Medieval Music
Middle Ages 450-1450

Three Eras

Dark Ages 450-1000
Romanesque 1000-1300
Gothic 1300-1450
Disadvantages of the time

- Poverty
- Illiteracy
- Feudalism
- Violence
- Crusades
- Hundred Years’ War
- Barbarian Raids
- Social injustice
- Disease
  - Black Death
  - Plague
Advantages of the time

- **Chivalry**
- **Religious piety**
  - Focused on life after death
  - Monasteries
  - Convents
- Intellectual reasoning, logic, and learning was important
Advantages of the time

Cultural and educational values were derived from Greek philosophers

- Plato
- Pythagoras
- Aristotle
The Church

- Central in peoples lives

- Toward the end of this period people began to focus more on themselves and sensuality and less on God and religion
Medieval Music
Primary Roles

- **Philosophy** - it was treated as a science directly related to astronomy
- **Worship** - it was the bearer of church liturgy
- **Entertainment**
Medieval Church

Church was the primary music institution
Music was heard (chant)
Music was taught
Music was developed (polyphony)
Important People

- Guido de Arezzo
  - Developed the music staff & standardized system of notation
  - Music was written using neumes *(see pg. 85)*

- Pope Gregory I (the Great)
  - Organized & categorized church music
  - Gregorian chant
Early Sacred Music

Sacred means having to do with the church
Gregorian Chant
Also called plainsong or plainchant

Listening #1 - Alleluia: Vidimus Stellam
(CD 1:63 - Listening Guide p. 86)
Characteristics

- **Monophonic**
  - voice on one melody
  - Unaccompanied

- **Latin texts derived from the Bible (Psalms)**

- **Rhythm & tempo are flexible**

- **Used for over 1000 years by the Roman Catholic Church**

- **No longer used because masses are no longer sung in Latin (sung in the vernacular-local language)**
Characteristics

- Conjunct melodies
- Step-wise movement
- Narrow range
- Often melismatic phrasing (several notes on one syllable)
- Sometimes syllabic phrasing (one note per syllable)

Based on church modes
- Ionian c-c
- Dorian d-d
- Phrygian e-e
- Lyian f-f
- Mixolydian g-g
- Aeolian a-a
- Locrian b-b
Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

- Nun (Abbess of Rupertsburg in Germany)
- Wrote poetry and music (including a musical drama)
- Wrote books on religion, science & medicine
- First woman composer from whom a large number of works have survived

*Listening #2-O Successores*  
(*CD 1:66 Listening Guide pg. 88*)
Secular Music in the Middle Ages

Secular music means non-church music
Secular Music Characteristics

- Written in the vernacular (local language)
- Often concerned with the subject of love
- Monophonic
- Regular rhythm with a clear beat
- Instrumental accompaniment
- Created and performed by poet-musicians
Medieval Instruments

http://www.music.iastate.edu/antiqua/instrument.html

Rebec - bowed stringed inst.
Pipe - tubular wind inst.
Psaltery - plucked or struck string inst.
Secular Musicians

**France**
- (Record Side 3 #5)
- Troubadours (Southern France)
- Trouveres (Northern France)
- Beatriz de Dia

**Germany**
- Meistersings
- Minnesingers
More Secular Musicians

- Jongluers
- Wandering Minstrels
- Important source of information (no newspapers, etc)
- Provided entertainment

- Estampie
- Medieval Dance
- One of the earliest surviving forms of instrumental music

*Listening #3 - Estampie*

*(CD 1:67 read paragraph on pg. 90)*
The Development of Polyphony

Polyphony is two different melodies sung or played at the same time.
Organum

Earliest polyphonic music
Began in monasteries
Monks added a second line to the chant
Cantus Firmus—chants that formed the basis for polyphony
Added line was usually faster than the original chant

Listening #4-Perotin-Alleluia: Nativitas
(CD 1:68 p. 92)
Measured Rhythm

- Definite time values
- Clearly defined meter

**Rhythmic Patterns**

1\(^{st}\)-trochaic ��

2\(^{nd}\)-iambic ��

3\(^{rd}\)-dactylic ��

4\(^{th}\)-anapestic ��

5\(^{th}\)-spondaic ��

6\(^{th}\)-tribrachic ��

Based on the meters of poetry
Ars Nova

- Great change that came to secular polyphony in the 14th century in Italy and France
- Secular music became more important than sacred music
- Polyphonic music no longer based on Gregorian chants but on drinking songs, etc.
- New form of notation allowed composers to indicate specific rhythmic patterns
Medieval Genres

Genres are types of music

- Chant—monophonic then moving to polyphonic
- Organum—early polyphony
- Mass—monophonic then moving to polyphonic

Listening #5—Machaut: Agnus Dei from Notre Dame Mass
(CD 1:70 p. 96)
Medieval Genres

Genres are types of music

- Chant - monophonic then moving to polyphonic
- Organum - early polyphony
- Mass - monophonic then moving to polyphonic
- Motet
- Chanson
- Madigral
- Ballata

Listening #6 - Landini: Ecco la primavera
(CD 1:69 p. 94)
Major Composers of the Medieval Era

- Leonin
- Perotin
- Machaut
- Landini
Leonin

c. 1163-1190 French
1st significant composer of polyphony
one of the 1st composers to use modal rhythms systematically
Learned music while serving as a choirboy in Paris
Perotin

- c. 1160/70-c. 1205/25 French
- Composed in 3 or 4 voice parts
- Received music training at Notre Dame Cathedral
- Learned music while serving as a choirboy in Paris
Guillaume de Machaut

c. 1300-1377 French

Dominant composer of the Ars Nova

1st to set the complex mass ordinary in polyphony

1st composer to preserve his complete works by compiling them

Received training in church (was an ordained priest)

Listening #7 Machaut: Puis qu'en oubli sui de vous (Since I Am Forgotten By You)
Franesco Landini

- c. 1335-1397 Italian
- Most famous and prolific Italian composer of the 14th century
- Also a poet and wrote many of his own texts
- Inventor of a new stringed instrument
- Blind from childhood
- Organist who built and tuned organs
- Studied philosophy and astrology
UNIT TEST