The Renaissance in music happened from the first half of the 15th century and ran until around 1600. This period was when the opera genre started to pop up and marked a new chapter in music history.

The music of the Renaissance was really like a continuation of the Medieval period's achievements, mainly vocal music and the development of polyphony. But this time, they really stepped up the game. The polyphony got more complex and relied on more sophisticated compositional techniques. They had tricks like quoting a melody from one composition in another (the parody technique), imitating the melody of one voice in the next (which is pretty clear in a canon, like in the popular melody "Panie Janie"), or mimicking sounds of nature or surroundings (imitazione della natura).

Vocal music was still going strong, with vocalists singing in quartets, quintets, sextets, etc. Choirs sang, and towards the end of the period, they even started to introduce multi-choir compositions. These were pieces created for multiple choirs placed in different parts of the church to create a feeling of spacious sound enveloping the listeners.

Vocal music still had a religious vibe and was primarily used for church services. That's why the most popular genres in the Renaissance were the mass, psalm, hymn, or motet – songs with religious text.

Alongside vocal music, instruments and secular music started to become more and more important. Court music became popular. Songs were created, usually about love, like the French chanson, the Italian madrigal, or pieces with a dance rhythm, like a rondo. The instruments you'd typically see during the Renaissance were the lute, viola, organs, flutes, trumpets, drums.

Some major game-changing events for Renaissance music were the Reformation process, which also changed music evolution – the Protestant chorale or Protestant religious songs were created, and the invention of printing. This was a huge milestone for musicians as well. The first music printing house started its operation in Venice. Other major centers for music printing in the 16th century included Paris, Antwerp, and Nuremberg.

As for the rockstars of the Renaissance, we're talking about composers from the Flemish center (today's Belgian territories) and France, like Josquin des Prez, Jacob Obrecht, Clément Janequin, Orlando di Lasso, and also Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Adrian Willaert, Andrea Gabrieli, Giovanni Gabrieli.

And if you want to get a feel of Renaissance music, check out "Echo" by Orlando di Lasso or "Missa Papae Marcelli" by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.