

RENAISSANCE MUSIC: PART 2: CHURCH MASS

WHAT IS A MASS?

A Mass is a Eucharistic celebration (reenactment of the Last Supper of Jesus Christ) in the Latin liturgical rites of the Roman Catholic Church. The term “Mass” is derived from the Late Latin word *missa* (dismissal), a word used in the concluding formula of Mass in Latin: “*Ite, missa est*” (“Go; it is the dismissal”). In antiquity, *missa* simply meant dismissal”. The usage of the word *missa* has a deeper meaning in Christian usage, implying a mission”. Most Western denominations not in full communion with the Catholic Church also usually prefer terms other than Mass.

In Renaissance music, the formal Mass (which is from what our modern day Mass is based upon) was called the Cyclic Mass. This was a setting of the Ordinary of the Roman Catholic Mass. It follows the structure outlined below, unified by a common musical theme, generally referred to as a cantus firmus (or fixed idea). The cyclic mass was the first multi-movement form in western music to be subject to a single organizing principle.

STRUCTURE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS

ESSENTIAL MOVEMENTS

There are seven essential sections (or Movements) of a Roman Catholic Mass:

1. Kyrie
2. Gloria (in Excelsis Deo)
3. Credo
4. Sanctus
5. Canon
6. Agnus Dei
7. Ite, Missa Est

OTHER MOVEMENTS

1. Introit
2. Collect
3. Epistle
4. Gradual
5. Alleluia (or Tract)
6. Evangelium

7. Offertory
8. Secret
9. Preface
10. Communion
11. Post-Communion