# Early Music

Plainchant

The earliest music that we know, both sacred and secular, consists of a single line melody. This is a monophonic texture.

Examples of this can be found in early church music, in the form of **plainchant** (also known as **plainsong** or **Gregorian chant**). Plainchant melodies were generally flowing, often moving by **step** rather than by **leap**, and would be sung in an **a cappella** style (i.e. **unaccompanied**).

The rhythm would be irregular and very free, following the natural rhythms and stresses of the Latin words.

Plainchant melodies were based on special types of scaled called **modes**. **Modes** can be found by playing any notes within an octave, but keeping to the white notes only.
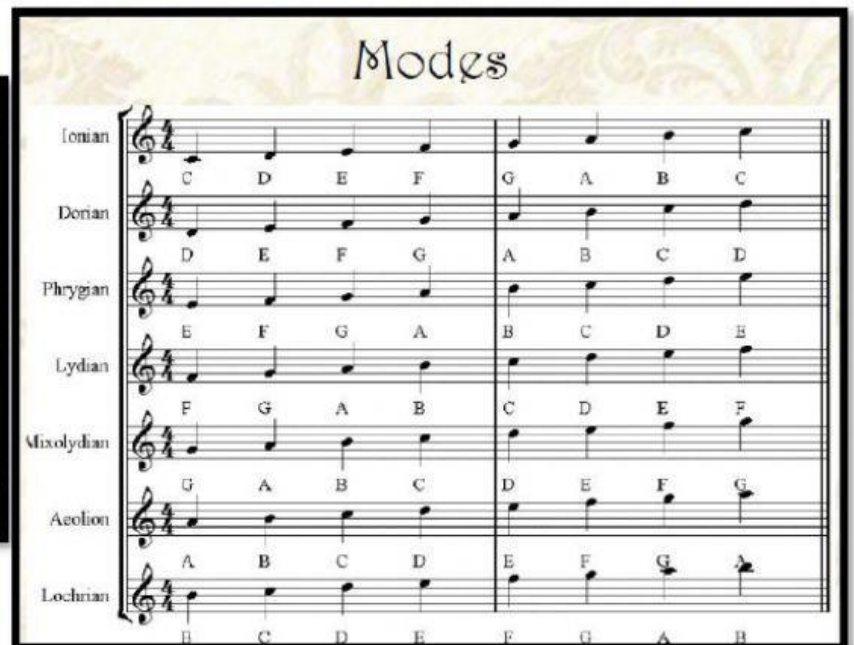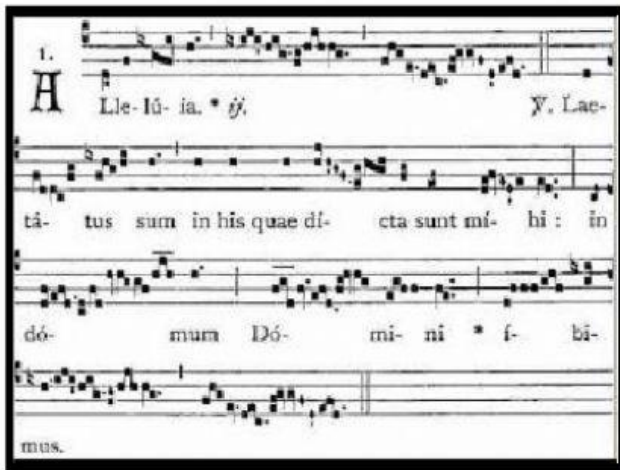
Listen to an example of plainchant:

Mainly Syllabic	Major	Modal	A cappella
Mainly melismatic	Polyphonic	Triplets	Unison

Choose 4 relevant concepts from the box above and write them in the correct categories on the table below.

Melody	Harmony	Texture	Timbre

Sacred Music in the Renaissance period

Composers throughout history have written sacred music. In the Renaissance period sacred music was generally sung in Latin and performed **a cappella** (without instrumental accompaniment). It often contained some of the following features:

Melodic	Harmonic	Rhythmic	Texture	Timbre
Melisma Syllabic Conjunct/stepwise Limited range	Modal/Mode Suspension Dissonance Passing notes Cadences (often plagal at end)	Time changes Free rhythm	Polyphonic Homophonic Imitation	A cappella

*For Higher, the only Renaissance **style** you need to know is the **Mass**. Other sacred styles were the Anthem and the Motet. While the Mass was the main style of the Renaissance era, composers would continue to write Masses up to the 20th century*

Mass

The **Mass** is the chief service of the Catholic Church. The Latin setting of the Mass divides into five main sections, or "items":

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison	Lord have mercy, Christ Have mercy
Gloria in excelcis Deo	Glory to God in the highest
Credo in unum deum	I believe in one God
Sanctus; Osanna; Benedictus	Holy, holy, holy; Hosanna; Blessed is he….
Agnus Dei	Lamb of God

Listen to *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* from Byrd *Mass for 5 Voices*:

Now listen to some of Palestrina's **Missa Papae Marcelli**

The Kyrie is in 3 distinct sections – *Kyrie eleison-Christe eleison-Kyrie eleison*. See if you can spot all 4 cadences in the first Kyrie eleison section.

- Perfect   Interrupted
- Imperfect   Plagal

NB Gloria and Credo start on the second line of the text (ie Et in terra pax and Patrem omnipotentem.
To see the full text for each of the sections of the Mass, see here:
http://www.kitbraz.com/tchr/hist/med/mass_ordinary_text.html

Fill in any features that you notice.

Style	Melody/ Harmony	Rhythm/Tempo	Texture/Structure/Form	Timbre

WHAT IS A SUSPENSION IN MUSIC?

A suspension in music is where **a note from a chord is held whilst the other notes of the chord change to a new harmony.**
The held note is **discordant** and clashes with the new chord and this tension is only **resolved when the note moves down a degree** to a note belonging to the new chord.

Suspensions feature heavily in Renaissance music, creating tension and release between the vocal lines

There are 3 stages involved in a musical suspension:
1. Preparation
2. Suspension
3. Resolution

In the **preparation**, the note played is a harmony note and can be found in any part.
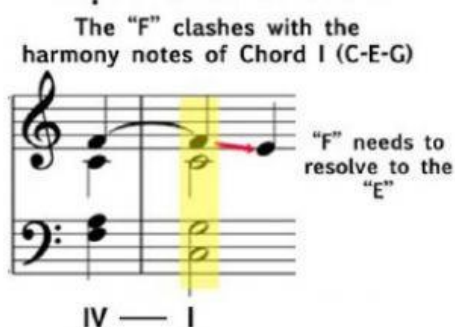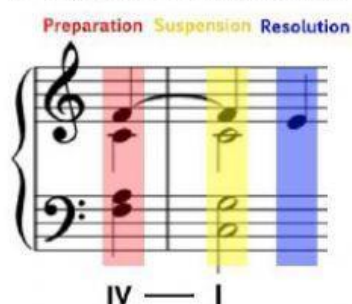In our example above, the F in the soprano part is the note selected.
In the **suspension**, the prepared note is held as the other parts change chord.
This creates a **dissonance between the held note and the new chord**.
The **resolution** is the point at which the **suspended note falls by a degree to a harmony note** in the new chord.

(a) Tick **four** boxes to identify the titles of movements you would expect to find in a *Mass*.

Kyrie eleison   Veni Sancte Spiritus

Exsultate Deo   Sanctus

Credo   For unto us a child is born

Ave Maria   Agnus Dei

(b) Tick **four** features you would expect to find in a *Mass* from the *Renaissance* period.

Pavan   Modal

A cappella   Basso continuo

Suspensions   Polyphonic

Polytonality   Passacaglia

c) Tick three features present in the music (tr 17)

staccato   melismatic

sonata   plagal cadence

triplets   accelerando

mass   polyphony

plainchant

d) Tick three features present in the music (tr19)

plainchant   oratorio

descant   legato

mordent   acciaccatura

mass   mode

2.a) Follow the melody below and tick the correct box to fill the missing notes in bar 5

(b) Tick **three** features present in the music.

Plagal cadence   Turn

Mode   Acciaccatura

Three against two   Suspension

Time changes   Irregular time signatures

LIVEWORKSHEETS