

MEDIEVAL MUSIC (600 - late 1300's)

Characteristics:

- * *Vocal music unaccompanied*
- * *Built upon Greek musical modes*
- * *in service to the Church*

Vocabulary

Monophony one melodic line w/o accompaniment, earliest medieval music

Modes Scales medieval music was based on: Ionian (C), Dorian (D), Phrygian (E), Lydian (F), Mixolydian (G), Aeolian (A), and Locrian (B)

Polyphony several lines of independent melody, first explored in 900

Cantus Firmus “Fixed Song” – the foundation melody or voice in polyphonic chant, borrowed from Gregorian chant or later from popular song

Important Musical Forms of the Medieval Period

Plainsong/Plainchant monophonic chant, Latin words derived from Mass on melodies derived from Greek modes, unaccompanied, in the free rhythm of natural speech.

1. Responsorial Plainchant: recitation of Psalms
2. Antiphonal Plainchant: pure melody

Gregorian Chant (600) Pope Gregory unified Church music by merging new Mass of Latin and Galician regional differences, sung in churches by men/boys

1. Syllabic – one note per syllable
2. Neumatic – two or three notes per syllable
3. Melismatic – many notes per syllable

Organum (800–1100's) first example of polyphony, second voice added a 4th/5th above main melody. In the 12th century, 3 or 4 voices organum became popular.

Ars Nova (1300's) “New Art” – plainsong with new rhythmic complexity and polyphony, included cantus firmus

Motet short unaccompanied choral work for 2 voices with ornate upper voice (tenor) with a different text than cantus firmus, expanded to 3 and 4 voices in late 1300's

Troubadours (1000) performers of plainsong folk music accompanied by string or percussion instrument, simpler melodies, faster, and in the common language, on themes of war, chivalry, and love, spread out of France in early 1200's

Popular song forms in the 1300's included ballade, rondeau, and virelai.

Trope melismatic plainsong that lost the original words, new words were inserted which had nothing to do with the original words. Banned by the 16th century Council of Trent

Important Composers of the Medieval Period

Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377) first composer to explore polyphony

Leonin/Perotin (12th/13th century) published *Magnus Liber* ("Big Book") which developed organum into a high art.

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