16th-century Instrumental Music


The 16th-century ideal of homogeneous sound was realized in instrumental consorts featuring an entire compass of pitches with a uniform sonority.

The **lute** was the most popular household solo instrument in the Renaissance. The **vihuela** (early guitar) and lute music was notated in a tablature system which indicated finger placement and rhythm.

The **In Nomine** repertory of instrumental music was based on a cantus firmus derived from the Benedictus section of Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas*.

Compositions derived from vocal models.

transcriptions of madrigals, chansons, or motets with improvised ornamentation
canzona—light, fast-moving, strongly rhythmic, with a fairly simple contrapuntal texture
(based on chanson)—organ canzonas were forerunners of the fugue in the Baroque, the ensemble canzonas were to develop into the *sonata da chiesa*
gradual division of canzona into distinct sections through introduction of contrasting thematic material
Dance music.
dance pairs common: e.g. pavane / galliard
in the latter half of the century, dance music for lute, keyboard, and ensembles was
published in increasing amounts.
some dances were simple arrangements of tunes for popular use, but the majority seem
to have been written for social occasions in the homes of the bourgeoisie or the
courts of the aristocracy.
Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesography* (1588) is an important source for instructions about
dances.

Improvisatory pieces.
ornamenting a given melodic line or adding one or more contrapuntal parts to a given
melody (cantus firmus).
 fantasies--unfold freely, rambling fashion, various names (fantasy, fancy, ricercare,
prelude, etc.)
 keyboard style fantasias were toccatas.
 Ricercar--perhaps patterned after the motet, "to pick out" in lutenist jargon, in effect, a
textless imitative motet.
 Sonata--the Venetian sonata of this period is the sacred counterpart of the canzona.
Important was the application of the polychoral medium to instruments, e.g. Gabrieli's
Sacrae Symphoniae of 1597.

Variations.
improvised variations on a short ostinato pattern (Romanesca, Ruggiero, etc.)
the virginalists especially favored variations (see *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*)