

MSC 1003 – Music in Civilization, Spring 2019

Prof. Smey

Class 5, Tues Feb 12

Quiz Prep

At the beginning of this class we'll talk a little bit more about how you can prepare for our upcoming quiz. In particular we'll focus on listening strategies that can help you be confident about which track is being played on our piece IDs. Often there are very simple and superficial aspects of the recordings that you can focus on.

Also, we'll probably talk about strategies for the "essay" question at the end.

Secular Music in the Renaissance

So now let's pick up where we left off in the world of secular music, listening to pieces that were made for use at court for the entertainment of the upper class. Secular music continued to develop in the Renaissance, evolving out of things we saw in the Medieval period.

Secular Vocal Music = Madrigals

You may remember that in the late Medieval period the fashion was for troubadour and trouvère-type songs at court, which presented sophisticated, poetic words set to monophonic melodies.

By the Renaissance these songs have evolved into *madrigals*, a more complex, polyphonic kind of secular piece. (The people composing this stuff aren't troubadours any more, they are called *madrigalists*.)

Like the work of the troubadours, these songs will tend to be in the local, vernacular language (French, Italian, English, etc.) The texts tend to be humorous and clever. They can be about anything entertaining, including the ever-popular subjects of love and sex.

They are polyphonic, not monophonic.

And finally, they frequently indulge in a technique that can be called “tone painting.” (This is my preferred term for it. The book uses “word painting” and “madrigalism.”) This means that the composer tries to depict the meaning of the text in the musical notes.¹

Our homework and quiz piece is [As Vesta was from Latmos Hill Descending](#) by Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623), and in it we can hear lots of tone painting. Whenever the text speaks of ascending the hill, the musical lines also go upwards, and when the characters are going down the hill the musical lines also go down. There is also some play with the words “two by two,” “three by three” and so on, which are set with pairs of voices, then trios etc. There is detailed commentary on all this in the book, p. 79 in the eighth edition and pp. 83-84 in the seventh.

When we hear this piece is it easy to imagine that it is about a bunch of mythological figures running up and down hills. However, if you look closely you’ll see that it is actually a tribute to a certain “Maiden Queen.”

*As Vesta was from Latmos hill descending,
She spied a maiden queen the same ascending,
Attended on by all the shepherds swain,
To whom Diana's darlings came running down amain,
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.*

Vesta is the Roman goddess of home and family. Here she is coming down Latmos Hill, and she meets a “maiden queen” who is walking up. Vesta is accompanied by a sort of posse or entourage (“Diana’s darlings”) who abandon the Goddess and run to be with the queen.

The Maiden Queen is actually Queen Elizabeth of England, who was still reigning at the time this piece was composed. This tribute is the sort of thing Weelkes’ audience would have enjoyed.

¹ In this term “tone” is being used as a synonym for “note.” We could also say “note painting” or “sound painting.” Students sometimes mistakenly assume that “tone” is like “mood,” but that’s not really correct. Creating a certain mood (like happy or sad) throughout the whole piece isn’t really tone painting! Instead, a composer is tone painting when he or she reacts suddenly to the words and changes the music in a dramatic fashion, trying to “paint” the meaning of the text with the notes.

In class I also played one “bonus” madrigal, ["Now is the Month of Maying" by Thomas Morley](#). This one doesn't feature any tone painting as far as I know, but it is amusingly naughty, with some mild sexual innuendo.

Interlude: Duple and Triple Meter

One concept we need at this point is the idea of a duple or triple “metric pattern” or “beat pattern.” This is just the pattern of beats in the music, which might influence how you dance to it and how a musician would count it.

This is a concept we'll keep exploring in the next few weeks.

The basic idea is pretty simple. Most of the music in the world is in a **duple meter**, which you would count out by saying “1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2” or “1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.” (We consider counting in four to be basically the same as counting in two, since they are both multiples of two.)

However, some music is in **triple meter**, which you would count “1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3” like a waltz! Obviously a waltz is a different sort of groove, it feels different and you'd have to dance to it in a different way.

That's the difference between duple and triple in a nutshell. In the future we'll practice listening to tracks and deciding what the meter is.

Instrumental Music

For the most part the people of the Renaissance have the same instruments we saw in the Medieval period, including the recorder, shawm, crumhorn, viol, lute, and harp. The main new development is the popularity of *consorts* – collections of an entire family of the same sort of instrument, from small to large.

We saw a recorder consort play [John Dowland's Earle of Essex Galliard...](#)

and we saw a viol consort play [the same piece](#).

In general, this polyphonic dance music was still conceived for generic instruments – you can play them on whatever consort you might have, you can mix different kinds of instruments, and you can even mix vocals and instruments. The title pages of this kind of music usually advertised its versatility “for singing or playing.”

There are also a few new instrumental developments.

- The *sackbut* is invented – this is an early form of the trombone, which looks quite similar to the modern version.

- Lute music becomes more interesting thanks to the use of a special kind of notation called tablature. We heard a man play [John Dowland's Frog Galliard](#).
- Early forms of the harpsichord begin to crop up and so we have our first good keyboard music. The *virginal* was particularly popular in England – this is a small, rectangular-shaped harpsichord that could fit on a table top. We saw someone play [William Byrd's Rowland on a virginal](#)

Pavane and Galliard

Finally, we looked at the Renaissance dance pieces that we will study for Quiz #1 – an anonymous Pavane and Galliard.

I've got infographics up on [a youtube video](#), but let me also summarize the useful information here.

Both of these dances appear in an anthology called *Musicque de joye*. It was published around 1550 by Jacques Moderne, a French printer of music. The actual composers of these pieces are unknown.

The Pavane and Galliard were often paired together. The Pavane is a slow dance in duple meter, performed by couples who hold hands and do a walking step forward and back. The Galliard is faster, in triple meter, and it is more active – here dancers leap upwards on almost every beat.

In our recordings the Pavane is played on a consort of viols, and the Galliard is played on shawms.