Early and Renaissance Music

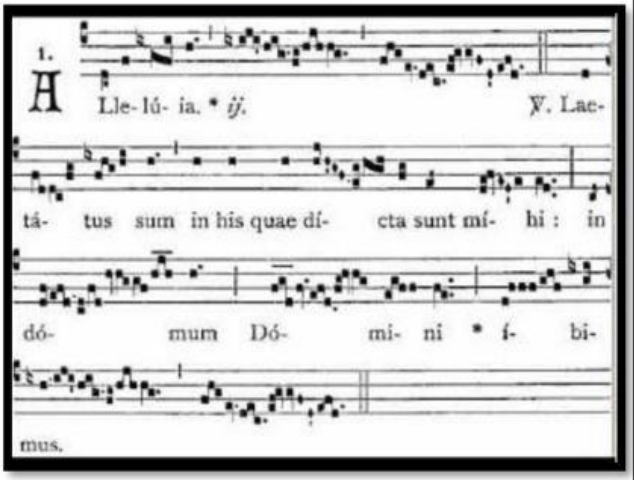
Plainchant

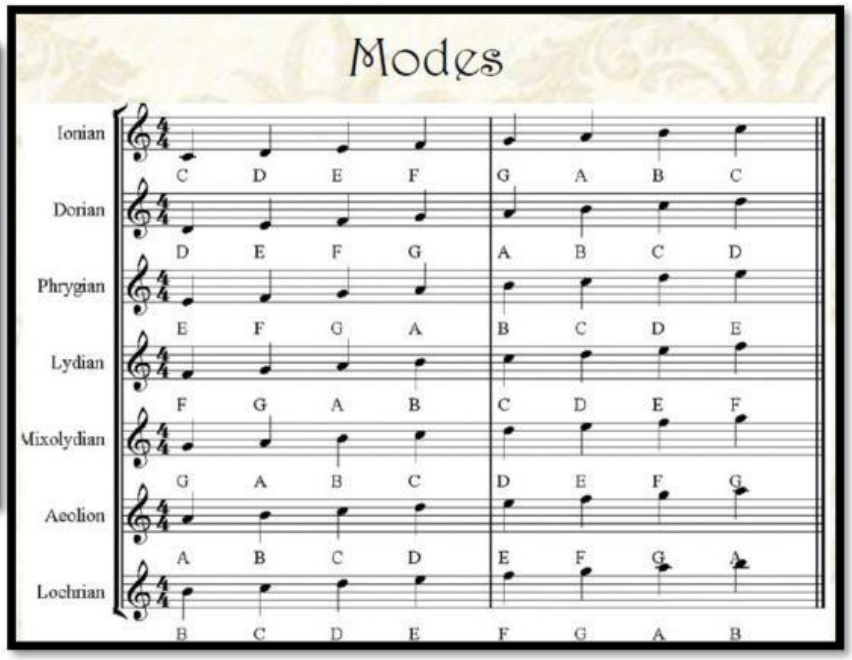
The earliest music that we know, both sacred and secular, consists of a single line melody. This is a monophonic texture.

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

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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* *Stepwise* *Limited range*	*Modal/Mode* *Suspension* *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
- Imperfect
- Interrupted
- 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:

- Fill in any features that you notice.

Style	Melody/ Harmony	Rhythm/Tempo	Texture/Structure	Timbre

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a) Tick FOUR boxes to identify the titles of movements you would expect to find in an ordinary mass.

- [ ] Kyrie eleison
- [ ] Exsultate Deo
- [ ] Credo in unum
- [ ] Ave Maria
- [ ] Veni sancte spiritus
- [ ] Sanctus
- [ ] Agnus Dei
- [ ] Jubilate Deo

b) Tick FOUR features you would expect to find in a mass from the Renaissance period

- [ ] Obbligato
- [ ] A cappella
- [ ] Suspensions
- [ ] Mode
- [ ] Basso continuo
- [ ] Passacaglia
- [ ] Ground bass
- [ ] Ritornello

c) Tick three features present in the music

- [ ] staccato
- [ ] plainchant
- [ ] triplets
- [ ] mass
- [ ] melismatic
- [ ] plagal cadence
- [ ] accelerando
- [ ] polyphony

d) Tick three features present in the music

- [ ] plainchant
- [ ] turn
- [ ] mordent
- [ ] mass
- [ ] oratorio
- [ ] legato
- [ ] acciaccatura
- [ ] mode

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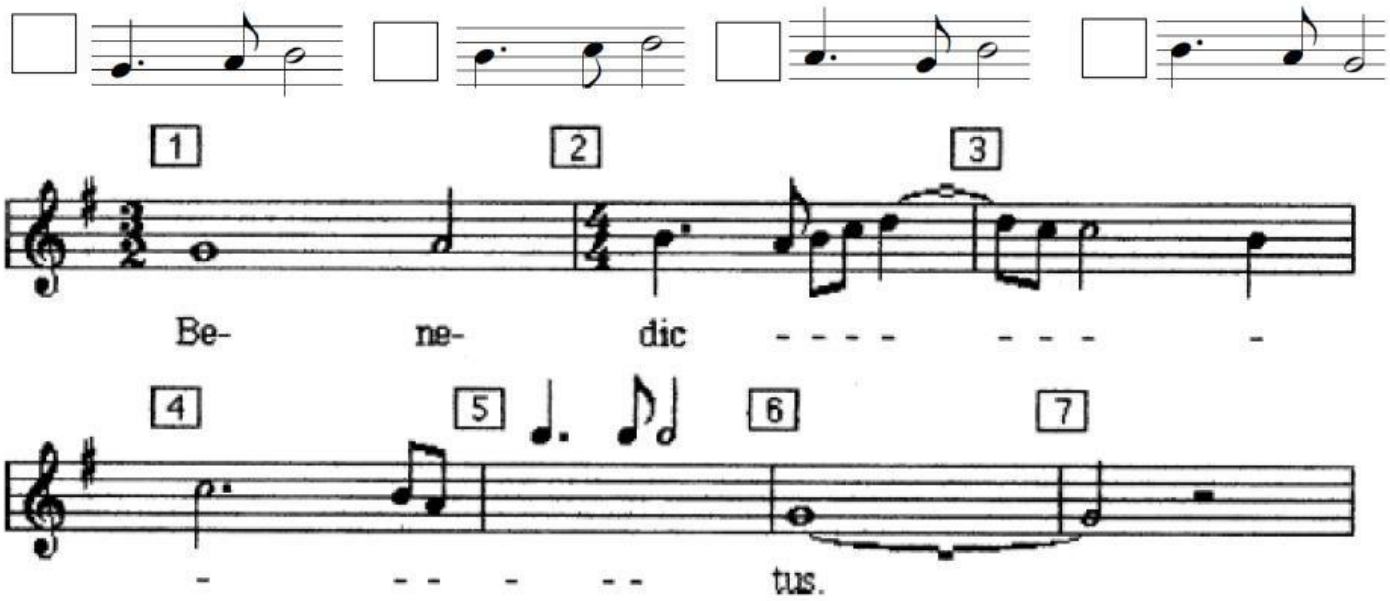
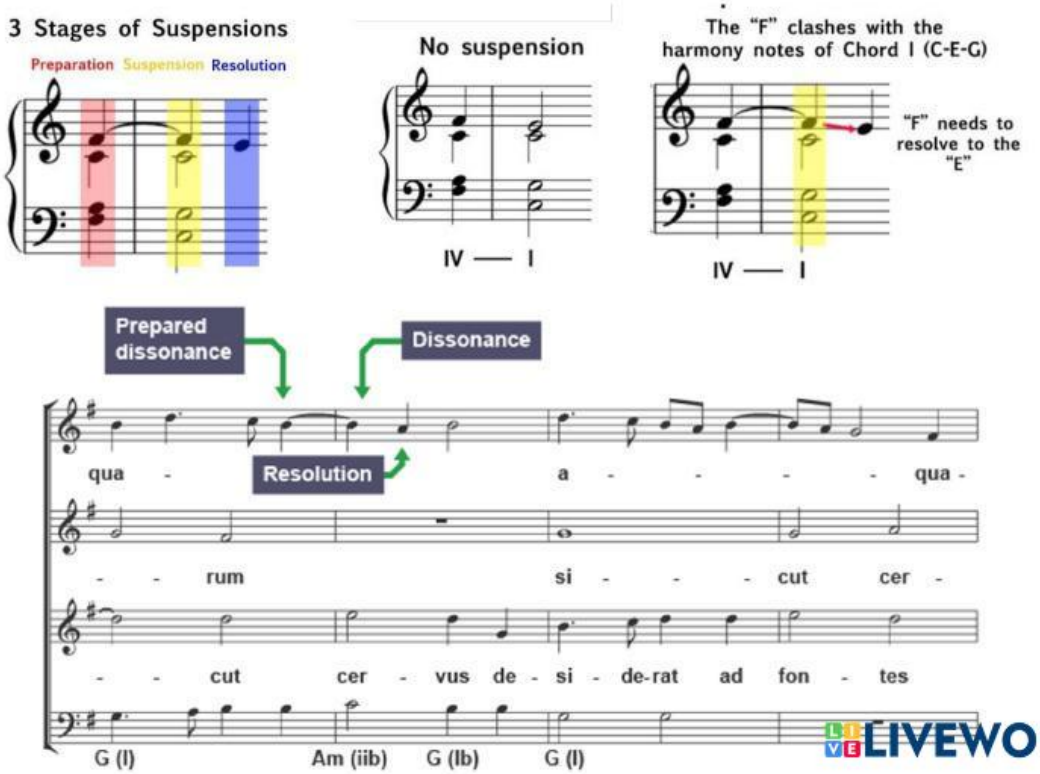
2.a) Follow the melody below and tick the correct box to fill the missing notes in bar 5



b) Tick THREE features present in the music.

- [ ] Plagal cadence
- [ ] Turn
- [ ] Mode
- [ ] Acciaccatura
- [ ] Three against two
- [ ] Suspension
- [ ] Time changes
- [ ] Irregular time signatures



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