinners, where entertainers dress in period clothing and perform Renaissance madrigals, secular songs, and instrumental pieces, are especially popular during the Christmas season. And the sacred a cappella choral works of Palestrina and his contemporaries are among the most glorious music produced in any era.

When listening to Renaissance music, ask yourself these questions:

- What are the performing forces? Only voices, only instruments, or a combination of the two?

- Is the texture of the music homophonic, polyphonic, or a mixture?
- Is the music performed a cappella or with some type of accompaniment? If it is accompanied, what type of instrument is accompanying the performer?
- If the music has a text, are there instances of word painting that enhance its meaning? In what language is the text?
- Do you hear instances of imitation between the parts, particularly in choral music?
- How would you characterize the rhythm? Does it flow along smoothly without a sharply defined beat, or is there a clear beat?
- For instrumental music, what instruments are being played? What do the instruments look like? How would you describe the sound they produce? Are there any percussion instruments included, and if so, how many and of what type?
- Are the performers dressed in clothing of the period?