

Table of Contents

The History of Music

The Middle Ages

Introduction	7
Life in the Middle Ages	8
The Political Situation	8
Society and Culture	16
Science	26
The Arts in the Middle Ages	28
Literature	28
Architecture	31
Painting and Decorative Arts	34
Sculpture	38
Musical Life in the Middle Ages	40
The Church	40
The Court	42

Music in the Middle Ages

Characteristics of Music in the Middle Ages	44
General Features	44
Specific Features	46
Composers	54

The Renaissance

Introduction	57
Life in the Renaissance	58
The Political Situation	58
Society and Culture	63
Science and Thought	70
The Arts in the Renaissance	74
Literature	74
Architecture	76
Sculpture	78
Painting	80
Musical Life in the Renaissance	88
Professional Musicians	88
Amateur Musicians	90

Music in the Renaissance

Characteristics of Renaissance Music	91
General Features	91
Specific Features	92
Liturgical Forms	95
Secular Forms	97
Instrumental Music	99
Instrumental Forms	100
Composers	101
Early Renaissance	101
High Renaissance	104

Humanism

Humanism, in connection with the Renaissance, refers to the study of ancient literature, history and moral philosophy, and it is not surprising that it developed in Italy where people lived among reminders of ancient Roman civilization. It was not that the classical works from Rome and Greece were unknown in the Middle Ages, because it was the monks in the scriptoria who saved them. But in the Renaissance they were studied by lay people, who did not automatically see things from a religious point of view. Humanism was essentially a program for education which involved the study of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy as found in ancient Latin and Greek texts, and was seen as the way to produce good citizens. It became the main intellectual force in Renaissance Italy and spread to most of Europe.

Humanism focussed more on life on earth than on the promise of a life in heaven. More emphasis was placed on individual achievement and human feeling, less reliance on tradition and religious authority. Its influence was felt in the growth of literature in the language spoken by the people instead of Latin, as well as in the writing of history, art and the way people lived their lives.

One of the most important humanist thinkers was the Dutch cleric and scholar Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1469-1536). He studied and lectured all over Western Europe and made several trips to England, establishing humanism there as well. His criticism of corruption in the Catholic Church preceded the Reformation, although he was not really a religious reformer. He also held enlightened views about education and teaching children; he criticized excessive discipline and encouraged arousing the children's interest. His most famous work is *In Praise of Folly*.

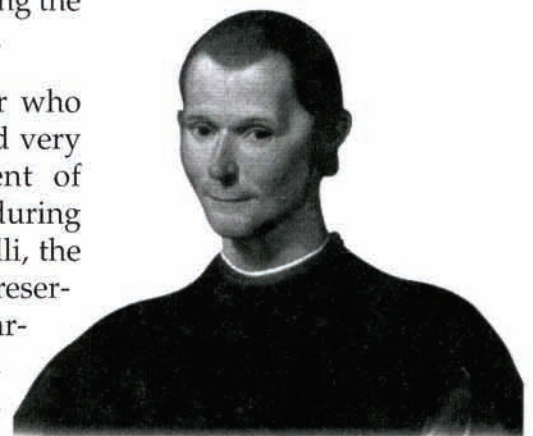
Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) was a political philosopher who was raised in the Italian humanist tradition but who reached very different moral conclusions. *The Prince* was a statement of Machiavelli's philosophy of politics, which he developed during his career as a diplomat in Florence. According to Machiavelli, the ideal leader, or prince, is a benevolent despot for whom the preservation of the state is the only goal. The book describes the various unscrupulous methods by which a ruler can gain and hold power. To this day, a cunning schemer may be called "machievellian."



Erasmus, painted by
Hans Holbein



A page from *In Praise of Folly* with a drawing
by Hans Holbein



Niccolò Machiavelli

The late Renaissance



Rosso Fiorentino, *Descent from the Cross*, 1521

In the late Renaissance, there was a reaction to the style of the High Renaissance; this new movement came to be called mannerism. The earliest mannerist painters pulled away from the classicism of the High Renaissance. Fiorentino's *Descent from the Cross*, for example, shows sharp edges and acid colours that are very different from the flowing lines and naturalism of the previous generation of Renaissance painters.

The Madonna with the Long Neck by Parmigianino is typical of mannerist style, with elongated bodies in exaggerated poses and a general sense of artificiality.

One of the greatest mannerist painters was Tintoretto, who used the tactic of contrasting bright light and deep darkness to increase the drama of his works. He also often organized his paintings on a diagonal that reaches to the very back of the scene, another theatrical technique. One of his greatest works, *The Last Supper*, is very different from the painting of the same name by Leonardo da Vinci.



Parmigianino, *The Madonna with the Long Neck*, 1535



Tintoretto, *The Last Supper*, 1592-94

Tintoretto often included elements of the supernatural in his works. Here, angels conjured from the clouds of smoke from the oil lamp seem to hover over the table.