Music of Franco-Flemish Composers, 1450–1520

PRELUDE

Chapter Outline

People of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could see and emulate the rediscovered architectural monuments, sculptures, plays, and poems of antiquity, but they could not actually hear ancient music. Although the revival of the arts and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome was in full swing by 1450, the music of antiquity could be understood only through the writings of classical philosophers, poets, essayists, and music theorists that were becoming available in translation. "Moderns" learned about the power of ancient music to move the listener and wondered why their own music did not have the same effect. The influential religious leader Bernardino Cirillo (see page 111) expressed disappointment with the artful polyphonic music of his time, and he urged musicians to follow the example of the other arts and to reclaim the power of classical musical styles and modes.

We may think of the musical Renaissance more as a general cultural movement and state of mind than as a specific set of musical techniques. Furthermore, music changed so rapidly during these centuries—though at different rates in different countries—that we cannot identify one uniform Renaissance style. Nevertheless, with the expansion of Burgundian territories and influence, the musical Renaissance spread chiefly from the Low Countries—regions of northeastern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands—to other areas of western Europe. In this chapter, we will explore the music of northern composers, who are referred to variously as French, Franco-Flemish, or Netherlandish, depending on where they were born. Each new generation built on the musical accomplishments of the previous one, and composers of the same generation competed with one another in writing masses, motets, and chansons.

The chapter will close with a discussion of Josquin and his contemporaries. Of the large number of first-rank composers active around 1500, Josquin des Prez (ca. 1450–1521) was surely the greatest.[1] Few musicians have enjoyed

1. Josquin's name, like that of many other composers of earlier times, is spelled in various ways: des Prez, Desprez, Despres; similarly, Du Fay's name is often seen as Dufay. Such flexibility resulted no doubt from the different pronunciations, alphabets, and customs in the many countries in which they worked and from the absence of standardized spelling, which came about only after the gradual increase in printing and literacy made it an issue.

Figure 6.1. Western Europe about 1500. By this time, the Spanish rulers Isabella and Ferdinand had united Spain; the kings of France controlled several former quasi-independent fiefdoms within their borders, including Burgundy, Anjou, Brittany, and Provence; and Maximilian I, king of Germany and Holy Roman emperor, ruled directly over Austria, Alsace, and the Low Countries.

higher renown while they lived or exercised more profound and lasting influence. One of his contemporaries, Martin Luther, acknowledged Josquin's complete technical and expressive control of his art by calling him "master of the notes." Others hailed him as "the best of the composers of our time" and the "father of musicians." Florentine diplomat and humanist Cosimo Bartoli wrote in 1567 that Josquin had been without peer in music, on a par with Michelangelo in architecture, painting, and sculpture: "Both opened the eyes of all those who now take pleasure in these arts and shall find delight in the future."

The Musical Culture of the Renaissance

Musical humanism

In addition to providing a new intellectual climate to the Renaissance, humanism had a very practical outcome: a rebirth of interest in music theory's Greek past. As early as 1424 at the court of Mantua, students were reading the musical treatise of Boethius (see Chapter 2) as a classical text rather than as a basis for professional training. Over the next half century, Greeks emigrating from Byzantium as well as Italian manuscript hunters brought the principal Greek treatises on music to the West. Among these were the theoretical works of Aristides Quintilianus, Claudius Ptolemy, Cleonides, and Euclid. Also newly available were passages by Plato and Aristotle on music (see Chapter 1). By the end of the fifteenth century, all of these treatises were translated into Latin.

Power of the ancient modes

The rediscovery of the ancient Greek philosophers and their theory of musical modes—especially their belief that the choice of mode could affect the listener's emotions—led to renewed interest in the Greek modal system. Both Plato and Aristotle had insisted that various modes had different ethical effects (recall the discussion about ethos in Chapter 1). Like their medieval predecessors, however, Renaissance theorists and composers mistakenly assumed that the old Greek modes were identical to the similarly named church modes and that the legendary powers of the former could be attributed to the latter. The Swiss theorist Heinrich Glarean (1488–1563), in his book *Dodekachordon* (The Twelve-String Lyre, 1547), added four new modes to the traditional eight: the Aeolian and Hypoaeolian with the final on A, and the Ionian and Hypoionian with the final on C. With these additions, he tried to reconcile the theory of the modes with the practice of composers, who frequently employed tonal centers on A and C. In using something borrowed from ancient culture to modify his medieval heritage, Glarean was typical of his age.

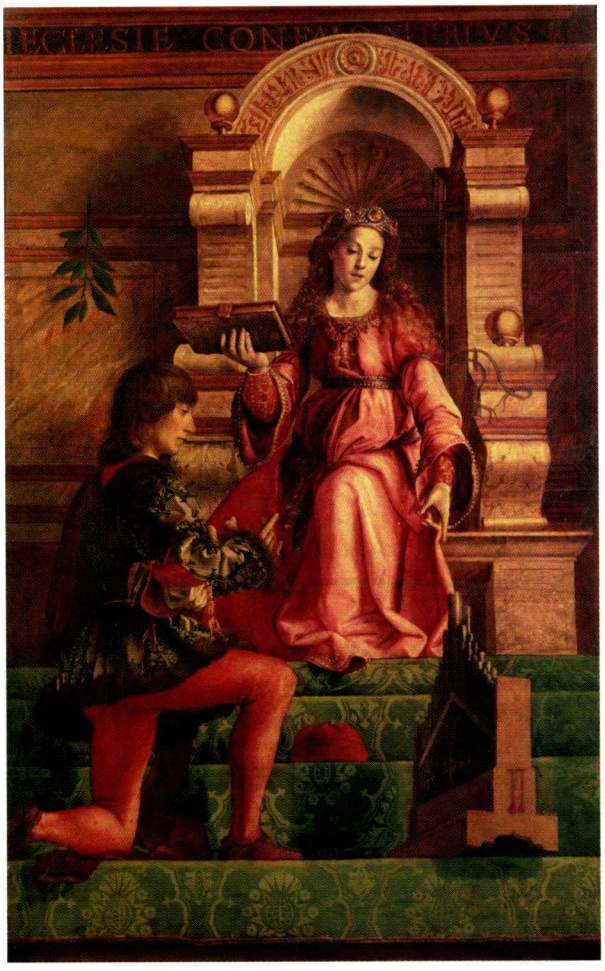

Figure 6.2. Music portrayed as a liberal art, probably from the 1470s by Justus of Ghent, a Netherlandish painter who was also active in Italy. The unidentified kneeling gentleman illustrates the new respect accorded the science of music in the Renaissance.
(National Gallery, London/Bridgeman Art Library.)

The new emphasis on thirds and sixths posed a challenge to music theorists, who had defined only the octave, fifth, and fourth as consonant in the Middle Ages because these were generated by the simple ratios that Pythagoras had discovered. Moreover, although the imperfect consonances sounded rough to the ear and out of tune, fourths and fifths were perfectly consonant in the tuning system of the Middle Ages and were, therefore, along with the octave, the only permissible cadential sonorities. But by the beginning of the sixteenth century, music theorists began to yield to changing usage and adjusted tuning systems to make the thirds and sixths acceptable in theory and in practice. Accordingly, triads appeared more frequently in final cadences from the sixteenth century on.

VIGNETTE Bernardino Cirillo on Reviving Ancient Music

Bernardino Cirillo (1500–1575), rector of the famous shrine and pilgrimage destination the Santa Casa of Loreto, was a prominent churchman in mid-sixteenth-century Rome. Here, in a letter published during his lifetime (1549), he allies himself with the humanists by finding modern polyphony wanting in expression and urges a revival of the Greek doctrine of ethos and a restoration of the ancient modes.

. . . Music among the ancients was the most splendid of all the fine arts. With it they created powerful effects that we nowadays cannot produce either with rhetoric or with oratory in moving the passions and affections of the soul. . . . By means of the power of song [using the correct modes], a slow and lazy man becomes lively and active; an angry man is calmed; . . . a miserable man becomes happy; and thus music governs human affections and has the power to alter them as need be. Now, where has this led?

• • •

I should like, in short, when a mass is to be sung in church, the music to be framed to the fundamental meaning of the words, in certain intervals and numbers apt to move our affections to religion and piety. . . . Each mode should be adapted to its subject, and when one has a lullaby to sing, or a plaintive song, one should do likewise. Thus the musicians of today should endeavor in their profession to do what the sculptors, painters, and architects of our time have done, who have recovered the art of the ancients; and the writers, who have reclaimed literature from the hell to which it was banished by corrupt ages; and as the sciences have been explained and given in their purity to our times. Thus the musicians should seek to recover the styles and modes, and the power of the Phrygian, Lydian, Dorian, and Mixolydian compositions, with which they would be able to do what they wish.

Bernardino Cirillo, letter to Ugolino Gualteruzzi, trans. Lewis Lockwood; in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Readings in Music History*, rev. ed. by Leo Treitler (New York, Norton, 1998), pp. 369–371.

Consonance and dissonance

As definitions of consonance and dissonance were reevaluated and distinctions between them sharpened, composers and theorists devised new rules for handling dissonance. Thus, from the practice of the fifteenth-century international style emerged a new style of counterpoint in which a work was composed note against note or melody against melody with a preference for consonance, including thirds and sixths, and strict control of dissonance. This new approach to composition suggests that musicians valued beauty, order, and pleasing the senses, attitudes that closely parallel contemporary trends in art.

Tinctoris

The most up-to-date instructiozn book on counterpoint in the late fifteenth century was the *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (A Book on the Art of Counterpoint, 1477) by Johannes Tinctoris (ca. 1435–1511), a Flemish composer who settled at the court in Naples in the early 1470s. He deplored the works of the "older composers in which there were more dissonances than consonances" and proclaimed that nothing written before the 1430s was worth hearing. Tinctoris shows his humanism by referencing numerous Greek and Roman writers; but lacking examples of ancient music, he claims only the composers of the last two generations, starting with Dunstable, as models worth imitating. Drawing on the practices of the composers he names, he devised strict rules for introducing dissonances, limiting them to passing and neighbor tones on unstressed beats and to syncopated passages (or what we call suspensions) at cadences. These rules were further refined in later treatises by Italian authors and finally synthesized in Gioseffo Zarlino's massive treatise *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (Harmonic Foundations) of 1558.

Music and words

In keeping with the ancient Greek view of music and poetry as virtually inseparable, humanists believed that music and words could strengthen each other. The image of the ancient poet, singer, and accompanist united in a single person inspired both poets and composers of the Renaissance to seek a common expressive goal. Authors became more concerned with the sound of their verses, and composers with matching and projecting that sound. The grammatical structure of a text guided the composer in shaping its musical setting and in placing cadences (of greater or less finality) according to the text's punctuation. Inspired by the poet's message and images, composers tried new ways to express the content of the text. They were careful to follow the rhythm of speech and the natural accentuation of syllables, whether in Latin or the vernacular. Where singers had previously been responsible for matching syllables with the notated pitches and rhythms, composers now took greater care in aligning words with music, although they had no control over copyists and rarely had the opportunity to correct proofs of their printed works.

Music printing

In fact, the development of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century had a huge impact on the musical culture of the Renaissance—first, by producing books and treatises that helped spread the ideas of antiquity, and, in the next century, by putting music in the hands of far more people than the few who could afford to own even the simplest hand-copied *chansonnier* earlier. It is no exaggeration to say that the invention of music printing caused changes that were as revolutionary for musical culture in the Renaissance as the development of notation and music literacy had been for the Middle Ages or as the advent of sound recording was to be for music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Why Italy?

Why did the Renaissance begin in Italy? One reason was geography: Italy was close to, or even at the very source of, the learning and art that inspired the movement. Another reason was Italy's commercial dominance: its trade with Byzantium, its wealthy families (like the Medici, who were bankers), and its profusion of secular princes all spurred the growth of a worldly culture, as opposed to the ecclesiastical culture fostered by the great monasteries and cathedrals of northern Europe. The Italian peninsula in the fifteenth century was made up of a collection of city-states and small principalities that were often at war with each other. The rulers, many of whom had gained their positions by force, sought to glorify themselves and magnify their city's reputation by erecting palaces decorated with newly commissioned artworks and recently unearthed artifacts from ancient civilizations; by maintaining chapels of talented singers and ensembles of gifted instrumentalists; and by entertaining neighboring potentates. Meanwhile, the citizenry—no longer in feudal service to a lord and free of military duties (wars were fought mostly by mercenaries)—accumulated wealth through commerce, banking, and crafts. Although they prayed and attended church, these people gave priority to earthly matters. Personal fulfillment through learning, public service, and accomplishment motivated their individual lives as well as their social contacts and institutions.

Patronage for music

Just as the dukes of Burgundy had made their court a magnet for talented artists and musicians, the wealthy and powerful Italian dukes and princes recruited and attracted the most accomplished composers and musicians from France, Flanders, and the Netherlands to their cities. Thus, the Medici in Florence, the Este in Ferrara, the Sforza in Milan, and the Gonzaga in Mantua, to name only some of the Renaissance ruling families, became patrons to and employers of the learned singer-composers who had been trained in the magnificent cathedrals and chapels of the north.

Northern Composers: The Generation after Du Fay

Ockeghem

Although the migration of musical talent across the Alps to Italy had already begun in the fifteenth century (and was to continue for another three hundred years), Jean de Ockeghem (ca. 1420–1497) was one northern composer who was known in Italy only by reputation (see biography and Figure 6.3). More than half a century after his death, the Italian humanist Cosimo Bartoli paid him a tribute comparable to the one he gave to Josquin des Prez (quoted above, page 109): "I know well that Ockeghem was, so to speak, the first who in these times rediscovered music, which had almost entirely died out—not in other wise than Donatello, who in his time rediscovered sculpture."

Masses

Most of Ockeghem's thirteen masses resemble each other in their general sonority: four voices of similar character interact in a contrapuntal texture of independent melodic lines. He extended the bass, which before 1450 rarely moved below C, downward to G, F, and even C in special combinations of low voices. Ockeghem achieved a full, thick texture that gives his works a darker and more homogeneous sonority than we find, for example, in Du Fay's masses.

Tenor mass

Some of Ockeghem's masses, like Du Fay's *Missa Se la face ay pale*, are tenor masses, which are built on a single cantus firmus that is used as the basis for every movement. For example, the *Missa De plus en plus* takes as its cantus firmus the tenor part of the chanson by Binchois (NAWM 34), with whom Ockeghem may have studied. This work can also be considered a cyclic mass because its movements are unified musically: in this case, the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei are all based on the same borrowed tenor line, which, though not as attractive and recognizable as the top voice, makes a firm foundation for the composition. Ockeghem follows custom by placing the cantus firmus in the tenor, but freely changes the rhythm and adds notes.

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Cyclic mass

Naming masses

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, masses without a cantus firmus sometimes took their titles from the mode in which they were written (for example, *Missa quinti toni*—Mass in mode 5). Ockeghem's *Missa mi-mi* derives its name from the first two notes of the bass voice, e–A, both of which in solmization were sung to the syllable *mi*. Because the opening of each movement quotes this two-note motive, the *Missa mi-mi* is known as a motto mass. Some masses, including Ockeghem's *Missa prolationum* and *Missa cuiusvis toni*, were named for a structural feature—in these cases, a canon. A mass having neither a cantus firmus nor any other identifying peculiarity was often called a *Missa sine nomine* (mass without a name—the musical equivalent of "Untitled" in modern art).

Canon

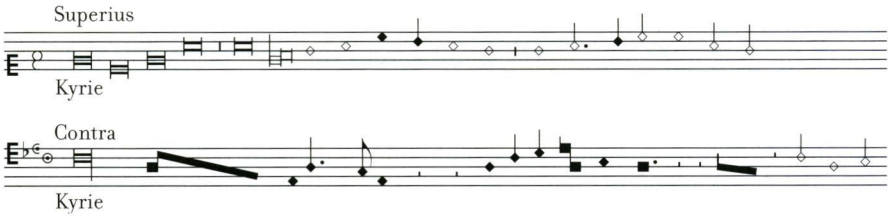
The word *canon* (Latin for rule) has two meanings: the compositional technique of deriving two or more voices from a single notated voice, as Ockeghem does in *Missa prolationum*, and the instruction or rule by which these parts were derived. The rule might instruct the second voice to sing the same melody starting after a certain number of beats had elapsed and at the same or a different pitch, as in the kind of canon most familiar today; alternatively, the second voice might be instructed to invert the original melody or sing it backward, resulting in an inversion or retrograde canon. The type of canon used in *Missa prolationum*, in which the voices move at different rates of speed, is known as a mensuration canon. Each movement of this work is also a double canon—that is, two canons sung or played simultaneously. Musicians valued such puzzle canons for the ingenuity and skill they displayed.

Figure 6.3. This miniature, from a French manuscript of about 1530, shows a singer thought to be Ockeghem and eight other chapel musicians singing a Gloria in the usual fashion of the time—from a large manuscript choir book on a lectern.

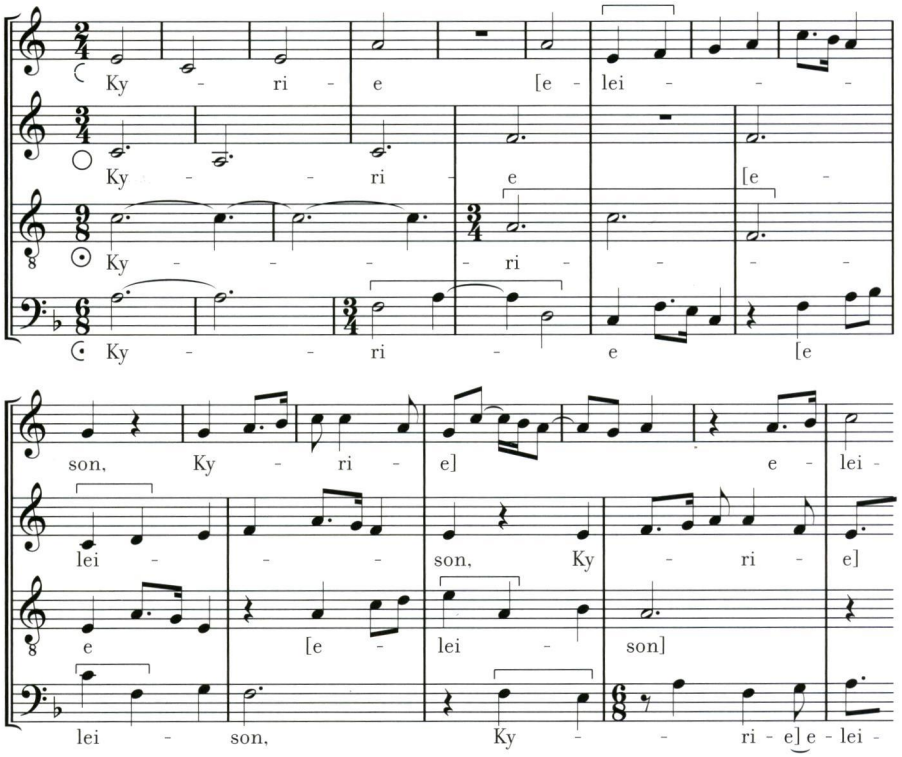
(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. MS F.1587, fol. 58.)

Example 6.1: Ockeghem, opening of Kyrie II from Missa prolationum

a. Original notation



b. Transcription



Missa prolationum

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Ockeghem's *Missa prolationum* shows exceptional compositional virtuosity: the mass is notated in two voices but sung in four, using the four prolations of mensural notation (see Chapter 4). Example 6.1a shows the original notation and 6.1b the transcription for the opening of the second Kyrie (the full Kyrie is in NAWM 39). Each of the two written parts has two clefs and two mensuration signs, so each of the four singers observes the pertinent symbols. The soprano sings the notes of the superius part in the soprano clef (C-clef on the lowest staff line) in imperfect time, minor prolation (the mensuration encoded by the semicircle), while the alto reads the same notes using the C-clef on the second staff line in perfect time, minor prolation (the mensuration indicated by the circle) to produce the two top lines in Example 6.1b. The tenor and bass read the contra part in a similar fashion to produce the two bottom lines of the transcription.

Chansons

In prestige and craft, writing secular music did not lag far behind mass composition. Chansons from 1460 to 1480 show more and more use of imitative counterpoint, at first between the superius and tenor voices and later among all three parts. Most of Ockeghem's chansons, as well as those of his equally famous contemporary Antoine Busnoys (ca. 1430–1492), made use of the traditional *formes fixes* of courtly poetry. Of these, the rondeau's popularity endured until

Jean de Ockeghem (Johannes Okeghem) (ca. 1420–1497)

Ockeghem was celebrated as a singer (he is said to have had a fine bass voice), as a composer, and as the model and perhaps mentor of many leading composers of the next generation, including Josquin, who set to music the French words of a moving lament on his death:

> Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains,
> Skilled singers of all nations,
> Change your voices so clear and proud
> To sharp cries and lamentations.
> For Death, terrible despot,
> Has trapped your Ockeghem . . .

The poem goes on to portray Ockeghem as the "good father" of several younger composers.

He was born and trained in the province of Hainaut in northeastern France, served briefly in Antwerp, and spent several years in France with the chapel of Charles I, duke of Bourbon. He is most closely identified with the French royal court, where he served three kings over a span of more than four decades. He was a member of the royal chapel from 1451 on, led the chapel as First Chaplain from 1454, and became master of the chapel in 1465. He was also treasurer at the royal church of Saint Martin of Tours from 1458 and became a priest around 1464. He returned to his native region on occasion, where he was in touch with Du Fay, Binchois, and Busnoys, and traveled to Spain on a diplomatic mission for King Louis XI around 1470. But he seems never to have gone to Italy, and his music shows little Italian influence.

Figure 6.4. Relief portrait of Jean de Ockeghem, created by twentieth-century medalist Pierre Turin.
(Photo by Arn Dekker, Cambridge, England.)

In fact, both his career and his music are notably less cosmopolitan than those of Du Fay.

Ockeghem's known output was relatively small for a composer of his renown, although many of his works may have been lost or destroyed by fire, war, or other devastations. Most of his works cannot be dated with any certainty. In some respects, his music continues in the style of previous generations; in others, it typifies his time; but in certain ways, it is unique, perhaps because his long service in one place encouraged the development of an individual idiom.

Major works: 13 masses, Requiem Mass, at least 5 motets, 21 chansons

the end of the century, whereas that of the ballade and virelai declined. Certain chansons by Ockeghem, Busnoys, and their successors were enormous hits: some favorites appear again and again in manuscripts and prints from many different countries. Composers freely altered their own and others' chansons, rearranged them, and transcribed them for instruments. Above all, the chansons provided an inexhaustible supply of material for masses, which might be based on either the superius or the tenor of the original songs.

Medieval and newer features

Some medieval traits still common in the music of Ockeghem and Busnoys, such as the *formes fixes* and reliance on a repeating tenor for structure, disappear in the next generation. Others, such as the use of a cantus firmus, continue but become less prominent. The newer elements, including greater equality of voices, more use of imitation, and expansion of range, were extended by their successors and became characteristic of sixteenth-century musical style.

> A great number of gentlemen and merchants of good account . . . [were entertained] by the exercise of music daily used in my house, and by furnishing them with [printed] books of that kind yearly sent me out of Italy and other places.

So wrote Nicholas Yonge, a London clerk with enough means and social position to support an active amateur musical life, in the dedication to his 1588 collection of madrigals, *Musica transalpina* (see Chapter 7). His words reveal how the music-printing and music-publishing business changed the way people used and enjoyed notated music during the Renaissance, allowing it to be cultivated not only in noble courts and churches, but also in ordinary households as recreation.

Printing from movable type, known in China for centuries and perfected in Europe by Johannes Gutenberg around 1450, was first used for music in the 1470s in liturgical books with chant notation. The application of movable type meant that notes could be assembled in any order, rearranged, and reused. This method proved much more practical than other procedures, such as carving music into wood blocks.

In 1501 in Venice, Ottaviano Petrucci (1466–1539) produced the first collection of polyphonic music printed entirely from movable type, the *Harmonice musices odhecaton A* (One hundred songs of harmonic music [polyphony]—it actually contained only ninety-six). Figure 6.5, a page from this collection, shows the elegance of his work. Petrucci used a triple-impression process in which each sheet went through the press three times: once to print the staff lines, another to print the words, and a third to print the notes and the florid initials. His method was time-consuming, labor-intensive, and costly, but his results were models of clarity and accuracy.

Petrucci was no less clever a businessman than he was a craftsman. Before setting up shop, he had procured a patent on his process and a "privilege" that effectively guaranteed a monopoly on music printing in Venice for twenty years. After sizing up the market, he decided to make his first volume (the *Odhecaton*) an anthology of secular song, including what he judged to be among the best tunes of his own and the preceding generations. These were short pieces for three or four parts that could easily be performed at home or in the company of friends. Two more song collections followed—*Canti B* in 1502 and *Canti C* in 1504—allowing Petrucci to corner the market for the most up-to-date and popular secular music of the day. By 1523, he had published fifty-nine volumes (including reprints) of vocal and instrumental music.

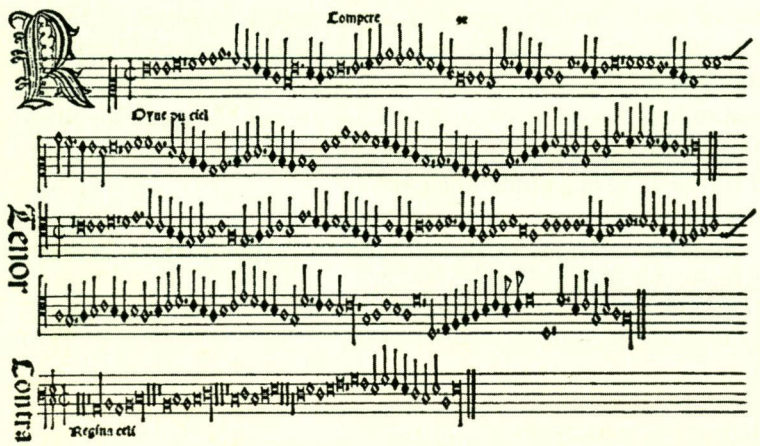

Figure 6.5. Loyset Compère's chanson Royne de ciel, *from* Harmonice musices odhecaton A, *published by Ottaviano Petrucci in 1501. The incipit of the text appears under the cantus part. The music uses the "white notation" of the Renaissance. The notes that look like diamond-shaped whole notes are semibreves; open notes with stems (akin to half notes) are minims; black notes with stems (like quarter notes) are semiminims; and flags are added to the semiminim to indicate shorter durations. The resemblance to common-practice notation is clear, except that no bar lines or ties are used.*

Printing from a single impression—using pieces of type that printed staff, notes, and text together in one operation—was apparently first practiced by John Rastell in London about 1520 and first applied on a large scale in 1528 by Pierre Attaingnant (ca. 1494–1551/2) in Paris. Although more efficient and less costly than Petrucci's triple-impression method, the process produced results that were much less elegant because the staff lines were no longer continuous but part of each piece of type; inevitably, the lines were imperfectly joined and appeared broken or wavy on the page, as seen in Figure 6.6. Nevertheless, the practicality of the method ensured its commercial success. Attaingnant's process set the standard for all printed music until

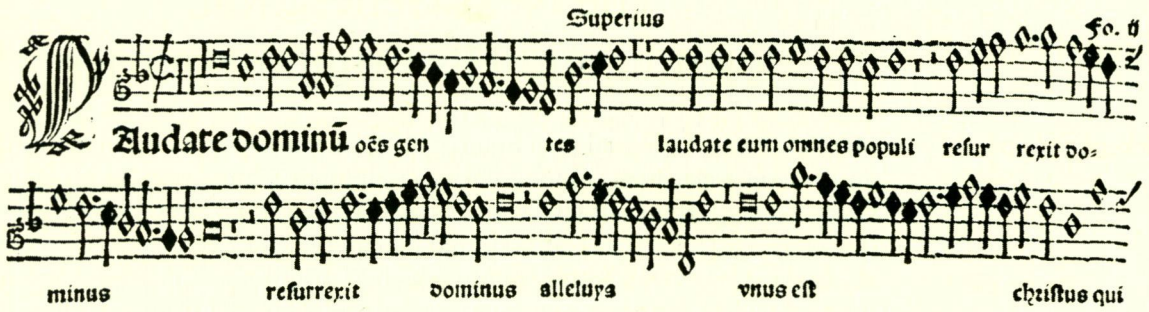

Figure 6.6. First portion of the superius part for the motet Laudate Dominum *by Pierre de Manchicourt, as printed in Pierre Attaingnant's* Liber decimus quartus XIX musicas cantiones continet *(Paris, 1539). Attaingnant printed in a single impression, using type in which each note, rest, clef, or other sign includes the staff lines on which it sits.*

copperplate engraving became popular in the late seventeenth century.

Most ensemble music published in the sixteenth century was printed in the form of rectangular partbooks, each volume containing the music for a particular voice so that a complete set was needed to perform the piece. Partbooks were intended for use at home or in social gatherings (see Figure 6.7), and most church choirs continued to use the large handwritten choirbooks (see Figure 6.3). Because there was not enough demand for these large books to make printing them economical, new ones were still being hand-copied in the sixteenth century even as printed collections began appearing.

In general, the existence of printed copies meant that both sacred and secular works would become known more widely and would be preserved for performance and study by later generations. This, in turn, stimulated awareness of individual influence and achievement. Josquin des Prez was the first composer whose widespread renown and lasting impact was assured by the printing press when Petrucci devoted three volumes to the publication of Josquin's masses during the composer's lifetime but no more than one volume to the works of any other composer.

The economics of supply and demand for printed music grew in ever widening circles: printing stimulated the desire for music books and increased their affordability, which, in turn, spurred the further development of music printing and competition among publishers. By the end of the sixteenth century, Rome, Nuremberg, Lyon, Louvain, Antwerp, and London had joined Venice and Paris as centers of music publishing, and printed music had become an indispensable part of musical life.

Figure 6.7. A vocal quartet reading from partbooks. The rich costumes suggest that these are aristocratic amateurs performing for their own pleasure in the privacy of an idyllic island. Detail from an anonymous sixteenth-century painting.
(Musée de l'Hôtel Lallemant, Bourges, France. Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.)

The Next Generation: Josquin and His Contemporaries

Ockeghem's pupils

Many of the next generation of Franco-Flemish composers modeled their works on those of Ockeghem. Among the most eminent figures were Jacob Obrecht (1457/8–1505), Henricus (Heinrich) Isaac (ca. 1450–1517), and Josquin des Prez (ca. 1450–1521). Each was born around the middle of the century, each received his earliest musical training and experience in the Low Countries, and each traveled widely, working in various courts and churches in different parts of Europe, including Italy. Consequently, the careers of each illustrate the lively musical interchange between northern and southern Europe—that is, between the Franco-Flemish centers and those of Italy and Spain. Obrecht, from the Dutch town of Bergen op Zoom, died in Italy of the plague while working as a member of the ducal chapel in Ferrara, where Josquin was also employed for a time. Isaac, Flemish by birth, also ended his years in Italy, serving the Medici rulers of Florence. It is no surprise, then, that their music mixes and even combines northern and southern elements: the serious tone, formal structure, intricate polyphony, and subtly flowing rhythms of the north; and the spontaneity, simpler structure, homophonic texture, dancelike rhythms, and more clearly articulated phrases of the south. Isaac's tender song *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen* (Innsbruck, I must leave you, NAWM 40), with its appealing melody, sweet harmonies, and clear phrase structure, is a good example of the Italian style even though its text is in German.

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Odhecaton

The *Odhecaton*, the first printed anthology of chansons (see page 116), illustrates how deeply northern music penetrated into Italy. It contains works dating from about 1470 to 1500 by composers from the late Burgundian era to the generation of Obrecht, Isaac, and Josquin. In Petrucci's title *Harmonice musices odhecaton A*, the letter "A" indicates that it was planned as the first in a series. In fact, two more chanson volumes followed in short order. Over the next half-century, Petrucci and other Italian music printers issued a great number of such anthologies by French and Franco-Flemish composers, attesting to the popularity and longevity of their songs.

Figure 6.8. Jacob Obrecht in a portrait from 1496 by an anonymous Flemish painter. (Kimball Art Museum.)

Chansons

More than half of the chansons in the *Odhecaton* are for three voices and written primarily in the older styles. In the four-voice chansons, however, we see the genre developing toward a fuller texture, a more completely imitative counterpoint, clearer harmonic structure, and greater equality of voices. Duple meter replaced the more common triple meter of the Burgundian period. Many of these pieces, like the masses of the

time, were based either on a popular tune or on a single voice from some earlier chanson.

Josquin's chansons

By contrast with Ockeghem, Josquin des Prez virtually abandoned the *formes fixes*, choosing instead strophic texts and simple four- or five-line poems. The polyphonic fabric of his chansons is not formed from independent layers, like Ockeghem's, but is unified and interwoven with imitation, the most important new compositional device of the sixteenth century. Instead of the cantus-tenor voice pair providing the scaffolding of the texture, with the other voices filling in, all the parts are now structurally equal.

Mille regretz

CD 3|7

Mille regretz (A thousand regrets, NAWM 43), a chanson attributed to Josquin though perhaps not by him, illustrates the style of about 1520. In contrast to the chansons of Du Fay and Ockeghem, the voices are more alike, yielding a homogeneous texture that alternates between homophony and imitation and between all four voices and ever-changing combinations of two or three voices. Each phrase of text receives its own treatment, a lesson that Josquin learned well from the Italian humanists.

Josquin des Prez (Josquin Lebloitte, Dit Desprez) (ca. 1450–1521)

Josquin's motets, masses, and songs were widely sung, praised, and emulated in his lifetime and for decades after his death. He was known by his given name because "des Prez" was a nickname.

Josquin's biography has been clarified by recent research, but there are still gaps. Historians only recently discovered his family name—Lebloitte—from a will leaving him a house and land in Condé-sur-l'Escaut in Hainaut, now in Belgium. His early life is undocumented, but he was probably born and trained in or near Saint-Quentin in northern France, about halfway between Paris and Brussels. He served in the chapel of René, duke of Anjou, at Aix-en-Provence in the late 1470s. After René's death in 1480, his singers transferred to the service of King Louis XI in Paris, and Josquin may have been among them.

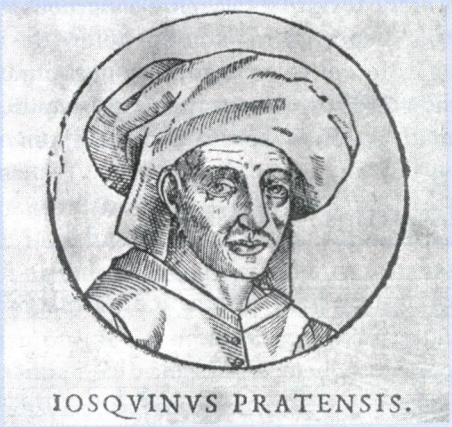


Figure 6.9. Josquin des Prez, in a woodcut from Petrus Opmeer, Opus chronographicum . . . *(Antwerp, 1611). Opmeer based his portrait on an oil painting that once stood in Saint Gudule Church in Brussels but was destroyed in the 1570s.*
(Bettmann/Corbis.)

Josquin spent much of his career in Italy, serving the Sforza family, rulers of Milan (ca. 1484–1489), and in the Sistine Chapel in Rome (1489–1495 or later). Josquin may have been in France at the court of King Louis XII from 1501 to 1503. He was appointed maestro di cappella to Duke Ercole I d'Este in Ferrara in 1503, commanding the highest salary in the history of that chapel. A recruiter for the duke had recommended Isaac instead, "because he is of a better nature among his companions and will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to, and not when one wants him to, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary while Isaac will come for 120." The duke hired Josquin anyway, no doubt aware of the prestige to be gained by employing the best musician available. Josquin left after a year, apparently to escape the plague. From 1504 until his death in 1521, he resided at Condé-sur-l'Escaut, where he was provost at the church of Notre Dame.

Major works: about 18 masses, over 55 motets and liturgical works, about 65 chansons (about 10 for instruments), and over 70 doubtful and misattributed works

Josquin's influence

Of all the composers we have studied since Du Fay, none enjoyed higher renown or exercised greater influence than Josquin (see biography and Figure 6.9). Composers from his own time through the late sixteenth century emulated and reworked his compositions. His music, privileged by Petrucci's printing press (see pages 116–117), continued to be recopied, published, and performed for almost a century after his death, a rare honor at a time when most music more than a few decades old was deemed unworthy of performance. His music was so esteemed and popular that publishers and copyists often attributed works by other composers to him; historians are still having difficulty sorting out which pieces are truly his.

Motets

The high proportion of motets in Josquin's output is also noteworthy. In his day, the mass was still the form that composers turned to in order to demonstrate mastery of their craft. But the mass's liturgical formality, unvarying text, and established musical conventions left little room for experimentation. Motets, on the other hand, could be written on a wide range of relatively unfamiliar texts that offered interesting new possibilities for word-music relationships. For a Renaissance composer of Josquin's inclination, the motet became the most challenging and inviting genre of sacred composition.

Text and music

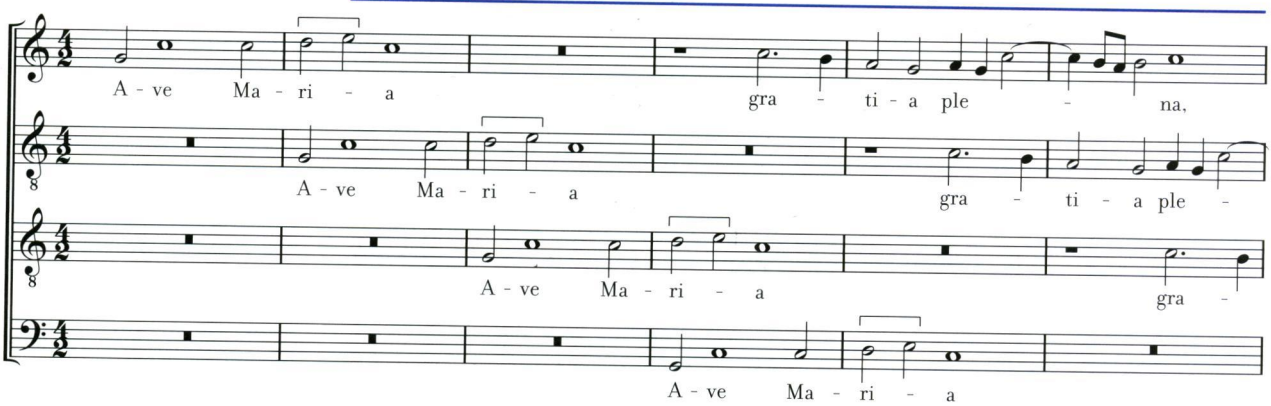
In keeping with humanist ideals, Josquin and his contemporaries tried to make the music communicate the meaning of the text. They carefully fit the musical stress to the accentuation of the words, whether Latin or vernacular, and wanted the words to be heard and understood. The highly florid lines of Ockeghem and other Franco-Flemish composers gave way to more direct syllabic settings in which a phrase of text was presented as an uninterrupted thought. Composers turned to the chanson and the Italian popular genres as models for their vocal writing.

Ave Maria . . . virgo serena

CD 2|67 CD 1|51

We see Josquin's typical approach to motet writing in *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena* (Hail Mary . . . serene Virgin, NAWM 41), probably from about 1485, one of his best-known pieces. The music is perfectly crafted to fit the words. Josquin calls attention to the text by giving each segment a unique musical treatment and a concluding cadence on C. Although the texture varies, its main method of construction is imitation—that is, each voice takes up the same motivic idea, or "point of imitation," one after the other (Example 6.2). This equalizes and unifies the voices, bringing the lines of the texture into a more congruous whole and creating an effect similar to that of perspective in painting. Before the last voice has finished its musical phrase, a different voice begins the next phrase of text with a new subject. By having the voices overlap in this way, Josquin avoids a cadence until the first full grammatical stop at "serena," where all the parts sing

Example 6.2: Josquin des Prez, motet: Ave Maria . . . virgo serena



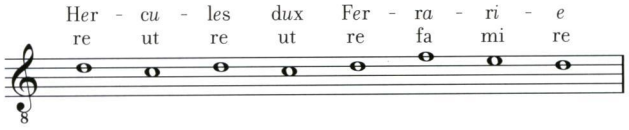
Hail Mary, full of grace

together for the first time, building with increasing rhythmic activity to the first simultaneous cadence. The words are declaimed naturally, the accented syllables being given longer and higher notes in most cases, and their meaning is occasionally reinforced by a particularly suitable musical gesture. (A fuller discussion is given in NAWM.)

Cantus firmus masses

Not all of Josquin's work is so forward-looking. As we might expect, he employs conservative styles most conspicuously in his masses, which abound in technical ingenuity. Most use a secular tune as a cantus firmus. *In Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales*, Josquin transposes the familiar tune, *L'homme armé*, to successive degrees (or musical syllables—*voces musicales*) of the scale—C for the Kyrie, D for the Gloria, and so on—and includes a mensuration canon in the Agnus Dei.

For *Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae*, written to honor Ercole (Hercules) I, who was duke of Ferrara from 1471 to 1505 and Josquin's employer at one point in his career, Josquin used as a cantus firmus a *soggetto cavato dalle vocali*, a "subject drawn from the vowels" of the duke's name and title, by letting each vowel indicate a corresponding scale syllable, thus:



Parody mass

Josquin's *Missa Malheur me bat* illustrates the new approach of basing a mass on an existing polyphonic work. Instead of using one voice as a cantus firmus, the composer borrows extensively from all voices of the model, reworking the latter's characteristic motives, points of imitation, and general structure in each movement of the mass. This approach is especially successful when the model is a motet or chanson in the new, predominantly imitative or homophonic styles of the sixteenth century because in such works the tenor is not the main structural voice and no voice would function well as a cantus firmus. Typically, the resemblance to the model is strongest at the beginning and end of each movement, and the composer's skill is demonstrated by the new combinations and variations he can achieve within the borrowed material. A mass composed in this manner is called a parody (or imitation) mass because it reworks material from another polyphonic work. The parody mass replaced the cantus firmus mass as the dominant type around 1520.

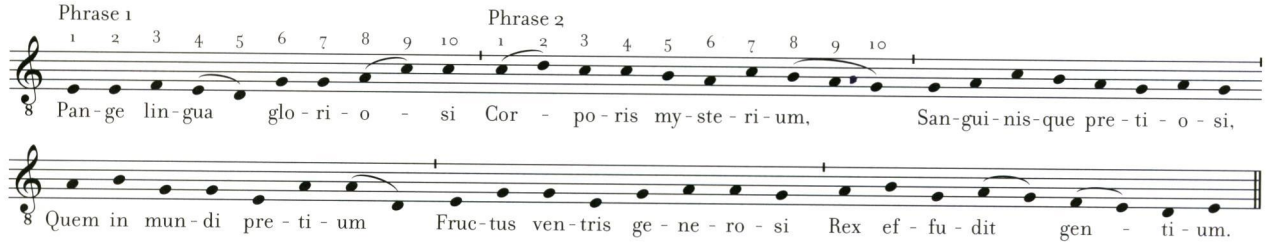
Paraphase mass

CD 3|1 CD 1|58

Missa Pange lingua (excerpted in NAWM 42), one of the last that Josquin composed, represents another new type of work: the paraphrase mass. It is based on the plainchant hymn *Pange lingua gloriosi* (Sing, tongue, of the glorious), but instead of using the hymn melody as a cantus firmus in the tenor, Josquin paraphrases it in all four voices, in whole or in part, in each movement. Phrases from the hymn melody are adapted as motives that are treated in points of imitation, or occasionally in homophonic declamation. Example 6.3a gives all six phrases of the hymn, with the notes of the first two phrases numbered (ten pitches in each). Example 6.3b shows how Josquin begins by using the first phrase, *Pange lingua gloriosi*, as the basis for the opening section of the Kyrie. The tenor quotes the first six pitches literally and is then imitated by the bassus, superius, and altus in succession. The remaining pitches (7–10) are dissolved by the paraphrase process into shorter note values that follow only the contour of the hymn tune. Then, at measure nine, the bassus anticipates the melody of the hymn's second phrase (*corporis mysterium*), the new pitches of which are again clearly stated by the tenor before the tune is obscured by the melismatic activity leading to the cadence. Toward the end of this section, the contour of the second phrase remains clearest in the superius (measures 13–16) as the texture thickens for the

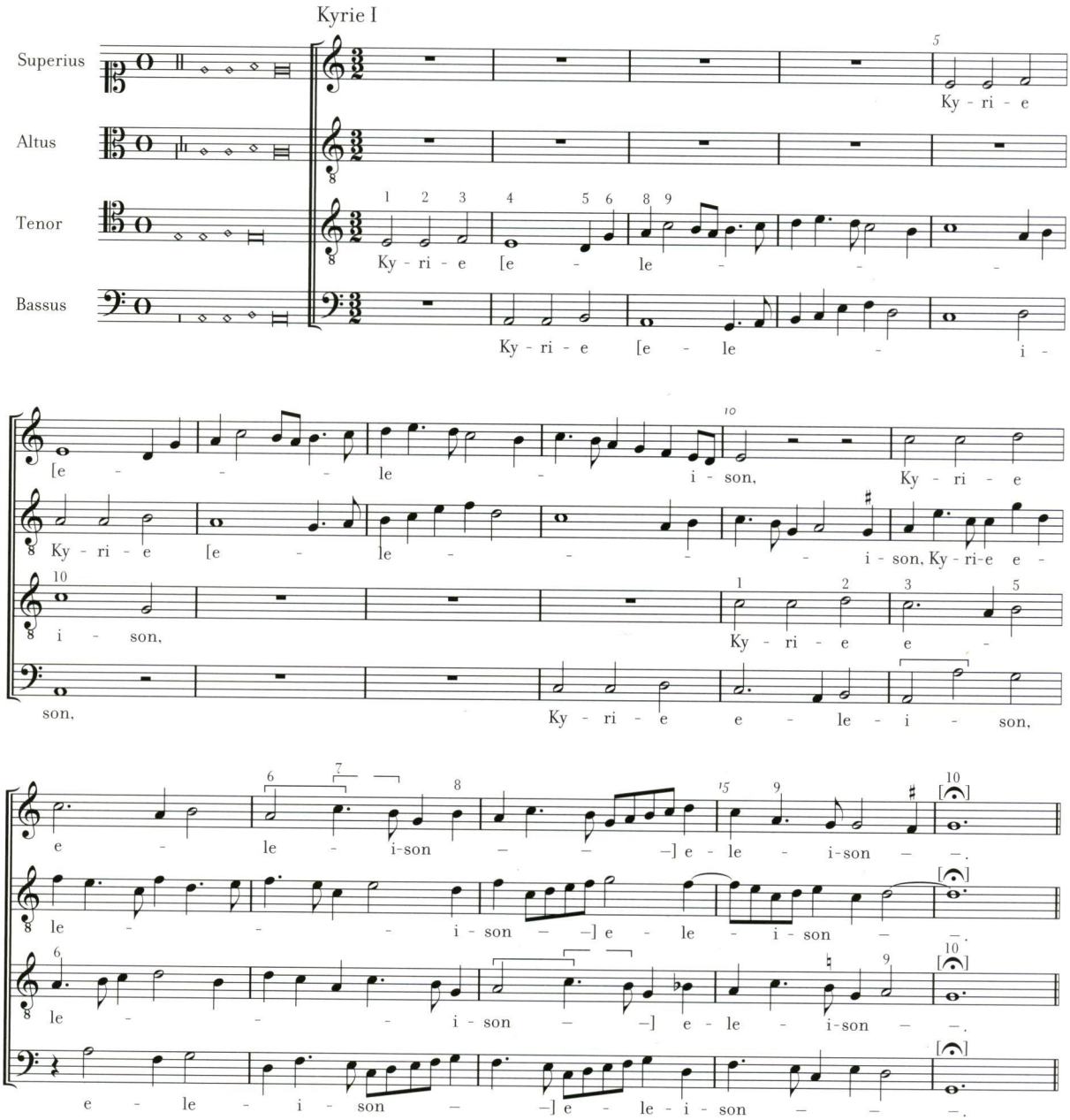
Example 6.3: Pange lingua

a. Hymn



Sing, tongue, of the glorious body's mystery and of the precious blood, ransom of the world, that the fruit of the generous womb, the king of all peoples, poured forth.

b. Josquin des Prez, Missa Pange lingua*: Kyrie excerpt showing paraphrase of hymn phrases 1 and 2, by Josquin des Prez*



Type	Cantus firmus mass	Paraphrase mass	Parody or Imitation Mass
Example	Du Fay, *Missa Se la face ay pale*	Josquin, *Missa Pange lingua*	Josquin, *Missa Malheur me bat*
Borrowed material	Chant or other melody	Chant melody	All voices from polyphonic work
Where is it used?	Tenor of mass	All voices of mass	All voices of mass
How is it used?	In long notes, as structural cantus firmus	Paraphrased and with notes added	Motives, points of imitation, or other elements reworked
Main texture	Layered, with tenor as structural voice	Imitative, with some homophonic passages	Imitative, with some homophonic passages

Figure 6.10. Types of cyclic masses based on borrowed material.

close in all four voices. Josquin similarly employs the next two phrases of the hymn in the Christe section, and the final pair of phrases as the melodic material for the last Kyrie (see NAWM 42). As with the parody mass, the new technique still results in a cyclic mass because the same basic material underlies each movement, tying the movements together.

Although composers continued to write cantus firmus masses in the sixteenth century, they turned increasingly to parody and paraphrase techniques because they preferred these to the structurally confining cantus firmus technique, which came to be seen as archaic. The source material was likely chosen for the same reasons as before: to suit a particular religious holiday or saint; to honor a patron; to convey meaning by alluding to the original words of the chanson or motet (which would not be heard, but perhaps remembered, by the listener); or, in the case of a parody—that is, imitation—mass, to pay homage to another composer through emulation. Figure 6.10 provides a comparison of the various types of mass settings based on borrowed material and is discusssed in Chapters 5 and 6.

TIMELINE The Age of the Renaissance: Franco-Flemish Composers

MUSICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
Ockeghem at French royal chapel **1451–97**	**1453** England defeated in Hundred Years' War
Death of Du Fay **1474**	
Tinctoris, *Liber de arte contrapuncti* **1477**	**1477** Death of Charles the Bold; France absorbs duchy of Burgundy
Josquin, singer in ducal chapel, Milan **ca. 1484–1489**	
	1485–1603 Tudor dynasty in England
	1492 First voyage of Columbus to America
	1493–1519 Reign of Maximilian I as Holy Roman Emperor
	1495 Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*
Death of Ockeghem **1497**	
Petrucci publishes *Odhecaton A* **1501**	
Petrucci publishes Josquin masses **1502**	
Josquin at Ferrara **1503–4**	**1504** Michelangelo, *David*
	1509 Henry VIII becomes king of England
	1519 Charles V becomes Holy Roman Emperor
Josquin's *Missa Pange lingua* (NAWM 42) **ca. 1520**	
Death of Josquin **1521**	

POSTLUDE

The Renaissance was an era of rediscovery and rapid change that affected the way educated people lived and thought about their own era and culture. It had far-reaching consequences in all the arts and, with the help of the printing press, brought about new attitudes toward the creation, consumption, and reception of music. The international style that had begun to emerge from the variety of compositional techniques practiced in England and on the Continent during the 1400s now spread to Italy and throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

The Renaissance produced a number of specific musical styles and influenced many features of European art music. More and more, composers let the structure of the text determine the structure of the music. Polyphonic parts were unified through imitation and became nearly equal in importance. The quest by composers for full harmonies, singable melodies, and motivic relationships between the voices influenced the texture of sacred as well as secular pieces. Borrowed melodies, whether sacred or secular, were still used to unify large compositions, but the borrowed material was often distributed among the voices rather than confined to the tenor or superius. Although the tenor remained a key voice in the structure, the bass began to assume its modern role as the foundation of the harmony. Final cadences continued to close in perfect consonances, but elsewhere composers strove for full triadic sonorities. Simplification and standardization of rhythm favored duple measure organized by the value of the breve (alla breve). The preferred sacred genres were the cyclical mass and the motet. The chanson, breaking out of the *formes fixes*, was cast in new shapes, and its texture was gradually pervaded by imitation. Hidden and esoteric structural devices, such as isorhythm and mensuration canon, gave way to transparent textures, principally that of overlapping imitative sections, relieved occasionally by homophonic ones. These trends provided composers more compositional choices than they had had earlier and, aided by the success of music printing, more opportunity to communicate with a wider audience. Many of the trends discussed in this chapter continued throughout the sixteenth century.

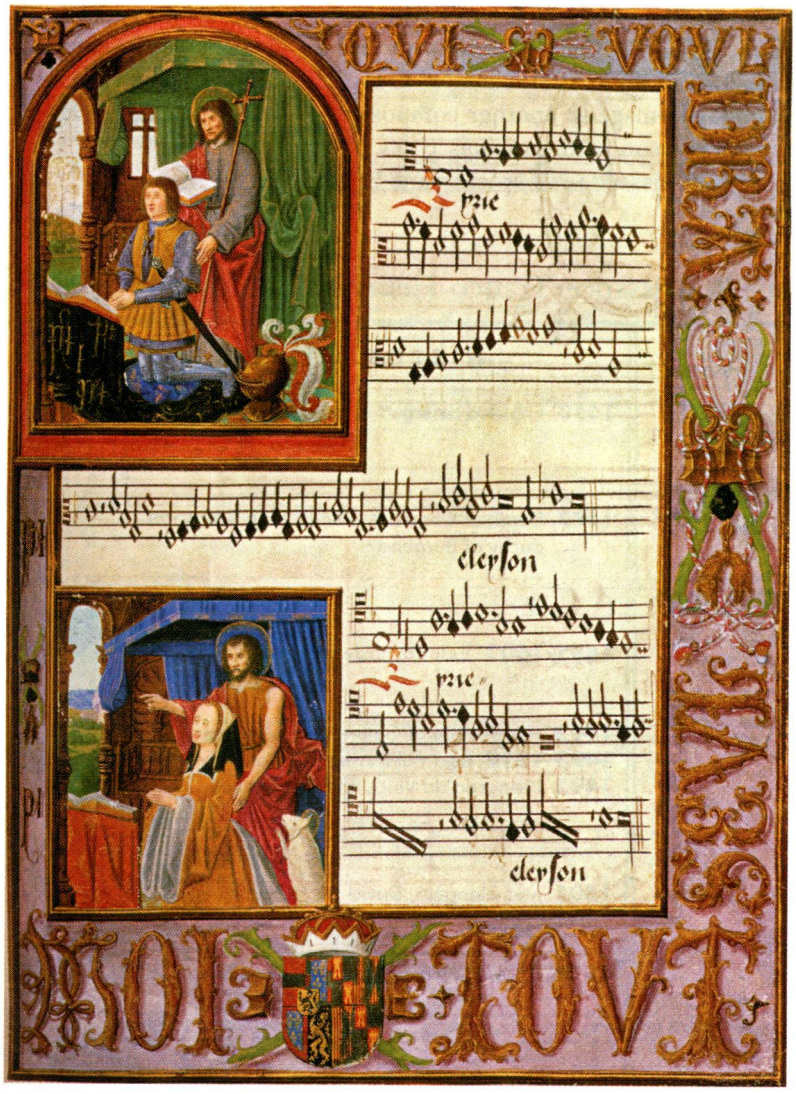


Figure 6.11. Kyrie of the Missa Ave maris stella *by Josquin; one of two facing pages of the manuscript, showing two of the four voice parts.*

(Royal Library of Belgium, Robert Wangermee, *Flemish Music and Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* © 1968 Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers.)