The Oxford History of

WESTERN MUSIC

College Edition

SECOND EDITION

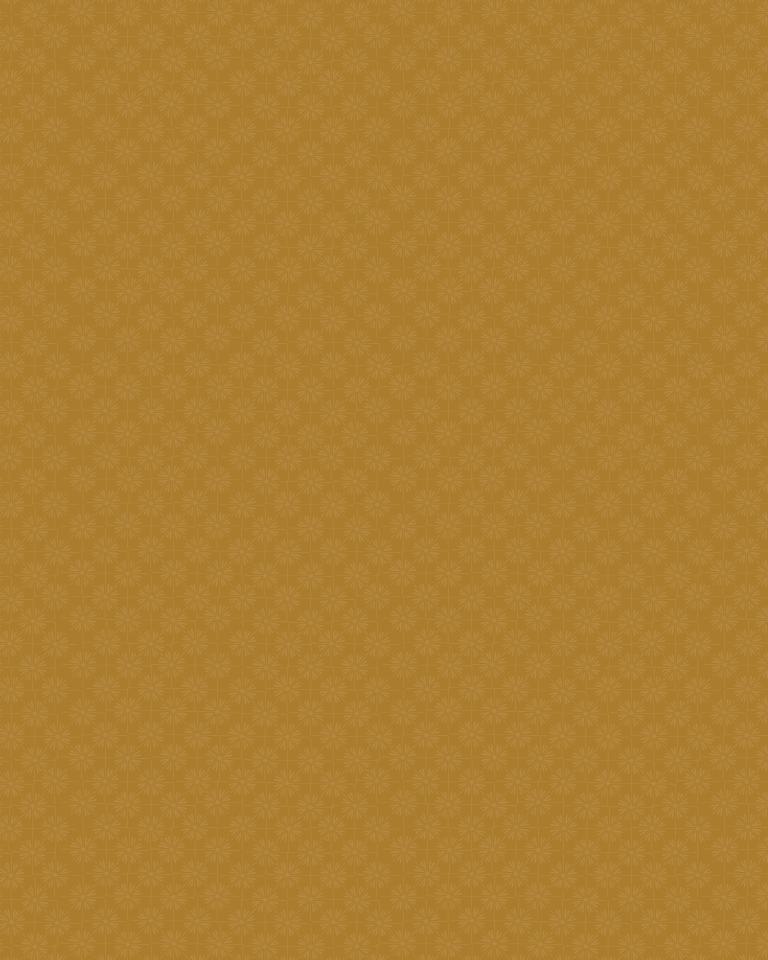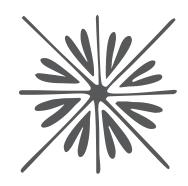## Richard Taruskin
Christopher H. Gibbs

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Introduction: Reading Music

by Christopher H. Gibbs

Perhaps because I initially came to classical music in high school as an engaged listener rather than fledgling performer or composer, I have always been fascinated by its history, by biographies of musicians, and by the ways music connects with other aspects of life and culture: with politics, the arts, and philosophy. As I majored in music history at college and then went on to graduate school, I was drawn to courses and writings that explored these areas and found myself frustrated that textbook surveys and standard histories so often seem to shy away from what I thought were important issues. The emphasis tended to be on compositions in splendid isolation, on dry formal descriptions and bloodless analysis. The biographical treatment of composers in textbooks was usually relegated to brief sketches in sidebars, and so were illuminating primary source readings such as letters, diaries, and reviews. The college literature classes I took were not spent parsing grammar and sentence structure, but something comparably dull seemed to be the point of too many discussions about music.

So it was with great excitement that, many years later, I anticipated the publication in 2005 of the *Oxford History of Western Music* by Richard Taruskin, a historian known for making connections among music, musicians, and the world. A year later I enthusiastically accepted an offer to transform his six-volume reference work into a textbook. I wanted to share such an outstanding resource with those new to the history of music. I embarked on the daunting task of drastically abridging, extensively reshaping, and judiciously augmenting Taruskin's work with practical considerations in mind: limitations on space, concrete pedagogical aims, and the desire to tell a story. The first edition of this book was the result, and I hope this revision proves even more inviting.

I am sometimes asked by students thinking of taking a course with me whether they need to be able to "read music." It is a common enough question for nonmusic majors to ask but, on reflection, a rather strange one. Students wanting to take art history or literature classes don't ask the professor if they have to be able to draw or write fiction; everyone assumes they can see and read. But with music, the ability to read the notes, to be musically literate, helps shape one's understanding and gives essential access to compositions that are neither recorded nor performed. It facilitates technical analysis of a descriptive nature. And yet I love having interested students with limited or no musical training in my classes,

because I find they often have insights that more advanced music students preoccupied by theoretical issues may miss.

The whole question of reading music is particularly relevant for this book because the study of Western music differs fundamentally from that of the other arts with respect to what has been transmitted from the distant past. We can engage directly with literary and visual masterpieces dating back thousands of years, see sculptures, walk in and around historic buildings, read classic poems, and experience great dramas. Music does not survive in any comparable manner, not because it did not exist in antiquity but rather because there was no means for preserving it—no adequate notation and, of course, no technological means for audio recording. Rudimentary musical notation only emerged about a thousand years ago in a way that allowed the gradual preservation and spread of a large quantity of music.

While this reality places certain limits on the study of the Western musical tradition, it also opens up an opportunity: the possibility of tracing music as it has been written down from its earliest manifestations to the present day. The sheer abundance and diversity of notated music in the West over the centuries is deserving of critical study—one that does not take literacy for granted, or simply celebrate it as a special Western achievement, but rather considers the consequences. Indeed, Taruskin claims that the literate musical tradition is coherent at least insofar as it has a shape. Its beginnings are known and explicable, as we'll see in Chapter 1, and its end is now foreseeable, and also explicable, as the final chapters explore. The music discussed in the opening chapters is primarily religious, vocal, sung in Latin, and related to the Roman Catholic Church, because that was what was most often written down and therefore survives in the greatest quantity. The music examined in the final chapters is dominated by the interplay of notated classical pieces and unnotated ones, particularly jazz and rock.

No single book can cover all the different kinds of music that have been made in Europe and the Americas over the past one thousand years. Our concern is with what is usually called "art music," "concert music," or "classical music" (for convenience, I use the last term, lowercase and without quotes, throughout the book). The treatment of jazz, rock, and other popular twentieth-century musical styles is thus primarily in relation to the interplay and influence—sometimes the enormous influence—these styles have had on the classical tradition. Recent decades have seen an explosion in the serious study of jazz, rock, and world music, which fortunately has led to textbooks and courses specifically dedicated to them that can do the topics the justice they deserve.

An important consequence of the focus here on literate music is that the history narrated is that of elite genres: Masses, concertos, operas, symphonies, and many other kinds of pieces. Until recently, and in some ways even up to the present day, literacy has been the privilege—the closely guarded possession—of social elites: ecclesiastical, political, military, hereditary, meritocratic, professional, economic, educational, academic, and fashionable. What else, after all, makes "high art" high? One of the threads woven throughout this book is the tension between music intended for a select few and that meant for a broader audience.

Over the centuries there has been a progressive broadening of access to literacy together with various cultural benefits (the history, as it is sometimes called, of the democratization of taste). This increased access to culture for a larger group

of people was met at every turn with a counterforce seeking to redefine elite status ever upward. The cultural goods that we all enjoy—music, art, literature, movies, sporting events, and so forth—prove crucial to the ways in which we define ourselves. Debates about taste occur across class lines and often pit classical styles against popular ones. This tension is commonly viewed as being relatively recent, but in fact has a much longer and more diverse history in all of the arts. The competing ways in which people view music are central to the narrative in this book.

We will encounter a large cast of characters who have played many sorts of roles in musical life over the past thousand years. Most histories of Western music cover the relevant repertoire of musical compositions, but make little effort to explain why and how things happened as they did, or to identify who made them happen in the first place. Musical compositions, however, did not emerge out of thin air and then miraculously influence later pieces. *People* wrote these works; other people patronized, performed, presented, published, criticized, and heard them.

Inevitably composers receive the greatest attention. Relatively little is known about the lives of most musicians discussed in the first third of this book—or even about very famous composers as late as George Frideric Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach in the early eighteenth century. On the other hand, with the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in an era of renewed individualism, a profound and much better documented relationship is apparent between composers' lived experiences and the music they created. That Mozart emerges as the first real personality in our story is not just because of the popularity of *Amadeus*, a play from the late 1970s turned into an award-winning movie. As a purely practical matter, a multitude of Mozart's intimate letters survive, many of them written to his ambitious, high-maintenance father, that make for wonderful reading. For Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, and a host of other prominent nineteenth-century composers, we have access to private lives that seem (perhaps a bit too conveniently) to connect in fascinating ways with their works.

In writing a survey of Western music, an author faces hard choices of providing depth versus covering a breadth of material. We could have profiled many more composers and compositions, debates, ideas, genres, and geographical centers of activity, so much worthy of attention. We opted instead for a narrative approach, telling stories about different times, people, places, and pieces, all of which takes space to unfold in continuous prose uncluttered by distracting sidebar discussions. But this approach requires some caution because stories themselves have histories. Exploring who tells the tales in history and how they tell them—what is presented, omitted, valued, and discounted—is the concern of *historiography*, the study of the nature of history. All historians have particular (even if not always conscious) interests, concerns, and methods that are never completely objective or comprehensive. You will find spread throughout the book some reflections on important historical and methodological issues. These "time outs" are crucial because they encourage reflection on the nature of history itself, on history as a construct. As in every class I teach, I hope that students not only develop a body of cumulative knowledge—of pieces, places, and names—but also cultivate ways of historical and critical thinking. Ideally (and idealistically), I hope that some of this kind of thinking can extend beyond the arts and into life more generally. Historical, cultural, and critical awareness are ever more urgent to maintain a thriving democracy.

One of the great challenges of the contextual study of music is trying to develop an historical imagination. I realize it is not possible to listen with the ears of the past, but it is still worth thinking about the conditions that surrounded the creation of the music we listen to, play, study, and love. I wonder what it must have been like to hear a Mass by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina during the mid-sixteenth century. How did people experience such music in a particular time and space? I try to imagine the sense of awe at entering the Sistine Chapel in Rome, of being in a place that exalted magnificent art and that smelled of incense, a feast for the senses. Or I think about what the listening experience might have been like in the first decades of the nineteenth century, when Beethoven challenged the expectations of audiences with symphonies that were shockingly longer, louder, and more technically difficult than any symphony ever heard before. Indeed, except for sounds such as thunder claps and cannon fire, people in a pre-electronic age rarely heard anything so loud, so intense, as the famous Fifth Symphony.

The discussion of individual compositions in this book therefore goes beyond technical analysis and so-called style criticism, taking into account connections with society, politics, and other art forms, considering how pieces were created as well as their reception, and ultimately thinking about their meanings. It is easier (and safer) to look at music in abstract and isolated ways, to talk just about the notes. But a principal reason music endures is because meaning can be ascribed to it; this is why so many of us are drawn so powerfully to this particular art form. Music historians must try to go beyond their own personal reactions and consider a range of responses over time. The trick is to shift the question from "What does it mean?" to "What has it meant?"

Value judgments—what stacks up as great music over time—also have an honorable place in historical narratives, but they should not merely be the historian's judgment. Musicians decide what to emulate, perform, and promote, and which music ultimately stands the best chance of enduring. No patron or press agent can decree a classic. Beethoven's greatness is "only" an opinion, one widely held by a general public as well as by countless musicians. Beethoven's perceived greatness emerged during the nineteenth century and continues today. This is what constitutes his commanding authority, which certainly is a historical fact. Without taking Beethoven's stature and influence into account, one cannot understand what went on in the world of classical music over the last two hundred years. Whether the historian agrees or not with the past critical verdicts on Beethoven has no bearing on the obligation to report them.

As stories tend to do, the narrative in this book unfolds chronologically. This allows us to discuss the trajectories of musicians' lives as well as the relationships and influences among composers and compositions. As Western music developed over the centuries and became ever more widely disseminated, there were ever more interconnections among works. Composers often modeled pieces on earlier ones; there were frequent contests to outdo the past, all of which helped to establish and maintain dynasties of prestige. We will encounter a whole line of celebrated composers who passed the torch to younger ones by bestowing on them some memorable pronouncement of future glory. Even though there is good reason to be skeptical about the authenticity of many of these benedictions, such soundbites nonetheless played an important role in the construction of a musical mainstream, what is known as a *canon*, which we will have many opportunities to explore and question.

Some compositions are treated at considerable length not only because they were so famous but also because they became exemplary and representative. By getting to know well works like Josquin des Prez's motet *Ave Maria* (ca. 1485), Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1856–59), and Igor Stravinsky's Octet (1923) we are better able to understand subsequent musical developments. These pieces entered a canon of select masterpieces and eventually a sort of aural museum of musical works that lent them ever greater stature and influence.

Specific works (or parts of them) of historical importance were selected for the anthologies and recordings accompanying this textbook in order for them to be easily available to students. I have not allowed space and other limitations, however, to restrict too much the scope of discussions in this book. Technology today allows easy access to hear an enormous quantity of music as well as to view scores. In the chapter on Beethoven, for example, the primary focus with regard to symphonies concerns the Third, Fifth, and Ninth, but all nine are mentioned and discussion of some distinctive features should encourage students to delve into this repertory more on their own. Anyone today interested in hearing the unusual opening of the First Symphony or the witty finale of the Second can do so with just a few clicks on a computer. A few more clicks and the scores can be consulted. I encourage you to experiment and explore.

While at times I expanded the range of references from Taruskin's lengthy history, I have retained the general proportions of his volumes. The coverage of the so-called historical style periods—the all-too-handy Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Modern eras—is unequal in length, with an emphasis on the music of the past two hundred years. To a certain extent this reflects the quantity of the surviving evidence, the duration of the compositions themselves, and the place this repertory continues to hold in musical life today.

The ability to "read music" long separated musicians in classical genres from those who just listened or played "by ear," as is the case with many musicians who specialize in popular music. A common lament these days is that classical music is dying—it is an issue explored in the last chapter—but if this book shows anything it is that music is always changing and adapting. Classical music no longer plays the role it did for elite audiences in Beethoven's time two hundred years ago, yet countless more people are exposed to it today than ever were in his day, if only because of technology. The recent and astounding embrace of Western classical music in Asia is yet another indication that, far from dying, the tradition is in certain ways expanding. The history of this musical tradition—from its birth as a literate art form in the cavernous spaces of Medieval monasteries and cathedrals to its current expansion across the Internet to electronic devices throughout the world—is a story well worth telling.

Acknowledgments

All thanks must commence with Richard Taruskin for the opportunity of transforming his magisterial six-volume *Oxford History of Western Music* into a textbook and for giving me a free hand in doing so. In the original reference work he acknowledged the many people who helped in its preparation, and it is my pleasure to thank the many others who assisted in creating this College Edition and now in a revision.

Part I

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL MUSIC
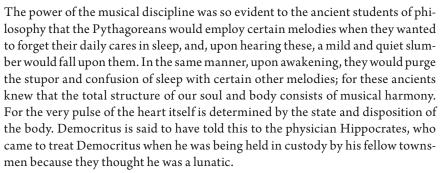
Overview

THIS PART OF THE TEXT focuses on the first music for which we have a written record, or the Medieval era. We investigate what is known about earlier music, especially from the ancient Greeks and Romans, and how it influenced the beginnings of Western music, particularly Gregorian chant. We show how over the next centuries both secular and sacred music developed, each influencing the other. Medieval music reached its greatest heights in the *Ars Nova* during the fourteenth century.

Reading

IN THIS EXTRACT, the Medieval philosopher Boethius discusses the influence of music on human life. His writings would greatly influence the direction that sacred music took during this time.

The power of the musical discipline was so evident to the ancient students of philosophy that the Pythagoreans would employ certain melodies when they wanted to forget their daily cares in sleep, and, upon hearing these, a mild and quiet slumber would fall upon them. In the same manner, upon awakening, they would purge the stupor and confusion of sleep with certain other melodies; for these ancients knew that the total structure of our soul and body consists of musical harmony. For the very pulse of the heart itself is determined by the state and disposition of the body. Democritus is said to have told this to the physician Hippocrates, who came to treat Democritus when he was being held in custody by his fellow townsmen because they thought he was a lunatic.

But why have I said all this? Because there can be no doubt that the unity of our body and soul seems to be somehow determined by the same proportions that join together and unite the harmonious inflections of music, as our subsequent discussion will demonstrate. Hence it happens that sweet melodies even delight infants, whereas a harsh and rough sound will interrupt their pleasure. Indeed this reaction to various types of music is experienced by both sexes, and by people of all ages; for although they may differ in their actions, they are nevertheless united as one in the pleasure of music.

Why is it that those mourning in tears express their lamentation through music? This is especially the case with women, who, as it were, make the cause of their weeping sweet through a song. The ancients even had the custom of letting a tibia lead funeral processions, as these lines of Statius testify: "The tibia, whose practice it is to lead forth the youthful dead, utters its mournful note from a curving horn."

And someone who cannot sing particularly well will nevertheless sing to himself, not because it is pleasant for him to hear what he sings but because it is a delight to express certain inward pleasures which originate in the soul, regardless of the manner in which they are expressed. Is it not clearly evident that the morale of soldiers is built up by the music of trumpets? If it is true that fury and wrath can be brought forth out of a peaceful state of mind, then there is no doubt that a more temperate mode can calm the raging and excessive desire of a perturbed mind. How does it happen that when someone hears a pleasant song with his ears and mind, also his body involuntarily responds with some motion similar to that of the song? And how does it happen that this same person can enjoy some melody he has already heard merely by recalling it in his memory? Thus from all these examples it appears to be beyond doubt that music is so naturally a part of us that we cannot be without it, even if we so wished.

For this reason the power of the mind ought to be directed toward fully understanding by knowledge what is inherent in us through nature. Thus just as erudite scholars are not satisfied by merely seeing colors and forms without also investigating their properties, so musicians should not be satisfied by merely finding pleasure in music without knowing by what musical proportions these sounds are put together.

1

Music from Antiquity to Gregorian Chant: ca. 1200 BCE to ca. 1200 CE

Since the dawn of humanity, music has been an integral part of life. The music of ancient times is described in a wide range of sources, from the Bible to writings of Greek philosophers. Because there was no way of writing music down that can be understood today, we do not know how it actually sounded. The history of notated music in the West begins somewhat more than a thousand years ago with chants written for services of the early Roman (or Western) Catholic Church. It became known as Gregorian chant because of a legend that Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) received unaccompanied melodies through the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit. Gregorian chant was sung in the Mass, reenacting the Last Supper of Jesus, and in a series of eight daily prayer services called the Offices. This chapter traces how these unaccompanied monophonic chants were written down using signs known as neumes, how those chants were used and classified, and what distinguished them musically.

———

OUR STORY BEGINS, as it must, in the middle of things. The advent of music notation coincided with no specific event. Still less did it mark the origin of music or of any particular musical repertory. Yet sometime over a thousand years ago music stopped being an almost exclusively oral tradition and became a partly literate one. The history of written music in the West begins with the music for the services of the Roman Catholic Church. What had previously been transmitted from generation to generation through singing and playing came to

3

Figure 1-1 Five-finger flute carved from bird bone at least 35,000 years ago and unearthed in a cave in Germany in 2009. *Nicholas Conard*

be partially written down, preserved, and disseminated. This was an enormously important change. The beginning of music writing gives us access through actual documents to the music of the past and suddenly raises the curtain on activities that had been going on for many centuries. No matter exactly when, where, and how it happened, from this point we can become witnesses, able to trace the evolution of music over the past millennium through notated sources.

Music had, of course, already existed for many millennia. The problem is that we know very little about what it actually sounded like. Unlike ancient works of visual art and literature, much of which survived and had enormous influence on the art that followed it, music works existed only during their performance, and then disappeared unless passed on through oral tradition. What knowledge we have about preliterate music, from tens of thousands of years ago, from biblical times, from ancient Greece, and then from the first millennium of the Common Era, can be gleaned from various kinds of visual, descriptive, and physical evidence, including some very early instruments. In 2009, for example, archaeologists in Germany discovered a five-finger flute made of bone from the Stone Age, at least 35,000 years ago (Fig. 1-1).

Music in the Bible and Ancient Greece

There are many surviving illustrations of ancient music making found in prehistoric cave paintings, in Egyptian murals, on Greek pottery, and elsewhere that show the instruments that were used during those periods, if not of the specific music that was produced. Written descriptions are also abundant. The Bible has some particularly vivid ones. Psalm 150, the climax of the **Psalter** (Book of Psalms), gives an account of how prayers were accompanied by music in Judaism at that time. It reads, in part:

> Praise him with fanfares on the trumpet,
>   praise him with psaltery and harp;
> praise him with tambourines and choir,
>   praise him with strings and organs;
> praise him with the clash of cymbals,
>   praise him with triumphant cymbals;
> let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

While we can read of the chanting of **psalms** and other sacred texts in the synagogue, no Jewish music was written down exactly until much more modern times.

While some early kinds of musical notation survive to a very limited degree from ancient cultures, the principal challenge has been figuring out how to decode them. In the 1970s scholars managed to transcribe the notation on a cuneiform tablet dating from around 1200 BCE that had been unearthed on the site of the ancient Babylonian city of Ugarit, near Ras-Shamra in modern Syria.[1] The tablet contained a **hymn** to the goddess Nikkal, the wife of the moon god Kushuh (Ex. 1-1). It consists of intervals recognized as consonant in most Western music today.

EXAMPLE 1-1   First phrase of Hurrian hymn from ancient Ugarit, transcribed by Anne Draffkorn Kilmer

The ancient Greeks later developed a pitch-specific musical notation. A handful of melodies survive, at least partially, in decipherable sources. The earliest are two Delphic hymns, pieces praising the god Apollo, from around 130 BCE. Most of what remains are relatively late examples, set down long after the era of the great philosophers and playwrights. One complete "composition" is the *Epitaph of Seikilos* (Ex. 1-2), which probably dates from the first century of the Common Era. It appears on a tombstone that was discovered in the late nineteenth century during the construction of a railroad in what is modern Turkey. The brief piece shows that to the Greeks music was important in remembering the dead. The opening lines engraved on the memorial stone state its purpose: "I am a tombstone, an image. Seikilos placed me here as an everlasting sign of deathless remembrance." This suggests that Seikilos (whoever he was) may have written the following short epitaph (Greek for "over a tomb," that is, a short memorial poem) and perhaps the melody as well:

> As long as you live, shine
> Grieve you not at all
> Life is of brief duration
> Time demands its end.

Ancient Greek music ◦

Anth I, 1

EXAMPLE 1-2   The Epitaph of Seikilos

The Greeks used letters and symbols to indicate pitch and rhythm. Example 1-2 shows the original notation over a modern transcription.[2] Although this is just a vocal melody, contemporaneous illustrations suggest that sung texts were often accompanied by various kinds of instruments, including the cithara or lyre, plucked string instruments, and the aulos, a wind instrument.

Music played an important role in ancient Greece. It was integral to theater, in which the chorus commented on the action of the drama and in which dance was one of the elements of the total spectacle. Greek philosophers wrote at considerable length about music, specifically about its ethical qualities and what its proper place should be in society. In a famous passage from Plato's *Republic* (written around 360 BCE), his teacher Socrates advocated banning most of the musical scales "because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it."[3] Understandably, the power of music, often associated with bodily and sensual pleasures, has always unsettled those who would seek to control human emotions for religious, political, or cultural reasons. At the same time, music has long been praised for its healing properties, spiritual effects, and ability to express emotions. Debates about the dangers and benefits of music continue to this day.

Figure 1-2 Woodcut by Franchinus Gaffurius, 1492, showing Pythagoras exploring musical relationships. *New York Public Library Digital Images*

Ancient Greek Theories of Music

The ancient Greeks also wrote about music theory, which means that something is known concerning their tuning systems. According to Greek legend, the sixth-century BCE philosopher Pythagoras one day heard beautiful sounds coming unexpectedly out of a blacksmith's shop. Weighing the four anvils the smiths were striking, he discovered the harmonic ratios governing the perfect ("Pythagorean") consonances (Fig. 1-2). For many centuries to come, when musicians thought theoretically about music, they did so in terms of the arts of measurement. What was measurable was what was studied: the pitch ratios we call *intervals* and the durational ratios we call *rhythms*, which were eventually organized into meters (another reference to measuring). One of the most influential treatises was *De musica* (About Music) by St. Augustine (354–430), the greatest of the Fathers of the Christian Church. Completed in 391 CE, the book contains a famous definition of music as "the art of measuring well." It ends with a meditation on the theological significance of harmonious proportions and the way in which they reflect the essential nature of the universe.

The most-studied treatise was *De institutione musica* (On the Organization of Music), by the Roman statesman and educational reformer

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. 480 to ca. 524). It consisted largely of translations from earlier Greek-influenced writers who had lived in the second century CE in Arabia and Egypt. Although by Boethius's time the actual music practiced by the ancient Greeks was lost, his text became the source of Medieval scholars' knowledge of Greek music theory. Accordingly, his treatise concerns not practical music but abstract *musica*, perhaps best translated in this context as "harmony." Boethius inherited two transcendent ideas from the Greeks: that **musica** mirrored the essential harmony of the cosmos and that it therefore had a decisive influence on human health and behavior. This was known as the doctrine of *ethos*, from which the word "ethics" is derived. Audible music (*musica instrumentalis*, "music such as instruments produce") is thus only a gross metaphor for two higher levels. At the top was the harmony of the cosmos (*musica mundana*), and in the intermediate position was the harmony of the human constitution (*musica humana*).

Boethius's theory of music

This scheme can be quite effectively seen in a famous manuscript illumination of the mid-thirteenth century, fully seven hundred years after Boethius (Fig. 1-3). In each of the three panels of this illumination, the personification of *musica* points to a different level of her manifestation.

In the top panel Musica points to a representation of the universe, with its four elements: earth, air, fire (the sun), and water. The sun and moon further represent the periodic movements of the heavens, an aspect of measurable "harmony."

In the middle panel she points to four men representing the four "humors," or basic personality types—that is, the four types of "human harmony": The "choleric" temperament was ruled by bile; the "sanguine" by blood; the "phlegmatic" by phlegm; and the "melancholic" by black bile. The four humors mirror the four elements; thus, human harmony is a function of the celestial.

In the bottom panel we find *musica instrumentalis*, the music that we actually hear, represented by a fiddle player.

Figure 1-3 Frontispiece of mid-thirteenth-century manuscript representing the musical cosmology described by Boethius in *De institutione musica. Lebrecht Music and Art Photo Library*

Difficulties in Understanding Early Notation

Attempts to decipher some of the notation of antiquity reveal a problem that we will encounter as well in the earliest notated music of the Christian Church. Like the Greek system, it employed what is now often called the "**diatonic** pitch set," the field of pitches and pitch relationships reducible to a specific arrangement of tones and semitones ("whole steps" and "half steps"), of which the major and minor scales are most familiar today. The earliest Christian notation indicated only the contour of melodies, but gradually a system developed that allows us, for the most part, to decipher the exact pitches and thus the specific melody. This early notation, however, conveys little or nothing about meter and rhythm. Notation in the Christian world that indicates measured rhythm emerged in the late twelfth century. For much music of the distant past we know almost nothing about crucial elements that make a particular piece of music distinctive for us today: meter and rhythm, harmony, tempo, dynamics, instrumentation, and so forth. Part of the story we will tell in this book concerns the continuing refinement of notation in an attempt by composers to retain—or assert—ever-greater control over performance. An interesting consequence is that notation itself came to influence what was composed, rather than being only a means of committing compositions to paper.

Most of the music that survives from the Middle Ages is sacred, that is, connected to religion, principally to the Western Christian Church, rather than secular, the music of everyday nonreligious life. The earliest music typically comes down to us as monophonic chant, single unaccompanied lines of pure melody, rather than as polyphonic (multivoiced) pieces or pieces played on instruments. Most of the music was sung in Latin rather than in everyday (vernacular) languages. From these facts it would be easy to draw several false conclusions: in the West there was sacred music before there was secular music; monophonic before there was polyphonic; vocal before there was instrumental. In fact, the chant connected to the Catholic Church was only one of many musical repertories that coexisted in Europe a thousand years ago. Nonetheless, it is the earliest body of music that, thanks to notation, we can study in detail.

Music of the Early Christian Church

In order to appreciate the context of this first great surviving Western repertory of music, what is now commonly called **Gregorian chant**, we need to discuss the organization of religious life, how the days and years and services of the Church worked. We also need to use some historical imagination so as to appreciate how music functioned within religious life. It was meant not to be "performed" for pleasure or entertainment, but to be enacted as one element of a life devoted to God.

The early methods of notation employed in the few examples that we've studied to this point fell out of use and in any case were deciphered only in modern times. The first surviving artifact of actual Christian service music is a fragment of a Greek hymn to the Holy Trinity, notated on a papyrus strip during the fourth century CE. It is the earliest surviving representative, by six or seven centuries, of the Greek-texted music of the Orthodox Church of the Eastern Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire. (Orthodox in Greek means "correctly believing.") Unlike the music of the Western Roman Church, which was based

on the traditional prose-poetry of the Psalter, the Eastern Orthodox Church emphasized hymns, newly composed "songs with praise of God" in metrical verse, a repertory known as Byzantine chant. In addition to this chant repertoire in the East, different ones were associated with other locations: Coptic chant in Egypt; Ambrosian in Milan; Mozarabic in Spain; and Gallican in northern Europe. There is a considerable range in style and in the quantity of surviving music for each of these repertories, and much of it was notated only centuries later. Our focus will be on the music of the Roman Church, which has the most extensive written legacy.

Christianity was initially a persecuted religion that won broader acceptance only after the Roman Emperor Constantine converted to it in 312 CE. During the centuries that followed, Rome emerged as the most powerful seat of the Christian Church, although there were other important (and sometimes competing) centers as well as many smaller and simpler communities, known as monasteries. In 753, Pope Stephen II headed north from Rome, crossed the Alps, and visited the king of the Franks, Pepin III, to gain support for his struggles against the Lombards, a Germanic tribe. Two decades later, Pepin's son and successor, Charles I, known as Charlemagne (Charles the Great, ca. 742–814), intervened to help the pope, as he would yet again in 800, when he entered Rome in triumph. On Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as secular ruler of the Western Roman Empire (with Leo himself maintaining his role as spiritual ruler). This date is traditionally said to be the beginning of the "Holy Roman Empire," which lasted—at least in name—for more than a thousand years. The alliance of imperial and papal authority led to a short period of peaceful stability during which there was a resurgence of learning and creativity known as the Carolingian Renaissance. (Carolingian is a Latinized reference to the noble family that traced its lineage back to Frankish ruler Charles Martel.)

History of the early Christian Church ◦

The exporting of the Roman chant to the Frankish lands in the north was one of the facets of that cultural rebirth (Fig. 1-4). A central figure in the process was an English scholar, Alcuin of York (ca. 735–804), who served as Charlemagne's tutor and later advised him in matters of state. He was a great proponent of literacy and instituted one of the earliest educational systems in Europe. The curriculum for higher education was based on the seven "liberal arts" of the ancients: the three arts of language (grammar, logic, and rhetoric), known as the *trivium*; and the four arts of measurement (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), known as the *quadrivium*. Within the quadrivium, music was conceived in entirely theoretical terms as measurement of harmonic ratios (tunings and intervals) and of rhythmic quantities (poetic meters). This made it possible to study music even in the absence of any form of practical musical notation. Music continued to be studied for centuries in a generalized way, quite unrelated to actual music making.

Frankish changes to the Roman chant ◦

The principal reason the Roman chant needed to be imported was that the Carolingians wanted to centralize authority. The geographical sweep of the Catholic territories was vast, incorporating peoples speaking many languages and including a large assortment of local legal systems and religious practices. With the establishment of the Roman pope as spiritual patron of the Carolingian Empire, the unification of the whole broad realm of religious services according to the Roman practices became necessary. This meant suppressing the so-called Gallican rite in the north (as well as the Ambrosian and Mozarabic, among others) and replacing them with Roman service texts and tunes.

Figure 1-4 Europe in the eighth century, shortly before the earliest notations of Christian chant.

The words of the Roman **liturgy**—the prescribed order for the religious service—could be imported easily enough in books; but without a way to write down the melodies, the only means of conveying the music was to import singers from Rome who could teach their chant to their Frankish counterparts. The fact that eighth-century Roman liturgical song—*cantus* in Latin, from which we get the word "chant"—was singled out for preservation in written form during the Carolingian Renaissance was therefore not because it came first or because it had some uniquely special musical quality. Rather, notation was used by the powers in Rome to spread its liturgy and music elsewhere.

The Legend of Pope Gregory I

From around the time of the advent of chant into written history, it was widely asserted that the entire musical legacy of the Roman Church was the inspired creation of a single man, the sainted Pope Gregory I, who served as pope from 590 until his death in 604. Yet in Gregory's time there was no way to notate melodies. His contemporary, St. Isidore, Bishop of Seville (ca. 560–636), put it this way: "Unless sounds are held in the memory by man they perish, because they cannot be written down."[4]

By the ninth century the legend was firmly established that Pope Gregory was the composer of what has ever since been known as Gregorian chant. The

○ *Gregorian chant*

legend was spread not only through literary accounts but also in visual tradition (see Fig. 1-5). As the story goes, the pope, while dictating to a scribe his commentary on parts of the Bible, often paused for a long time. Gregory's silences puzzled the scribe, who was separated from him by a screen. Peeping through, he saw the dove of the Holy Spirit hovering around the head of Pope Gregory, who resumed his dictation only when the dove moved away. As a divine creation, mediated through an inspired, canonized human vessel, the Roman chant would have the prestige it needed to triumph eventually over all local opposition. Yet no one person, neither Gregory nor any of his contemporaries, actually composed the "Gregorian" chants. It was a huge collective enterprise that seems to have achieved standardization in Rome by the end of the eighth century.

But what were its origins? Until very recently it was assumed that the origins of Christian liturgical music went back, like the rest of Christian practice and belief, to the "sacred bridge" connecting the Christian religion with Judaism. This would seem a natural connection between Christ, himself a Jew, and the early rise of Christianity. Moreover, the words of Gregorian chants were overwhelmingly psalm verses, and the recitation of psalms, along with other scriptural readings, is to this day a common element of Jewish and Christian worship. But it does not seem now that the Jewish rites were immediately transferred to Christian worship services; that happened to

some extent later and in different circumstances. The origins of Christian psalmody (the singing of psalms) lie not in the very public worship of the Jewish temple but, rather, in the secluded services of early Christian ascetics worshiping in monasteries.

Christian monasticism arose in the fourth century, partly in reaction to the Church's worldly success following its establishment as the official religion of the late Roman Empire (Fig. 1-6). An increasing number of Christian enthusiasts reacted against what they considered the oppressive power structure of the Church and advocated retreat into a simple, solitary life more akin, in their view, to the original teachings of Christ. Their communities had various profiles, although most centered around an austere life devoted to prayer and meditation or to ascetic communal living devoted to pious fellowship and productive work. Separate communities were established for women, which were later called convents or nunneries.

The most famous monastery was founded in 529 at Monte Cassino, in central Italy, by St. Benedict of Nursia (480–547). He wrote an influential set of rules that governed daily life in his monastery and that became widely adopted elsewhere as the "Rule of Saint Benedict." The practices of chanting Psalms that gradually developed into Gregorian chant arose in this communal context. An important aspect of the monastic regimen was staying up at night, a discipline known as the vigil. To help the monks keep awake and to assist their meditations, they would recite constantly, chiefly from the Bible and particularly psalms, in a kind of heightened speech (**cantillation**). Reciting the complete 150 psalms in a ceaseless cycle, somewhat in the manner of a mantra, distracted the mind from physical appetites and was thought to lead to higher levels of consciousness.

Musical metaphors of community and discipline were symbolized by unaccompanied singing in unison. This remained the Gregorian ideal, although the community of worshipers was replaced in the more public services by specially trained choirs. **Monophony** was thus a choice, not a necessity. While it may seem to reflect the primitive origins of chant, early Christian monophony in fact represents the purposeful rejection of earlier, more elaborate practices, both Judaic and pagan.
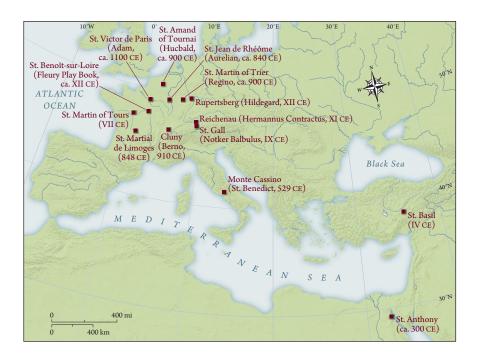
Figure 1-5 Dove of the Holy Spirit hovering at the head of Pope Gregory, shown in a Medieval manuscript. Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Hs. 171/1626. *Wikipedia/Public Domain*

Rule of Saint Benedict ○

The Development of the Liturgy: The Offices

In his book of rules St. Benedict required that the psalms be recited in a weekly round of services known as the *Offices*, of which there were eight each day. The greatest single portion went to the Night Office (now called *Matins*), which

Figure 1-6 Early Christian monastic centers.

accounted for more than half of the weekly round of all 150 psalms. The shorter day Offices began at dawn with one of praise (*Lauds*) and continued with four "minor hours" named after the clock hours according to Roman terminology: *Prime* (the first hour); *Terce* (the third hour); *Sext* (the sixth hour); and *None* (the ninth hour). The public liturgical day ended with *Vespers*, which features the psalm-like "Canticle of Mary" (known as the Magnificat, which is its first word). Finally, there was a bedtime service for monks called *Compline* (completion), at which more elaborate chants were sung, especially in the later Middle Ages, to the Blessed Virgin as a plea for her intercession. (Lauds, Vespers, and Compline are services that contain *canticles*—texts from the New Testament sung in the manner as psalms.) At a minimum an Office service included a psalm, a scripture reading, and a *hymn*, which was a metrical song of praise derived from Greek pagan practice.

Just as the liturgical day was a cycle of services and the monastic week was a cycle of psalms, so the whole Catholic Church calendar was organized in a yearly cycle of commemorations known as *feasts*. Monks thus lived out their lives according to these nested cycles—wheels within wheels within wheels. The basic annual framework commemorated events in the life of Christ, organized in two great cycles surrounding the two biggest feasts, Christmas (the Birth of Christ) and Easter (the Resurrection of Christ). The Christmas cycle, beginning with four solemn weeks of preparation called Advent and ending with the feast of Epiphany on 6 January, uses the Roman pagan calendar and has the fixed date of 25 December. The Easter cycle, beginning with the forty-day fast called Lent and ending on the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday with the feast of Pentecost, derives from the Jewish calendar. The date of Easter can therefore vary by more than a month and falls from 22 March to 25 April. The yearly calendar also came to include a cycle of ever-more numerous feasts for the Virgin Mary and saints' commemorations

and many other occasions, among them special (so-called *votive*) occasions where prayers and offerings are made, such as weddings, funerals, and memorials.

As official occasions were added to the calendar—and they continue to be added and deleted to this day—music had to be provided with appropriate words and melodies for each one. Many of these additions were sung only once a year, while others were sung every day. The church therefore needed an enormous quantity of music. The use of specific words and music often varied from region to region, even from town to town. The veneration of a local "patron saint" (a go-between to God for a particular place or group), for example, demanded more elaborate music than would be sung in places without any special connection. Additional texts, placed before and after the fixed words of a psalm, would vary so that the meaning of a psalm could be expanded and feasts differentiated. These added *antiphons* and *responds* offered further opportunities for new musical compositions. An **antiphon** is a short sentence or verse that is sung before and after a psalm and sometimes between its individual verses, which were sung in alternation by two halves of the choir. A **respond** is the first part of *responsorial* chant, in which the full choir alternates with a soloist singing a verse to follow.

Proper and Ordinary of the Mass

The most elaborate music of the Christian Church is associated with the *Mass*, the central public service of worship. The **Mass** is a reenactment of Jesus's Last Supper, the Jewish Passover Seder he held the evening before his crucifixion, when he gathered his disciples together. The opening part of the service, called the *synaxis* ("synagogue," after the Greek for "a meeting or assembly"), consists of prayers, chants, and readings and is open to those who have not yet completed their religious instruction. The often beautiful, elaborate, and awe-inspiring ritual elements—the elegance of the clothes, the allure of the smell of incense, the sweetness of the sounds, the majesty of the physical space—were enticing and impressive. This was meant in part to attract new members to the Church at a time when Christianity was competing for prominence with other religions.

The second part of the Mass, a service known as the *Eucharist* (from the Greek for "thanksgiving"), is closed to all who have not yet been baptized. It consists of a reenactment of the Last Supper in which the congregation mystically ingests the blood and body of Christ in a form miraculously transformed from wine and bread. As a public service that incorporated a great deal of action, the Mass did not contain full psalms or hymns, with their many stanzas—that would have taken too long. Instead, it featured short texts set to elaborate music, including words that expressed the "proper" identity of each occasion at which Mass was celebrated—feast, Sunday, or saint's day.

In some sections, therefore, the words change from day to day; these sections form what is called the *Proper* of the Mass. In other sections the words remain the same day in and day out, and these parts make up the *Ordinary*. The term "Mass Ordinary" eventually came to mean five unchanging texts sung by the choir: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. These began to receive significant musical attention in the Carolingian period and centuries later would be set as unified cycles. This later development spawned a tradition of Mass composition

to which many famous composers of the standard concert repertory made contributions, including Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

With the standardization of the Ordinary chants, the Franks consolidated the form of the Western Mass, including its music, for the next millennium. Their version was reimported back to Rome in the eleventh century and became standard almost everywhere in Europe and the British Isles. The text and chants of the Mass Ordinary developed over centuries, with the Gloria probably being the oldest part and the Agnus Dei the latest addition. Later in this chapter we will go through the individual parts of the Mass, both Proper and Ordinary, sung and recited, in the order they eventually assumed in the service, an assemblage and ordering that likewise took centuries to become standard (see Appendix).

Writing It Down: Neumes
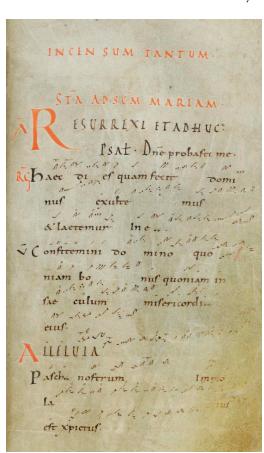
The music associated with the Office and Mass services may strike some listeners today as all sounding alike: monophonic melodies chanted in Latin. Its richness and diversity, however, are extraordinary, which should not be surprising given the great span of time and space over which it developed. After we see how the music was eventually written down and learn the rudiments of how to read the notation,

Figure 1-7 Easter Introit, *Resurrexi,* from a soloist's chant book, prepared at the Swiss monastery of St. Gall early in the tenth century.

we will get a sense of this musical variety by looking at different musical adornments to a single verse of a single psalm.

Chant notation evolved through the invention of so-called **neumes** that tracked the relative rise and fall of the melodies and the placement of notes in relation to text syllables (Fig. 1-7). Some early surviving liturgical books contain neumes, but not before the end of the ninth century, several generations after the Carolingian chant reform had occurred. This has led to a great deal of speculation about the actual origins of the neumes and the date of their earliest use.

Scholars long assumed that the Carolingian neumes were an outgrowth of accents marks, the signs—acute (´), grave (`), circumflex (^), and so forth—that represented the inflection of poetry-recitation and that still survive to a certain extent in the writing of modern French and other languages. As originally conceived, the acute accent meant a raising of the pitch of the voice, the grave a lowering, and the circumflex a raising-plus-lowering. Placing these signs over the syllables of words would therefore help remind someone who already knew a melody about its general contour (that is, whether the tune was going up or down) even if the signs did not indicate the precise interval.

There are other theories about the origin of neumes, all of which assume that they were dependent on some earlier sign-system. Yet neumes may simply have been invented independently in response to the immediate musical purpose at hand. There were earlier, pre-Christian schemes for graphically representing music, such as we have seen with the ancient Greeks or as used in Jewish biblical cantillation, which Jewish children are taught to this day in preparation for their rite of passage to adulthood (*bar* or *bat mitzvah*), when they read from scripture.

The new contour-based Carolingian neumes follow an entirely different principle of representation, out of which developed the Western notation that is familiar today. Carolingian neumes shared the limitation of all the early neumatic systems: We cannot actually read a melody from them unless we already know the tune. To read a previously unknown melody at sight, we need at a minimum a means of precise intervallic (or relative-pitch) measurement. Later, neumes were "heighted," or *diastematical* (Greek for "interval"), on the lines and spaces of a staff. Only then was it possible to transmit melodies soundlessly, although the notation still did not convey many aspects of how the music actually sounded.

Guido of Arezzo
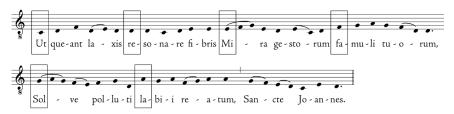
According to tradition, heighted neumes were the invention of the Italian monk Guido of Arezzo (Fig. 1-8). His *Micrologus* (Little Treatise), a manual on the rudiments of music theory completed around 1028, included the earliest guide to staff notation. The breakthrough came when neumes were placed on the lines and spaces of a ruled staff to show precisely their relative pitch locations. Special colors, later replaced by alphabet signs, were used to denote the C and F "key" lines—*claves* in Latin—that have half steps below them; these letters survive as our modern "clefs." These innovations made "sight-singing" possible. Most of Medieval notation employed four staff lines, not five as used today.

Guido lived from about 990 to about 1033 and specialized for most of his life in the training of choirboys. As a tool he used a hymn called *Ut queant laxis* and constructed a tune so that the first syllable in each half-line of text falls one scale degree higher than the one that precedes it, the entire series tracing out exactly the basic six-note diatonic segment, or **hexachord**, from C to A (Ex. 1-3).

Figure 1-8 Guido of Arezzo showing his sponsor Theodaldus how to calculate the string lengths of a scale using a monochord. *Lebrecht Music and Art Photo Library*

EXAMPLE 1-3 Hymn, *Ut queant laxis;* words by Paul the Deacon, music possibly by Guido of Arezzo

Ut que - ant la - xis re - so - na - re fi - bris Mi - ra ge - sto - rum fa - mu - li tu - o - rum,

Sol - ve pol - lu - ti la - bi - i re - a - tum, San - cte Jo - an - nes.

That thy servants may freely proclaim the wonders of thy deeds, absolve the sins of their unclean lips, O holy John.

Guido's hexachord

Ut - Re - Mi - Fa - Sol - La

Associating the text syllables with the appropriate pitches gave a syllable name to each degree in the hexachord (*ut–re–mi–fa–sol–la*). Once internalized, the syllables served a double purpose for ear training. Any interval, ascending or descending, could be demonstrated in terms of a syllable combination (thus: *ut–re*, the whole step; *ut–mi*, the major third; *ut–fa*, the perfect fourth; *re–fa*, the minor third; etc.). Second, the difference between the whole step and the half step could be mastered by drilling the interval *mi–fa*. The reason it is so important to know where the half step *mi–fa* is situated is that this is the definer of mode quality (the distribution of half steps and whole steps), or what we now think of as scales.

Solmization

Many centuries later the syllable *si* was added by some singing teachers so that a full major scale could be sung with model ("**solmization**") syllables. In modern practice, *si* has been replaced by *ti*, and *ut* has been replaced by *do*. Guido, however, did not as yet have or need the concept of the major scale. He managed to complete the octave by transposing the basic module so that it began on G, the intervals of the hexachord G–E being identical with C–A. In this new placement, the progression *mi–fa* corresponds with the half step B–C. To solmize the full scale from C to C, one mutates at some convenient point, either reinterpreting *sol* as *ut* or reinterpreting *la* as *re* so that the syllables fill an entire octave. The slashes below denote half steps:

```
C    D    E   /   F    G    A    B   /   C
ut   re   mi  /   fa   sol  la
                  ut   re   mi  /   fa
```

To avoid the tritone that arises between F and B, later theorists recognized another transposition of the module, beginning on F, that would place the *mi–fa* pair on A and B♭. The entire range of hexachord transpositions thus achieved, mapping out the musical pitch space within which Gregorian chant was habitually sung, finally looked like Ex. 1-4.

EXAMPLE 1-4   The gamut, or full range of pitches represented on the Guidonian Hand, together with the seven hexachords that are required for its solmization
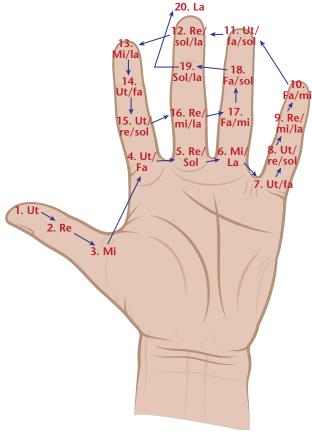
In order to gain an *ut* at the bottom on which to begin the first set of syllables, Guido placed a G below the A that normally marked the lower end of the modal system, discussed later. This extra G was represented by its Greek equivalent, *gamma*. Its full name within the array was "Gamma ut," which was shortened to *gamut* and became the name of the array itself. (The word "gamut,"

of course, has entered the common English vocabulary to denote the full range of anything.) The two versions of B (the one sung as *mi* over G, corresponding to our B natural, and the one sung as *fa* over F, corresponding to B♭), were assigned to a single mutable space, whose actual pitch realization would depend on the context. The higher B, known as the hard one, was represented by a square-shaped letter that eventually evolved into the modern natural sign (♮). The hexachord containing it was also known as the "hard" hexachord. The lower one, which softened augmented fourths into perfect ones, was known accordingly as "soft" and was represented by a rounded letter that eventually evolved into the modern flat sign (♭). The hexachord containing B♭ was known as the "soft" hexachord; the original module, derived from the hymn, was called the "natural" hexachord.

As an aid toward memorization, a device was adopted whereby items to be memorized were mapped in spiral fashion onto the joints of the left palm (Fig. 1-9, 1-10). The once-widespread use of such mnemonic devices as the "**Guidonian Hand**" is still reflected in our daily language by expressions like "rule of thumb"

Figure 1-9 The Guidonian Hand as represented in a thirteenth-century Bavarian manuscript. *The Bavarian State Library*

Figure 1-10 Diagram showing how the Guidonian Hand was used as a memory aid. The scale begins at the top of the thumb, moves down it, then crosses the base of the hand, up the pinkie, across the top of the fingers, down the second finger, across the middle and fourth fingers, up the fourth, back to the third, and then culminates at the top of the third finger, forming a counterclockwise spiral.

and "at one's fingertips." Armed with the internalized *gamut*, a singer could translate a written melody into its constituent intervals without hearing or playing it. A singer could truly sing at sight, or, as Guido put it, "sing an unknown melody."[5]
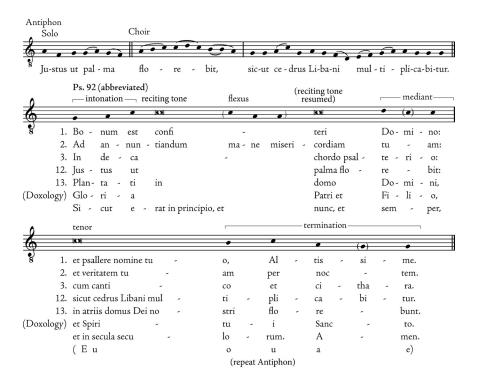
It took centuries for a more standardized system to develop. In our exploration of early music we will encounter a notation that in the late nineteenth century was called "square" or "quadratic," after the shape of the note heads, adapted from a calligraphic-style handwriting that became prevalent in twelfth-century manuscripts. The notation of Example 1-5a is printed as it is found in the *Liber responsorialis*, a book of Office chants published in 1895 by the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes in France. The monks at the abbey carried out a vast restoration project in which the corpus of Gregorian chant was edited from its original manuscript sources. Many of our examples in this chapter are given in square notation as they are found in the *Liber usualis*, a large anthology of the basic chants for Mass and Offices, also issued by the monks of Solesmes. Example 1-5b transcribes part of the antiphon into modern notation.

EXAMPLE 1-5a *Justus ut palma* as it appears in the *Liber responsorialis,* a book of Office chants published in 1895 by the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes in France

Ju-stus ut pal-ma   flo - re - bit,   sic-ut ce-drus Li-ba-ni mul-ti-pli-ca-bi-tur. E u o u a e.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

EXAMPLE 1-5b *Justus ut palma* as antiphon to Psalm 92

1. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:
2. To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,
3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.
12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

(Doxology) Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

As early as the tenth century, neumes were learned from tables in which each shape was given a distinctive name. In Example 1-5a, the two-note ascent over pal-, for example, was called the *pes* (or *podatus*), meaning "foot." Its descending counterpart, over -ma, was called the *clivis* (meaning "sloped"). The three-note neumes were known, respectively, as the *scandicus* (from scandere, "to climb"), the *torculus* ("a little turn"), and the *trigon* ("a toss"). The motion opposite to the *torculus* (i.e., first down and then up) is shown by the *porrectus* ("stretched"), with its striking oblique neume: ▧. The pes, clivis, torculus, and porrectus were the basic shapes, corresponding roughly to the acute, grave, circumflex, and anticircumflex accents, and they were retained in later notational schemes.

Neumes ◦
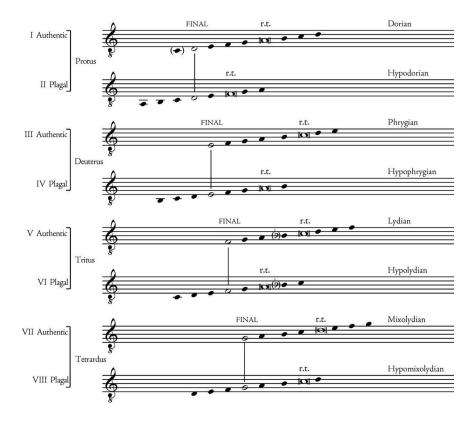
Church Modes

As the chant repertory rapidly grew, there was an ever-increasing need to classify and order them, which was accomplished in part through the system of **church modes**. This took some centuries to develop, but by the tenth century there were eight modes, what we now think of as scales differentiated by the location of whole and half steps (tones and semitones). They are further defined by their most important notes, the final one and the **reciting tone**. Another aspect of chant classification is their range. Chants ending on each of the four final notes—D, E, F, and G—were further broken down into two classes. Those with the final note at the bottom of their range were said to be in "authentic" modes, while those that extended lower than their final notes, so that the final occurred in the middle of their range, were called "plagal." The four final notes, each governing two modes in both authentic and plagal forms, made for a total of eight.

There are four ways that the interval of a fifth can be filled in with four tones (T) or semitones (S): (1) **TSTT**, (2) **STTT**, (3) **TTTS**, and (4) **TTST**. Example 1-6 gives the full array of church modes, which came to be numbered from 1 to 8, in modern notation. Frankish theorists eventually gave them Greek names borrowed from Boethius: Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian. The meaning of the Greek prefix *hypo-*, attached to the names of the plagal scales, is roughly the same as the word *plagal* itself: both mean "lower." Example 1-6 also indicates the reciting tones (r.t.): those for the authentic modes are normally a fifth above the final note and those for the plagal modes usually a third below that of its authentic counterpart.

EXAMPLE 1-6 The eight Medieval modes

It is important to bear in mind that Medieval modal scales do not specify actual pitch frequencies as they do in our modern practice. We should avoid the common assumption that the Dorian scale represents the piano's white keys from D to D, the Phrygian from E to E, and so on. Rather, the "four finals" and their corresponding scales represent nothing more than the most convenient way of notating patterns of half steps and whole steps.

Thinking of the modes as a function of scale and final note was originally the product of music theory of the tenth and eleventh centuries when an attempt was made to organize the chants of the Roman Church according to the categories of ancient Greek music theory. In the ninth century there had emerged collections of antiphons that were grouped according to the simple formula for singing a psalm, called a **psalm tone**. Eight psalm tones are used in the Latin liturgy, plus one called the *tonus peregrinus* ("wandering tone") because the most prominent pitch of the second half of a verse is different from that of the first half.

○ *Psalm tone*

These antiphon collections, which came to include all kinds of chants, are known as *tonaries*. They served a practical purpose, because in every service newly learned antiphons had to be related appropriately to psalm tones. To achieve this goal, the antiphons were compared with psalm tones to see how the interval was

filled in between their final note and the pitch corresponding to the psalm tone's reciting tone.

Psalmody in Practice: The Office and the Mass

It is time now to look closely at some music. We will begin by tracing settings of a single psalm verse through various liturgical functions in both the Offices and the Mass. The twelfth verse of Psalm 92 was especially favored, perhaps owing to its vivid similes, and it invited settings both simple and elaborate. The Latin verse reads: *Justus ut palma florebit, et sicut cedrus Libani multiplicabitur*, translated in the King James Bible as "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

Example 1-5a is the simplest of the settings, a very bare melody that has been stripped to its minimum functional requirements. But the very act of singing, however minimal, elevates words out of the context of the everyday. This simple kind of chanting is ancient. Here Psalm 92 is paired with an antiphon consisting of its twelfth verse, the *Justus ut palma*.

In Example 1-5b, the tone formula is analyzed into its constituent parts, which function very much like punctuation marks. First there is the intonation, given by a soloist to establish the pitch. The intonation formula always ascends to a repeated pitch, the reciting tone. This pitch is repeated as often as necessary to accommodate the syllables of the text, the number of which can vary considerably from verse to verse. In a long verse there will be many repetitions of the reciting tone, lending the whole the "monotone" quality often associated with Medieval chants. The longest verses (such as the second in this particular antiphon) have a "bend" (*flexus*) as additional punctuation. The end of the first half-verse is sung to a formula known as the *mediation*, which functions as a divider, like the comma or colon in a text. The second half-verse again begins on the reciting tone, and the whole verse ends with the *termination*, often called the "cadence" (derived from the Latin *cadere*); as in a declarative sentence, it entails a pitch's lowering or "falling."

The relationship between the text and the music in the psalm tone is straightforwardly *syllabic*: one note to each syllable, the reciting tone accommodating most of them. The antiphon is a moderately *neumatic* chant, in which nine of the twenty-one syllables in the text carry two- or three-note neumes. As we see in Examples 1-5a and 1-5b, added to the end of the psalm is the *Doxology* (from the Greek for "words of praise"), the Christianizing tag invoking the Holy Trinity. It is treated simply as an extra pair of psalm verses. In the *Liber usualis,* the Doxology is given as a group of six notes set over the space-saving abbreviation "E u o u a e," which are the vowel letters in ". . . seculorum. Amen." *Justus ut palma* appears in two more Office services in commemoration of a martyred saint, at Vespers and None.

The *Justus ut palma* text appears not just in Office services but also at least four times in the original Gregorian corpus of Mass Propers, the chants for the yearly round of feasts. Their elaborateness varies depending on the occasion and

the liturgical function they accompany. Because *Justus ut palma* is a verse about praise, it is particularly suitable for honoring saints. Example 1-7 shows the first part of the chant opening the service, the *Introit*. Being a Mass chant, it is considerably more elaborate than its Office counterparts. This chant possesses the same graceful arc-like shape we have already seen in the Office psalm tones.

EXAMPLE 1-7 *Justus ut palma* as Introit (opening)

Ju - stus * ut palma flo - re - bit:

Our next example is the opening of the Offertory on *Justus ut palma* (Ex. 1-8). This setting is even more ornate than the Introit. There are now many notes assigned to certain single syllables, a style called **melismatic**, with lengthy **melismas** comprising most of the music.
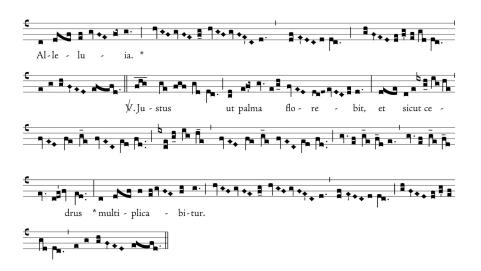
EXAMPLE 1-8 *Justus ut palma* as Offertory (opening)

Ju - stus * ut palma flo - re - bit:

Settings of the *Justus ut palma* verse were also sung between the scripture readings that cap the first portion of the Mass, at a time when there is little or no liturgical action occurring. These are the most florid of all the Mass chants. The lesson chants are responsorial ones with a soloist alternating with the choir. At the beginning of the Alleluia verse (Ex. 1-9), the soloist sings up to the asterisk in the example; the choir begins again and continues into the fifty-one-note *jubilus*, the long melisma on the last syllable of the word "alleluia." Melismatic singing was held by Christian mystics to be the highest form of religious utterance: "It is a certain sound of joy without words," St. Augustine wrote of such chanting in the fourth century, "the expression of a mind poured forth in joy."[6] The same soloist/choir alternation is indicated in the verse by the asterisk before the expressive melisma on the word *multiplicabitur* (given mainly to the soloist). The choral alleluia is repeated after the verse, giving the whole a rounded (ABA) form. This is mirrored on a smaller scale by the internal repetitions (representable as aabb) that make up the internal melisma on the word *cedrus*. The repetitions that give the Alleluia setting its striking shape are memorable not just for the listener but also

for the singer. Such repeated phrases or formulas served as vital memory aids in an age of oral composition. They also show the relationship between this extraordinarily ornate, mystically evocative composition and the simple psalm tone with which our survey of chant genres began (cf. Ex. 1-5a).

EXAMPLE 1-9 *Justus ut palma* as Alleluia

Al-le - lu - ia. *

V. Ju - stus   ut palma   flo - re - bit, et   sicut ce -

drus *multi - plica - bi-tur.

Melodic repetitions of this type not only link the parts of individual chants, they link whole chant families. Anthology I.3a and 3b contains two Graduals, each consisting of a melismatic respond and an even more melismatic verse for a solo singer. The respond in I.3a is yet another setting of the *justus ut palma* verse; I.3b is the Easter Gradual *Haec dies*, in which the text consists of two verses from Psalm 118, one functioning as respond (v. 24), the other as the soloist's verse (v. 1). The two chants draw heavily on a shared group of melodic turns; indeed, a whole family of Graduals, numbering more than twenty in all, have these formulas in common. Such shared formulas are found most frequently at initial and cadential points; internal repetitions regularly occur to accommodate lengthier texts. The use of standard melodic material would have aided in the process of oral composition and made the melodies easier to remember.

Anth I, 3a–3b

The Structure of the Mass Service

Now that we have sampled some of the stylistic variety among chants, we can look at the structure of the Mass service as it was eventually codified with its sung and recited parts, the Ordinary sections, which are the same at every service, and the Proper ones, which change from day to day (see Appendix: Structure and Text

○ *Introit*
○ *Kyrie*

of the Mass). The service begins with a Proper chant, the *Introit*, which accompanies the entrance of the celebrants. The first Ordinary chant follows, the *Kyrie eleison*, which has a complex and somewhat puzzling history. Its special status is immediately evident from its language: This is the one Greek survival in the otherwise Latin Mass. *Kyrie eleison* (Greek) means "Lord, have mercy," which alternates with the words *Christe eleison* ("Christ, have mercy"). By the ninth century, when the Frankish musicians were attempting to standardize chant, the Kyrie had been established as having nine repetitions: three times singing Kyrie eleison, three times Christe eleison, and another three times Kyrie eleison. As in the case of the other Ordinary chants, the Kyrie inspired a wide range of musical settings, from quite simple to complex. The more artful Kyrie tunes often reflect the shape of the text, matching its ninefold elaboration of a three-part text with patterns of repetition like AAA BBB AAA′ or AAA BBB CCC′. (In both cases the last invocation—the A′ or C′—is usually rendered more emphatically than the rest, most typically by inserting or repeating a melisma, which provides a sense of closure.)

| Anth I, 4a |

In Anthology Volume I-4a, the words *Kyrie–Christe–Kyrie* are set to a non-repeating (ABC) pattern, but the word *eleison* has an aa′b pattern. The retention of the same formula for *eleison* while *Kyrie* changes to *Christe* and back seems to be a vestige of an old congregational refrain. This particular chant dates from the tenth century and is known as Kyrie IV. The identifying number for this and other Ordinary chants is the one assigned to it in modern chant books. Melismatic Kyries were sometimes fitted with other words. Although the Church later purged these added texts, the old opening words (*incipits*) are still used as identification in modern liturgical books, as is the case in Anthology Volume I-4b called Kyrie IV, *Cunctipotens Genitor Deus*.

| Anth I, 4b |

○ *Gloria*

| Anth I, 4c |

The second Ordinary section immediately follows the Kyrie. The *Gloria* begins with two verses from the Gospel of St. Luke, quoting the angelic greeting to the shepherds on the night of the Nativity. Next comes a series of praises, then a series of litanies (petitions), and finally a concluding praise song. It appears that in its earliest versions this was sung by the entire congregation. The Glorias preserved in Frankish manuscripts are usually neumatic chants with occasional melismas. Once past the celebrant's intonation with the words "Gloria in excelsis Deo," they are clearly intended for the clerical or monastic choir. The complete text of the Mass is given in the Appendix of this book.

A comparison of the texts of these two opening Ordinary sections reveals something that would have enormous musical consequences. The Kyrie sets just three words (*Kyrie, Christe, eleison*), although with many repetitions. The text of the Gloria, on the other hand, contains nearly a hundred words, virtually without repetition. The result is that Kyrie settings typically have melismatic melodies that linger over the few words. The Gloria, as a wordy section of the Mass, does not invite the luxury of lingering over words or even single syllables, lest the whole section take too long to sing. Melismas therefore tended to be far less common or to be used sparingly to highlight a particular moment in the text.

○ *Gradual* and *Alleluia*

Moving on in the service, between two readings, or "lessons" (from Paul's Epistles and from the Gospels, respectively), come two Proper chants that tended to be quite elaborate: the *Gradual* (named for the stairs by which the celebrants ascend to the pulpit) and the *Alleluia*, which is replaced during Lent by the *Tract*, a long, sometimes highly melismatic psalm setting.

Concluding the first part of the Mass is the next Ordinary text: the *Credo*, a setting of the Nicene Creed, the articles of Christian faith from the fourth century. It was adopted by the Franks in 798 and was formally incorporated into the Latin Mass in 1014, positioned between the Gospel reading and the Offertory as the divider between the two parts of the service. This text is even longer than that of the Gloria and thus again invites syllabic text setting.

Credo ◦

Anth I, 4d

The second part of the Mass service, the Eucharist, begins with an antiphon that accompanies the collection (the *Offertory*), one of the Proper chants. The next Ordinary section is the *Sanctus*, an acclamation from the Book of Isaiah. (Under its Hebrew name, *Kedusha*, it has been part of the Jewish worship service since ancient times.) In its Latin form, the Sanctus text retains a pair of Hebrew words: *Sabaoth* ("hosts") and *Hosanna* ("save us"). The earliest Frankish settings date from the tenth century.

Offertory ◦
Sanctus ◦

Anth I, 4e

After the spoken *Canon*, consecrating the bread and the wine, and the Lord's Prayer (*Pater noster*), comes the next Ordinary chant: the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God). This was introduced to the Mass in the seventh century to accompany the breaking of bread before communion. At first it was cast as a litany, with an unspecified number of repetitions of the entreaty to the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi*), answered by the congregational prayer, "have mercy on us" (*Miserere nobis*). The chant was later standardized and abbreviated, limited to three acclamations, with the third response changed to "grant us peace." The chant for the Agnus Dei is sometimes cast in a rounded "ternary form" (ABA), thus similar to some settings of the opening Kyrie.

Agnus Dei ◦

Anth I, 4f

The consummation of the Eucharist, *Communion*, is a psalmodic chant like the Offertory, which is followed by a prayer. Another text that was often included in the early Ordinary formularies was the dismissal versicle, *Ite, missa est*—"Go, it is sent," from which the term *Missa*, for Mass, was adopted, and its response, *Deo gratias* ("Thanks be to God"). During Lent and Advent this is replaced by *Benedicamus Domino* ("Let us bless the Lord").

Communion ◦

Ite, missa est ◦

Frankish Additions to the Chant Repertory

As the Franks in the north made their own additions to the Gregorian repertory, the Mass became more elaborate. In the middle of the ninth century Amalar of Metz, an urban cleric who was employed by Charlemagne, supported the practice of inserting melismas into festive chants. He believed these additions could offer an ecstatic or mystical kind of "understanding" beyond the power of words to convey. Amalar wrote enthusiastically of the Roman practice of replacing the traditional jubilus, the melisma on the "-ia" of "Alleluia," with an even longer melody, which he describes as "a jubilation that the singers call a *sequentia*."[7] These lengthy additions did not please everyone. Agobard of Lyons, another ecclesiastical observer from the time, condemned what Amalar praised. He complained that sacred singers spent all their time improving their voices instead of their souls, boasted of their virtuosity and their memories, and vied with one another in melismatic contests.

The early *sequentia* melismas had many internal phrase repetitions, such as we saw earlier with the two Graduals (cf. Anthology I, 3 a and b), designed to make them easier to memorize. Another memory aid employed by Frankish singers had far-reaching artistic significance: adding words to melismatic chants that turned

them into syllabic hymns. This led to a fantastic flowering of new devotional song that developed over three centuries and reached its peak in twelfth-century France (see Chapter 2).

An early witness to the practice of giving syllabic texts to melismatic melodies is Notker Balbulus (Notker the Stammerer, d. 912), a monk who was Charlemagne's first biographer. In the introduction to his *Liber hymnorum* (Book of Hymns), which dates from about 880, Notker recalls that in his youth he learned the practice from a monk who had escaped from an abbey in northwestern France after it had been invaded by "Normans" (that is, Vikings).[8] This would have been around 850, about twenty years after Amalar had first described the *sequentia* and promoted it among the Franks. The fleeing monk, Notker tells us, had with him a book of antiphons in which some *sequentia* melismas had words added. Notker eagerly adopted this trick for making memorable extra-long vocalises, what we now call the **sequence**.

○ *The sequence*

The sequence came to be an entirely syllabic chant with a double versicle structure. It was one of the indigenous Frankish contributions to the evolving Roman liturgy. "Sequence" literally means "something that follows," and, indeed, the sequence comes after the Alleluia. In the sixteenth century, during the reforms of the so-called Counter-Reformation, all but four sequences were eliminated from the service. The fortunate four were those for Easter (*Victimae paschali laudes*), Pentecost (*Veni sancte spiritus*), Corpus Christi (*Lauda Sion*, by St. Thomas Aquinas), and the Requiem Mass (*Dies irae*).

Anth I, 5a

Dies irae (Day of wrath) is an example of a sequence in metrical verse, in this instance rhyming (Ex. 1-10). *Dies irae* comes from the Mass for the Dead and is probably the most famous of all Medieval liturgical songs. It is a very late one, perhaps even a thirteenth-century composition; its text, in rhymed three-line stanzas, is attributed to Thomas of Celano (d. ca. 1255). In its full form the *Dies irae* has three paired versicles that repeat like a litany: AABBCC/AABBCC/AABBC, with the last C replaced by a final couplet, to which an additional unrhymed couplet and an Amen were added by an anonymous reviser. (Example 1-10 gives the first versicle.)

Anth I, 5b

EXAMPLE 1-10   *Dies irae* (Requiem)

Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la, Sol - vet   sae - dum in fa - vil - la: Tes - te   Da - vid   cum Si - byl - la.

Dreaded day, that day of ire,
When the world shall melt in fire,
Told by Sybil and David's lyre.