CHAPTER6

CHAPTER 6: MUSIC OF FRANCO-FLEMISH COMPOSERS, 1450-1520

Chapter Outline

Prelude. (CHWM 108–9)

The musical Renaissance was a revival of ideas about ancient music rather than a revival of a specific set of musical techniques. Most prominent composers in 1450–1520 came from France, Belgium, or the Netherlands. The greatest composer of the era was *Josquin des Prez*(ca. 1450–1521).

I. The Musical Culture of the Renaissance (CHWM 110–12)

1. Musical humanism   
   During the fifteenth century, all major Greek writings on music were translated into Latin.
2. Power of the ancient modes   
   In the Renaissance, each mode was thought to convey certain emotions.
3. Glarean   
   In his *Dodekachordon*(The Twelve-String Lyre, 1547), *Heinrich Glarean*(1488–1563) added four new modes (authentic and plagal modes on A and C) to the traditional eight.
4. Tuning   
   New tuning systems were introduced that allowed imperfect consonances to sound in tune, and triads began to appear at cadences.
5. Consonance and dissonance   
   Composers and theorists devised new rules for handling dissonance, suggesting that musicians valued beauty, order, and pleasing the senses.
6. Tinctoris   
   *Johannes Tinctoris*(ca. 1435–1511) explained rules for using dissonance in his treatise *Liber de arte contrapuncti*(A Book on the Art of Counterpoint, 1477). Dissonances were limited to passing and neighbor tones on unstressed beats and suspensions. The rules were further refined by *Gioseffo Zarlino*in *Le istitutioni harmoniche*(Harmonic Foundations, 1558).
7. Music and words   
   Humanism encouraged composers to pay increasing attention to the meaning, sound, grammatical structure, and accentuation of the texts they set.
8. Music printing   
   Printing allowed wider distribution at a lower cost of writings on music and of music itself.
9. Why Italy?   
   Humanism and the arts thrived particularly in Italy, where royalty, ruling families of small city-states and principalities, and religious figures sought to outdo one another in their patronage of literature and the arts.
10. Composers in Italy   
    Many of the composers employed in Italy were from France, Flanders, and the Netherlands.

II. Northern Composers: The Generation after Du Fay (CHWM 113–17, NAWM 39)

1. Ockeghem   
   *Jean de Ockeghem*(ca. 1420–1497) was a northern composer who was renowned as the most important of his generation.
2. Masses   
   In his masses, Ockeghem usually used four independent voices of similar character. By extending the bass range, he achieved a fuller and darker sound than Du Fay.
3. Tenor mass   
   Ockeghem’s *Missa De plus en plus*is a *tenor mass*whose cantus firmus is the tenor of Binchois’s chanson *De plus en plus.*
4. Cyclic mass   
   Ockeghem’s *Missa De plus en plus*is also a *cyclic mass*because all of its movements are based on the same borrowed tenor line.
5. Naming masses   
   Masses without a cantus firmus were sometimes named for their mode or for a structural feature, as in Ockeghem’s *Missa prolationum.*
6. Canon   
   Composers used *canon*to show off their ingenuity and skill and employed techniques like *retrograde*and *inversion. Missa prolationum*uses *mensuration canons*.
7. *Missa prolationum*  
   Ockeghem’s creativity and compositional virtuosity are evident in his *Missa prolationum*, which is notated in two voices but sung in four, using the four prolations of mensural notation. **Music: NAWM 39**
8. Chansons   
   Ockeghem’s chansons, as well as those by his contemporary Antoine Busnoys (ca. 1430–1492), combine features from Du Fay’s generation with new features. Chansons of the period were freely altered, arranged, and transcribed for instruments, and some became very popular.

**Biography: Jean de Ockeghem (Johannes Okeghem)**  
Ockeghem was a singer, composer, and teacher. He was born in northeastern France and worked for French kings for over forty years. His long service in one place encouraged the development of an individual idiom.

1. Medieval and newer features   
   In chansons from Ockeghem’s generation, Medieval features include the use of*formes fixes*and the reliance on the tenor for structure. Newer features include more use of *imitation,*greater equality among the voices, and expansion of range.

**Innovations: Music Printing**  
The music-publishing business changed the way people used and enjoyed notated music during the Renaissance. Printing from movable type was first used for music in the 1470s in liturgical books with chant notation. *Ottaviano Petrucci*(1466–1539) of Venice was the first to print polyphonic music from movable type in 1501, using a triple-impression process (with one impression for the staff lines, another for the notes, and another for the text) to create beautiful, clear collections of music. Petrucci obtained a "privilege" that gave him the exclusive right to print music in Venice for twenty years. The single-impression process used by *Pierre Attaingnant*(ca. 1494–1551/52) was less expensive but also less elegant. Most ensemble music was published as *partbooks*. Music printing made possible an awareness of individual achievement and renown and stimulated the demand for music books and competition among publishers.

III. The Next Generation: Josquin and His Contemporaries (CHWM 118–24, NAWM 40–43)

1. Ockeghem’s pupils   
   Many composers of the generation born near the middle of the fifteenth century modeled their works on those by Ockeghem. The three greatest composers were*Jacob Obrecht* (1457/8–1505), *Heinrich Isaac*(ca. 1450–1517), and *Josquin des Prez* (ca. 1450–1521). All were trained in the Low Countries and worked in Italy and elsewhere, and their music blends northern and southern elements. Isaac’s song *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen*, with its appealing melody, full triads, and clear phrase structure, shows the influence of the Italian style. **Music: NAWM 40**
2. *Odhecaton*  
   The first volume of polyphony printed from movable type was Petrucci’s*Harmonice musices odhecaton A,*an anthology of chansons from around 1470 to about 1500 in both older and newer styles.
3. Chansons   
   The four-voice chansons in *Odhecaton*have a fuller texture, more imitative counterpoint, a clearer harmonic structure, and greater equality between voices than earlier chansons.
4. Josquin’s chansons   
   Josquin and others of his generation abandoned the *formes fixes*for more varied poetic and musical forms. Voices are no longer independent layers, but are equal in a flexible texture that includes imitation between voices.
5. *Mille regretz*  
   *Mille regretz*illustrates the chanson style of about 1520. Music: **NAWM 43**

**Biography: Josquin des Prez (Josquin Lebloitte, Dit Desprez)**  
Josquin was probably born and trained in northern France. He spent much of his career in Italy, serving in Milan and in the Sistine Chapel in Rome and becoming one of the most sought-after musicians. For the final seventeen years of his life, Josquin lived and worked in Condé-sur-l’Escaut.

1. Josquin’s influence   
   Josquin was considered the greatest composer of his time, and his works were recopied and performed long after his death.
2. Motets   
   The large number of motets by Josquin reflects the interest composers had in setting a variety of texts and exploring word-music relationships.
3. Text and music   
   The influence of humanism led Josquin and others to match music more carefully to the meaning and accentuation of words.
4. *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena*  
   Josquin’s attention to text can be seen in his motet *Ave Maria . . . virgo serena.*Each phrase of text receives its own motivic idea, which is usually treated in a*point of imitation.***Music: NAWM 41**
5. Cantus firmus masses   
   Most of Josquin’s cantus firmus masses are based on secular tunes.
6. Parody mass   
   In a *parody mass,*the composer borrows extensively from all voices of a polyphonic model and reworks them to create something new in each movement of the mass.
7. Paraphrase mass   
   Josquin’s *Missa Pange lingua*is a *paraphrase mass,*in which a borrowed melody is paraphrased in all voices in each movement. Composers used parody and paraphrase techniques for the same reasons as cantus firmus techniques: to honor patrons, to convey meaning, or even to pay homage to another composer. **Music: NAWM 42**