Music in the Renaissance

According to a theorist writing in 1475, no music worth hearing had been written before 1440 . . .

Josquin Desprez (des Prez)

- 1st “Great Composer” glorified by contemporary and following generations
- new approach to composition?

Jos Canh

duh Pray

The Old Way

Add a third active line that goes well with the cantus firmus and the other line
Add a nice active line that goes well with the cantus firmus
Start with a bit of chant – a cantus firmus

The Emerging Way?

Still very “linear” in conception, especially in its emphasis on IMITATIVE COUNTERPOINT, but more “vertical” in organization? (Careful control of dissonance; favoring triads.)
Compared to Ars Nova . . .

- more careful handling of dissonance
- more respect for the mode (less chromatic)
- "sweeter" sound world favors the warm or sweet sound of 3rds & 6ths (intervals) instead of the stark, empty sounds of perfect 4ths & 5ths

Josquin listening example

KEY INFO:
- motet -- *Ave Maria . . . Virgo Serena*, 1502
- Josquin (c. 1440-1521)
- Imitative counterpoint --
  - canon -- the same melody appears in different voices, overlapping due to staggered starting times

Extra info: listen for LINE and the careful handling of dissonance. The shift to triple time and then back to duple near the end of a work is characteristic of many Renaissance works. The opening melody is based on a chant fragment, but most of the work is freely invented anew.

*Ave Maria . . . Virgo Serena*

Each phrase imitated by following voices

Entry order: 1 2 3 4
time interval = 4 beats

Overlapping entry
Entry order: 1 2 3 4
time interval = 4 beats

Overlapping entry
Entry order: 1 2 3 4
time interval = 5 beats

Entry order: 2 1 3 4
time interval = 4 beats

slightly overlapping entry
High duet (1 & 2) answered by low duet (3 & 4) + 3rd voice (2)

brief break
All 4 voices start rhythmically together but gradually create complex interlocking texture

*TRIPLE METER*

lines generally together (a chordal, homorhythmic texture) but still independent -- there is a hidden canon

Text at this point?
Ave Maria . . . Virgo Serena

back to duple

Duet in 1 & 2 answered by duet in 3 & 4

That section is repeated note-for-note but with a different text

Free imitation (lines 1 & 3 exact)

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Homorhythmic to the final “Amen”

Quite a career

Served in cathedrals and chapels of a wealthy family, the pope, and French royalty

• Milan, Rome, Ferrara, Belgium & France

SIGNIFICANCE – this approach to music an international culture

Summary – Italian Renaissance

• POLITICS – Italian city-states; power from € (money)

• EARLY RENAISSANCE – Florence

• HIGH RENAISSANCE – Rome

• ART – Classical ideals revived; BIG 3

• IDEAS – Humanism returns

• MUSIC – Josquin & imitative counterpoint

DATEBOOK

1432 – Donatello’s nude David

c.1500 – Michelangelo’s David & Josquin’s Ave Maria . . . Virgo Serena (approximate date)

Raphael

Madonna dell Granduca, c.1505

Ock, Chigi Codex