

The Late Renaissance

(ca. 1570-1600)

Composers

- ▶ **Giovanni Perluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525-1594)**
 - ▶ Italian composer of sacred music (masses and motets)
- ▶ **Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594)**
 - ▶ Flemish composer of both sacred and secular music (masses, motets, madrigals, etc.)
- ▶ **Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611)**
 - ▶ Spanish composer of sacred music (masses and motets)

Genres

- ▶ **Mass**
 - ▶ The Catholic mass has certain recurring (or "ordinary") Latin texts that were sung each week:
 - ▶ Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Benedictus
 - ▶ In the late-sixteenth century, these mass texts were set to music using imitative polyphony
- ▶ **Motet**
 - ▶ Similar in style to settings of the mass (also using imitative polyphony), but instead of using mass texts, motets use other sacred Latin texts (such as passages from the Bible)

Palestrina, *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera*

- ▶ **Aspects to consider**
 - ▶ **Character:** What is the character of the music? Sacred or secular and dancelike?
 - ▶ **Texture:** How are the voices related? Is one voice more important than the others?
 - ▶ **Melody:** Jumpy and exciting or smooth and serene? What is the largest melodic leap that you can find?
 - ▶ **Range:** How big is the range for the upper (cantus) voice?
 - ▶ **Meter:** Does the music seem like it has a clear meter?
 - ▶ **Harmony:** Is it consonant or dissonant sounding?
 - ▶ **Cadences:** Do all of the voices cadence together? Where is the first cadence?

General characteristics of the music

- ▶ Purely vocal in style; not instrumental or dancelike in nature
- ▶ Imitative entries of the same line of text (*points of imitation*)
- ▶ Voices are independent and nearly equal in importance
- ▶ Primarily stepwise with careful treatment of leaps
- ▶ Small vocal ranges / avoidance of extreme registers
- ▶ Temporally free; does not sound metrical
- ▶ Primarily consonant with careful treatment of dissonance
- ▶ More focus on the linear (melody) than on the vertical (harmony)
- ▶ Overlapping cadences create a sense of seamless continuity
- ▶ Above all it is subtle and refined, balanced and restrained, avoiding the dramatic gesture