

Title:

Medieval and Renaissance Europe Music

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Summary:

While musical life in Europe was undoubtedly rich in the early Medieval era, as attested by artistic depictions of instruments, writings about music, and other records, the only European repertory which has survived from before about 800 is the monophonic liturgical plainsong of the Roman Catholic Church, the central tradition of which was called Gregorian chant.

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Article Body:

Medieval and Renaissance Europe

While musical life in Europe was undoubtedly rich in the early Medieval era, as attested by artistic depictions of instruments, writings about music, and other records, the only European repertory which has survived from before about 800 is the monophonic liturgical plainsong of the Roman Catholic Church, the central tradition of which was called Gregorian chant. Several schools of liturgical polyphony flourished beginning in the 12th century. Alongside these traditions of sacred music, a vibrant tradition of secular song developed, exemplified by the music of the troubadours, trouveres and Minnesanger.

Much of the surviving music of 14th century Europe is secular. By the middle of the 15th century, composers and singers used a smooth polyphony for sacred musical compositions such as the mass, the motet, and the laude, and secular forms such as the chanson and the madrigal. The introduction of commercial printing had an immense influence on the dissemination of musical styles.

European Baroque

The first operas, written around 1600 and the rise of contrapuntal music define the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque era that lasted until roughly 1750, the year of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach.

German Baroque composers wrote for small ensembles including strings, brass, and

woodwinds, as well as Choirs, pipe organ, harpsichord, and clavichord. During the Baroque period, several major music forms were defined that lasted into later periods when they were expanded and evolved further, including the Fugue, the Invention, the Sonata, and the Concerto.

European Classical

The music of the Classical period is characterized by homophonic texture, often featuring prominent melody with accompaniment. These new melodies tended to be almost voice-like and singable. The now popular instrumental music was dominated by further evolution of musical forms initially defined in the Baroque period: the sonata, and the concerto, with the addition of the new form, the symphony. Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, well known even today, are among the central figures of the Classical period.