

The villancico

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During the late fifteenth century in Spain, King Ferdinand along with other Spanish courts influenced the idea to develop their own idea of music.

The Villancico was the product of this movement and became the most influential secular polyphonic style in the Spanish Renaissance. Songs were based on subjects that were talked about throughout Spain and were only composed for aristocracy. These short songs included a refrain and one or more stanzas.

Meanwhile, in Italia the counterpoint to this was the Frottola, which was a four part strophic song that is set syllabically with the melody in the upper voice, that include marked rhythms and very simple diatonic harmonies.

However, as history progresses new things are invented and soon the madrigal endured the frottola, the madrigal would to be the most important secular style in the sixteenth century Europe, predominantly Italia, and one could argue of the entire Renaissance era and its entirety.

During the course of this essay I will be discussing the background of how the madrigal came to be, as well as an introduction to how it slowly rose to the top of the charts in Italia as well as Europe, as well as the madrigal itself explaining its influence in society and to musicians all over Europe, and lastly the composers and what inspired them to grow the movement that would stand strong for years after their departure.

To the knowledge of mankind at the moment we are unsure directly of the condition the madrigal had before the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg; but, though there is missing evidence, there is a very

small margin of doubt that the early phases must have some correlation as we are aware of the later ones have done.

It is thought that the people responsible for the origination process were, the Troubadours and the Minnesingers, these groups had a very strong influence in popular music during the middle ages. In Florence during the fourteenth century a very unique style of poetry was introduced to the composers that would spark the madrigalists and would produce one of the best composers of the time Francesco Landini to write madrigals.

Now a side note, the fourteenth century madrigals are different from the sixteenth century ones. " Madrigal, in music, secular composition for two or more voices, introduced in Italy in the fourteenth century and revived in a different form during the sixteenth century, at which time it also became popular with English, French, German, and Spanish composers." (4).

For the most of the fifteenth century the music of Italy was sought out by the composing masters in the northern regions of France along with parts of the Netherlands. Late into the fifteenth century the native tradition of music that was very keened to the Italians, whos way of life was soon salvaged by the patronage noblemen in Florence as well as Mantua.

As the fifteenth century carries on, Spain begin to see a slight rise in the musical field during the Ferdinand and Isabella campaign - yes the very same who sent Christopher Columbus to find a new way to India - the king and queen wanted the courts to find a new style that would encourage unity and glorify Spain.

The product of this is the Villancico, which was the most important polyphonic form for them in the Renaissance time period.

The form of this style uses AAB stanza structures like most songs from the middle ages, the melody was always carried by the top voice while the other parts could be either sung or played by instruments. When Italia knew the news of this new form being produced in Spain, they slowly developed a counterpart which is called the Frottola.

The frottola was a tune that was used to sing poetry with, with the ending of each line having a cadence of some sort, with the upper voice providing the melody and lower parts the harmonial foundation. The features of this music was very simple and satirical, made for the courtly elite during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

According to Fenlon and Haar, " the publication of Pisano's Musica of 1520 put a stop to the publication of frottola collections without encouraging the rise or development of the madrigal or even the publication of new compositions of this sort... It was only with the appearance of the undated Libro primo de la Fortuna, which Einstein placed about fifteen twentynine, that the first true madrigals reached print.

The intervening period was regarded as an 'artistic pause', a larval stage of undermined length and character." (6).

It was around this time in the sixteenth century that the madrigal made its appearance into the Italian lives, and began to have a long outstanding impact on the composers and music as a whole. " As a literary type, the

madrigal of the sixteenth century is a free imitation of the fourteenth century madrigal. This literary movement was a great stimulus to musical activity.

The musicians of the early sixteenth century, at first Netherlands composers working in Italy, cooperated with the poets in order to achieve a new style of artistic refinement and expression." (2) "

A Madrigal, is a form of vocal chamber music that originated in northern Italy during the fourteenth century, declined and all but disappeared in the fifteenth, flourished anew in the sixteenth, and ultimately achieved international status in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries." (1).

Madrigals date back to Italia in the fourteenth century, the madrigals then were based on a poem that was pretty constant of a couple to three stanzas with each having exactly three lines, with about seven to eleven syllables per line. It was most often seen polyphonically (many voice parts) in just two parts, the form that was used reflected musically from the structure of the poem that was used for the piece.

The most common madrigals have a form that is AAB with both of the stanzas as the A section being sung to the exact same music as the first, this is then followed by the B section, or the coda, which kinda finishes up the poem. In the early sixteenth century the madrigal owed the style to the lyrics of Petrarch, the poetry at this time was very enjoyed and had an astounding revival.

" Madrigali de diversi musici: libro primo de la Serena (Rome, fifteen thirty) is the first collection of pieces to bear the title 'madrigal'. Its eight works by Verdelot, one by the Ferrarese Maistre Jhan and two by each of the Festas are characteristic of the new genre but it contains, like the diverse prints of the fifteen twenties, some lighter pieces and even a few French chansons." (5).

In the very early stages many songs were written in homophonic style (this is a dominant melody, sometimes predominant, with a somewhat subordinate accompaniment) and is typically intended for four voices.

One of the most influential composers of the madrigal was Philippe Verdelot, the french international spent most of his time in Italy, he is arguably considered to be called the father of the Italian madrigal even though he is french.

However, he is the most prolific and one of the earliest composers of the madrigal in his time, spending most of it in Florence after the city was revived by Medici. In fifteen thirty three or fifteen thirty four, two books of Verdelot madrigals were officially printed in Venice, Italy.

These books were soon to be the most popular collections of music at the time. By fifteen forty, Verdelot and Arcadelt were seen as the masters of the madrigal, although there are many other composers of the first generation some include, Francesco Layolle, Corteccia, Domenico Ferrabosco, and Costanzo Festa.

Festa was an important figure in the creation of a subcategory of madrigals, the three voice. The possible interest in this three voice madrigal is said to be stimulated by the three voice chansons in Rome around the fifteen twenties to fifteen thirties. His three voice madrigals were printed and reprinted countless times due to popularity for the simple and elegant style.

It is difficult to see from Festa's point of view to assess his importance, but nonetheless he was a figure that helped grow popularity for the musical genre.

Arcadelt was seen to have followed in the footsteps of Verdelot, the madrigals of Arcadelt were published in five books that had a good diversity of one, three or four voices between the time of fifteen thirty eight to fifteen forty four, and many of his works appear alongside Verdelot in manuscripts.

Many of the poetic literature that Arcadelt chose showed a very close relationship to the ballata style and some form of the canzone as well. His madrigals are shown to contain a fairly decent amount of counterpoint, within this texture he was able to blend the idea of sound and sense.

There is however no proof in any form that shows that Arcadelt or Verdelot lived in Venice, Italy at any point in time. During the middle of the sixteenth century the classical style of Arcadelt was still widely used even though the madrigal genre was very rapidly changing. The rising composer in Venice was Willaert, he soon became the head musical figure there from fifteen twenty seven until his death in fifteen sixty two.

According to the Oxford University Press, " In several respects this differs from what Verdelot and Arcadelt had done, even from Willaert's own earlier work. Willaert here set the verse of Petrarch in preference to that of that of 16th-century Petrarchists; he favoured the sonnet, dividing it so that a piece in two sections or partes, like a motet, resulted." (5).

The voices that are used in his madrigals are freed as if someone were speaking more so than exact. The pupils of his fairly imitated his style in many ways with questionable success. Due to Willaert's strong impact in the fifteen forties the town of Venice, Italy was the prime center of all madrigal composition in Europe.

The outer cities were greatly influenced by the Venetian way of musical culture. In the fifteen fifties, the level of chromaticism began to please the ear of society, again it is said that Willaert and his circle of pupils took the head figure. A composer by the name of Rore became of prime importance to the new innovations that were sweeping the madrigalists.

The early madrigals show that there must be some association with Willaert. The focus on the meaning of poetry led Rore to be able to fluidly run lines together, ending some phrases in the middle of the line, even disregarding some rules here and there. However, a new power emerges in fifteen fifty five as Palestrina and Lassus both finished their first book of madrigals.

The figure of Palestrina though could not be deciphered, as he was very commonly opinionated as a follower of Arcadelt, which to many historians

seems unfitting and unjust. Although Lassus was strongly associated with Rore and Willaert, his writings were very complex in nature. Palestrina on the other hand was seen as a stand out, a conservative of sorts from the experimental side of things.

" The madrigals are as a class appropriately lighter in texture and more flexible in rhythmic motion than the motets, and they make sharper use of contrasts. Yet they share the general lucidity of texture common in his music, and this quality may well have contributed to the popularity of the most famous among them." (5).

This made Palestrina a strong figure as a known madrigalist than people tend to admit. His books show a joy in the popularity of Rome during the time period, and many works are seen to be written for a private devotional setting. Meanwhile in England during the latter sixteenth century there was a greater concentration of madrigal compositions being written.

The madrigal is said to be associated with London music printing, which in fifteen eighty eight began under Byrd. In the fifteen nighties, Morley, weelkes and Wilbye began to shine as prolific composers for England. Morley was a young chap that was very keen to Italy was a major role in guiding the English madrigal development.

He enlisted more madrigals than anyone else in his time, he set a stylistic normality that was soon followed by other madrigalists in England, this gave him a position of quality power along with prestige.

Unfortunately for England, the madrigal was short lived after the death of Morley and Queen Elizabeth, once then the madrigal began a decline. This new growing mood struck and action against Petrarchism.

The history after the year sixteen hundred merely comes down to the study of minor figures who wrote only a few songs with some success. The period of English madrigals to some composers were seen as more abstracted in tradition. Many of whom seemingly ignored or merely did not understand the madrigal, they style of text or how to treat the words in a harmonic style. " After the second decade of the 17th century, no work of any lasting reputation was produced, and the style soon fell into neglect.

Under the Stuart dynasty polyphonic song lost much of its popularity, and the civil war crushed out all artistic feeling" (3). The madrigal was a popular choice throughout the Renaissance, but like most good things, they come to and end for a period of time before they are drawn out again.

The madrigal gave a new enlightenment to the people and the composers that wrote them. Without the madrigal we may not have the style that we use to day when we sing or hear instruments play. It opened doors that were used for many years and gave the opportunity for improvement.

The madrigal set norms that may not have been set without it and if they were it would have been many years after and who knows where we would be today without its unique style. Although this style is no longer written today, there are still societies and groups in schools that show a great appreciation to the genre, and form madrigal clubs that only sing them.

After the madrigal fell out the opera became the talk of the town and it is believed the reason as to why the madrigal fell short is what seems like only an eighty year p. Work Cited Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Madrigal." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 19 Nov. 2017, [www. britannica. com/art/madrigal-vocal-music](http://www.britannica.com/art/madrigal-vocal-music).

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