

## EXPLANATION 2.4: THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

### 1) ITALY

The most significant aspect in secular music was the creation of the frottola and the development of the madrigal. On the other hand, in religious music, the main aspects were the use of the "spezzati" choirs (this is the placing of several choirs in various parts of the church) and the ideas of the Counter-Reformation (Council of Trent), present, above all, in the music of Giovanni da Palestrina. These ideas intended that music be understandable in its texts, without parodies or sensual aspects, so as to bring God closer to those who would listen to it.

### 2) THE FROTTOLA

The frottola is a polyphonic composition sung in Italian. The texts deal with very varied topics (amatorial, satirical, mythological, humorous). The rhythm has a dancing flow and the upper voice always predominates, in such a way that the other voices used to be played by instruments (lute above all). They were usually written in 4 voices with preponderant homophony (same rhythm in all the voices). It is of aristocratic origin and is a precursor of the madrigal. Its structure is stanza with a refrain that is repeated between the stanzas. The main composers of frottola were Bartolomeo Tromboncino and Marchetto Cara. The area where they worked was Mantua, Ferrara and Urbino.

### 3) THE LAUDA (Plural: laude)

The lauda is the religious counterpart of the frottola. The texts are religious, in Italian or Latin. Musically they had the same characteristics as the frottola. Laude were sung in semipublic devotional meetings, probably a capella or with instruments accompanying the remaining 3 voices. The texts were very understandable and for this reason laude were very popular during the Counter-Reformation. Some Franco-Flemish composers used laude's melodies for their motets, like Josquin.

### 4) MÚSICA RELIGIOSA: ESCUELA VENECIANA Y ESCUELA ROMANA

#### VENICE

The 16<sup>th</sup> century is distinguished by the magnificent chapels in cathedrals. In Venice the artistic center was the Cathedral of Saint Marc. There, the most notable musicians were Adrian Willaert and the Gabriellis (Andrea and his nephew Giovanni). Religious Venetian music, texturally speaking, is more homophonic than contrapuntal, emphasizing the use of several choirs at the same time (policorality). Three main composers were:

- Adrian Willaert, of Flemish origin, used the divided choirs, called "spezzati", that alternate as question-answer.
- Andrea Gabrielli used homophony frequently.
- Giovanni Gabrielli, introduced a chorus of instruments to the vocal choir. This last composer ventures into the Baroque.

#### ROME

In Rome, the figure of Giovanni da Palestrina stands out. He was a composer who used all techniques of polyphonic composition. His music is considered as the most perfect expression of ecclesiastical style. It is linked to the musical ideas of the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation. These ideas demanded comprehensibility of the texts, avoiding madrigalisms and suppression of profane cantus firmus or cantus firmus coming from parody. Other very important composers of the Roman school were Orlando di Lasso and the Spanish Tomás Luis de Victoria who was also a very good organist as well as composer.

### COMPREHENSION TEXTS QUESTIONS

1. **What two secular Renaissance musical forms developed in Italy?**
2. **What ideas are important for the Counter-Reform in the musical aspect?**
3. **What is a frottola and what are its texts about?**
4. **How is the rhythm and upper voice of a frottola?**
5. **What is the structure of a frottola and how many voices does it have?**
6. **Why is the lauda the religious counterpart of the frottola and why they were so popular?**
7. **Texturally, how is religious Venetian music, and what does it emphasise?**
8. **Name one musical aspect of each composer at Saint Mark's Cathedral.**
9. **What did Palestrina do in his music to adapt to the ideas of the Council of Trent?**
10. **Who were the other two composers of the Roman School?**