

EXPLANATION 1.3: MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS POLYPHONY

1. ORGANUM

The combination of sounds was already known by St. Augustine in the 4th century and by Boethius in the 6th century. However, in some theoretical treatises at the end of the 9th century the singing of several voices at the same time (polyphony) was mentioned with the name of "organum". It is possible that this practice was not a recent innovation but had been done before. Regino de Prüm and Hucbaldo define consonance (sounds that please the ear) and the dissonance (sounds that displease the ear) in those treatise.

Organum consists of adding another voice to a Gregorian melody. The original melody was called vox principalis and the new melody vox organalis.

2. TYPES OF ORGANUM

When another melody was added to the original melody at an interval of a 4th, 5th, or 8th , two parallel melodies were formed. This was known as **simple organum**. If, in addition, one of these voices or both of them, were doubled again to the octave, then, this received the name of **compound organum**.

On the other hand it is distinguished that:

The organum whose voices always – or always almost always - go in parallel is called the **parallel organum**.

When the parallel movement is temporarily abandoned at the beginning and end of the sentence, then this is called **modified parallel organum**.

Subsequently, if the parallelism is completely abandoned, then becomes **free organum** because the voices go either in the opposite direction, or oblique, or as one can choose.

3. ORGANUM TREATISES

All these organa (plural of organum) are explained in the most well-known treatises of the time such as:

- The Music Enchiriadis and the Scholia Enchiriadis, both anonymous of the 9th century.
- The Micrologus, by Guido d'Arezzo, ca.1050
- The Ad organum faciendum, ca.1100.

If organum was practiced or not in the first two treatises we do not really know for sure, but, the truth is that the birth of written polyphony begins with these treatises, attributed to Hucbaldo (9th century), although its authorship has now been questioned.

4. COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS:

1. **When was singing in several voices known in written form?**
2. **What is organum?**
3. **What is a vox organalis and a vox principalis?**
4. **What is parallel organum?**
5. **What is free organum?**
6. **Name the two 9th century treatise on organum and on which dates where they written?**
7. **Who wrote the treaty "Micrologus"?**
8. **What word is the plural of organum?**
9. **Write on a staff a vox organalis at a fifth above of this notes: C D E G F E D C.**