

## Introduction

Music is when we blend sounds together in a particular order that is pleasing and meaningful. Some music tries to express a particular feeling, to paint a certain image, or to tell a story. Sometimes music has such a catchy beat, we can't resist getting up to dance along! Other music simply gives us the pleasure of hearing a lovely musical pattern, similar to the the pleasure we experience when gazing at a beautiful pattern on a piece of fabric or in a piece of art. Think about your experience with music. Why do you listen to music? What are some of the reasons you listen to music? How does it make you feel?

This week we will journey hundreds of years into the past, to a time when people thought music had a very important, sacred purpose. They believed that music had the power to return our souls, minds and bodies to a state of peace and harmony. Composers and musicians during this time believed music could be made so beautiful that it could raise hearts to the very heavens. This type of music is called **sacred music**. It is important to start our journey here, because sacred music gave the world four key musical gifts: **Notation, Harmony, Polyphony** and **Composition**. We will unpack these words very carefully over the course of this volume!



### In the timeline of Classical Music...

We are here

Medieval

Renaissance

Baroque

Classical

Romantic

20th Century

Contemporary

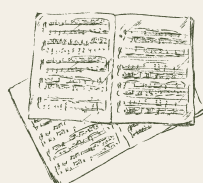


### Engage with paint:

Art Tutorial: **Notre-Dame**

*Learn how to draw the birthplace of polyphony!*

To access, visit [sadiehoyt.com/thestoryofclassical](http://sadiehoyt.com/thestoryofclassical)



### Listen to:

Playlist for Part I: **Cathedrals of Polyphony**

You can find this at [sadiehoyt.com/thestoryofclassical](http://sadiehoyt.com/thestoryofclassical)

WEEK 1

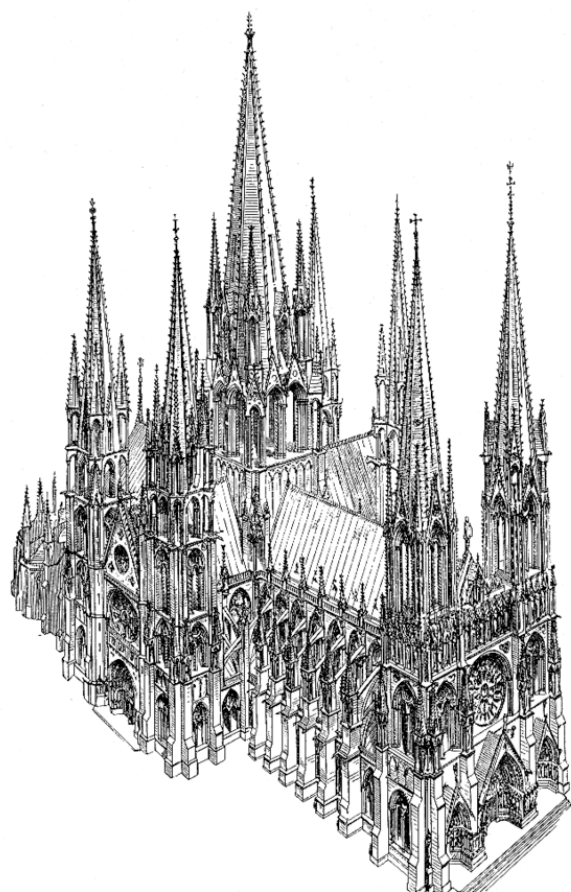
# Music of the Ancient Cathedrals



*Hildegard of Bingen*

Germany, 800-1000

If you were to walk through European cities 900 years ago, you might notice that the largest buildings in the city were spectacular, grand churches called cathedrals. People during this time believed that worshiping God was the most important part of their lives, so they built beautiful sanctuaries dedicated to God and God's Beauty. These cathedrals had tall, majestic steeples that seemed to touch the heavens and large stained glass windows that let in streams of light through brightly colored glass. The music heard within these walls shimmered like the colors of the stained glass and soared to the heavens like the steeples. Melodies and harmonies created patterns so intricate and glorious, people's hearts were filled with wonder, peace, and joy.



But just like it took hundreds of years for the architects, builders, and artists to learn how to build a cathedral, so too did it take hundreds of years for composers to learn how to mix melodies together in ways that were pleasing.

This week we are going to learn how composers discovered the beauty of mixing voices into intricate layers. We will start at the very beginning with one voice, and as we journey through the month, we will learn how composers gradually added layer upon layer of harmony until, by the end, we will hear a majestic cathedral of sound.



### Students' Activities During Reading:

**Ages 3-7:** Color in churches and stained glass windows.

**Ages 8+** Color in or copy stained glass windows.

Since the very earliest days of the Christian Church, people have lifted their voices in song during prayer. For a long time, however, music wasn't written down. Instead, musicians simply composed music in their heads and taught it to the next generation by singing it to them. In the 9th century, however, musicians started realizing that if they could create symbols to represent different pitches, they could preserve music more reliably. And so they started writing little black dots on lines to indicate pitch. This process of writing down music is called **notation**. Notation made it possible to write music of longer lengths, to set words to particular notes, and to organize music into multiple layers. This meant it could become something quite complex and beautiful - like a grand cathedral, a rich tapestry, or a piece of art.



*Sacred music sung in churches during the early Church was called **chant**. It was sung during liturgies as a way of lifting voices in praise to God.*



*This is our modern way of writing down music. You may already know that these black dots are called **notes** and that each note means to play or sing a different pitch with a particular rhythmic value.*

*Now look at how notes were originally written down, in the 9th century! Back then they were not called notes but instead **neumes**. Neumes showed which pitch to sing but did not indicate exact rhythm. This meant that the music flowed very organically, without sticking to a particular rhythm or tempo.*



**The 4 key characteristics of chant are:**

- Flows very naturally, rising and falling in a similar manner to a person's speaking voice.
- Purely vocal and unaccompanied (meaning usually there are no musical instruments added. If an instrument is added, it is in a very simple drone style)
- Has a single melody line. This is called **monophony** (this word has two Greek roots: mono (one) + phōnē (sound))
- Does not have a set rhythm or pulse. Instead, the music flows in an improvisatory, organic way.