

Musical Evolution
Antiquity Era – Renaissance Era

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Introduction

Western Music is a **crucial** part of our evolution. One can argue that it is the foundation of modern-day society, and without it, we (as a society) would not be able to fathom the world. Although it is not clear when music came into existence, using ancient cultures and ancient artifacts, scholars have been able to trace early signs of music all the way from the early ages of civilization. In music, there are two periods in history, where music developed to what we see and hear today. Both periods in history demonstrated oral and written techniques that allow our current approach in studying music. Therefore, we will focus on the Antiquity period and the Renaissance period and five developments of music from the antiquity age and the Renaissance age.

¹Tracing the history of western music from antiquity to the late Renaissance period unveils different and complex developments of music that allow our current approach to its study. From methodologies of measuring intervals to the development of polyphony, from the universalization of sacred repertoire to the oral musical practices of secular music from the Middle ages, the history of music we study demonstrates, but how it contained different meanings according to its use.

Antiquity Age

The age of Antiquity, also known as the ancient era, spanned the beginning of recorded human history. Although there is a lack of evidence about what music was like from the ancient world, scholars do however have a few bits of evidence that have led philosophers to some interesting conclusions. These include surviving instruments, visual images of musicians and instruments, writings about music and notated music itself. Some of the music instruments that were used in the age of Antiquity were Instruments like; the Lyre, the Kithara and the Aulos. These instruments were used by the Greeks and the Egyptians who were heavily with the production of music. The Greeks and Egyptians would use these instruments for dances, and poems called dithyrambs.

As music began to develop, so did critical thinking. Philosophers would stretch the meaning of music to what it is today. Pythagoras who is known for being the father of greek music theory system, not only invented a mathematical theorem that is studied in algebra classes today ($a^2+b^2=c^2$) but he used his knowledge to divide notes into systems called modes. He created what is called a monochord with a string a hammer and a anvil

²He found that if divided the consisting of a string stretched over a wooden rectangular box. He found that if he divided the string by placing his finger at different place, he could produce different notes. Futhermore, he used his knowledge of mathematics to deduce that certain divisions, or ratios, could predict which note would sound.

Music theorist **Cleonides** and **Aristoxenus** polished what would become the seven Greek modes paving the way for all western music to follow.

Other accomplishments during the antiquity age includes the earliest complete song. The Epitaph of Seikilos (Translated as drinking song) is a **Skolion**. The song mode is Phrygian. Other

² Andrew Lesser, "Music of Antiquity," www.andrewlessermusic.com, n.d., <http://www.andrewlessermusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Music-of-Antiquity.pdf>

fragments of songs include (Statsimon Chorus) which was found on papyrus from the 3rd to the 2nd Century B.C. Another fragment that survives is the (Delphic Hymns to Apollo) these songs were very influential in the 20th century.

³In addition, modal scales have been extensively used in jazz and rock music. One of the most famous uses of modal jazz is Miles Davis on the album “Kind of Blue”

Renaissance Age

During the renaissance, music was essential part of civil, religious and daily life. Around this time, church manuscripts had gone public by Boethius and Martianus Capella (who were associates of the church) for secular artist to read and annotate. At the time only the church could read music. Their manuscripts included sermons, prayers, masses and, motets all written/notated in music, this is what got the church members. These were used to spread the message of the church, soon enough it would spread the message of the music composers. Masses had two kinds of sources that were used, **monophonic** and **polyphonic**. It has two forms of elaboration, **Cantus firmus, the paraphrase mass, The imitation mass (parody mass) The Cantus (Imitation mass)** For prayers, churches would start of with the kyrie which meant “ God have mercy on us, Christ have mercy on us, other prayers including **Gloria**. Chants were also included. Antiphonal were alternating choirs, direct only meant one choir, Melismatic meant many notes per syllable. Chanting was necessary in order to reach every corner of the church. Services included: Vespertin (Night) Matinee (Morning) Après Medi (Afternoon). Boethius was

³ Andrew Lesser, “Music of Antiquity,” www.andrewlessermusic.com, n.d., <http://www.andrewlessermusic.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Music-of-Antiquity.pdf>

considered the most important authority in the middle ages and his concepts influenced music theory for the next thousand years. His book *Die Institutione Musica* treats music as a science of numbers because numerical ratios and proportions determine intervals, consonances, scales and tuning. He would use info from the antiquity age. With this information, secular composers would use this to complete their works and play it. Musicians like; Josquin des Prez would expand on the intervals like thirds and sixths. They would develop Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Mixolydian, Lydian, Aeolian, and, Locrian

Josquin's music epitomized these trends, with Northern-style intricate polyphony using canons, preexisting melodies, and other compositional structures

With philosopher and now musicians understanding notation, they were able to make funds for the hard work. Notations would soon go to the printing press thus created a whole new way of saving music. Different genres also came out of the renaissance period. Which began

Conclusion

Without both periods of music, notation as we know it would be very different. Learning this as a music major has hugely opened my eyes to understanding the early stages of music. It has showed me to keep my eyes open to the possibilities and not to be so closed minded about cultures and the perspective of music

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