

## UNIT IV

# The Renaissance

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## The Renaissance Spirit

*"... we here in the West have in the last two hundred years recovered the excellence of good letters and brought back the study of the disciplines after they had long remained as if extinguished. The sustained industry of many learned men has led to such success that today this our age can be compared to the most learned times that ever were."—LOUIS LE ROY (1575)*

The Renaissance (c. 1450–1600) is one of the most beautiful if misleading names in the history of culture: beautiful because it implies an awakening of intellectual awareness, misleading because it suggests a sudden rebirth of learning and art after the presumed stagnation of the Middle Ages. History moves continuously rather than by leaps and bounds. The Renaissance was the next phase of a cultural process that, under the leadership of the Church, the universities and princely courts, had begun long before.

### *The Arts in the Renaissance*

*Philosophical  
developments*

What the Renaissance does mark is the passing of European society from an exclusively religious orientation to a more secular one; from an age of unquestioning faith and mysticism to one of belief in reason and scientific inquiry. The focus of human destiny was seen to be life on earth rather than in the hereafter. There was a new reliance on the evidence of the senses rather than on tradition and authority. Implied was a new confidence in people's ability to solve their problems and rationally order their world. This awakening found its symbol in the culture of Greek and Roman antiquity. Renaissance society discovered the summit of human wisdom not only in the Church fathers and saints, as their ancestors had done, but also in Homer and Virgil and the ancient philosophers.



*The Renaissance painter preferred realism to allegory and psychological characterizations to stylized stereotypes. These characteristics are exemplified in Madonna and St. Anne by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) (© Photo P.M.N., The Louvre, Paris)*

Historians used to date the Renaissance from the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the emigration of Greek scholars to the West. Today, we recognize that there are no such clear demarcations in history. But a series of momentous circumstances around this time help to set off the new era from the old. The introduction of gunpowder signaled the eventual end of the age of knighthood. The development of the compass made possible the voyages of discovery that opened up a new world and demolished old superstitions. The revival of ancient letters was associated with the humanists, and was spurred by the introduction of printing. This revival had its counterpart in architecture, painting, and sculpture. If the Romanesque found its grand architectural form in the monastery and the Gothic in the cathedral, the Renaissance lavished its constructive energy upon palace and chateau. The gloomy fortified castles of the Medieval barons gave way to spacious edifices that displayed the harmonious proportions of the classical style. (The term *classical* in this context refers to the culture of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, whose art embodied the ideals of order, stability, and balanced proportions.) In effect, Renaissance architecture embodied the striving for a gracious and reasoned existence that was the great gesture of the age.

So, too, the elongated saints and martyrs of Medieval painting and sculpture were replaced by the David of Donatello and the gentle Madonnas of Leonardo. Even where artists retained a religious atmosphere, the Mother of Sorrows and the symbols of grief gave way to smiling madonnas—often posed for by very secular ladies—and dimpled cherubs. The human form, denied for centuries, was revealed as a thing of beauty; also as an object of anatomical study. Nature entered painting along with the nude, and with it an intense preoccupation with the laws of perspective and composition.



*The human form, denied for centuries, was revealed in the Renaissance as a thing of beauty.* David by Donatello (c. 1386–1466). (Alinari/Art Resources)

Medieval painting had presented life as an allegory; the Renaissance preferred realism. The Medieval painters posed their figures frontally, impersonally; the Renaissance developed psychological characterization and the art of portraiture. Medieval painting dealt in types; the Renaissance concerned itself with individuals. Space in Medieval painting was organized in a succession of planes over which the eye traveled as over a series of episodes. The Renaissance created unified space and the simultaneous seeing of the whole. It discovered the landscape, created the illusion of distance, and opened up endless vistas upon the physical loveliness of the world.

The Renaissance came to flower in the nation that stood closest to the classical Roman culture. Understandably the great names we associate with its painting and sculpture are predominantly Italian: Donatello (c. 1386–1466), Masaccio (1401–28), Botticelli (c. 1445–1510), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Michelangelo (1475–1564), Raphael (1483–1520), and Titian (1488–1576). With masters who lived in the second half of the century, such as Tintoretto (1518–94) and Veronese (1528–88), we approach the world of the early Baroque. From the multicolored tapestry of Renaissance life emerge figures that have captured the imagination of the world: Lorenzo de' Medici and Ludovico Sforza, Lucrezia Borgia and Isabella d'Este. Few centuries can match the sixteenth for its galaxy of great names. The list includes Erasmus (1466–1536) and Martin Luther (1483–1546), Machiavelli (1469–1527) and Galileo (1564–1642), Rabelais (1494–1553) and Cervantes (1547–1616), Marlowe (1564–93) and Shakespeare (1564–1616).

The Renaissance marks the birth of modern European temper and of Western society as we have come to know it. In that turbulent time was shaped the moral and cultural climate we still inhabit.

### *The Musician in Renaissance Society*

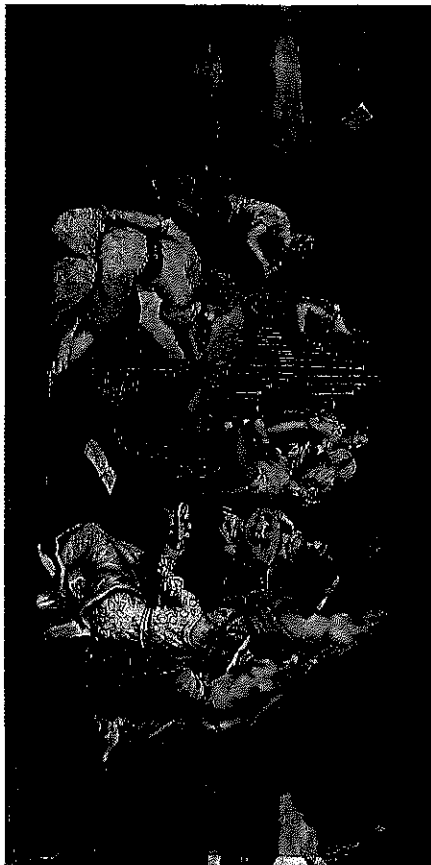
The painting and poetry of the Renaissance abound in references to music. Nothing more clearly attests to the vast importance of the arts in the cultural life of the time. The pageantry of the Renaissance unfolded to a momentous musical accompaniment. Throwing off its Medieval mysticism, music moved toward clarity, simplicity, and a frankly sensuous appeal.

Musicians of the sixteenth century were supported by the chief institutions of their society—the Church, city, and state; royal and aristocratic courts. As the influence of the art spread, professional possibilities widened. Musicians could find employment as choirmasters, singers, organists, instrumentalists, copyists, composers, teachers, instrument builders, music printers, and publishers. There was a corresponding growth in the basic musical institutions: church choirs and schools, publishing houses, civic wind bands. So too were there increased opportunities for apprentices to study with master singers, players, and instrument builders.

The rise of the merchant class brought with it a new group of patrons of music. This development was paralleled by the emergence, among the cultivated middle and upper classes, of the amateur musician. When, in the early sixteenth century, the system for printing type was made available to music, printed music books became available—and affordable. This in turn

### *Intellectual developments*

### *Musicians as professionals*



*The painting and poetry of the Renaissance abound in references to music making. A painting by Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-94), The Muses in Concert. (Scala/Art Resource)*

made possible the rise of the great publishing houses, such as Attaignant in Paris or Susato in Antwerp. As a result, there was a dramatic upsurge of musical literacy.

### *Renaissance Musical Style*

The vocal forms of the sixteenth century were marked by smoothly gliding melodies conceived entirely in relation to the voice. The Renaissance achieved an exquisite appreciation of *a cappella* music. (You will recall that this term refers to a vocal work without instrumental accompaniment.) The sixteenth century has come to be regarded as the golden age of the *a cappella* style. Its polyphony was based on a principle called *continuos imitation*. The motives wandered from vocal line to vocal line within the texture, the voices imitating one another so that the same theme or motive was heard now in the soprano or alto, now in the tenor or bass. There resulted a close-knit musical fabric capable of the most subtle and varied effects.

### *Word Painting*

Most church music was written in a *cappella* style. Secular music, on the other hand, was divided between purely vocal works and those in which the singers were supported by instruments. The period also saw the growth of solo instrumental music, especially for lute and the keyboard instruments. In the matter of harmony, the Renaissance leaned toward fuller chords. There was a turning away from the parallel fifths and octaves favored by Medieval composers to the more euphonious thirds and sixths, also a greater use of dissonance was linked to the text. The expressive device of *word painting* or musically pictorializing words from the text, was much favored:

### *THE RENAISSANCE SPIRIT*

an unexpected, harsh dissonance might coincide with the word "death" or an ascending line might lead up to the word "heavens" or "stars."

Polyphonic writing offered the composer many possibilities, such as the use of *canus firmus* (fixed melody) as a basis for elaborate ornamentation in the upper voices. Triple meter had been especially attractive to the Medieval mind because it symbolized the perfection of the Trinity. The new era, much less preoccupied with religious symbolism, showed a greater interest in duple meter.

The composers of the Flemish school were pre-eminent in European music from around 1450 to the end of the sixteenth century. They came from the southern Lowlands, which is now Belgium, and from the adjoining provinces of northern France and Burgundy. In their number were several who wrote their names large in the history of music.

## 14

### *Renaissance Sacred Music*

*"He who does honor and reverence to music is commonly a man of worth, sound of soul, by nature loving things lofty."—PERRAULT DE*

*KONSARD TO FRANÇOIS II (1560)*

Music played a prominent part in the ritual of the Church. There were several types of music for church services in addition to the monophonic Gregorian chant, such as polyphonic settings of the Mass, motets, hymns, and Magnificats. (*A Magnificat* is a canticle in honor of the Virgin.) These were normally based on counterpoint and, especially in the early sixteenth century, on pre-existent music. Such works were sung by professional singers, usually churchmen, trained from childhood in the choir schools.

### *The Renaissance Motet*

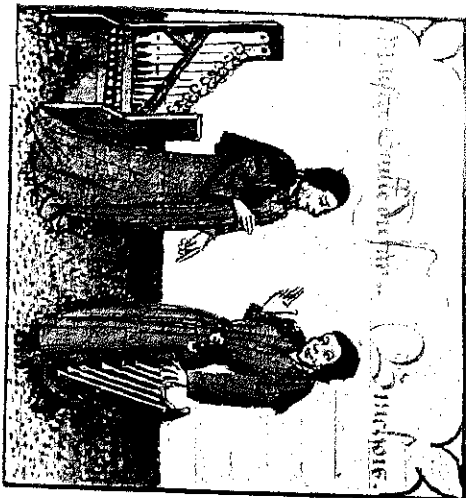
The Renaissance motet now became a sacred form with a single Latin text, for use in the Mass and other religious services. Motets in praise of the Virgin Mary were extremely popular, because of the many brotherhoods of laymen all over Europe devoted to Marian worship. These works were in three or four voices, sometimes based on a chant or other *canus firmus*. Until this point the voices had been equal in importance. Now the interest shifted to the top voice or melody, with the lower parts serving as a background and sometimes played on instruments.

*Dufay: Alma redemptoris mater*

Guillaume Dufay (c. 1400–74) was one of the earliest composers of the Burgundian School to make his career in Italy, where he spent his formative years. He was also active at the court of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1419–67), which for several decades rivaled that of the kings of France in the brilliance of its art. He spent his last years in his native Cambrai in northern France, where he continued to compose up to his death.

In the music of Dufay and his Burgundian colleagues, the rhythmic complexities of fourteenth-century music were abandoned in favor of an uncomplicated, more accessible style. The meandering vocal lines of the past were replaced by well-defined melodies and clear-cut rhythms, with something of the charm of folksong. Harmony grew simpler and more consonant, foreshadowing a language based on triads and sense of key. Eventually, Dufay expanded the standard musical texture from three voices to four.

Dufay's style is well exemplified in his Latin motet *Alma redemptoris mater* for three voices on a text praising the Virgin Mary. (In such works, some or all of the voices may be played on instruments as well.) Several important characteristics distinguish his music from that of earlier times. To begin with, the *cantus firmus*, drawn from a Gregorian chant, has been elevated to the highest part, where the listener can easily hear it. Instead of being a mystical symbol, it is now a graceful melody that delights the ear. As a result, this voice dominates the others. Also, instead of following the sacred chant slavishly, Dufay adapts it both rhythmically and melodically to his own expressive purpose. Equally significant, Dufay has replaced the open fifths and octaves that impart so stark a color to Medieval music with the gentler thirds and sixths. As a result, he seems to have moved a considerable distance away from Machaut's archaic sound.



Guillaume Dufay (left) and fellow-composer Gilles Binchois. Miniature from a fifteenth-century manuscript.

Dufay's motet opens with an extended melisma on the first vowel of *Alma*. (See Listening Guide 6.) Throughout the piece, single words are sustained for series of notes. When words are dissolved in music this way, the composer is obviously using the text merely as scaffolding. Dufay's prime concern is the flow of the melodic lines.

The motet is in triple meter and in several sections. It opens in three-part harmony, but toward the end the sopranos divide to make four voice parts. In effect, harmony is moving toward the four-part structure that will become the standard, in which each of the four voices—soprano, alto, tenor, bass—occupies its respective register instead of crowding the others in the same range. This means, too, that the separate voices can take on greater independence, with an attendant broadening of the musical space.

## Listening Guide 6



LN/6



LN/10

**DUFAY: *Alma redemptoris mater****Date:* mid-15th century*Genre:* Latin motet*Subject:* Honors the Virgin Mary*Setting:* 3 voices and/or instruments*Basis:* Gregorian chant *Alma redemptoris mater* in top voice**Text***Alma redemptoris mater,*

quae perva caeli porta manes,  
et stella maris, succurre cadenti,  
surgere qui curat populo.

Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,  
tuam sanctum genitorum:  
Virgo prius ac posterus,  
Gabrielis ab ore sumens  
Illum Ave,  
peccatorum miserece.

**Translation**

Gracious mother of the  
Redeemer,  
Abiding at the doors of Heaven,  
Star of the sea, aid the falling.  
Rescue the people who  
struggle.

Thou who, astonishing nature,  
Hast borne thy holy Creator:  
Virgin before and after,  
Who heard the Ave from the  
mouth of Gabriel,  
Be merciful to sinners.  
Trans. by DR. YVETTE LORUNA

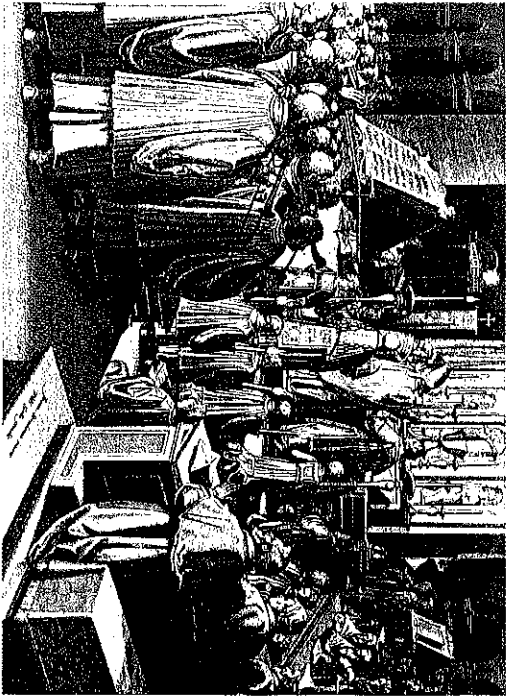
**Setting**

Solo, then homophonic in 3  
voices, oriented to top  
voice

More polyphonic, movement  
in all voices  
Homophonic texture returns  
in long, sustained chords  
in all voices until the end  
Sopranos divide to make 4  
voice parts

Opening of Gregorian chant *Alma redemptoris mater* with melisma on "Alma"

An engraving from the sixteenth century of a Mass being performed in a church. The Mass is a religious service, a collection of prayers and hymns. The Mass is performed in a church, and the Mass is a religious service. The Mass is performed in a church, and the Mass is a religious service. The Mass is performed in a church, and the Mass is a religious service.



### The Early Renaissance Mass

With the rise of polyphony, composers concentrated their musical settings on the invariable portion of the Mass that was sung daily, known as the Ordinary. This came into prominence the five sections known as the musical setting of the Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. (Today these sections of the Mass are recited or sung in the language of the country—the vernacular.) The opening section, the Kyrie—a prayer for mercy—dates from the early centuries of Christianity, as its original Greek text attests. It is an A-B-A form that consists of nine invocations: three of “Kyrie eleison” (Lord, have mercy), three of “Christe eleison” (Christ, have mercy), and again three of “Kyrie eleison.” There follows the Gloria (Glory to God in the highest). This is a joyful hymn of praise which is omitted in the penitential seasons, Advent and Lent. The third movement is the confession of faith, Credo (I believe in one God, the Father Almighty). It includes also the *Et incarnatus est* (And He became flesh), the *Crucifixus* (He was crucified), and the *Et resurrexit* (And He rose again). Fourth is the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), which concludes with the *Hosanna* (Hosanna in the highest) and the *Benedictus* (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord), after which the *Hosanna* is repeated as a kind of refrain. The fifth and last part, the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world), is sung three times. Twice it concludes with “*Miserere nobis*” (Have mercy on us), and the third time with the prayer “*Dona nobis pacem*” (Grant us peace). A summary of the order of the Mass, with its Proper and Ordinary movements, follows. (Remember that we studied an example of a Gradual for Easter Sunday, *Haec dies*.)

### RENAISSANCE SACRED MUSIC

#### Movements and Order of the Mass

<i>Proper</i>	<i>Ordinary</i>
Introit	Kyrie Gloria
Collect	
Epistle	
Gradual	
Alleluia (or Tract)	
Evangeliu[m]	Credo
Offertory	
Secret	Sanctus
Preface	
Canon	Agnus Dei
Communion	
Post-Communion	
<i>Ite missa est</i>	

Like the motet, the polyphonic setting of the Mass was usually based on a fragment of Gregorian chant. This became the *cantus firmus* that served as the foundation of the work, supporting the florid patterns that the other voices wove around it. When used in all the movements of a Mass, the Gregorian *cantus firmus* helped to weld the work into a unity. It provided composers with a fixed element that they could embellish with all the resources of their artistry.

Of the Masses for special services the most important is the Mass for the Dead, the Requiem, which is sung at funerals and memorial services. The name comes from the opening verse “*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine*” (Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord). Included are prayers in keeping with the solemnity of the occasion, among them the awesome evocation of the Last Judgment, *Dies irae* (Day of Wrath).

The history of the Mass as an art form extends over the better part of eight hundred years. In that time it garnered for itself some of the greatest music ever written.

#### Josquin Desprez: *Agnus Dei* from *Missa La sol fa re mi*

“He is the master of the notes. They have to do as he bids them; other composers have to do as the notes will.”—MARTIN LUTHER

With the Franco-Flemish master Josquin Desprez (c. 1440–1521), the tradition is complete from the anonymous composer of the Middle Ages, through

#### Requiem



Josquin Desprez  
5 QUINVS PRATEVSIS.

the shadowy figures of the late Gothic, to the highly individual artist of the Renaissance. He is the first musician, as one historian put it, "who impresses us as having genius."

Josquin studied with the Flemish master Johannes Ockeghem, who exerted a powerful influence on several generations of composers. Josquin's varied career led him to Italy, where he served at several ducal courts—especially those of Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, and Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara—as well as at the Sistine Chapel in Rome. During his stay in Italy his northern art absorbed the classical virtues of balance and moderation, the sense of harmonious proportion and lucid form that found their archetype in the radiant art of Raphael. After leaving the Papal Chapel he returned to France. His last appointment was as a canon at the collegiate church of Condé where he was buried in the choir of this church.

The older generation of musicians had been preoccupied with solving the technical problems of counterpoint—problems that fit the intellectual climate of the waning Middle Ages. Josquin appeared at a time when the humanizing influences of the Renaissance were wafting through Europe. The contrapuntal ingenuity that he inherited from Ockeghem he was able to harness to a higher end—the expression of emotion. His music is rich in feeling, in serenely beautiful melody and expressive harmony. Its clarity of structure and humanism bespeak the spirit of the Renaissance.

Josquin composed at least seventeen complete settings of the Mass. He used a variety of techniques, basing the music on pre-existent models, both monophonic and polyphonic. The *La sol fa re mi* Mass, written while he was in Italy, is for four voices. It is based on the five-note figure in the title, (A G F D E), which serves as an ostinato that pervades the work.

A rather humorous story is the generally accepted explanation for this ostinato. It seems that Josquin's patron, Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, temporarily financially strapped, put off the composer's requests for payment with a reassuring "Lascia fare a me" (Leave it to me). Whereupon Josquin's friend, the Renaissance poet Serafino d'Aquila, translated the remark into its musical equivalent and incorporated it into a sonnet addressed to the composer. This five-note ostinato is heard again and again in all the movements of the Mass.

The Agnus Dei text is in three sections, as is Josquin's setting; in this work, the first and last sections are the same, giving the movement an A-B-A form. (See Listening Guide 7 for the text and analysis.) The outside sections are for four voices while the middle one is for two. The tenor presents the ostinato over and over again at various pitch levels. In our recording the basic motive is also heard on the sackbut (an early trombone).

One has only to examine the score to be dazzled by Josquin's mastery of contrapuntal technique. Yet despite the wizardry behind it, his piece sounds so simple in its flow and so natural. This is truly the art that conceals art.

# Listening Guide 7



## JOSQUIN: Agnus Dei from *Missa La sol fa re mi*

**Date:** early 16th century  
**Genre:** Mass, setting of Ordinary  
**Voices:** 4 (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Basses)  
**Form:** Imitative, based on 5-note ostinato  
**Basis:** 5-note motive (*la sol fa re mi*), at various pitch levels  
**Movements of the Ordinary of the Mass:**

- I. Kyrie eleison
- II. Gloria in excelsis
- III. Credo in unum Deum
- IV. Sanctus and Benedictus
- V. Agnus Dei



Musical form of Agnus Dei: 3 sections (A-B-A), based on text

<p><b>12</b> I Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.</p>	<p><b>Translation</b> Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.</p>	<p><b>Description</b> 4 voices (SATB) ostinato heard in tenor supported by sackbut also in S and A (marked with x's)</p>
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<p><b>13</b> II. Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis.</p>	<p><b>Translation</b> Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, Have mercy upon us.</p>	<p>2 voices (S and A) Alto with ostinato</p>
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<p><b>14</b> III. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi dona nobis pacem.</p>	<p><b>Translation</b> Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world Grant us peace.</p>	<p>4 voices liturgical repeat of Agnus I</p>
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*The High Renaissance Mass**Counter Reformation*

After the revolt of Martin Luther (1483-1546) the desire for a return to true Christian piety brought about a reform movement in the Catholic Church. This movement became part of the Counter-Reformation whereby the Church strove to recapture the minds of its people. Among its manifestations were the activities of Franciscans and Dominicans among the poor; the founding of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) by St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1566); and the deliberations of the Council of Trent, which extended—with some interruptions—from 1545 to 1563.

In its desire to regulate every aspect of religious discipline, the Council took up the matter of church music. The cardinals were much concerned over the corruption of the traditional chant by the singers, who added all manner of embellishments to the Gregorian melodies. They objected to the use of instruments other than the organ in religious services, to the practice of incorporating popular songs in Masses, to the secular spirit that was invading sacred music, and to the generally irreverent attitude of church musicians. They pointed out that in polyphonic settings of the Mass the sacred text was made unintelligible by the overelaborate contrapuntal texture. Certain zealots advocated abolishing counterpoint altogether and returning to Gregorian chant, but there were many music lovers among the cardinals who opposed so drastic a step. The committee assigned to deal with the problem contended itself with issuing general recommendations for a more dignified service. The authorities favored a pure vocal style that would respect the integrity of the sacred texts, that would avoid virtuosity and encourage piety.

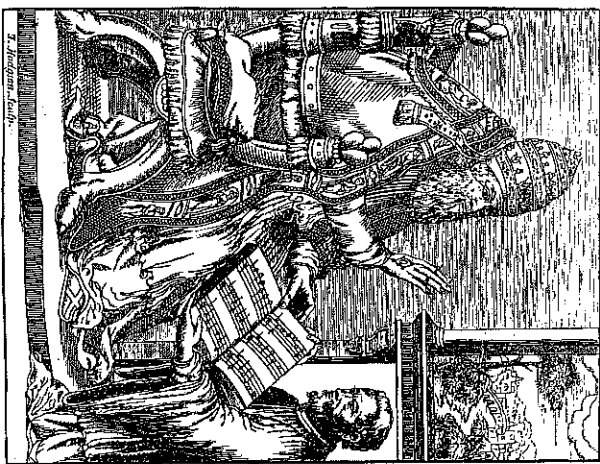
*Palestrina: Gloria from Pope Marcellus Mass*

*"I have held nothing more desirable than that what is sung throughout the year, according to the seasons, should be more agreeable to the ear by virtue of its vocal beauty."*

Giovanni Pierluigi, called da Palestrina after his birthplace (c. 1525-94), met the need for a reformed church music in so exemplary a fashion that for posterity he has remained *the* Catholic composer. He served as organist and choirmaster at various churches including that of St. Peter's in Rome. His patron, Pope Julius III (r. 1550-1555), appointed him a member of the Sistine Chapel choir even though, as a married man, he was ineligible for the semiclerical post. He was dismissed by a later pope but ultimately returned to St. Peter's, where he spent the last twenty-three years of his life. Palestrina's music gives voice to the religiosity of the Counter-Reformation, its transports and its visions. The contemplative beauty of his music does not exclude intense emotion; but this is emotion directed to an act of faith.

A true Italian, Palestrina was surpassingly sensitive to the needs of the human voice. It was from this vantage point that he viewed his function as a church composer. It was his good fortune to live not only at a time when

A contemporary engraving which depicts Palestrina presenting his earliest printed work to Pope Julius III.



the art of music had progressed far enough for him to achieve this goal, but also within a historical situation that made it necessary for him to do so.

Palestrina wrote over a hundred Masses, of which the most famous is the Mass for Pope Marcellus, successor to Julius III. It is popularly believed that this Mass was written to satisfy the new strict demands placed on polyphonic church music by the Council of Trent. Since the pontifical choir sang without instrumental accompaniment at this time, the *Pope Marcellus Mass* was probably performed a cappella. It was written for six voice parts—soprano, alto, two tenors, and two basses, a typical setting for the all-male church choirs of the time. The highest voice was sung by boy sopranos or male falsettists, the alto part by male altos or countertenors (tenors with very high voices), and the two lower parts were distributed among the normal ranges of the male voice.

The Gloria from the *Pope Marcellus Mass* exhibits the salient characteristics of Palestrina's conservative style. As was typical, the work begins with a monophonic intonation of the opening line "Gloria in excelsis Deo" (Glory be to God in the highest), followed by a carefully constructed polyphonic setting of the remaining text. Notable is the way Palestrina balances the harmonic and polyphonic elements of his art so that the words of the sacred text are clear and audible, an effect desired by the Council of Trent. (See Listening Guide 8 for the text and analysis.)

Palestrina's style incarnates the pure a cappella ideal of vocal polyphony, in which the individual voice fulfills its destiny through submergence in the group. His music remains an apt symbol of the greatness art can aspire to when it subserves a profound moral conviction.







## Renaissance Secular Music

*"I am not pleased with the Courtier if he be not also a musician, and besides his understanding and cunning (in singing) upon the book have skill in like manner on sundry instruments."*—BALDASSARE

CASTIGLIONE (1528)

### Music in Court and City Life

The secular music of the Renaissance was intended for both the professional and the amateur. Court festivities included music performed by professionals for the entertainment of noble guests and dignitaries. With the rise of the middle class, music making in the home became increasingly popular. Most middle- and upper-class homes had a lute (a plucked-string instrument with a rounded body) or a keyboard instrument, and the study of music was considered part of the proper upbringing for a young lady or—in lesser degree—gentleman. Women began to play a prominent part in the performance of music both in the home and at court. During the later sixteenth century in Italy, a number of professional women singers achieved great fame. In addition, dances provided a popular outlet for music at all levels of society.

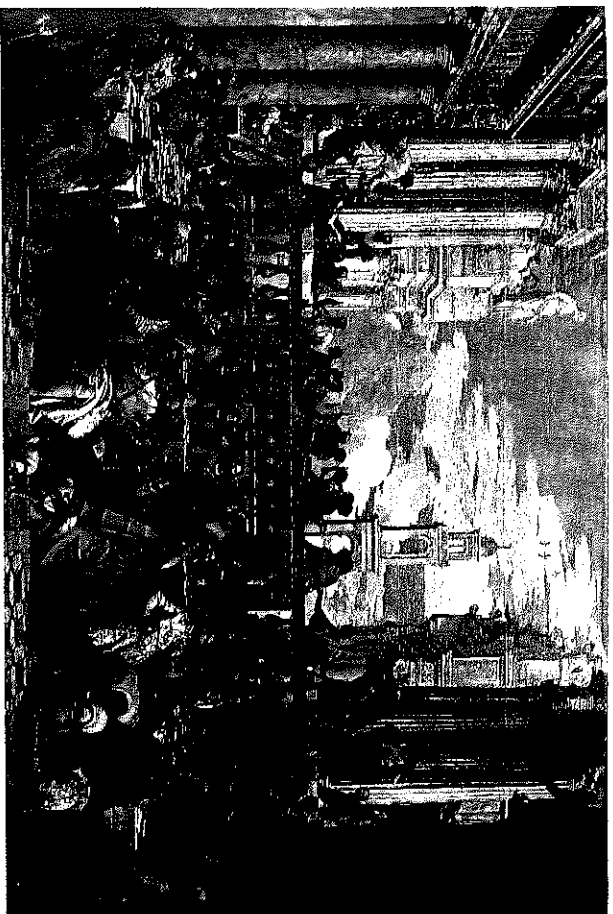
From the union of poetry and music came two important secular forms: the chanson and the madrigal. In both of these, music was used to enhance the poetry of such major literary figures as Petrarch and Pierre de Ronsard. In this domain the intricate verse forms of French and Italian poetry helped to shape the ensuing musical forms.

### The Burgundian Chanson

The fifteenth-century *chanson* was the characteristic genre at the court of the dukes of Burgundy and the kings of France, who were great patrons of the arts. It was usually for three voices, with one or both lower voices played by instruments. Chansons were set to the courtly love poetry of the French Renaissance, the poems being in the form of a *rondeau*, a *ballade*, or a *viteloz*. These fixed forms established the character of the setting and the repetition of sections. If there was a recurrent refrain of one or two lines, this naturally was reflected in the music.

### Ockeghem: L'autre d'antan

Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410–97) was born in Flanders. He became a singer at the Church of Our Lady in Antwerp, then entered the service of Charles I, Duke of Bourbon. He ultimately joined the French court, where he served for many years. His settings of the Mass include a Requiem; he also wrote motets and about twenty chansons in fixed forms.



*Music played an increasingly important role in the celebrations of sixteenth-century nobility: The Wedding at Cana by Paolo Veronese (1528–88). (The Louvre, Paris)*

His chanson *L'autre d'antan* (The Other Year) is in a more popular style of poetry than many of the court chansons. This informal love song tells in a simple, direct manner how the lover was first vanquished, then spurned. The fair one's glance that pierced his defenses was "forged in Milan"—a reference to the town that forged the best armor and swords. One line from the chanson, "Puis apres nostre amour cessa" (And then our love ended), echoes a sentiment that resounds through popular poetry down to our day.

The work utilizes one of the most widespread poetic forms of the late fifteenth century, the *rondeau*. This example has a six-line refrain for the opening stanza. The first half of the refrain ends the second stanza, the opening line is heard twice in the course of the third stanza, and the entire refrain returns as the fourth and last stanza. The musical form accommodates itself to this intricate scheme, consisting of two sections that are repeated according to the repetition in the poem. (See Listening Guide 9 for the text and musical structure.)

Ockeghem's chanson is based on imitative counterpoint and the setting is mostly by syllable, with some *melismas* near the end of phrases. In this recording, two parts are sung, and the bottom one is played on a bowed string instrument. The two voices in this chanson sing in the same range, with much crisscrossing of parts. The music is in a much older style than we heard in the selections from Palestrina and Tomkins, as is indicated by the hollow-sounding cadences on intervals of the fifth and octave rather than on the more euphonious third.

## Listening Guide 9

OCKEGHEM: *L'autre d'anian*

Date: late 15th century

Genre: Burgundian chanson, 3 voices

Poem: Anonymous rondeau

Musical form: two sections, A and B repeated as follows:  
A-B-A-A-a-b-A-B (capital letters = refrain text)

	Text	Rhyme Scheme	Musical Form	Translation
Refrain	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier passa</i>	a	A	The other year, the other day, she passed by
	<i>Ei en passant me trespassa</i>	a		And, in passing, pierced me through
	<i>D'un regard forgié a Milan</i>	b	B	With a glance forged in Milan
	<i>Qui me mist en l'autrier ban,</i>	b		That knocked me into the year ranks
	<i>Tant malvais brassin me brassa</i>	a		So rude a blow she dealt me
	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier passa</i>	a		The other year, the other day, she passed by.
	<i>Par tel faction me fricassa</i>	a	a	She destroyed me so thoroughly
	<i>Que de ses gaiges me cassa;</i>	a		That she dismissed me from her troops;
Partial Refrain	<i>Mais, par Dieu, cilc fist son dan,</i>	b	A	But, by God, she did her damage-
	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier</i>	a		The other year, the other day, she passed by
	<i>Et en passant me trespassa</i>	a		And, in passing, pierced me through
	<i>D'un regard forgié a Milan</i>	b	a	With a glance forged in Milan
	<i>Puis apertes nostre amour cessa,</i>	a		And then our love ended.
	<i>Car, oncques puis qu'elle dansa</i>	a		For, ever since she did her dance,
	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autre d'anian</i>	b		The other year, the other year,
	<i>Je n'eus ne bon jour ne bon an,</i>	b	b	I've had neither good day nor good year,
	<i>Tout de mal cany amassa.</i>	a		So much bad luck has piled up.
	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier</i>	a		The other year, the other day, she passed
	<i>passa</i>	a		
Refrain	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier passa</i>	a	A	The other year, the other day, she passed by
	<i>Ei en passant me trespassa</i>	a		And, in passing, pierced me through
	<i>D'un regard forgié a Milan</i>	b	B	With a glance forged in Milan
	<i>Qui me mist en l'autrier ban,</i>	b		That knocked me into the year ranks
	<i>Tant malvais brassin me brassa</i>	a		So rude a blow she dealt me
	<i>L'autre d'anian, l'autrier passa</i>	a		The other year, the other day, she passed by.

Trans. by HOWARD GABRY

Opening of chanson: brackets show imitation in all parts

*The Later Chanson*

Roland de Lassus

The Flemish tradition culminates in the towering figure of Roland de Lassus (c. 1532–94). A citizen of the world (he was equally well known in Italy as Orlando di Lasso), Lassus absorbed into his art the main currents of Renaissance music—the elegance and wit of the French, the profundity and rich detail of the Netherlanders, the sensuous beauty of the Italians. The greater part of his career was spent at the court of the Dukes of Bavaria in Munich, whence his fame spread all over Europe.

His works number over two thousand, from impetuous love songs (some with texts almost too explicit for the concert hall) to noble Masses, motets, and the profoundly felt *Penitential Psalms*. In his panoramic view of life, as in his feeling for vivid detail, Lassus elicits comparison with another great Fleming—the painter Pieter Brueghel (c. 1525–69). His music is compounded of passion, tenderness, brilliance, humor, and—at the last—nysticism.

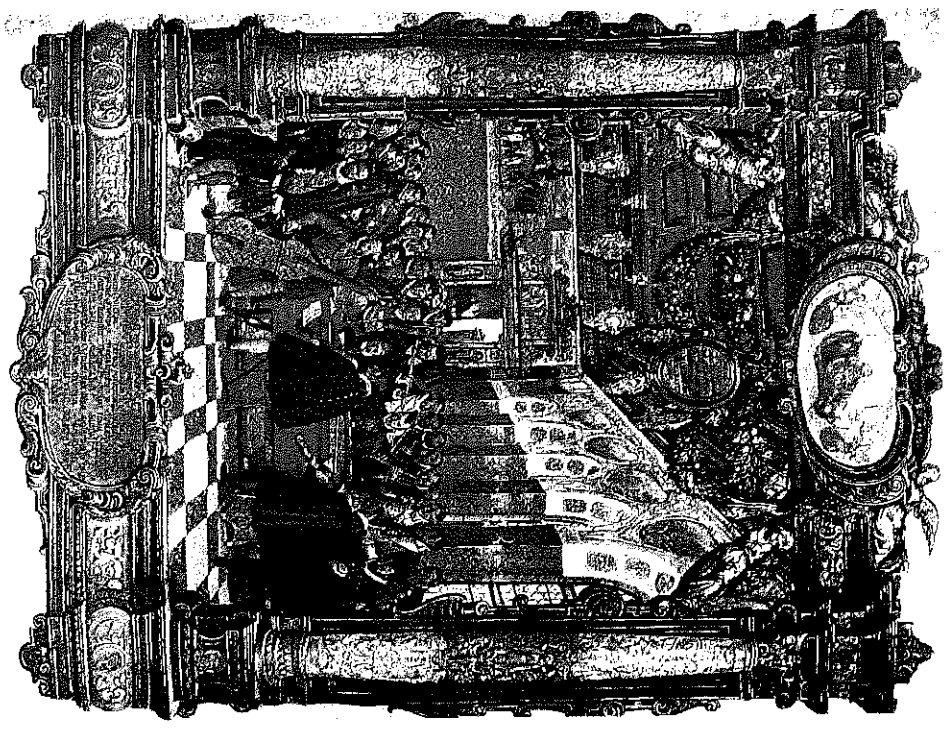
Lassus is one of the masters of the French chanson, which he handled with a freedom and fluency that made it—alongside the Italian and English madrigal—one of the more attractive genres of the Renaissance. The use of short lyric poems of a secular nature, in the language of the composer instead of in Church Latin, inevitably brought with it a closer relationship between words and music, in a larger sense between music and life.

Lassus wrote about a hundred and fifty chansons, most of them on the verses of such famous French poets as Pierre de Ronsard and Clément Marot. The texts cover a wide range of emotions from amorous to bawdy to religious.

*Lassus: Bon jour mon coeur*

The chanson *Bon jour mon coeur*, on a poem by Ronsard, has the lower guide line below with a series of endearments. (See text in Listening Guide 10.) It is set for the four voices that were becoming basic in vocal music—soprano, alto, tenor, bass. The chanson opens in a chordal or homophonic style that seems quite simple but is marked by many subtleties in the treatment of the text. For example, the opening lines alternate between

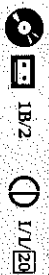
land de Lassus is  
 own at the keyboard  
 taking his chamber  
 ensemble in St. George's  
 all at the court of  
 brecht V in Munich.  
 ong with three  
 oitboys, about fifteen  
 instrumentalists, playing  
 variety of winds and  
 tings, encircle him,  
 om a miniature by  
 ans Mellich (1516-  
 1). (Munich, Bayerische  
 atsbibliothek)



phrases of two and three measures, with the chords on the first words giving way to contrapuntal style on such emotional epithets as "ma douce vie" (my sweet life) and "ma chère amie" (my dear friend). In addition, the choral setting of one note to a syllable is stretched out to short melismas on the key words "vie" and "amie." Lassus makes the text clear by having all the voices sing the same syllable at the same time. This declamatory manner brings into relief the passages in which he moves from choral to contrapuntal texture.

The art of Lassus incarnates the verve and splendor of the Renaissance, and well merits the judgment carved on his tomb: "Here lies that Lassus who refreshes the weariness of the world, and whose harmony resolves its discord."

# Listening Guide 10



## LASSUS: *Bon jour mon coeur*

**Date:** mid-16th century  
**Genre:** French chanson, 4 voices  
**Poem:** 9-line poem (aabcbbbb) by Pierre de Ronsard  
**Musical style:** free form, homophonic texture

### Text

Bon jour mon coeur, bon jour ma douce vie.  
 Bon jour mon oeil, bon jour ma chère amie.  
 Hé bon jour ma toute belle,  
 Ma nigardise, bon jour,  
 Mes délices, mon amour.  
 Mon doux printemps, ma douce fleur nouvelle,  
 Mon doux plaisir, ma douce columbelle,  
 Mon passereau, ma gentie tourterelle,  
 Bon jour, ma douce rebelle.

### Translation

Good day my heart, good day my sweet life.  
 Good day my eye, good day my dear friend,  
 ah, good day, my beauty,  
 my darling one, good day,  
 my delight, my love.  
 My sweet spring, my sweet fresh flower,  
 My sweet pleasure, my sweet young dove,  
 My sparrow, my gentle turtle dove,  
 good day, my sweet rebel.

"Bon jour mon coeur"  
 2 measures  
 completely chordal  
 long notes

"Bon jour ma douce vie"  
 3 measures  
 more movement  
 arched line

### Opening of chanson, illustrating 2- and 3-measure phrases

## Instrumental Dance Music

The sixteenth century witnessed a remarkable flowering of instrumental dance music. With the advent of music publishing, printed dance music became readily available for solo instruments as well as small ensembles. Venice, Paris, and Antwerp took the lead as centers of the new publishing

this miniature, compartment is divided for an aristocratic group moving a ronde in a room by three "loud" instruments (biblethèque Nationale, Paris)



THE RENAISSANCE

industry. The dances were often fashioned from vocal works such as madrigals and chansons, which were published in simplified four-part versions that were played instead of sung.

The instruments to be used in these dance arrangements were left unspecified. As often as not they were determined by the circumstances surrounding the performance. Outdoor performances called for "loud" instruments such as the shawm (medieval oboe) and sackbut (medieval trombone). For stately occasions, on the other hand, "soft" instruments such as recorders and bowed strings were preferred. Although percussion parts were not written out in Renaissance music, the evidence suggests that they were improvised at the performance.

A number of dance types became popular during the sixteenth century, several of which survived into the Baroque era. The stately court dance known as the *paivane* often served as the first number of a set and was followed by one or more quicker dances, especially the Italian *saltarello* (hopping dance) and the French *galliard* (a more vigorous version of the saltarello). The *allemande* or German dance, in moderate triple time, retained its popularity throughout the time of Bach and was adapted into the Baroque dance suite. Less courtly was the *ronde* or round dance, a lively romp associated with the outdoors in which the participants formed a circle.

#### *Susato: Three Dances*

One of the most popular dance collections of the sixteenth century was published in Antwerp in 1551 by Tielman Susato (c. 1515–67), a music

printer who was also a prolific composer and instrumentalist. His collection, called *Danserye*, was described on its title page as "very cheerful and fit to play on all musical instruments." It contained pavanes, galliards, *basses danses* (an older version of the pavane), as well as allemandes, rondes, and *bransles* (a quick dance of the follow-the-leader type). Many of the dances in Susato's collection were drawn from vocal models; these being identified above the music. One of the loveliest of the pavanes is *Mille regretz* (A Thousand Regrets), based on a widely known chanson of the same name by Josquin Desprez. The dance unfolds in three sections, each of which is repeated. The performance you will hear features four recorders of varying size—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—with finger cymbals used to emphasize the beat. When a section is repeated, the principal recorder freely ornaments the part. Like its chanson model, this piece has an unusual harmonic character. It is neither in major nor minor but in one of the Medieval modes—the Phrygian—that was then going out of fashion. The use of this mode imparts to the music a charmingly archaic atmosphere.

#### *Pavane*

The pavane is followed by two rondes, each in two-part form with repeated sections. In our performance these feature "soft" instruments. The first ronde is introduced by a drum, followed by a high recorder in the upper part and a regal or reed organ in the bass. The middle parts are filled in by various other recorders at each repetition. The second ronde, based on a chanson entitled *Mon amy* (My Friend), is performed at a slower tempo on bowed string instruments of the *viola da gamba* type. This Renaissance instrument had six or more strings and was fretted, like a guitar. Gambas were held between the legs like a cello. (Indeed, *gamba* is the Italian word for leg.) The strings are accompanied by a harpsichord and lute that support the harmonies. This set of dances closes with a restatement of the first ronde minus the repeats, a procedure we will observe again in the minuet-and-trio movements of the Classical era. (See Listening Guide on page 106.)

#### *Two rondes*

It was through dance pieces such as these that Renaissance composers explored the possibilities of purely instrumental forms. From these humble beginnings sprang the imposing structures of Western instrumental music.

#### *The Italian Madrigal*

In the madrigal the Renaissance found one of its chief forms of secular music. The sixteenth-century *madrigal* was an aristocratic form of poetry-and-music that came to flower at the small Italian courts, where it was a favorite diversion of cultivated amateurs. The text was a short poem of lyric or reflective character, rarely longer than twelve lines, marked by elegance of diction and refinement of sentiment. Conspicuous in it were the affecting words for weeping, sighing, trembling, dying that the Italian madrigalists learned to set with such a wealth of expression. Love and unsatisfied desire were by no means the only topics of the madrigal. Included, too, were humor and satire, political themes, scenes and incidents of city and country life, with the result that the Italian madrigal literature of the sixteenth century presents a vivid panorama of Renaissance thought and feeling.

## Listening Guide II



1B/1



1/L/15

## SUSATO: Three Dances

Date: 1551 dance collection

Setting: 4 parts, played on "soft" instruments

## Order of dances:

## 1. Parvane "Mille regretz"

Form: A-A-B-B-C-C

Tempo/Meter: Slow, staccato, duple

Instrumentation: Four recorders and finger cymbals, top recorder embellishes on repeats

Opening of melody (from Josquin chanson *Mille regretz*)(Note: the sharp above the last note is an example of *musica facta*, in which an accidental is added by the performer according to rules of performance.)

## 2. Ronde I

Form: A-A-B-B

Tempo/Meter: Lively duple

Instrumentation: Recorder, regal organ, and drum

Opening of melody



## 3. Ronde II

Form: A-A-B-B

Tempo/Meter: Moderate duple

Instrumentation: Viols da gamba, accompanied by harpsichord and lute

Opening of melody



## 4. Ronde I (without repeats)

Instruments participated, duplicating or even substituting for the voices. Sometimes only the top part was sung while the other lines were played on instruments. During the first period of the Renaissance madrigal—the second quarter of the sixteenth century—the composer's chief concern was to give pleasure to the performers, often amateurs, without much thought to virtuosic display. In the middle phase (c. 1550–80), the Renaissance madrigal became a conscious art form directed toward the listener.

The final phase of the Italian madrigal (1580–1620) extended beyond the late Renaissance into the world of the Baroque. The form became the



In this highly stylized, sixteenth-century painting, four aristocratic singers perform from part books in an imaginary landscape. The couple in back are beating time, as was customary. Concert in the Open Air. Anonymous (Italian School). (Bourges, Musée de Berry)

direct expression of the composer's personality and feelings. Certain traits were carried to the point of mannerism: rich chromatic harmony, dramatic declamation, vocal virtuosity, and vivid depiction in music of emotional words.

*Monteverdi: Ohimè! se tanto amate*

It was in the art of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) that the late Renaissance madrigal came to full flower. We shall discuss his music later in connection with the Baroque. Suffice it here to say that he published eight books of madrigals between 1587 and 1634. These consequently span the transition from Renaissance to Baroque.

*Ohimè! se tanto amate*, from Monteverdi's *Fourth Book of Madrigals* (1603), a superb example of his style, is a setting for five voices of a poem by Guarini. The words are in the courtly manner of much madrigal poetry, both tongue-in-cheek and exaggeratedly romantic in their subtle suggestions of sexual desire. Notable is the way Monteverdi uses the conventional "sigh" motive based on the descending interval of a third, and plays on it with the

key word "Ohimè!"—the unhappy lover's "Alas!"—against a harmonic background now consonant, now dissonant. This motive becomes the unifying element of the piece. (See Listening Guide 12 for the text.)

Other basic words in the text are set in an equally telling manner. The phrase "Sio more" (If I die) is set for three voices instead of five to suggest the ebbing strength of the dying lover, but upon its return is carried by all five voices; "Languido e doloroso" (languid and sad) calls forth an ascending chromatic scale with a harsh dissonance to bring out the sadness in "doloroso." And in the witty wordplay of the final line Monteverdi makes the lover sigh "a thousand times." This vivid depiction of the text through music, known as word painting, was a hallmark of the Italian madrigal. This is music of amorous dalliance, as elegant as the courtly lifestyle out of which it sprang.

# Listening Guide 12



Monteverdi: *Ohimè! se tanto amate*

Date published 1603, *Fourth Book of Madrigals*

Genre Italian madrigal, 5 voices (SSAATB)

Poem: 8-line madrigal (aabbccdd) by Battista Guarini

### Text

Ohimè! se tanto amate  
di sentir dir Ohimè, deh, perché fare  
chi dice Ohimè morire?  
Sio more, un sol potrete  
languido e doloroso Ohimè scentire;  
Ma se, cor mio, volete  
che via abbia' da voi, e voi da me,  
avrete mille e mille dolci Ohimè.

Opening of madrigal, showing "sighs" of falling thirds on "ohimè" (Alas)

### Translation

Alas, if you so love  
to hear me say alas, then why do you slay  
the one who says it?  
If I die, you will hear only  
a single, languid, sorrowful alas;  
but if my love, you wish  
to let me live and wish to live for me,  
you will have a thousand times a sweet alas.

Harsh dissonances, set to "e doloroso" (and sorrowful)

Repetitions of "mille mille dolci ohimè" (sweet alas thousands and thousands of times)

## The English Madrigal

Just as English poets took over the Italian sonnet, so the composers of England adopted the Italian madrigal and developed it into a native art form. All the brilliance of the Elizabethan age is reflected in the school of madrigalists who flourished in the late sixteenth century during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) and on into the reign of James I (1603–25). Among the most important figures were Thomas Morley (1557–1603), John Wilbye (1574–1638), Thomas Weelkes (c. 1575–1623), and Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625).

The first collection of Italian madrigals published in England appeared in 1588 and was called *Musica transalpina*—Music from beyond the Alps. The madrigals were “Englished”—that is, the texts were translated. In their own madrigals the English composers preferred simpler texts. New, humorous madrigal types were cultivated, some with refrains of nonsense syllables such as *ja la la*.

### Farmer: Fair Phyllis

John Farmer was active in the 1590s in Dublin, where he was organist and Master of the Children at Christ Church. In 1599 he moved to London, and published his only collection of four-part madrigals. One of these, *Fair Phyllis*, attained great popularity. He died in 1601.

*Fair Phyllis* is characteristic of the English madrigal in its pastoral text and gay mood. Typical are the repeated sections, the fragments of contrapuntal imitation that overlap and obscure the underlying meter, the changes from homophonic to polyphonic texture, and the cadences on the weaker pulse of the measure. The last line of the poem is set to chords, with a change to triple meter.

The English composers took over the word painting of the Italians. For example, he opening line, “Fair Phyllis I saw sitting alone,” is sung by a single voice. (See Listening Guide 13 for the text.) So too the statement that Phyllis’s lover wandered up and down is rendered musically by a downward movement of the notes which is repeated at various pitch levels and imitated in all the parts.

The Renaissance madrigal impelled composers to develop new techniques of combining music and poetry. In doing so it prepared the way for one of the most influential forms of Western music—the opera.

## Listening Guide 13

### FARMER: *Fair Phyllis*

Date: published 1599

Genre: English madrigal, 4 voices

Poem: 6 lines (ababcc), 11 syllables each

Musical style: polyphonic, with varied textures

#### Text

Fair Phyllis I saw sitting all alone  
Feeding her flock near to the mountain side  
The shepherds knew not whither she was gone  
But after her lover Amyntas hied  
Up and down he wandered whilst she was missing  
When he found her, oh then they fell a kissing

#### Word-painting examples:

“Fair Phyllis I saw sitting all alone”—sung by soprano alone

“up and down”—descending line, repeated in all parts imitatively

