Renaissance Sacred Music
- In literature and visual art, began in 1300’s in Italy
- In music, began around 1450 in France, Holland, and Belgium (Franco-Flemish)
- Used four voices,
- Did not keep chant in the bass (an medieval motets did)
- Sometimes incorporated secular melodies
- Used **Imitation**
  **Imitation**
  o The repetition, in close succession and usually at a different pitch level, of a melody by another voice or voices within a contrapuntal texture.
- **Josquin des Perez** (c.1450 – 1521)
  o One of the most influential composers of the Renaissance
  o Composed motets, Masses, and secular music
  o Composed Renaissance motets (secular references were dropped)
  o Composed “Ave Maria”
- **Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina** (1525 – 1594)
  o Successor to Josquin
  o Choirmaster in Rome
  o Returned greater simplicity for church music
  o Associated with the **Counter-Reformation** (Catholic reaction to the spread of Protestantism)
  o **Council of Trent**: A series of meetings of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church (1545–1563) to discuss church reforms following the Reformation. The decisions generated the Counter-Reformation (Catholic-Reformation). Lead to greater simplicity in church music.
  o Composed the Pope Marcellus Mass (easier to understand the words – may have contributed to retaining polyphony in church music during the counter-reformation)
    - Written in 6 voices
    - “Kyrie” written in three parts to reflect the trinity
Renaissance Secular Music
- Represented by bawdy songs called **madrigals** (England and Italy). **Chansons** (France), and **Lied** (Germany)
  o **Madrigal**: A polyphonic vocal piece set to a short poem; it originated during the Renaissance.
- **Italian Madrigal**
  o Has origins among Italian aristocracy
  o Often sentimental or erotic
  o Early madrigals were homophonic, but later became polyphonic
  o Late madrigals made use of **word painting**
    - **Word painting**: Representation of the literal meaning of a text through musical means.
- Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643): Well known composer of Italian Madrigals (later an important Baroque composer)
  - English Madrigals
    - Arrived in England in the middle of the 16th Century
    - Sometimes referred to by other terms including “song, sonnet, canzonet, and ayre”
    - William Byrd (1543 – 1623), John Farmer (wrote “Fair Phyllis”), and Thomas Morely were important composers of English madrigals
  - French Chanson
    - Featured strong accented rhythms, frequent repetitions, and much word painting
  - German Lied
    - Highly Polyphonic
    - Later became closer in sound to other European styles

Renaissance Instrumental Music
- Often improvised (like jazz music)
- Popular instruments include the lute
- Consorts (instrumental ensembles) performed music in people’s homes
  - Consort: A small group of Renaissance instruments. For example, a "recorder" consort is made up of recorders of various sizes, and a "viol" consort is made up of viols of various sizes. A "mixed" consort includes instruments of more than one instrumental type or family
- A well known composer of Renaissance instrumental music was Michael Praetorious (1572 – 1621)
  - German composer of the late Renaissance
  - Worked as a church organist and court musician
  - Composed “Three Dances from Tersichore”
- Other Renaissance composers include John Dowland (1563 -1626) of England
  - Known for compositions using the lute and viol consorts as well as songs
CHAPTER 5: Renaissance Music

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Renaissance Sacred Music
Renaissance Secular Music

LISTENING GUIDES

“Ave Maria” (“Hail Mary”), Josquin
“Kyrie” from Missa Papae Marcelli, Palestrina
“Fair Phyllis,” Farmer
“Ballet des Baccanales” (“Festive Dance”) from Terpsichore, Praetorius

NEW PEOPLE AND CONCEPTS

a cappella
Josquin des Prez
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
Counter-Reformation
Protestantism
Countil of Trent
madrigal
chanson
lied
word painting
Claudio Monteverdi
sight sing
ballets
John Farmer
chorale
transcription
fantasias
Michael Praetorius
tutti
embellished

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 5

The “Prelude” to this chapter emphasizes the shift in thinking that took place during the Renaissance (“rebirth”). This period saw a return to the Greek idea of the fully realized individual. A renewed interest in the world in which humans live gave rise to exploration and scientific discovery. Literacy also increased during this time period thanks to the printing press, which made books much more affordable and numerous throughout Europe.

The Renaissance was the era of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. No longer was there one Christian church. Spurred on by Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses,
Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, John Knox, and others took advantage of the dissatisfaction with problems in the Catholic church to develop their own approaches to Christianity. As a result, the Catholic church convened the Council of Trent, which met for three extended periods between 1545 and 1563. Among the many areas church leaders dealt with was music, which was simplified so that the text could be better understood.

Last, despite the rise of merchant-class tradesmen, women lost some of their status during this time period. They were seen as subordinate to their husbands. Girls also were not afforded the same education as boys.

Although music in the Catholic church didn’t change drastically, a choral tradition developed in the Lutheran church, much like the plainchant tradition. These simple melodies become the basis for hymns and other multivoice compositions.

In secular music, the Italian madrigal arose in the fourteenth century, reaching its height during the sixteenth century. About this time madrigals became popular in England, too. The French polyphonic chanson was also significant. The German counterpart to Italian and French secular vocal music is the lied, an example of which is Henrich Isaac’s “Insbruck ich muss dich lassen” (“Innsbruck I must leave you”).

Finally, although the tradition of performing vocal music on instruments continued, some music was composed for specific instruments. Published songs called for stringed instruments—the lute, vihuela, guitar, and others—to accompany the voice. Likewise this era produced some of the first music published for solo keyboard. The fantasia, toccata, and ricercare, which were entirely instrumental in nature, appeared too.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Imitative vocal polyphony became the Renaissance ideal. The motet and the mass were still the most popular sacred genres, but new secular vocal forms began appearing. The sixteenth-century Italian madrigal and the French polyphonic chanson were the highest achievements. Eventually the English became aware of the Italian madrigal via Musica transalpina, a collection of madrigals published in 1588. The English transformed the madrigal into a lighter fare.

2. As polyphonic textures became more and more complex, and also because of polytextual settings, texts became harder and harder to understand. The focus therefore shifted to the music. This became a cause of concern within the church, where music was considered a form of prayer. If people could not understand the words, then they could not hear the prayer. The Council of Trent specifically addressed this issue.

3. The influence of Renaissance humanism is evident in the increasing number of secular works published. Although many composers worked in both secular and sacred mediums, the development of music in secular settings seems much more robust during this period.

4. The cathedral of Saint Mark in Venice takes on increasing significance during the Renaissance. The position of music director there became the most prestigious position in Italy (if not all Europe). A number of important composers, from Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli to Claudio Monteverdi, held that post.
5. Although northern Europe was where Renaissance music began, the composers there were not isolated from the rest of Europe. Many, including Josquin, traveled widely and held posts in numerous places. Travel was just as important as publishing in spreading new musical ideas and methods.

6. Toward the end of the Renaissance, music composed for specific instruments began to appear. Throughout the medieval period as well as much of the Renaissance, instruments doubled a voice part or played a transcription or an improvised accompaniment. Not until much later did composers consider idiomatic writing.

7. Claudio Monteverdi provides a good example of how to think about style periods and changes of style. Change doesn’t occur at 12:01 a.m. on January 1 of a given year (1451 for instance), nor does it happen simultaneously across the world. Talk about how Monteverdi’s style changed over his long life. He himself characterized his music as either old style (Renaissance) or new style (baroque).

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did the Renaissance in music occur so much later than in the other arts?
2. Why were there more innovations in secular music than in sacred music during this time period?
3. How did the guild system affect the world of music?

FURTHER LISTENING

There are a number of other composers whose works are worth exploring:

Roland de Lassus (Orlando di Lasso), *Cum essem parvulus* (“When I was a child”) 1579, six-voice motet (SATTBB)

Guillaume Dufay, *Missa Se la face ay pale*, c. 1450, first example of secular cantus firmus

Josquin des Prez, *El grillo* (“The Cricket”), ballata

Cipriano de Rore, *Da la belle contrade d’oriente* (“From the fair regions of the East”), five-voice madrigal

John Dowland, “Come, Heavy Sleep,” lute song

Giovanni Gabrieli, *Ricercar del duodecimo tuono* (“Ricercar on the Twelfth Tone”), based on the twelfth scale tone (Ionian mode), which is the modern major scale.