Prelude (CHWM 16–17)

Western culture has roots in ancient Greece and Rome. Although little ancient music has survived, ancient writings about music, particularly music theory, had a strong influence on later centuries. This ancient heritage was passed on in part by the early Christian church.

I. Music in Ancient Greek Life and Thought (CHWM 17–21, NAWM 1)

In ancient Greece, music was linked to the gods and divine powers.

1. Extant Greek music
Greek music was *monophonic*, but was often performed in *heterophony*. It was usually improvised or learned by ear, not read from notation. **Music: NAWM 1**
2. Greek theory
Greek theorists and philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) developed ideas about music that profoundly influenced the musical thought of the Middle Ages and survive to this day.
3. Music and poetry
Music was closely tied to poetry. The rhythms of a melody followed the rhythms of its text, and the pitch contour often followed the inflections of a speaking voice.

**A Closer Look:**Ancient Greek Music: Kithara and Aulos
The lyre, aulos, and kithara were the three main instruments in ancient Greece, and they could be played alone or as accompaniment to singing, dancing, or recitation in religious ceremonies, festivals, and contests. A reaction against the rise of professional musicians, increasing [**virtuosity**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/01/outline.aspx), and the growing complexity of music led to a simplification of later Greek music and theory.

1. Music and ethos
The Greeks held that music directly affected *ethos*, one’s ethical character.
2. Theory of imitation
Aristotle wrote that music represents the passions or states of the soul and arouses passions in the listener, and that music stimulating undesirable attitudes should be avoided.
3. [**Music in education**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/01/outline.aspx)
Plato gave music an important role in education, arguing that the right kind of music disciplined the mind and aroused temperance and courage. Aristotle was less restrictive and endorsed music for entertainment and for its role in drama.
4. Greek music theory
Our modern system of music theory and its vocabulary derive largely from ancient Greece.
5. Music and number
*Pythagoras*(ca. 580–ca. 500 b.c.e.) is credited with discovering that the basic consonant intervals were produced by simple ratios: 2:1 for the octave, 3:2 for the fifth, and 4:3 for the fourth.
6. Harmonics
The Greek discipline of *harmonics*(matters concerning pitch) laid the foundation for modern concepts such as *notes*, *intervals*, *scales*, and modes.
7. Tetrachords
Greek scales were constructed from *tetrachords*, groups of four notes spanning a fourth. There were three *genera*(kinds) of tetrachords: *diatonic*, *chromatic*, and*enharmonic*.
8. Transmission of Greek ideas
Some Greek concepts about music were interpreted and transmitted to the Middle Ages through the writings of early Christians, but others were not rediscovered until the Renaissance.

II. Roman Music, 200 b.c.e.–500 c.e. (CHWM 21)

The Romans adopted many aspects of Greek musical culture.

1. Rome’s decline
Rome’s economic decline halted grand musical productions, and almost no distinctively Roman traces were left on later European musical developments.

III. The Early Christian Church: Musical Thought (CHWM 21–23)

1. Church Fathers
Christian writers and scholars known as the Church Fathers saw in music the power to inspire divine thoughts and to influence the character of listeners.
2. Dangers of music
Many early church leaders opposed listening to music for pleasure.
3. Transmission of Greek music theory
Greek theory and philosophy were summarized and passed on by early Christian writers, most notably by Boethius.
4. Martianus [**Capella**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/01/outline.aspx)
Martianus helped to codify the seven liberal arts: the three verbal arts called the*trivium*(grammar, dialectic or logic, and rhetoric) and the four mathematical disciplines called the *quadrivium*(geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and harmonics or music).
5. Boethius
*De institutione musica*(The Fundamentals of Music) by *Boethius*(ca. 480–524) is the main source through which Greek music theory was transmitted to the Middle Ages.

**A Closer Look:**Boethius’s *Fundamentals*
Boethius listed three kinds of music: *musica mundana*(cosmic music), the orderly numerical relations that control the natural world; *musica humana*(human music), which controls the human body and soul; and *musica instrumentalis*, audible music produced by voices or instruments. He saw music primarily as a science.

IV. The Early Christian Church: Musical Practice (CHWM 24–27)

1. Greek legacy
Early Christian communities absorbed musical practices from ancient Greece and other cultures, but their leaders rejected pagan uses of music and excluded instrumental music from church services.
2. Judaic heritage
Some elements of Christian worship derive from Jewish traditions, including the chanting of Scripture and the singing of *psalms*.
3. Christian observances
Like the Jewish temple service, the Christian Mass enacts a symbolic sacrifice, and worshippers and priests partake in a ritual meal and sing psalms.
4. Psalms and hymns
As Christianity spread, the church absorbed influences from many areas, including Syria and Milan.
5. Eastern churches
Byzantium, later called Constantinople, was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire from 395 to 1453, and its musical practices influenced the West.
6. Western churches
Between the fifth and eighth centuries, different regions produced several distinct Western liturgies and bodies of liturgical music.

**In Context:**Sounding and Silent Harmony: Music and Astronomy
Many ancient Greek thinkers linked music and astronomy because both studies were dominated by numerical relationships. Medieval Christian philosophers believed these relationships provided the foundation for knowledge about the order of the entire universe. These ideas persisted through the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

1. Chant dialects
Along with a separate liturgy, each region had its own repertory of liturgical melodies we call *chant*.
2. Rome’s musical dominance
Eventually, most regional dialects were replaced with a common liturgy and a set of melodies authorized by the Roman Catholic Church.
3. Gregorian chant
*Gregorian chant*was preserved for centuries by monks and nuns who sang, memorized, and wrote down melodies.