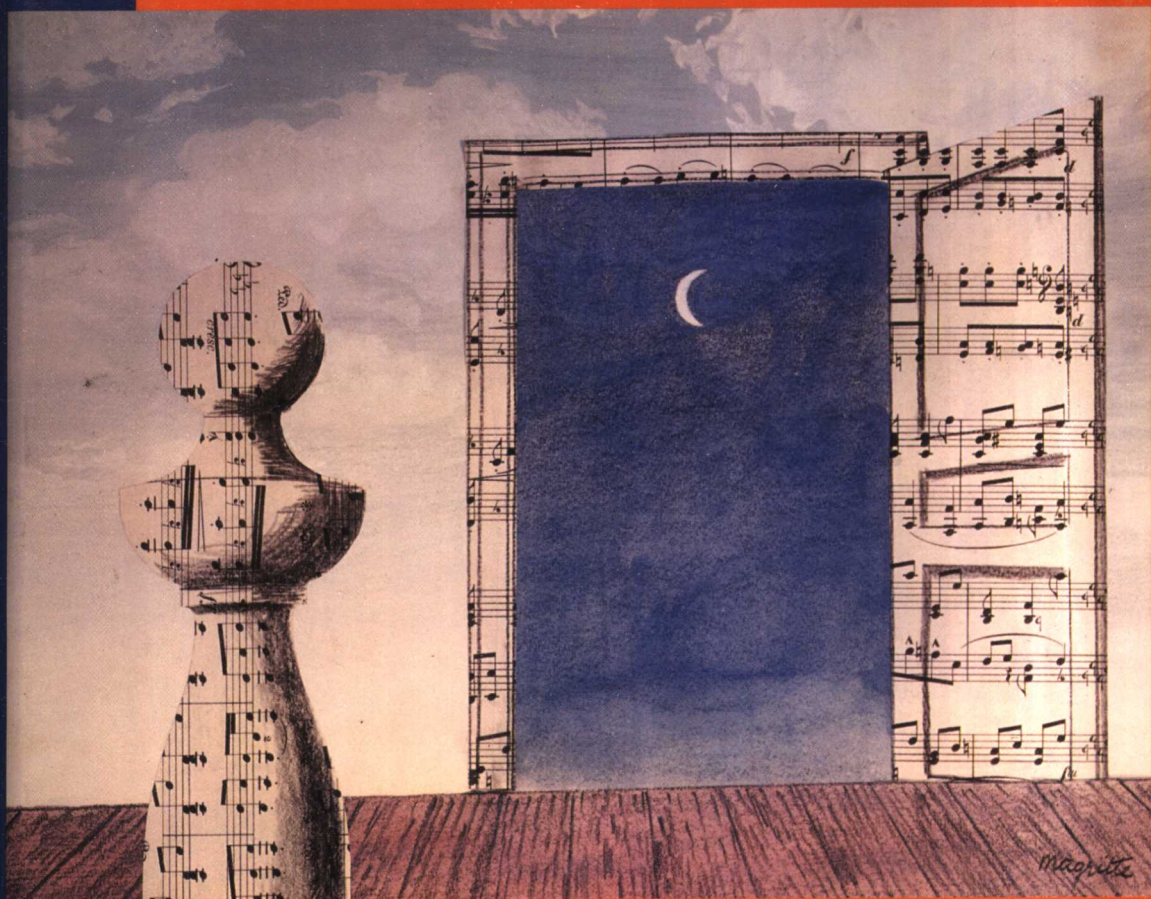


CONCISE HISTORY OF

WESTERN MUSIC

SECOND EDITION



BARBARA RUSSANO HANNING

BASED ON DONALD JAY GROUT AND CLAUDE V. PALISCA
A HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC, SIXTH EDITION

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The City College of New York

City University of New York

BASED ON

DONALD JAY GROUT & CLAUDE V. PALISCA

A HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC, *sixth edition*



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MUSIC IN ANCIENT GREECE AND EARLY CHRISTIAN ROME

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PRELUDE

Why study music history? Because in music as in all other realms of human endeavor, the past influences and informs the present. Never in music history has this been more true than in our own time, when scholars have retrieved and restored so much music from the past, performers have brought it to life, and recordings, radio, and television have disseminated it more widely than ever before. Our great-grandparents had access only to music that was performed live by their parents, teachers, friends, and local entertainers. If they could read music and afford lessons, they might also have become acquainted with a few works by Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and other composers, including the tunesmiths of Tin Pan Alley, whose music was in print. In contrast, the technological revolution has made an overwhelming number of works available: ten centuries of written music as well as the (often unwritten) musical styles of cultures from around the globe.

Composers and musicians have always been influenced by the sounds around them, regardless of how limited or varied these sounds were. Today, the possibilities are almost infinite; they range from the folk music of various cultures and ethnic groups to popular music broadcast over the airwaves or accessible via the Internet, even to the raw sounds of nature (such as whale songs) harnessed by modern technology. These influences are absorbed almost unconsciously and are either unintentionally or purposely incorporated into new works. Furthermore, throughout history composers of one generation have engaged in a conscious and determined struggle to define themselves in opposition to, or in sympathy with, the sounds and

styles of previous generations. Like children growing away from their parents, composers sometimes rebel and strike out on their own, only later to acknowledge and embrace or transform the ways of their predecessors. We find this tension—between rejecting the immediate past and accepting or reinterpreting it—in every era of music history. In fact, it mirrors a pattern we recognize in all fields of learning and the arts since the beginning of recorded history. In more recent times, however, the restoration of works from the more remote past has complicated the issue for creative artists by providing an awesome array of additional models and stylistic possibilities.

In itself, the influence of a rich past may not offer enough reason to study music history. After all, we can enjoy *Over the Rainbow*, *Yesterday*, or the latest Top-10 music videos without knowing who wrote them, when they were first performed, or what forces induced their creation. But if we want to understand *why* the music we hear was composed to sound the way it does, we look to music history for explanations. For example, as much as we may enjoy listening to Beethoven, we cannot really *understand* or *appreciate* his work without knowing the music of Haydn or Bach. Similarly, the music of Ellington or Stravinsky, to name two important composers of the twentieth century, owes much of its distinctiveness to a particular ancestry. Ellington's musical parentage included the ragtime and jazz idioms of African-American music as well as some European traditions. And Stravinsky reached not only into his own Russian past for inspiration, but as far back as the fourteenth century to the works of Guillaume de Machaut, which became available to modern listeners only during Stravinsky's lifetime.

To tell the story from its beginning, the history of Western European music—that is, the art music of Europe and the Americas, as opposed to the musics of many Eastern and other cultures—starts in ancient Greece and Rome. Like many aspects of European and American culture, such as philosophy, literature, visual arts, and government, Western music has tangible connections to these early civilizations, links that go back more than three thousand years. We acknowledge these connections when we design our Supreme Court and other civic buildings to look like ancient Greek temples, when we talk about *Platonic* love, and when we explain father-son conflicts in terms of the *Oedipus* complex.

Unlike the statues and architectural ruins of antiquity, however, the musical works themselves have vanished, except for a small number of songs and hymns (praise-songs) that were not identified until the sixteenth century or later. But the Greco-Roman musical heritage was transmitted to modern civilization through written descriptions and through images that survived in painting or sculpture, on vases, buildings, tombs, and other artifacts from the ancient world. We will see that Western music has much in common with **MUSIC IN ANCIENT GREEK LIFE AND THOUGHT**. Then, as now, music was used in religious ceremonies, as popular entertainment, and as accompaniment to drama. Greek music theory—especially its ideas concerning pitch—became the basis for Western music theory and was passed

on to the ancient Romans. During the first and second centuries, when the Roman Empire was in its heyday, cultivated people were supposed to be educated in music, just as they were expected to know Greek and Latin. Many of the emperors were patrons of music, and one—Nero—even aspired to personal fame as a musician.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, the musical heritage of ancient Greece and Rome was transmitted to the West, if incompletely and imperfectly, through **THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, specifically in the writings of the church fathers and other scholars who tried to understand and preserve this enormous body of information about music and other subjects. As the public rituals and musical practices of the early church spread from Jerusalem to Asia Minor and westward into Africa and Europe, they picked up musical elements from different areas of the Mediterranean region. At first there was little standardization; but as the prestige of the Roman emperor declined, the importance of the Roman bishop (eventually, the pope) increased, and Christians began to acknowledge the authority of Rome in matters of faith and discipline. This Roman dominance gradually led to the regulation and standardization of the Christian liturgy, or worship service, and to the organization of a repertory of melodies for singing sacred texts now known as Gregorian chant.

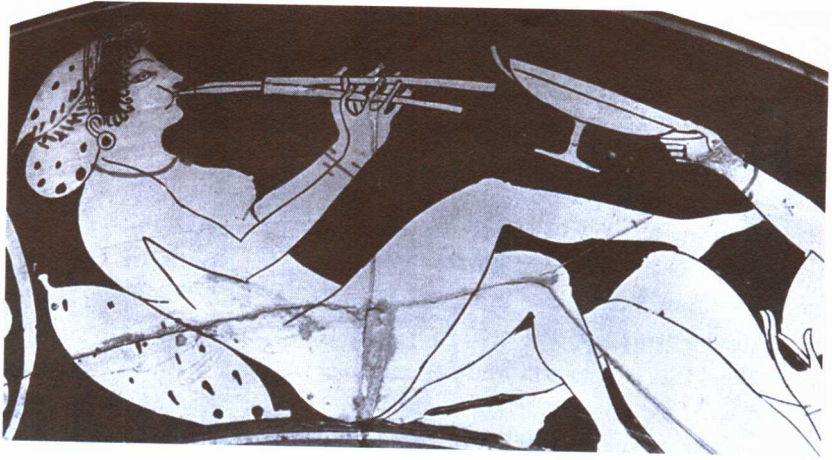
MUSIC IN ANCIENT GREEK LIFE AND THOUGHT

In Greek mythology, music had a divine origin: its inventors and earliest practitioners were gods and demigods, such as Apollo, Amphion, and Orpheus, and their music had magical powers. People thought it could heal sickness, purify the body and mind, and work miracles. In the Hebrew Scriptures, similar powers were attributed to music: we may recall the stories of David curing Saul's madness by playing the harp (1 Sam. 16:14–23) or of the trumpet blasts and shouting that toppled the walls of Jericho (Josh. 6:12–20).

The few surviving examples of ancient Greek music come from relatively late periods. Among the complete works or substantial fragments that survive we have the Epitaph of Seikilos, a drinking song from about the second century B.C.E. inscribed on a tombstone (see illustration, page 6, and its transcription, **NAWM 1**). From this and similar examples, and from what was written about Greek music, we may guess that it resembles music of the early Christian era. It was primarily monophonic—that is, melody without harmony or counterpoint—but instruments often embellished the melody while a soloist or an ensemble sang it, thus creating heterophony. Greek music, moreover, was almost entirely improvised. Its melody and rhythm were intimately linked to the sound and meter of Greek poetry. Despite the

Extant Greek
music

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Woman playing the double-aulos in a drinking scene. Usually a single-reed but sometimes a double-reed instrument, the aulos was typically played in pairs; here the player seems to finger identical notes on both pipes. Red-figured drinking cup ascribed to the Attic vase painter Oltos, 525–500 B.C.E. (Archivo Fotografico, Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional)

Greek theory

similarities between Greek and early Christian music, we have no evidence of any continuity in practice from the earlier culture to the later one.

By contrast, Greek theory profoundly affected the music of western Europe in the Middle Ages. From the ancient philosophers and theorists we know much more about Greek musical thought than about the music itself. Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle wrote about the nature of music, its place in the cosmos, its effects on people, and its proper uses in human society. Greek theorists, from Pythagoras (ca. 500 B.C.E.) to Aristides Quintilianus nine hundred years later, not only discovered numerical relationships between pitches but also developed systematic descriptions of the materials of music and the patterns of musical composition. In both the philosophy and the science of music, the Greeks achieved insights and established principles that have survived to this day. Here we will discuss only those that were most characteristic of, and important for, the later history of Western music. We will also discover that the word *music* had a much wider meaning to the Greeks than it has today.

Music and number

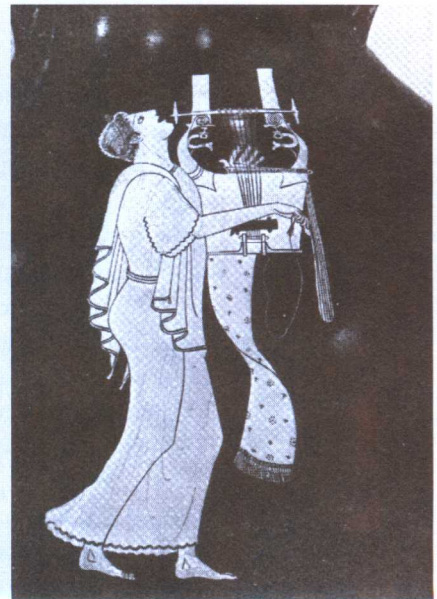
Pythagoras and his followers taught that music was inseparable from number, which was supposed to be the key to the entire spiritual and physical universe. According to legend, Pythagoras discovered the ratios of certain musical intervals when he heard hammers of different sizes pounding on an anvil in a blacksmith shop. More likely, he observed that when a vibrating string was stopped (held down) at its midpoint—or divided into lengths expressed by the simple ratio 2:1—it produced a sound one octave above the open (unstopped) string. Similarly, the ratios 3:2 produced a fifth, and 4:3 a fourth. Musical sound, then, being controlled by number, reflected the harmony of the entire universe, because number also

ANCIENT GREEK INSTRUMENTS: KITHARA AND AULOS

From earliest times music was an inseparable part of religious ceremonies. The lyre became the characteristic instrument for the cult of Apollo, and the aulos for followers of the god Dionysus. Both instruments probably came to Greece from Asia Minor; they were played solo and as accompaniment to the singing or recitation of epic poems. The lyre and its larger counterpart, the kithara, used five to seven strings (later as many as eleven). The aulos, a single- or double-reed instrument sometimes incorrectly identified as a flute, often appears with twin pipes. It was used to accompany the singing of poems in the worship of Dionysus as well as in theatrical performances of the great Greek tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and others, in which choruses and other musical portions combined or alternated with the sounds of the aulos.

From the sixth century B.C.E. or even earlier, both the lyre and the aulos were independent solo instruments. Contests of kithara and aulos players, as well as festivals of instrumental and vocal music, became increasingly popular. When instrumental music grew more independent, the number of virtuosos multiplied and the music itself turned more complex. Alarmed by this trend, the philosopher Aristotle warned against too much professional training in general music education. A reaction against technical virtuosity and musical complexity set in, and by the beginning of the Christian era, Greek music as well as its theory was simplified.

Kitharode singing to his own accompaniment on the kithara. His left hand, which supports the instrument with a sling (not visible), is damping some of the strings, while his right hand has apparently just swept over all the strings with the plectrum. A professional musician like this one wore a long, flowing robe (*chiton*) and a mantle (*himation*). Detail of an Attic red-figured amphora from the fourth century B.C.E., attributed to the Berlin Painter. (Courtesy, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1956. [56.171.38] All Rights Reserved)





Tomb stele from Aidin, near Tralles, Asia Minor. It bears an epitaph, a kind of *skolion*, or drinking song, with pitch and rhythmic notation, identified in the first lines as being by Seikilos, probably first century C.E. See the transcription in NAWM I. (Copenhagen, National Museum, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, Inventory No. 14897)

Music and poetry

determined the motion of the planets and the character of the human soul (see window, pages 14–15).

The close union between music and poetry is another measure of the Greeks' broad conception of music. For them, the two were practically synonymous: Plato, for example, held that song (*melos*) was made up of speech, rhythm, and harmony (which he defined as an agreeable succession of pitches in a melody). "Lyric" poetry meant poetry sung to the lyre; the original Greek word for "tragedy" incorporates the noun *ōdē*, "the art of singing." Many other words that designated different kinds of poetry, such as *hymn*, were musical terms. In the Epitaph of Seikilos already mentioned (NAWM 1), the musical rhythms of each line of the poem follow the text rhythms very closely. And if we knew the correct pronunciation of the ancient Greek verses, we might well discover that the contours of the melody match the rising and falling inflections of the words.

The doctrine of *ethos*

Underlying the doctrine of *ethos* (the Greek word for character) is the belief that music possessed moral qualities and could affect a person's character and behavior. Because of the Pythagorean view that the same mathematical laws governing music operate throughout the cosmos, the human soul was also thought to be kept in harmony by numerical relationships. Music, then, could penetrate the soul and, indeed, the inanimate world. The legendary musicians of mythology, it was believed, owed their ability to perform miracles to this power of music.

Theory of imitation

Closely related to the doctrine of *ethos* is Aristotle's theory of imitation, which explains how music affects behavior. Music, he writes, imitates (that is, represents) the passions or states of the soul, such as gentleness, anger, courage, temperance, and their opposites. Music that imitates a certain passion also arouses that passion in the listener, and so habitual listening to music that stirs up ignoble passions, for example, warps a person's character. In short, the wrong kind of music makes you the wrong kind of person,

and the right kind tends to make you a better person. Aristotle argues, for example, that those being trained to govern should avoid melodies expressing softness and indolence and should listen instead to melodies that imitate courage and similar virtues.

Both Plato and Aristotle believed that a public system of education that stressed gymnastics to discipline the body and music to discipline the mind could create the "right" kind of person. In his *Republic*, written about 380 B.C.E., Plato insists that these two educational components must be balanced: too much music makes a man effeminate or neurotic while too much athletics makes him uncivilized, violent, and ignorant. Plato recommends two *modes* (styles of melody)—Dorian and Phrygian—because they fostered the passions of temperance and courage. He excludes other modes from his ideal Republic and deplores current styles that rely on too many notes, scales that are too complex, and the mixing of incompatible genres, rhythms, and instruments. He disapproves of changing established musical conventions, saying that lawlessness in art and education inevitably leads to poor manners and anarchy in society. Aristotle, in the *Politics* (ca. 330 B.C.E.), is less restrictive than Plato about particular modes and rhythms. He holds that music can be used for amusement and intellectual enjoyment as well as for education. But he also believes that music is powerful enough, especially in combination with drama, to arouse certain emotions, like pity and fear, in people and so relieve them of those same emotions through a process similar to medical purgation or *katharsis*.

Music in education

In limiting the kinds of music they would allow in the ideal society, Plato and Aristotle showed what they disliked of Greek musical life, including orgiastic ritual rhythms, elaborate instrumental music, and professional virtuosos. These philosophers appreciated the great power music held over people's intellectual and emotional well-being. In later centuries, the church fathers also warned regularly against certain kinds of music. Nor is the issue dead: in the twentieth century, dictatorships, both leftist and rightist, attempted to control the musical tastes and activities of their people. Educators and many ordinary citizens today still express concern about the kinds of music (and pictures, lyrics, and performances) to which young people are exposed.

Music and politics

The Greek discipline of *harmonics*, or the study of matters concerning pitch, laid the foundation for our modern system of music theory and its vocabulary. Concepts such as notes, intervals, scales, and modes were defined and explored by Greek writers, including Aristoxenus around 320 B.C.E. (*Harmonic Elements*) and Cleonides, who lived some five or six hundred years later. Intervals, such as tones, semitones, and ditones (thirds), were combined into scales. Certain intervals, such as the fourth, fifth, and octave, were recognized as consonant. The scale's principal building block was the tetrachord, made up of four notes spanning the interval of a fourth. Theorists recognized three kinds, or genera, of tetrachord: diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic, the last involving intervals smaller than a

The harmonic system

Tetrachords

semitone. Such variety allowed for a broad range of expression and many different nuances within melodies.

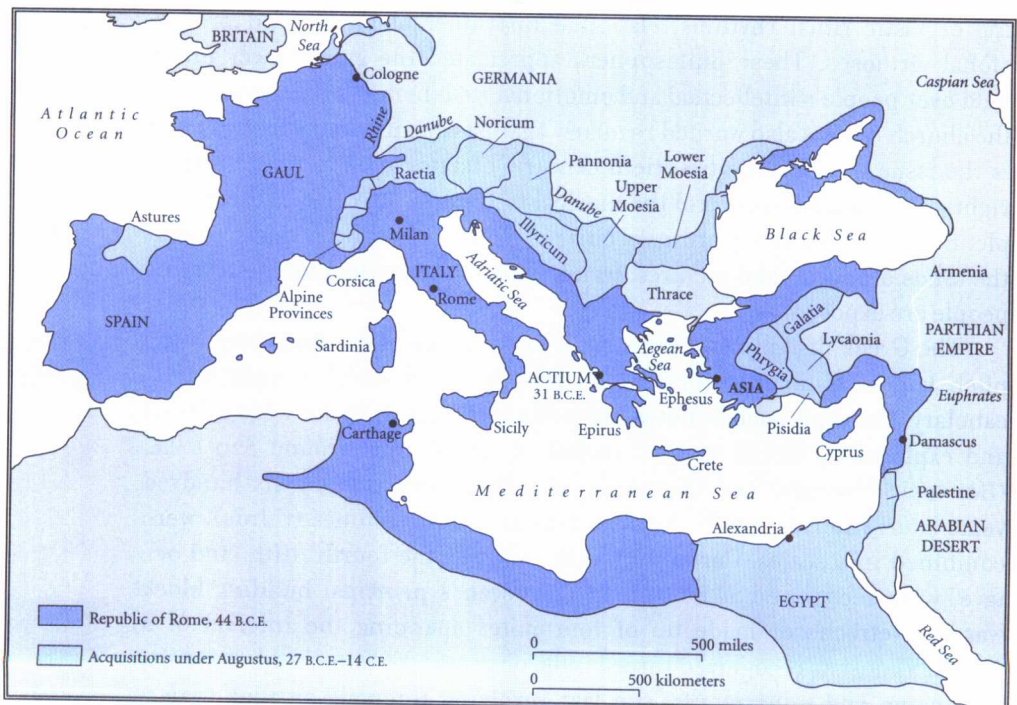
Early Christian writers about music transmitted some of these Greek concepts to the Middle Ages in their original form. Other concepts were poorly understood and survived only after being adapted to the musical practice of Gregorian chant. Still others were forgotten altogether until their rediscovery by the great Renaissance humanist scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Chapter 6).

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH: MUSICAL THOUGHT

Rome's decline

By the fifth century, the Roman Empire, which had for a time imposed peace on most of western Europe and on large parts of Africa and Asia as well, declined in wealth and strength. Unable to defend itself against invaders from the north and east, it was too large and weak to continue. The common civilization it had fostered throughout Europe splintered into fragments that would take many centuries to regroup and emerge as modern nations (compare maps, pages 30 and 128).

The Roman Empire at the death of Augustus in 14 C.E.



SAINT AUGUSTINE ON THE PLEASURES AND DANGERS OF MUSIC

When I remember the tears I shed at the psalmody of Thy church, when I first recovered my faith, and how even now I am moved not by the singing but by what is sung, when it is sung with a clear voice and apt melody, I then acknowledge the great usefulness of this custom. Thus I hesitate between dangerous pleasure and approved wholesomeness, though I am inclined to approve of the use of singing in the church (yet I would not pronounce an irrevocable opinion upon the subject), so that the weaker minds may be stimulated to devout thoughts by the delights of the ear. Yet when I happen to be moved more by the singing than by what is sung, I confess to have sinned grievously, and then I wish I had not heard the singing. See the state I am in! Weep with me, and weep for me, you who can control your inward feelings to good effect. As for those of you who do not react this way, this is not a concern of yours. But Thou, O Lord my God, listen, behold and see, and have mercy upon me, and heal me—Thou, in whose sight I have become a problem to myself; and this is my weakness.

—Saint Augustine, *Confessions* 10:33.

As the Roman Empire declined, however, the Christian Church gained strength, becoming the main—and often the only—unifying force and channel of culture in Europe until the tenth century. When the last Roman emperor finally left the throne in 476 C.E. after a terrible century of wars and invasions, the power of the papacy was already well established. With the help of the church fathers, highly influential Christian writers and scholars who interpreted the Bible and set down some guiding principles, the church took over Rome's mission of civilizing and unifying the peoples under its sway. Writing in Greek (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom) or in Latin (St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome), they saw in music the power to inspire divine thoughts and also to influence, for good or evil, the character of its listeners (a version of the Greek doctrine of *ethos*).

Philosophers and church leaders of the early Middle Ages disdained the idea that music might be enjoyed solely for its play of sounds, something we now take for granted. Without denying that the sound of music could be pleasurable, they held to the Platonic principle that beautiful things exist to remind us of divine and perfect beauty, not to inspire self-centered enjoyment or desire of possession. This view forms the basis for many of the pronouncements against music made by some church fathers (and later by some theologians of the Protestant Reformation; see Chapter 8). Others, however, not only defended pagan art, literature, and music but found themselves so deeply affected by them that they actually worried about their

Church fathers

Dangers of music