

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 scales 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 | Style |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Melisma Syllabic Conjunct/stepwise Limited range | Modal/Mode Suspension Dissonance Passing notes Cadences (often <u>plagal</u> at end) | Time changes Free rhythm | Polyphonic Homophonic Imitation Antiphonal | A cappella | Plainchant Mass Motet Anthem |

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 excelsis 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.

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.

3 Stages of Suspensions

Preparation Suspension Resolution

No suspension

IV — I

The "F" clashes with the harmony notes of Chord I (C-E-G)

"F" needs to resolve to the "E"

Prepared dissonance

Dissonance

Resolution

qua - a - - - - - qua -

rum si - - - - cut cer -

cut cer - vus de - si - de-rat ad fon - tes

G (I) Am (iib) G (Ib) G (I)

Motet

The **Motet** is a short sacred choral work, usually contrapuntal in style, with a Latin text. Here are some examples of texts used for motets:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Veni Sancte Spiritus</i> | Come, Holy Spirit |
| <i>Haec Dies</i> | This is the day |
| <i>Ave Maria</i> | Hail Mary |
| <i>Jubilate Deo</i> | Be Joyful in the Lord |
| <i>O quam gloriosam est regnum</i> | O How Glorious is the Kingdom |
| <i>Ave Verum Corpus</i> | Hail, True Body |
| <i>O Magnum Mysterium</i> | O Great and Mighty Wonder |

Listen to Gabrieli's *O Magnum Mysterium*, written for antiphonal double choir

Listen to Gabrieli's '(1554-1612) *In Ecclesia*. This is a motet written for 4 groups and continuo/organ.

Group 1: Solo singers with fluid and virtuosic part writing

Group 2: Mainly homo[phonic chorus

Group 3 :Instruments (cornetts)

Group 4: Instruments (viols and sackbuts)



| Style | Melody/ Harmony | Rhythm/Tempo | Texture/Structure/Form | Timbre |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Motet Renaissance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Modal – basically Am but no G#s make it Aeolian in tonalitySusensions – and other dissonances create tensionMany phrases end on a tierce de picardiePlagal cadencesSequence | Time changes Dotted rhythms | Antiphonal Homophonic Polyphonic Imitation Pedal point Rondo like structure with Alleluia chorus acting like a rondo in between each section | Polychoral Cornett Sackbut Viol continuo |