

# Music Appreciation

## Early Vocal Music

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# Vocal Pieces This Unit

- Ancient Greek – ‘Song of Seikillos’
- Medieval – *Dies Irae* (unknown composer)
- Medieval – Machaut, “I could all too well compare my lady..”
- Renaissance – Josquin, “El Grillo”
- Renaissance – William Byrd, “Sing Joyfully”

# Terms Covered this Unit

- Ethos
- A capella
- Sacred
- Secular
- Plainchant/Gregorian chant
- Catholic Mass
- Melisma
- Syllabic
- Epitaph
- Hymn
- Motets
- Anthem

# The historical importance of vocal music

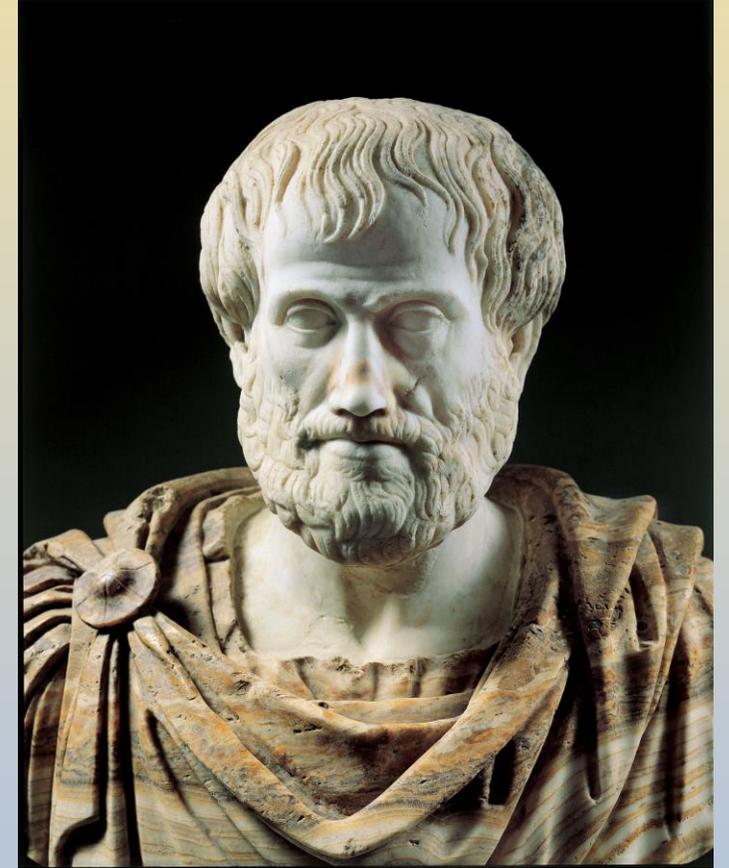
- Vocal music was the favored type of music of ancient antiquity (ancient Greece) through the Renaissance
  - Ancient Greeks expected a distinctive character (called the ‘**ethos**’) from their arts that only words could impart to music (Hanning, 3-4)
- Most music would be sung ‘**a cappella**’ (no instrumental accompaniment), or with instruments accompanying them
- Philosopher **Plato** wrote about the importance of music in society, writing about how music should serve the state
  - Warned against the use of purely instrumental music, saying it had little value
  - Said that music must be attached to poetry to reach its true value

# Aristotle on Music

- Believed that music could imitate and affect human's character:

“[melodies] contain in themselves imitation of ethoses; and this is manifest, for even in the nature of the harmoniai there are differences, so that people when hearing them are affected differently and have not the same feelings in regard to each of them, but listen to some in more mournful and restrained state...the same holds good about the rhythms also, for some have a more stable and other a more emotional ethos, and of the latter some are more vulgar in their emotional effects and others more liberal.”

-Aristotle, *Politics* 8.5 (quoted from Burkholder 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Pg 14)



# Vocal Music in Ancient Greece

- Although many pictures involving singing and instrument playing survive from Antiquity, very little **manuscript** survives to this day
  - Much of the music was transmitted orally
  - About 45 pieces or fragments of ancient Greek music survive
    - Range from 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD
- Many different **genres** of music
  - **Hymns** – songs to a god
  - Funeral songs
  - Wedding songs
  - Poetry/Epics set to music

# Musical Texture

- Surviving music is **monophonic** in texture
  - A single, unaccompanied melodic line
  - We are unsure if it was all played this way
  - Pictures depict musicians playing instruments while singing
  - Instruments playing a varied version of the melody at the same time?
    - **Heterophonic** texture
  - Instruments playing a strummed chord to harmonize nicely?
    - **Homophonic** texture
  - Instruments playing a completely independent melodic line?
    - **Polyphonic** texture

# Ancient Greek Instruments



From left to right: the Lyre, Kithara, and aulos. Most players would play two aulos at the same time as pictured

# Oldest surviving music

- **Epitaph** titled ‘Song of Seikilos’
  - A short, often poignant and/or humorous inscription on tombstones
- Discovered in southern Turkey
- From approximately 1<sup>st</sup> century CE
- Actually includes the text and the musical notation inscribed above it!



# Song of Seikilos

## Song of Seikilos

1st century CE, Greek

Ho - son zes, phai - nou Mē - den ho - lōs sy ly - pou

Pros o - li - gon e - sti to zēn to te - los ho chron - os a - pai - tei.

Translation:

“As long as you live,

Be lighthearted.

Let nothing trouble you.

Life is only too short,

And time takes its toll”

This performance uses the Kithara as an accompanying instrument

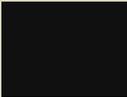
# Vocal Music in the Medieval Era

- Medieval period covers Fall of Rome (476AD) until 1400
- Following the Fall of the Roman Empire, Christian Church gains significant power over religion and politics
- Common genres of vocal music during the Medieval period:
  - Chant
  - The Catholic Mass
  - Secular song

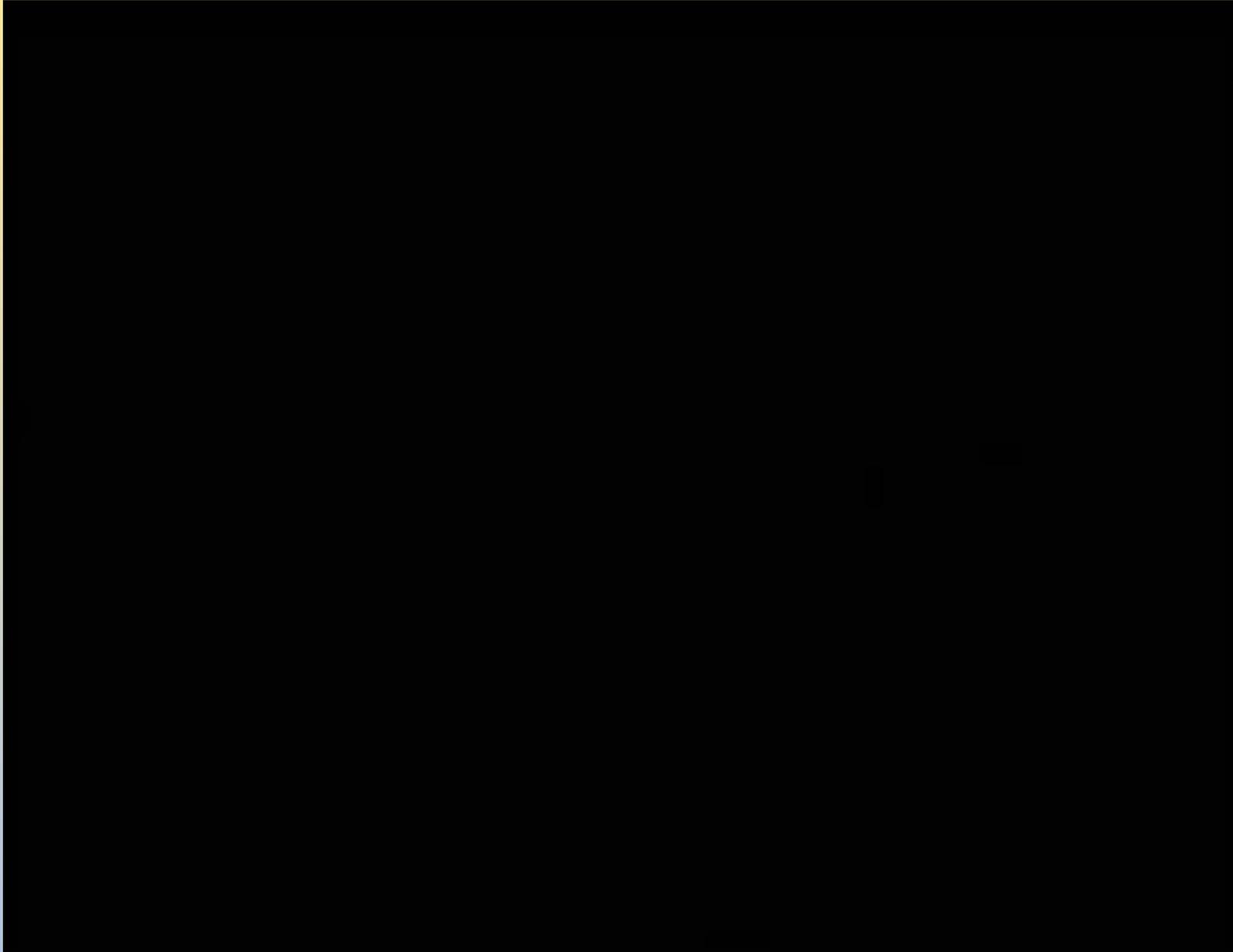
# Christian Chant

- Church services followed in religious traditions of prior times, and included **chant**, also known as **plainchant**
  - Unaccompanied **liturgical song** (used in a religious service)
  - ‘Because plainchant is a melody that projects the sacred and devotional words of ritual, its shape cannot be separated from its verbal message or from its place in the worship service’ (Hanning, 29)
- Plainchant also known as **Gregorian Chant**
  - Named after Pope Gregory II
  - Didn’t compose chants, but codified the order and structure of the mass around Europe

# Chant Style

- Chant is **melismatic**
  - Contains many notes for a single syllable of text
  - Long held-out vowels
- ‘Alleluia’ from a Catholic mass 
  - Long held out notes on “Al-le-lu-iaaaaaaa-aaaaaa-aaaaaa”
- For centuries the entire Catholic mass was chanted
  - Priest, cantor, congregation would chant the Latin text

# Historical re-enactment of a Medieval Mass



# Dies Irae

## Dies Irae

**Composer:** Unknown (Attributed to either Franciscan Friar or a Dominican Cardinal)

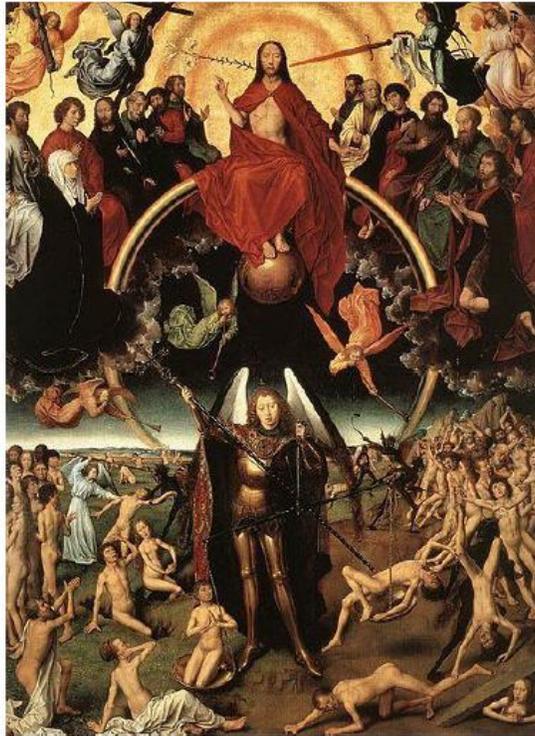
**Date of Composition:** 13<sup>th</sup> century (possibly older)

**Era:** Medieval

**Genre:** Hymn

**Texture:** Monophonic

**Translation:** “Day of Wrath”

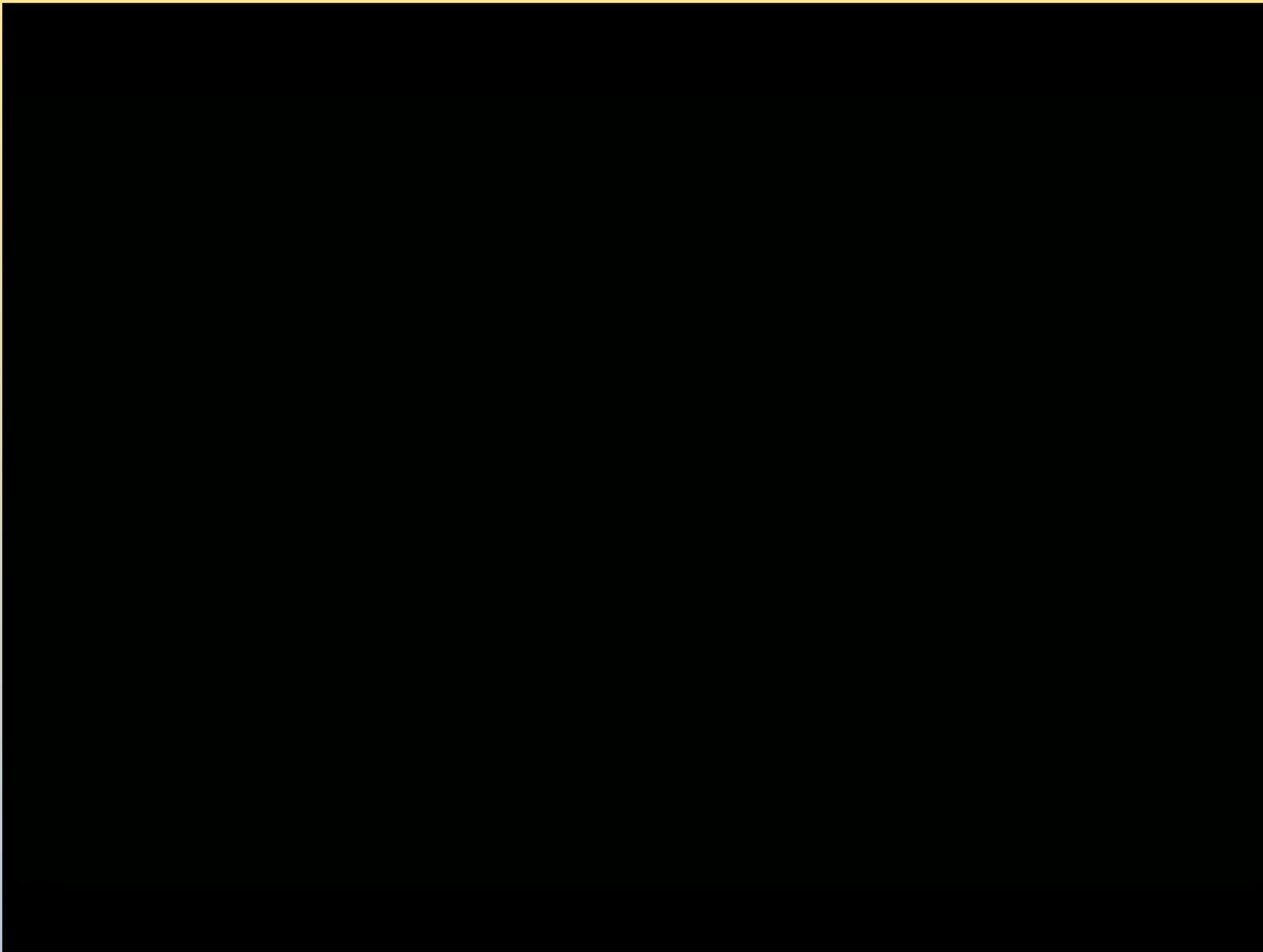


- “Dies Irae” is a Medieval-era poem about the Day of Wrath, or the Day of Judgement, where God comes back and judges all of Creation. The melody that was set to the poem is one of the most famous melodies in the Western canon. It was used in musical settings of the Catholic Mass thru the centuries and was adopted by composers all throughout music history. Berlioz used in the 5th movement of his *Symphonie Fantastique*, and Franz Liszt wrote an entire set of variations on it called *Totentanz* for piano and orchestra. Composers typically quote this melody when something bad is about to happen, or if they’re implying death musically (think the “Funeral March” in cartoons).

The Latin text below is taken from the Requiem Mass in the 1962 [Roman Missal](#). The first English version below, translated by [William Josiah Irons](#) in 1849, albeit from a slightly different Latin text, replicates the rhyme and metre of the original.<sup>[5][6]</sup> This translation, edited for more conformance to the official Latin, is approved by the Catholic Church for use as the funeral Mass sequence in the liturgy of the [Anglican ordinariate](#).<sup>[7]</sup> The second English version is a more [formal equivalence](#) translation.

1 Dies iræ, dies illa Solvat sæclum in favilla, Teste David cum Sibylla.	Day of wrath and doom impending. David's word with Sibyl's blending, Heaven and earth in ashes ending.	The day of wrath, that day will dissolve the world in ashes, <a href="#">David</a> being witness along with the <a href="#">Sibyl</a> .
2 Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando Judex est venturus, Cuncta stricte discussurus!	Oh, what fear man's bosom rendeth, When from heaven the Judge descendeth, On whose sentence all dependeth.	How great will be the quaking, when the Judge will come, investigating everything strictly.
3 Tuba mirum spargens sonum, Per sepulchra regionum, Coget omnes ante thronum.	Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth; Through earth's sepulchres it ringeth; All before the throne it bringeth.	The <a href="#">trumpet</a> , scattering a wondrous sound through the sepulchres of the regions, will summon all before the <a href="#">throne</a> .
4 Mors stupebit et natura, Cum resurget creatura, Judicanti responsura.	Death is struck, and nature quaking, All creation is awaking, To its Judge an answer making.	Death and nature will marvel, when the creature will rise again, to respond to the Judge.
5 Liber scriptus proferetur, In quo totum continetur, Unde mundus judicetur.	Lo, the book, exactly worded, Wherein all hath been recorded, Thence shall judgement be awarded.	The written <a href="#">book</a> will be brought forth, in which all is contained, from which <a href="#">the world shall be judged</a> .
6 Judex ergo cum sedebit, Quidquid latet apparebit: Nil inultum remanebit.	When the Judge his seat attaineth, And each hidden deed arraigneth, Nothing unavenged remaineth.	When therefore the Judge will sit, whatever lies hidden will appear: nothing will remain unpunished.
7 Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? Quem patronum rogaturus, Cum vix justus sit securus?	What shall I, frail man, be pleading? Who for me be interceding, When the just are mercy needing?	What then will I, poor wretch [that I am], say? Which patron will I entreat, when [even] the just may [only] hardly be sure?





Nike commercial from . The *Dies Irae* melody is heard in the background. Additionally, two teams clad in black and white duke it out in a commercial titled 'the Second Coming.'

# Medieval Polyphony and the Secular Song

- Over time, composers and monks began experimenting with **polyphony**
  - Long, gradual process that developed over time
  - Began implementing multiple sounds simultaneously
- Led to **polyphonic texture**, around 900AD
  - Multiple independent melodic lines happening at the same time
- Both sacred and secular music embraced this texture
  - The Catholic church initially had reservations with using too many voices in the music
- **Guillaume de Machaut** (~1300-1377)
  - French Poet and composer
  - Wrote both sacred and secular music
  - First composer to set the Catholic Mass to a polyphonic setting
  - Wrote many secular songs about courtly love



# “I can all too well compare my lady..”



- **Composer:** Machaut
- **Genre:** Secular song
- **Form:** AAB
- **Texture:** polyphonic
- **Poetic Content:** ‘courtly love:’ where a knight or nobleman admires a woman by singing her praises.
  - The poet compares his love of a woman to the myth of Pygmalion, who sculpted a statue and loved it so deeply that the goddess Aphrodite took pity upon him, and turned the statue into a real person

English Translation:

I can too well compare my Lady To that statue which Pygmalion made; It was of ivory, so beautiful and so peerless That he loved it more than Jason Medea The foolish man prayed to it all the time, But the statue responded not at all. So she does to me, that lady who melts my heart, So that I pray to her always and she responds not at all.

Pygmalion who would have died for love Prayed to his gods with such feeling That he saw the cold of the statue changed Into warmth and its hard form Softened, for it had life And human flesh and spoke softly. But my lady completely confounds me in this, So that I pray to her always and she responds not at all.

Now, may Love choose to change her hardness to softness Whom I have made the gift of my heart, And to bring her [noble]<sup>1</sup> heart to life with my love, So that I may have my reward from her. But Love joins with her In proud disdain, and sees the great desire Which will kill me; so I believe that these three act So that I pray to her always and she responds not at all.

# Medieval Vocal Style

- Instruments used: primarily vocal music
  - Instruments used to accompany, vocal line, but mostly vocal music
  - Instruments sound **very** different than today's instruments
- Texture
  - Early Medieval: Monophonic texture:
  - Around 900 AD: beginning of polyphony

# The Renaissance

- Term literally means ‘rebirth’
- Begins in Italy, around 1400-1600
- Economic prosperity beginning around 1400
  - More regional trade around Europe leads to greater wealth creation
- Europeans ‘rediscover’ ancient Greek texts
- The rise of ‘Humanism’
  - Sought to revive ancient learning:
    - Grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history
- The Protestant Reformation (next slide)

# The Protestant Reformation and Music

- 1517: Martin Luther nails his famous theses to a church door in Wittenberg
  - Complaining about the corruption in the Catholic church
  - Sets in motion the Protestant Reformation
  - One big reformation: church services can now be held in the language of the people, and *not* chanted in Latin (which very few understood!)
  - Composers can now compose sacred music in their own language!



# The Protestant Anthem

- English versions of **motets**
  - Motets and Anthems are both **sacred choral music**
  - Motets are sung in Latin, anthems in English
  - Sung a cappella (no instrumental accompaniment)
  - Polyphonic in texture
    - Many voices singing different melodies at the same time
    - Difficult to hear exactly what is being sung



# “Sing Joyfully”

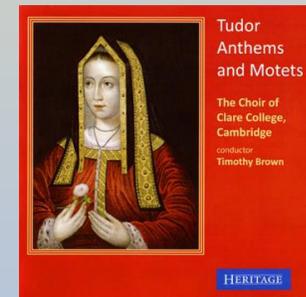
- **Composer:** William Byrd
- **Genre:** Anthem
  - (sacred English vocal work)
  - Taken from Psalm 81
- **Texture:** Polyphony
  - Uses **imitation**
    - Each voice literally imitates the first one
- **Form:** Sectional form
  - Each new phrase in the psalm has a new melody and new section of the overall piece

## Section

A  
B  
C  
D  
E  
F  
G  
H

## Text

Sing joyfully to God our strength;  
sing loud unto the God of Jacob!  
Take the song, bring forth the timbrel,  
the pleasant harp, and the viol.  
Blow the trumpet in the new moon,  
even in the time appointed, and at our feast day.  
For this is a statute for Israel,  
and a law of the God of Jacob.



# “El Grillo”

- **Composer:** Josquin des Prez
- **Genre:** Secular madrigal
- **Texture:** Polyphonic
- **Form:** ABA form
- **Poetic content:** silly song about a cricket
- **Word painting:** examples of music matching the poetry’s text
  - Ex. The text “longo verso” (“long line”) is held very long





## “El Grillo”

### Original Italian Text

El grillo è buon cantore  
[holds a long line in ‘verso’] che tiene longo verso.  
Dale beve grillo canta.

Ma non fa come gli altri uccelli,  
come li han cantato un poco  
van' de fatto in altro loco,  
sempre el grillo sta pur saldo  
Quando la maggior è [l'] caldo  
alhor canta sol per amore.

El grillo è buon cantore  
che tiene longo verso.  
Dale beve grillo canta.

### English Translation

[The cricket is a good singer]  
[who can hold a long line]  
[Give him a drink so he can go on singing]

[But he doesn't do what the other birds do]  
[Who after singing a little]  
[Just go elsewhere. ]  
[The cricket is always steadfast]  
[When it is hottest, ]  
[then he sings just for love]

[The cricket is a good singer]  
[who can hold a long line]  
[Give him a drink so he can go on singing]



# Renaissance Style

- Type of music: mostly vocal
  - Instruments usually used to accompany vocal line
  - Many pieces written **a cappella** (no instrument accompaniment)
- Texture:
  - Highly polyphonic
  - Many different voices singing different words and melodies simultaneously
- Scales
  - Uses different modes
    - Sounds different than Major and minor tonality