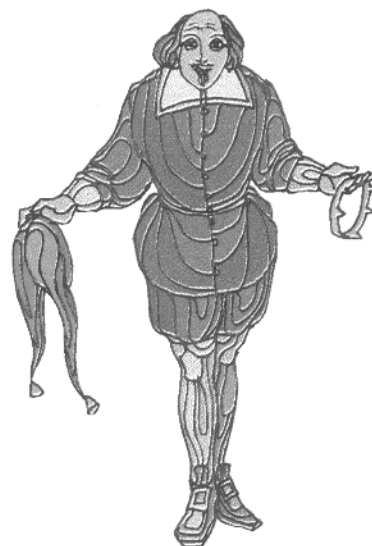
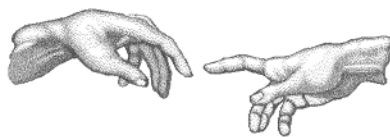
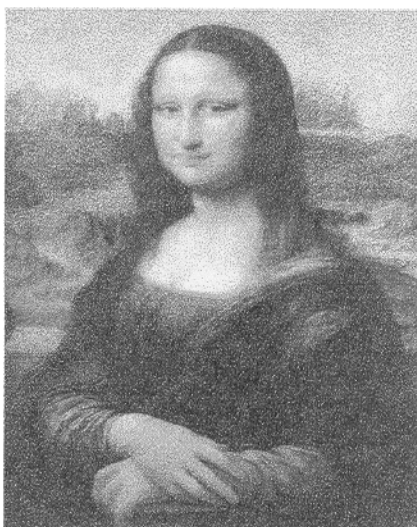

Music in History: The Renaissance 1450-1600

After the 1000 years of "Dark Ages," the Renaissance, from 1450-1600, brought much needed "light" into the world. People of the time spoke of a "rebirth" of creativity. Everybody wanted to learn. They wanted to read, write, learn mathematics, and play music. During this time period Columbus and Magellan explored the world. Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo created masterpieces of art. The printing press was invented. This was also the era of Shakespeare. Great things were happening in the world.

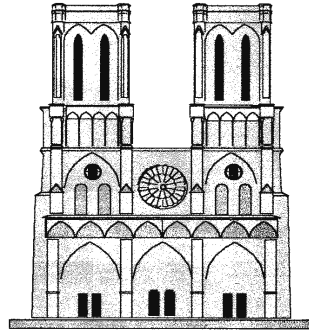


During the Renaissance every educated person was trained in music. It was also an important leisure activity. Musicians worked in churches, noble courts, and towns. But the focus of music was shifting from the church (like in the Middle Ages) to the courts.

In the Renaissance, as in the Middle Ages, vocal music was more important than instrumental music. Renaissance **composers**, people who write music, often used **word painting** in their music. Word painting is making a musical "picture" of the text. For example, the words "coming down from the clouds" might be set to a melody that moves down, and "running" might have many fast notes. Renaissance music has a narrow range of **dynamics**, **tone color**, and **rhythm**. The texture is mostly **polyphonic**. There is **not** a strong beat in Renaissance music so the rhythm flows gently along.

Music in History: The Renaissance 1450-1600

The music of the church, **sacred music**, was almost always vocal music. Instruments were considered too "vulgar" to be played in church. However, a few instruments began to find their way into church, such as the organ. Most church music was written for the church service called the **mass**.



Music that was played outside of the church is called **secular music**. The most important kind of secular vocal music in the Renaissance is the **madrigal**. A madrigal is a piece for several solo voices. The text is a short poem that is usually about love. It uses word painting. Due to the invention of the printing press in 1450, madrigals were widely used in Europe.

Instrumental music was becoming more important. Much of the instrumental music



was used for dancing. Dancing was a very popular Renaissance entertainment, so there is a great deal of this kind of music that has come down to us.

Renaissance instruments made after and duller sound than the instruments that we hear today. Composers did not write music for any specific instrument like they do today. This was because the music was meant to be played on **any** instrument that was available.