

# [Music in the middle ages](https://assignbuster.com/music-in-the-middle-ages/)

The Middle Ages, which was the years of about 450-1450, were a time of music in the Western European world. There were two categories of music during this time, secular and sacred. Secular music was the music found in the streets, ballrooms, or side shows. Secular music had parts to it that contrasted from sacred music. Sacred music was the music played for religious purposes. Sacred music was preferred over secular music. Sacred music was the music for healing, meaning anyone in a time of struggle would be graced if one listened to it. The main stage for sacred music during this time was the Roman Catholic Church. The Church had choirs made of mostly boys and men, respectively singing the higher pitched parts or the lower pitched parts. Some choirs had women in them, but most churches were against this. As a side note, in most churches they were against the use of instruments; therefore, they left the entirety of the song to the choir.

These church choirs usually sung Gregorian chants, or sometimes known as plainchants. “ Gregorian chant is sacred music, but not all sacred music is Gregorian chant,” according to Chaz Muth. A Gregorian chant is the song seen as the Roman Rite, which was typically sung during Mass or Office in Catholic Church services. These songs were sung in Latin, usually in a monophonic, or a one line melody with a wavering rhythm (Unknown 1). While different places around the world had different chants they would sing, the chants were often all monophonic, just utilizing different rhythms and voice textures. Some were very calming and even uplifting, while others were depressing and heavy. Gregorian chants were specific to the Rome area in the beginning, although in later years they seemed to have spread to much of Europe. Gregorian chants are named after Pope Gregory I (Unknown 1). While many researchers have accredited Pope Gregory I with being the overall chief of Gregorian chants, many parts to these songs seem to come from earlier times.

In looking at the history of Gregorian chants, these songs started in churches and made their way abroad. Most scholars claim that although Gregorian chants seem to have started during the time of Pope Gregory I’s ruling, it seems they date back to 750. Around 750, there were only Roman and Gallican chants in Rome. In France, Carolingian rulers appeared to have pieced the two together to combine these styles into one, making the Gregorian chant (Unknown 1). At this time, a new Holy Roman Emperor was announced, Charlemagne. Charlemagne was to live on in his father’s traditions as the new ruler and appraise the Roman Rite instead of the Gallican traditions usually carried out in that region. Furthermore, he must make certain that the Gregorian chant was to be sung in churches across the country. He had to push out other versions of chants, such as the Celtic chant and the Beneventan chant. Gregorian chant even took the place of the indigenous Roman chant, which now is to be called the Old Roman chant (Unknown 1). The locals did not let this happen easily. They kept certain chants secret in some churches to try to preserve what they could of their usual traditions. Although some of the chants they kept in secret lasted to this day, many believe that the Gregorian chant was the original chant of Rome. As scholars are now proving, Gregorian chants came in much later compared to others of the time.

Gregorian chants made a comeback in the years from 1980-1990 as the music industry constantly improved and created new versions of music. During this time to officially introduce the Gregorian chant’s return, there was an album made called Chant, which was produced to help encourage tranquility and serenity (Unknown 1). Gregorian chant, being a part of sacred music, was always intended for a calmness and peace of mind to be spread through those who listened to it. As previously mentioned, Gregorian chants were for those who were struggling, and as “ healing” music, seemed to fix all the stress one would go through. Many people thought, scientifically speaking, hearing a Gregorian chant amplified the amount of beta waves created in the brain, leading to a slower, more composed thought process (Unknown 1).

Today, Gregorian chants are still sung in many Catholic churches. There are some that have developed to be completely extrinsic, with many different layers to it. On the other hand, there are many that are simple and understandable even by small children. In Catholic churches, even if one sings his/her prayer, it can be considered as a chant. “ The music was seen as enhancing the sacred texts with an art form,” wrote Chaz Muth. These prayers, bible verses, and sayings were all holy in themselves, but putting them into song allowed them to become even more sacred. These chants help deepen the feelings and thoughts that one senses in this religious setting. They help intensify the prayers of the struggling and build hope that the worry will end soon.

Overall, Gregorian chants were and still are one of the most valuable pieces to any Catholic Church service. They are sung during Mass as well as Office. They are songs of prayer, singing to God to reach down and lift up the sorrows and pain in the world. Gregorian chants were and are very diverse in rhythm, with the same underlying monophonic melody and meaning. Even though all over Europe there were different versions of these chants, during Charlemagne’s ruling Gregorian chants were most prevalent, leading it to be still the most recognizable and prominent one today. Gregorian chants were a part of a sacredness that the secular music of that time could not provide. Civilians of any time would praise the Gregorian chant, wanting it to heal whatever problems they encountered. The Middle Ages was a time of music, but with the Gregorian chant being sung, it was also a time of hope and serenity.

## Work Cited

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