

The Polyphonic Style

The Catholic Church's OTHER Great Gift
to Western Music

Example: "O Magnum Mysterium"
by Tomas Luis de Victoria

Three kinds of musical “texture”:

Monophony (or monody) – A unison sung melody

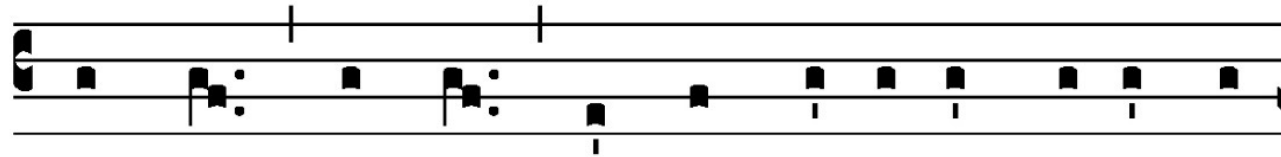
Homophony – A melody supported by other lines providing harmonic background (= a hymn in four parts)

Polyphony – Two or more independent melody lines that simultaneously, often repeating melodic material and text, and sounding good because of certain intervals between them.

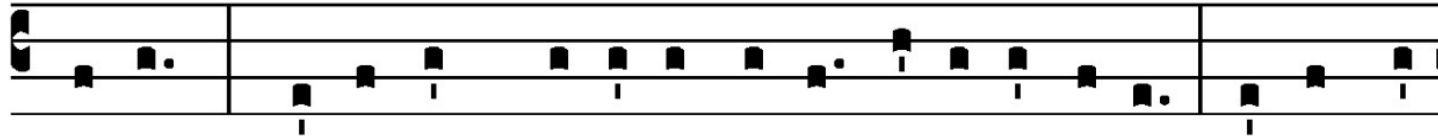
Note: When polyphony grows up, it becomes “counterpoint.” The unison of the independent melody lines is achieved by all of them working within the chordal framework of the major/minor keys

Gregorian Chant: Pure Monophony!

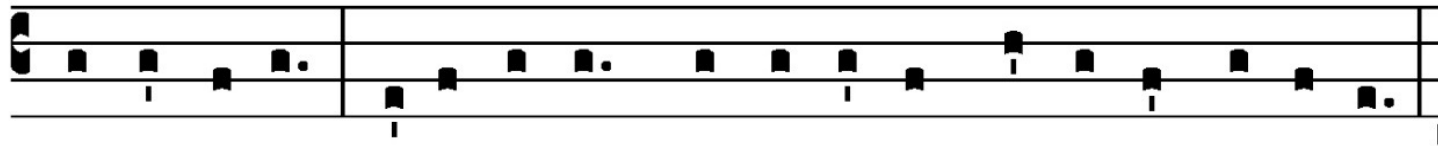
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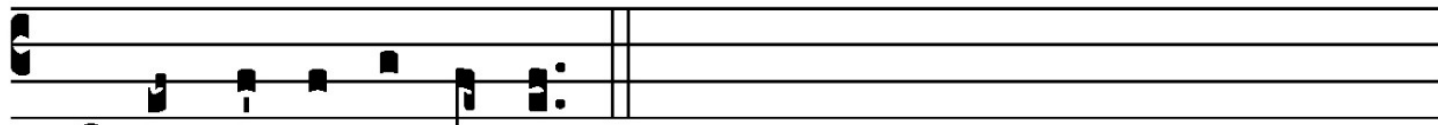
Anctus, * Sanctus, Sanctus Dómi-nus De- us Sá-



ba- oth. Plé-ni sunt cæ-li et terra gló-ri- a tu- a. Ho-sánna



in excélsis. Bene-díctus qui ve-nit in nómi-ne Dómi-ni.



Ho-sánna in excél-sis.



Major Event in Western Music: The Birth of Polyphonic Worship Music

- ▶ Notre Dame Cathedral: 12th and 13th Century
- ▶ A spirit of innovation with the Gregorian Chant
- ▶ “Let’s add other voices above or below the chant!”

First polyphony:
Double chant at the
octave by having boys
join the chant schola





Stages in the growth of polyphony:

- ▶ Getting more daring:
Doubling the chant at the fifth....
- ▶ And then at the fourth . . .
- ▶ And then lines moving away and toward each other
- ▶ Et voila: Polyphony!

○ Magnum Mysterium

“Oh, Great Mystery”

Latin text

○ magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum
natum,
iacentem in praesepe!
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum.
Alleluia!

English translation

○ great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the
newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!



The ox knows its
master, the donkey its
owner's manger, but
Israel does not know,
my people do not
understand.

Isaiah 1:3



While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and **placed him in a manger**, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 2:6-7



“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”



So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

Luke 2: 12 & 16





In a loud voice she
exclaimed:
"Blessed are you
among women, and
blessed is the child you
will bear! But why am I
so favored, that the
mother of my Lord
should come to me?"

Luke 1:42-43

Four-part vocal setting in G major, 4/4 time. The lyrics are in Russian. The Soprano part begins with a melodic line, while the other parts provide harmonic support. The lyrics are: "ты в раю - се", "раю - се", "а, в раю - се", and "а, в раю - се".

ты в раю - се раю - се

раю - се раю - се

а, в раю - се раю - се

а, в раю - се раю - се