

# **United States Academic Decathlon**

**October 26, 2005  
Rabobank Theatre  
Bakersfield, California**

**A Guided Sprint Toward the  
Music of the Renaissance**

**What follows is a presentation from the afternoon session of the Academic Decathlon concert held at the Rabobank Theatre in Bakersfield on October 26, 2005. This served as the general outline for a portion of the afternoon presentation by Cal State Bakersfield Professor of Music Jerome Kleinsasser.**

**Renaissance music can best be understood if one is aware of its roots in music of previous eras. This presentation is a synopsis of the development of musical style leading to the Renaissance. It is merely skeletal in nature and presented here in the hope it will stimulate discussion and further research among team members on the topic of Renaissance music.**

**Any questions or comments are welcome, and may be sent by e-mail to the professor at [jkleinsasser@csub.edu](mailto:jkleinsasser@csub.edu). Please leave a return address if you wish a response.**

**Good luck!**

**J. S. Kleinsasser**

# **A Guided Sprint Toward the Renaissance**

**Here's the plan:**

**A general view of musical development from ancient times to the Renaissance;**

**An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance;**

**The elements of music as revealed in the Renaissance.**

# A Guided Sprint Toward the Renaissance

## Ancient (ca. 500 b.c - 500 a.d.)

Little is known about the actual sound of ancient Greek and Roman music. We know more about the instruments used, but next to nothing about their melodies. Ancient festivals and celebrations utilized music, as did theatrical productions. It is clear that improvised poetry was recited or sung to the sound of a lyre (hence, “lyric poetry”).

Music was believed to have the power to heal the sick and calm the mind, or conversely, to excite or induce rage.

In theory, music was more closely associated with mathematics than other art forms.

Greek music is believed to have been more lyrical and aesthetically sensitive than was the more warlike or orgiastic music of the Romans.



# A Guided Sprint Toward the Renaissance

## Medieval (ca. 600 - 1450)

### Four points about Medieval music:

- what has come down to us is mainly religious music;
- predominantly vocal music (even if played instrumentally);
- it is usually monophonic or in developing polyphonic textures;
- the sound often has disparate timbres (mixed kinds of instruments) and/or texts compared to that of the Renaissance.



***Gregorian Chant***, the music used in liturgical services of the Roman Catholic Church, comprises the earliest important body of music literature in the Western World.

It is single-line music, sung in unison, without harmony and in a seemingly freely flowing rhythm.

Latin

English translation

**Fines terrae salutare**

**(All the earth shall praise)**

**Dei nostri**

**(Our God).**

**Jubilate Deo omnis terra**

**(Praise God, all the earth).**

Somewhere around the year 1100, other parts were added to the original chant melody, creating 2 and 3-part music called “organum.”

Here sung on the word “om - nes” = “all” (excerpt).

Eventually musical texture grew to include three lines, allowing much more fulsome harmonies. Ex. 13th century motet: *Alle-psallite-cum-luya*.

Alle psal- li- te cum lu- y- a

Al- le- - lu- y- a

le- psal- li- te cum lu- y- - a

Al- le- -

con- cre- pan- do psal- li- te cum lu- y- - a

Al-

le con- cre- pan- do psal- li- te cum lu- y- -

Al- le- - cor- de vo- to De- o to- to psal- li-

a

te cum lu- y- a

Al- le- - cor- de vo- to

De- o to- - to psal- li- te cum lu- y- - a

Al-

le- - lu- y- - a.

Al- le- - lu- - y- a.



**A Medieval portrayal of musicians displaying instruments of the time.**

**This was the age of *troubadours* (aristocratic poets) and *minstrels* (musicians hired to perform the music of troubadours).**

**It was the age of chivalry and courtly love, when often the object of one's affections was distant, and may not even have known the intentions of the author.**

**Marriages were often dictated by social station and power, thus the issue of love often could only be honored or consummated in song.**

**This 14th-century French love song for two voices plus a solo instrument displays two different melodies and texts sung simultaneously. A third line, played by an instrument, probably existed before the other two lines were added.**

<b>Voice 1</b>	<b>Inter densas deserti meditans</b>	<b>(Meditating in the thick woods of a)</b>
<b>Voice 2</b>	<b>Imbribus irriguis et vivo fonte redundans</b>	<b>(Flowing with nourishing rainshowers and a lively spring,)</b>
	<b>Silvas pridem allectus ocio</b>	<b>(wilderness not long ago, drawn to rest,)</b>
	<b>Plantis et arboribus vernoque tempore florens</b>	<b>(flowering in the spring-time with plants and trees,)</b>
	<b>In sonitu rivulus crepitans</b>	<b>(a murmuring brook in earshot,)</b>
	<b>Ortus odoriferis</b>	<b>(a garden of shady places redolent with</b>
	<b>Invasit me sompni devocio.</b>	<b>(a spell of sleep overcame me.)</b>
	<b>fragrans aromatibus umbris</b>	<b>(fragrances and aromas)</b>
	<b>Ecce princeps occurit inclitus</b>	<b>(Behold, a renowned prince appears...)</b>
	<b>Ocia querentes...</b>	<b>(Those seeking rest...}</b>
	<b>Flama capud textum cesarie...</b>	<b>(His head bedecked with golden hair...)</b>

**This stands in startling contrast to the motet “Quam pulchra es” by John Dunstable, in which three voices sing a common text in a prototype of chordal texture. Note too the fulsome harmony here (“Contenance angloise”).**

**Quam pulchra es et quam decora,  
carissima in deliciis  
Statua tua assimilata est palme,  
et ubera tua botris.  
Caput tuum ut Carmelus,  
collum tuum sicut turris eburnea.**

**Veni, dilecte mi,  
egrediamu in agrum,  
Et videamus si flores fructus  
parturierunt si floruerunt mala...**

**Ibi dabo tibi ubera mea.**

**Alleluia.**

**How fair and pleasant you are,  
O loved one in delights.  
You are stately as a palm tree,  
And your breasts are like its clusters.  
Your head crowns you like Carmel;  
Your neck is like an ivory tower.**

**Come, my beloved,  
Let us go forth into the field,  
And see if the grape blossoms appear,  
And if the pomegranates bloom.**

**There I will give you my love.**

**Alleluia**

Roy. Henry.

S in ter ra in ho mibus lo he uolum ta tis lau  
di mus te ter re de i a mus te adora mus te glo ri fi ca mus te gra tias  
agimus ti bi pro pter ma gnam glo ri am tu am. Do mi ne de us rex ce  
les ti us de us pa ter om ni po tens do mi ne si li um ge ni te rum a si se. Do mi  
ne de us a gnus de i fi lius pa tris. Qui tol lis pec ca ta mun di  
mi se re re no bis. Qui tol lis pec ca ta mun di sus ci pe de pre ca tionem  
no stram. Qui se des ad dex te ram pa tris mi se re re no bis.  
Quon iam tu so lus sanc tus. Tu so lus do mi nus. Tu so lus al ti ssimus  
The si cum spi ri tu in glo ri a de i pa tris. Al'

**A single choral part for a Mass “Gloria”  
from *Old Hall Manuscript*.**

**The most important source of English sacred music  
from the late 14th and early 15th centuries.**

## **Renaissance (fr. “rebirth”) (ca. 1400 - 1600)**

**The Renaissance was an age of discovery, both geographical and humanistic. Depth and perspective entered the visual arts, and human subjects became of primary importance.**

**The mysticism of the past gave way to the birth of science and proto-rational thought. Music reflected this as secular music challenged the supremacy of the sacred music of the past.**

- 1. music in 4 or more voice parts became the norm;**
- 2. use of imitative counterpoint was the dominant stylistic feature;**
- 3. dissonances were approached with great care;**
- 4. “text painting” - music attempts to illustrate the meaning of the text (as in madrigals).**



**Works by artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, reflect a new interest in the human form and character.**

**In music, secular subjects reached parity in importance with sacred thought.**

**The most important innovation in Renaissance music was imitative counterpoint.** Here is an example by Josquin des Pres from around 1500.



**Josquin des Pres**  
1440 - 1521

Each voice part (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) enters in imitation of its predecessor, until all four parts are sounding, then the process is repeated with a new melody in the next line of text.

**Ave Maria**  
**Gratia plena**  
**Dominus tecum**  
**Virgo serena**

**Hail Mary**  
**full of grace**  
**The Lord is with Thee**  
**serene Virgin.**

Imitative counterpoint of this type is the single most identifiable characteristic of Renaissance music.

## **An example of secular music by Josquin des Pres.**

### ***El Grillo* (The Cricket)**

**Ignoring imitation, *El Grillo* is written in an Italian popular style, with the melody stated clearly on the top.**

**Some scholars believe “Grillo” refers to a singer of that name who turned down more lucrative offers elsewhere to remain at the court served by Josquin, hence he “sang for love,” not money.**

<b>El grillo, è buon cantore,</b>	<b>(The cricket is a fine singer)</b>
<b>Che tienne longo verso,</b>	<b>(Who holds a long note)</b>
<b>Dalle beve grillo canta</b>	<b>(Sing of good times, cricket!)</b>
<b>dalle, beve, grillo, canta.</b>	
<b>El grillo è buon cantore.</b>	<b>(The cricket is a fine singer)</b>

<b>Ma non fa come gli altri uccelli,</b>	<b>(But he’s not like the other birds)</b>
<b>Come li han cantato un poco,</b>	<b>(as soon as they have sung a while)</b>
<b>Van’ de fatto in altro loco</b>	<b>(they are off somewhere else)</b>
<b>Sempre el grillo sta pur saldo,</b>	<b>(The cricket always stays put)</b>
<b>Quando la maggior è'l caldo</b>	<b>(When the weather is hottest)</b>
<b>Al' hor canta sol per amore.</b>	<b>(then he just sings for love.)</b>

**El grillo...**



**Josquin des Pres  
1440 - 1521**

**Generally regarded as the greatest composer of the late Renaissance, Palestrina was the first musician in history whose style was intensively studied by musicians of later centuries. His art has been described as the ultimate polyphonic manifestation of Gregorian Chant.**

**His style was the model for later composers ranging from Johann Sebastian Bach to figures in the 20th century.**

**His polyphonic texture was very smoothly fashioned in a way that very nearly eliminated recognizable dissonances.**



**Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina  
Ca. 1523 - 1594**

**Ex. from “Et in terra pax hominibus” from the *Pope Marcellus Mass***



## **Luca Marenzio (1553? - 1599)**

**Composer of over 500 madrigals and many more secular songs.**

**He was renowned for the sensitive relationships between words and music found in his works.**

**His influence carried over to the later English Madrigal School (Weelkes, Morley, Wilbye).**



**Music making by amateur players and singers became a favorite past-time during the late Renaissance.**

**Note: this kind of music-making was one avenue to performance for women.**

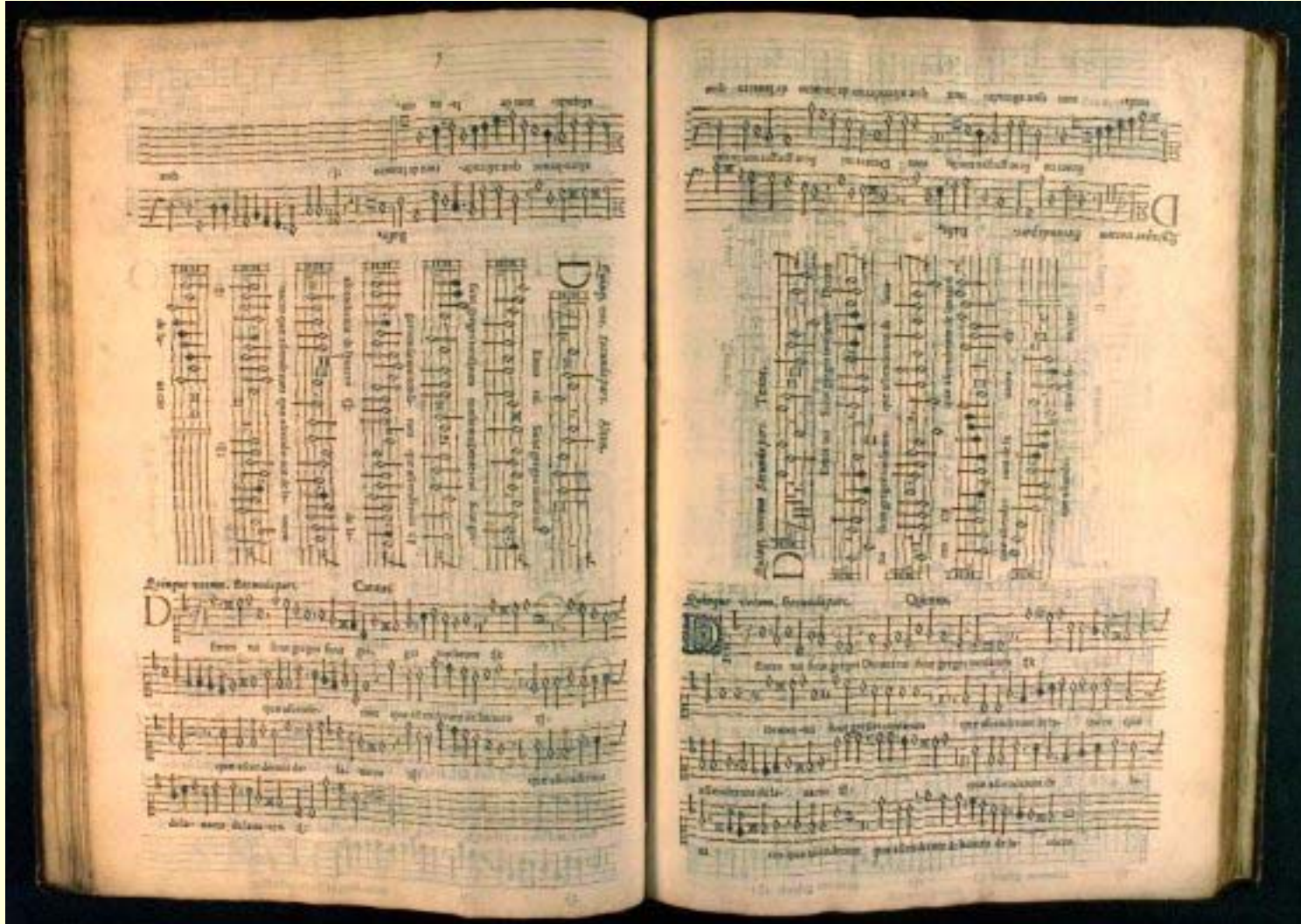
**The Renaissance was the first great era of amateur music-making. Part of one's social education involved the ability to play an instrument or compose a tune. Many famous individuals of the time, ranging from Martin Luther to Henry VIII, were accomplished musicians.**

**Any socially adept person would be able to sing a part at sight. One means of musical leisure was the singing of madrigals, which became a favorite after-dinner means of entertainment.**



“Table” format allowed singers from four sides of a table to read from the same book.

⇓ The bass part reads from this direction. ⇓



⇒  
Tenor  
sits  
here.  
⇒

⇐  
Alto  
sits  
here.  
⇐

⇑ Soprano I sits here. ⇑

⇑ Soprano II sits here. ⇑

**Madrigals ranged in difficulty and also in subject matter, from naive love songs to outrageously off-color subjects. Many included “text painting.”**

**A madrigal from ca. 1600,  
*Fair Phyllis* by John Farmer**

**Fair Phyllis I saw sitting all alone,  
Feeding her flock near to the mountain side. (repeat)  
The shepherds knew not whither she was gone,  
But after her lover Amyntas hied.  
Up and down he wandered, whilst she was missing;  
When he found her, oh, then they fell a-kissing.**

*Fair Phyllis* by John Farmer

Fair Phyllis I saw sitting all alone, (“**alone**” = **one voice**)

Feeding her flock near to the mountain side. (repeat)  
 (“**flock**” = **full ensemble**)

The shepherds knew not whither she was gone, (**imitative entries**)

But after her lover Amyntas hied. (**one part “chases” another**)

Up and down he wandered, (**scale pitches for “up and down”**)

whilst she was missing; (**2-parts “missing”**)

When he found her, oh, then they fell a-kissing.

(**change to lilting triple meter on “Oh, then they fell a-kissing”**)

(**Ties together end of last line with repeat of “up and down.”**)



## **Some instruments of the Renaissance.**

**Compositions written expressly for instruments first flourished in the 16th century, popularized by increased musical participation by amateurs.**



**Gamba**



**Viol**



**Rauschpfeife**



**Harpsichord**

**A few of the many Renaissance instruments which were indispensable for providing dance music.**



**Dulcimer**

**Crumhorn**



**Sackbut**



**Rebec**

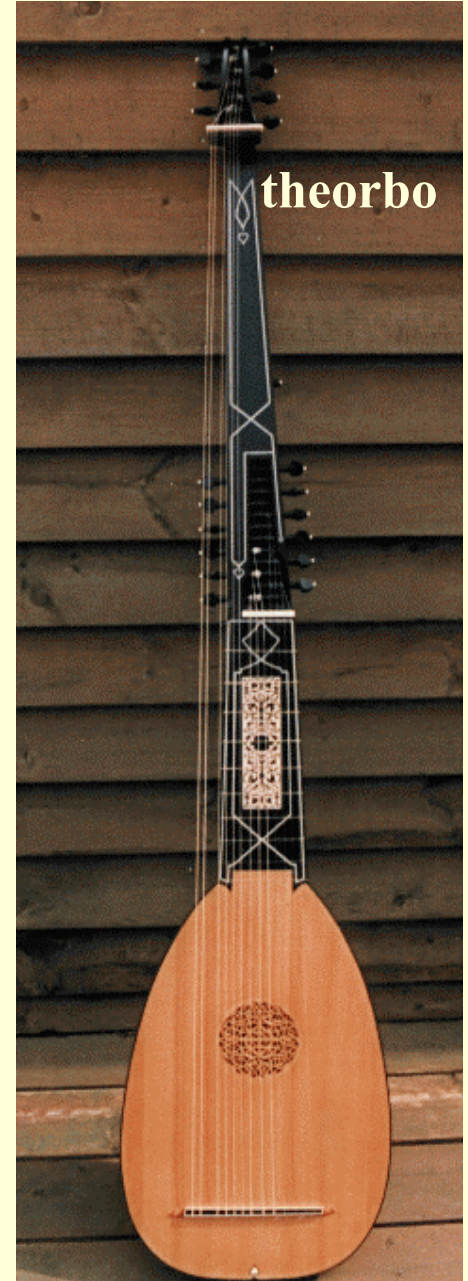




**lute**



**archlute**



**theorbo**

**vihuela (de mano):  
commonly used in  
Spain during the  
Renaissance.**



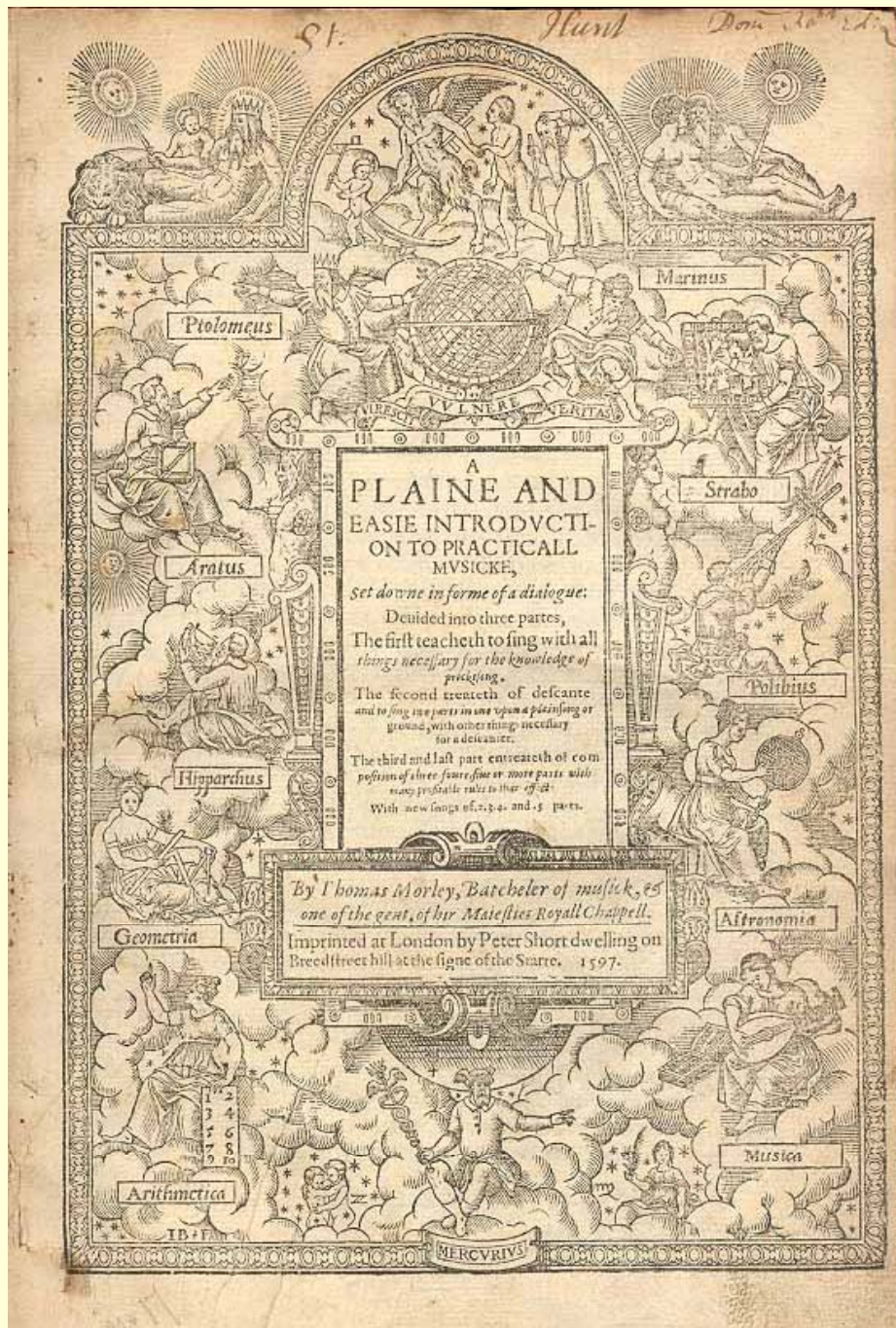
# Lute tablature for “Flow My Tears” (*Lachrimae*) by John Dowland



# Frontispiece: Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*.

One of the most popular “self-help” manuals for learning music, typical of the late Renaissance in England.

This manual found its way to the English colonies in America, and served as one of the earliest sources of music education in the Western hemisphere.



# **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

## **Early Renaissance 1400 - 1475**

**Principal composers are connected to secular courts, and less so to cathedrals;**

**Interest in composing music for the mass reaches its first highpoint, though composers are equally interested in producing chansons;**

**Composers provide multiple mass movements based on the same tune;**

**Imitation is systematically used for the first time in each movement;**

**The full triadic sonority increases in importance, though it is not yet dominant;**

**Composers from the North begin to gravitate toward Italy;**

**Major figures: Dunstable, Dufay, Binchois.**

# An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance

Early Renaissance 1400 - 1475

**Two leading composers of the Burgundian Era.**

**This representation of Dufay and Binchois is among the earliest likenesses of composers.**



# **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

## **High Renaissance 1475 - 1550**

**Music printing of polyphonic music from movable type is established.**

**Interest in matching music and word takes on greater importance;**

**The German chorale tradition is born in the Protestant Reformation;**

**Full triads become the norm, but are not yet universal;**

**First serious experiments with chromaticism are launched;**

**The first wave of collections of music printed for instruments appears;**

**The Italian madrigal reaches its first stage of development;**

**Major figures: Marenzio, Josquin, Isaac, Walter.**

# **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

**Late Renaissance 1550 - 1610**

**Control of dissonance in imitative counterpoint reaches its zenith;**

**Texture increases to six voice parts or more (Tallis writes motet in 40 voice parts);**

**Age of the Counter Reformation and high Anglican Church Music;**

**Full triads become the norm throughout musical texture;**

**Some experiments with chromaticism become extreme;**

**Collections of Italian madrigals become common, and inspire the English Madrigal School;**

**The accompanied madrigal begins a trend leading to the emergence of the Baroque era;**

**Major figures: Byrd, Palestrina, Victoria.**

## **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

### **Melody:**

**Renaissance music is overwhelmingly melodic by nature. In vocal music, subordinate parts tend to be more melodic than what we consider traditionally harmonic.**

**Melismatic lines in the early Renaissance (ex. Dufay “Gloria”) more closely resemble the undulations of Gregorian Chant. The influences of the secular chanson, however, eventually brought about syllabic melody with shorter, more evenly balanced melodic phrases.**

**Instrumental music was more likely to contain phrases of moderate length and repetition.**

## **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

### **Harmony:**

**Harmony in Renaissance music resulted from the tonal interaction of multiple lines in imitative polyphony.**

**The “modal” harmony of the Renaissance was the result of the interaction of melodic lines in imitation. Strict harmony was less important than the resolution and agreement of vocal lines.**

**Uses of chromaticism, for expressive purposes, took on increasingly greater importance in the 16th century. Dissonance in some experiments rivals music of the 20th century.**

## **An outline of stylistic developments during the Renaissance**

### **Rhythm:**

**Music of the Renaissance gradually assumed regularity of metrical patterns (already heard in dance music).**

**The isorhythmic structures of the Medieval period eventually disappeared altogether by the 16th century.**

**Dance music of the Renaissance often mixed meters in a very lively way, leading to the dance suite of the Baroque era.**

# **United States Academic Decathlon**

**GOOD LUCK TO ALL  
DECATHLETES !**

**A Guided Sprint Toward the  
Music of the Renaissance**