

Music of the early middle ages

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Music of the Early Middle Ages Music, like many of history's other achievements, can trace its origins back to the beginning of man. The early Middle Ages of Europe was a significant time period when music began to develop a more permanent aspect in people's lives. During this time, music was essentially divided into two different genres, sacred and secular. Sacred music was performed during religious worship or ceremony and secular music was performed for entertainment purposes.

The following paragraphs will discuss the maturity of music through this period (500-1200) through chants, polyphony, and musical instruments, as well as a review of two pieces of music composed during this time frame. Chanting is the original form of music that was used for sacred music purposes. This type of chanting is also known as plainchant. Plainchant is a monophonic form of music, meaning " it comprised a single melody without any harmonic support or accompaniment (Sherrane). During the sixth century, Gregorian Chant was named after the Pope Gregory I, and was the official music heard throughout the Western Catholic Church. It has been said that " Gregorian Chant remains among the most spiritually moving and profound music in Western culture (Sherrane). " The sacred form of music then evolved into organum, which added a second line parallel of the melody at a different octave. This type of singing " resulted in hollow sounding music (Sherrane). Organum was very popular at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris with successful composers, Leonin, and his successor Perotin, utilizing this style of music in their works. Perotin went on to develop early works of polyphony, " two or more melodies are performed simultaneously (Early European Music- Part 2). " Polyphony added more depth and complexity to

plainchant. It could either rehearsed beforehand or improvised during the performance.