Chapter 1: The First Literate Repertory in Western Music: Gregorian Chant

I. Introduction
   A. Music notation began more than 1,000 years ago.
   B. Pictures and drawings tell us something about music use in ancient cultures, but not how it sounded.
   C. Ancient Greeks developed pitch-specific notation, and some have been deciphered.
      1. Greeks used symbols to indicate pitch and rhythm.
      2. Music played an important role in Greece: It was prevalent in drama; philosophers such as Plato discussed its power.

II. The Distant Past
   A. Theories of Music
      1. Pythagoras discussed physical properties of music.
      2. Boethius wrote the most-studied early treatise, De institutione musica.
         a) Boethius lays out the premise of abstract music in a doctrine of ethos: In ascending order of significance, these are musica instrumentalis (audible music), musica humana (music of the human constitution), musica mundana (music of the cosmos).
         b) The ideas presented in De institutione musica influenced Western thought for centuries, as Ex. 1-3 illustrates.
   B. Historical Imagination
      1. Early medieval notation employed a diatonic pitch set similar to the Greek system.
      2. Notated music of the early Middle Ages is predominantly sacred. It is known as monophonic chant.
      3. Notated chant represents only a small part of musical life in this period.
      4. The first great surviving Western repertory is Gregorian chant.
   C. Christian Beginnings, as far as We Know Them
      1. Several different chant repertories existed in the early Middle Ages (before Charlemagne).
      2. We will focus on that of the Roman church.
         a) Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day, 800.
         b) Charlemagne brought some of the greatest minds to his court, including Alcuin of York, who instituted an education curriculum in which music was part of the quadrivium.
         c) Charlemagne’s centralization of authority extended to the church.
         d) The melodic aspects of chant required notation in order to spread the Roman versions of chants.
   D. The Legend of St. Gregory
      1. Through legend, Pope Gregory I became credited with creating the musical repertory of the Roman church.
2. He was taught the sacred chants by the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove.
3. Gregorian chant was central to a monastic life.

III. Liturgy
A. The Development of the Liturgy: The Offices and the Mass
1. The Offices
   a) The Offices were eight daily services that featured the psalms.
   b) Offices were spaced roughly every three hours.
   c) Feast days marked the liturgical year.
   d) Eventually, *antiphons* introduced psalms—these were newly created musical compositions.
2. The Mass
   a) The most elaborate music of the Christian Church is associated with the *Mass*. During the Mass, celebrants re-enact the Last Supper of Jesus, the Jewish Passover Seder.
   b) The Mass Proper consists of the texts that change based upon the feast day, liturgical calendar, etc.
   c) The Mass Ordinary consists of the texts done every time. The five sections are Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.
B. Writing It Down: Neumes
1. Chant notation evolved through the invention of *neumes*.
2. In the early eleventh century, neumes were placed on lines and spaces. We call these *diastematic* neumes.
C. Guido of Arezzo
1. The Italian monk Guido of Arezzo wrote a treatise on music theory (*Micrologus*) and provided the earliest guide to staff notation in the early eleventh century.
2. Guido used the hymn *Ut queant laxis* as a device to teach sight-singing. This is the beginning of *solmization*.
3. Guido describes a system in which music is organized around groups of six consecutive pitches, hence *hexachord*.
4. Later teachers added *si (ii)* and substituted *do* for *ut*.
D. Modal Theory
1. *Psalm tones* outline the basic functions of singing psalms.
2. *Mode* indicates not simply a scale, but also melodic characteristics.
3. Collections of antiphons grouped according to the psalm tones with which they were associated are known as *tonaries*. These emerged in the ninth century.
4. Chant classification by mode and its correspondence with psalm tones involves the recognition of the range (*ambitus*).
   a) Chants are broken down further based on the range + final.
   b) Those that end on the final are “authentic.”
   c) Those that emphasize the final in the middle of their range are “plagal.”
5. Eight modes make up the Medieval church modes, whose names may be found in Boethius’ writings.
6. Pitch is non-standard in medieval music, so we should not associate modes with pitches found on the piano.

E. Psalmody in Practice: The Office and the Mass
   1. *Justus ut palma florebit* (Psalm 91) in the Office
      a) As a psalm tone.
      b) Other uses in the Office.
   2. *Justus ut palma florebit* (Psalm 91) in the Mass Proper, where it occurs at least four times a year.
      a) As the Gradual.

F. The Layout of the Mass
   1. The *Introit* is the first Proper chant, followed by the first Ordinary chant: the *Kyrie*.
      (1) The Kyrie is the only part of the Mass in Greek.
      (2) The text is tripartite, and each section is also tripartite. The text’s scheme is AAA BBB AAA.
   2. The *Gloria* follows the Kyrie.
      (1) The Gloria text is found in the Gospel of St. Luke, the part where the angels greet the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus.
      (2) The text is significantly longer than that of the Kyrie.
      (3) There are not many melismas, which would make the text too long.
   3. Two elaborate Proper chants (the Gradual and Alleluia, which may be replaced in more somber liturgical seasons with the *Tract*) precede the next part of the Mass Ordinary: the Credo.
      (1) The Credo is the longest text in the Mass.
      (2) It is a Latin statement of the Nicene Creed, which was approved in the fourth century as a statement of faith (“I believe ...”).
      (3) Due to its great length, it is set syllabically.
   4. The Eucharist (re-enactment of the Last Supper) is the second half of the Mass. It begins with the *Offertory*. Then follows the *Sanctus*, part of the Mass Ordinary.
   5. After the consecration of the bread and wine, the final Ordinary chant is sung: the *Agnus Dei*.

IV. Frankish Additions to the Chant Repertory
   A. One way of altering a traditional chant was with the sequence.
      1. Sequences initially were added melismas, replacing the traditional jubilus.
      2. They had internal repetitions, which made them easier to memorize.
      3. Eventually new words were added to the musical additions.
      4. Sequences began to stand alone as musical compositions and were rather popular. By the Renaissance, they were so numerous that the Counter-Reformation reformers cut the number to four.
   B. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) also composed sequences.
1. The biography of Hildegard illustrates a remarkable composer, preacher, and administrator.
2. She wrote a large amount of poetry and music, expressing mystic visions.

C. Hymns, Tropes, and Liturgical Drama
1. Hymns can be interpreted as liturgy’s popular songs and differ significantly from psalmody in their creativity.
2. Tropes were another type of new music composed under the Franks.
   a) Unlike sequences and hymns, however, tropes did not stand alone.
   b) Tropes are added to existing material and comment directly on that material.
   c) Manuscripts containing tropes are called Tropers.
3. The most famous trope is *Quem quaeritis in sepulchro*. This particular trope exemplifies what becomes liturgical drama.
4. Liturgical dramas were plays sung in Latin. They were acted out and helped tell the story to largely illiterate audiences. Famous examples include the *Play of Herod* and *Ordo virtutum* (by Hildegard of Bingen).

D. Marian Antiphons
1. Votive antiphons were the last genre of Medieval chant added to the liturgy.
2. They are antiphons that are not based on the psalms. “Marian” antiphons honor the Virgin Mary.
3. Marian antiphons grew in popularity until they were incorporated into the liturgy in the thirteenth century.
4. Only four Marian antiphons remain in use today.

V. Polyphony
A. How to Do Polyphony
1. Western music was never entirely monophonic, but we do not know how polyphonic music from early periods sounded.
2. A chief—if not the primary—distinguishing feature of Western music is polyphony.
3. The polyphony which we can describe resulted from Paris in the twelfth century.

B. *Symphonia* and Its Modifications
1. The earliest surviving descriptions of polyphony from which we can understand what the sound might have been were the Frankish treatises from the late ninth century.
2. There are two basic ways to do polyphony. One is based on a drone, the other by singing a parallel part above or below another.
3. The parallel doubling sung at perfect intervals is called *organum*.
4. Strict parallel organum quickly runs into problems, such as tritones. Alterations were made that also assisted in “meeting points” along the way, and at the beginning and ending. This becomes “oblique” organum.
5. The rules for preparation of consonant and dissonant intervals govern oblique organum.

C. Organum and Discant
   1. Guido’s *Micrologus* was widely influential, and its influence can be felt on early polyphony.
   2. The earliest extant decipherable polyphony is from late eleventh-century Chartres. These are in two parts, note-against-note counterpoint, and do not double in parallel motion.
   3. The principles seen in this music provide the basis for much of Western music written since the Middle Ages, particularly our rules for handling consonances and dissonances.