

# THE

**THE RENAISSANCE PERIOD, A STYLISTIC PERIOD BETWEEN APPROXIMATELY 1400-1650, WAS A TIME OF BRILLIANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN LITERATURE, SCIENCE,**

**HUMANISM- THE EMPHASIS ON HUMAN VALUES AND CAPABILITIES- MOVED SOCIETY AWAY FROM THE PERVASIVE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH THAT HAD DOMINATED LIFE DURING MEDIEVAL TIMES.**



The humanists emphasized the importance of human values outside of religious beliefs. Renaissance humanists were often devout Christians but their promotion of secular or non-religious values often put them at odds with the church.

Human possibilities were exemplified by Leonardo Da Vinci, a universal genius as talented and creative in science and in the arts. This was the age of the artist Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and Tintoretto.



THE MONA LISA



CEILING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL



ARCHITECTURE

# HUMAN VOICE - AN EXPRESSIVE TOOL

During the Renaissance period, composers began to emphasize the expressiveness of the human voice as a solo instrument. Poetry and music were often combined for the purpose of expressing a variety of emotions, especially aspects of love.

## WORD PAINTING

With the Renaissance came a greater interest in the music's text and its meaning. In the sixteenth century composers discovered that music could portray human emotions, not just express religious texts (duh!) To explore this new phenomenon, composers tied music more closely together with poetry. In their **madrigals**, Renaissance composers expressed the meaning of the text musically by coloring words with new harmonies and chromaticism. They used the device of **word painting**, music that portrays the literal meaning of the words of the text.

Madrigal  
Composed by Thomas  
Weelkes (1601)

### As Vesta Was Descending

As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending  
she spied a maiden queen the same ascending,  
attended on by all the shepherd's swain,  
to whom Diana's darlings come running down  
again.

First two by two  
then three by three together  
leaving their goddess all alone, hasted thither,  
and mingling with the shepherds of her train  
with mirthful tunes her presence entertain.  
Then sang the shepherds and nymphs of Diana  
Long live fair Oriana!

### Questions to consider?

- What is this madrigal about?
- Describe the mood of the music and the text. What musical characteristics helped you make your decision?
- How did Weelkes "paint" the meaning of the text in his music?
- Is the word painting in the madrigal obvious or subtle?

## SECULAR VOCAL MUSIC FORMS

**Madrigal**- gives musical expression to feelings of longing or grief, particularly the pain of frustrated love. IN many ways the madrigals was the predecessor of opera.

**Ballett** - strong, rhythmic type of vocal music related to instrumental dance music. The txt is happy, rather than sad. It often urges the hearer to join in on the merriment.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- WHAT IS THE FORM?
- HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE MADRIGAL ABOVE?
- DOES MORLEY USE ANY WORD PAINTING?

"Now is the Month of Maying" a ballett by Thomas Morley

- A Now is the month of Maying  
When merry lads are playing, fa la la ...
- B Each with his bonny lass,  
Upon et greeny grass, fa la la...
- A The spring, clad all in gladness,  
doth laugh at Winter's sadness, fa la la...
- B And to the bagpipe's sound,  
The nymphs tread out their ground, fa la la...
- A Fie then! why sit we musing?  
Youth's sweet delight refusing? fa la la...
- B Say, dainty nymphs, and speak,  
Shall we play barley-break? fa la la ...

# The Rise of Instrumental Music

One of the most significant musical developments in the late Renaissance was the rise of instrumental music, as a separate type. Composers began to write music for specific instruments and instruments alone, functioning not as accompaniment for voices, but as a new and exciting resource of varied color.

One of the most important purposes for instrumental music was to accompany dancing. For this purpose, the meter must be strongly emphasized and the tempo must be quite regular. The dances popular in the late

Renaissance were not solo pieces, but stylized group dances, performed by members of the court. Dance manuals of the time still survive, so it is possible for us to reconstruct the actual movements and steps done to the music.

Shall we dance?

Listen to “**La Bouree**” from *Terpsichore* (1612), a collection of instrumental French dances, by the German composer Michael Praetorius and try to identify the basics.

## INSTRUMENT



SHAWMS



RECORDERS



### IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING

- Describe the tempo and metric organization of the music.
- Describe how contrast is achieved in the music.

### GROUP ACTIVITY

Work in small groups and use computer software to compose a Renaissance-style instrumental dance piece. Explore elements of *tempo, metric organization, and form.*