



From the
Beginning:
Ancient Music

Primitive Music

- The earliest music likely developed in response to natural sounds that early humans hear all around them.
- The earliest music, produced by humans in preliterate cultures is called **primitive** or **prehistoric** music.
- Mostly vocal, but as tools are made, probably began to experiment with the sounds.

Bone Flute



Prehistoric humans

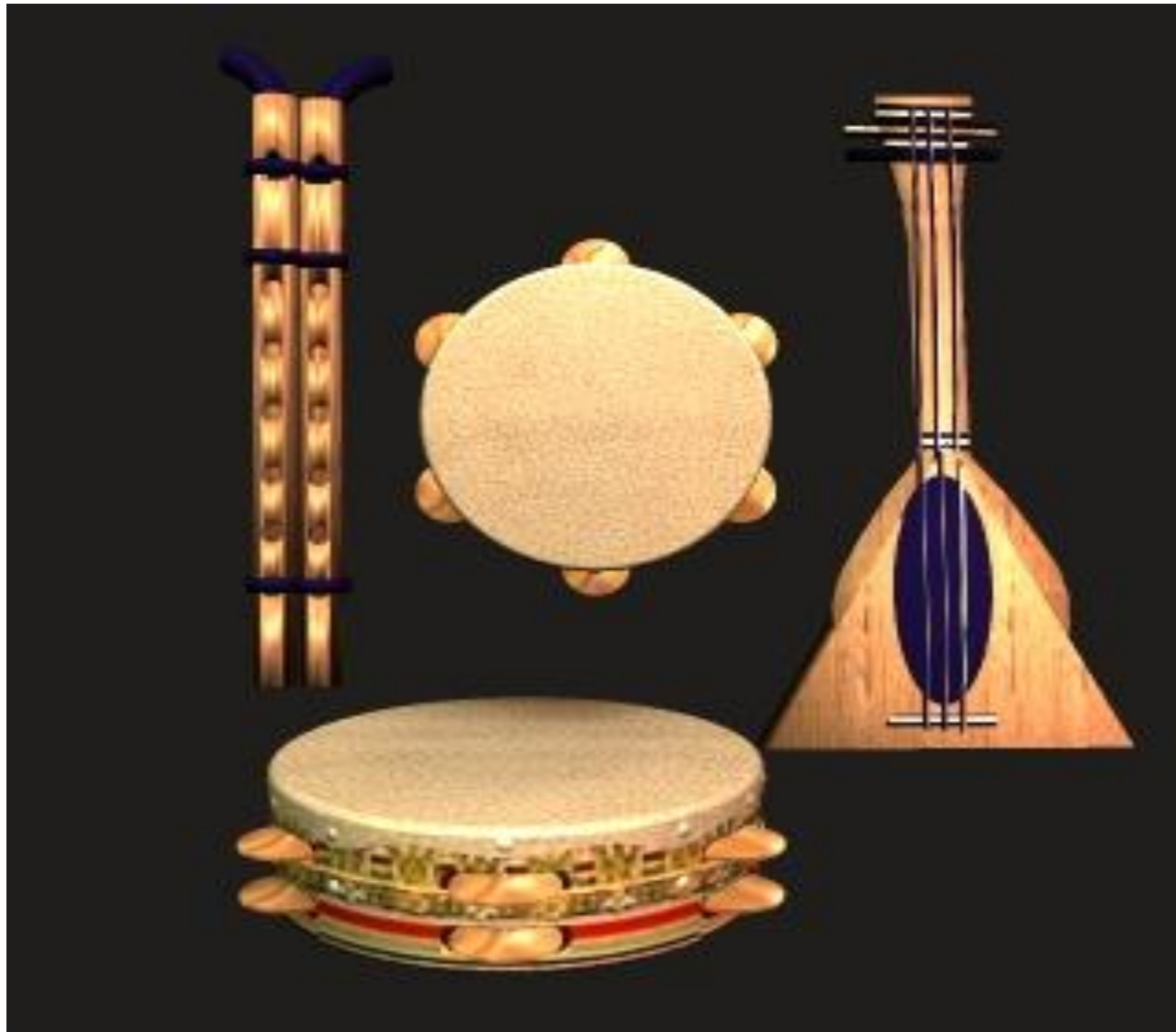
- Were so called because they had yet to write down their history; prehistory literally means a time before history was documented.
- This all changed around 4000 B.C.E when humans developed written language.
- Their music became more standardized – conscious sounds and patterns that formed rhythm and melody.
- Music made in this literate, post-prehistoric era from 4000BCE until the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE is called ancient music.

Ancient Music

- Did not develop in the same way or same pace in every culture.
- Slow learning curve
- We don't know how this ancient music sounded (no one knew how to write music down).
- It is clear that Western Music (us) evolved from the Near Eastern culture.

Egypt

- Egypt unified many disparate cultures of the Nile under one Pharaoh
- Advanced culture of its time – architecture (pyramids), technology (irrigation of Nile) and art (writing system and literature).
- Regarded music as a gift from the gods.
- Music played important role in religious practices
- No music examples exist but it is believed that Egyptian music was based on a 5 tone scale. Both male and female voices were used.
- Earliest known instruments: harps, lutes, lyres, double clarinets, percussion, tambourine, trumpet.



Mesopotamia

- Located around the current Iraq.
- Cradle of civilization and advancement
- Babylonian liturgical services were known to comprise a number of psalms and hymns. Two different voices alternating chant – antiphonal.
- Earliest known written music: Sumner in southern Mesopotamia/city of Ur.
- Created on the “Ur Tablet” and is referred to the oldest known song but was a set of instructions for performing that eras music.
- From the tablet, we have learned that music of that time was composed in harmonies of parallel thirds, written in a diatonic scale.
- 800 BCE the first known musical scales. 5/7 tones per octave.

Greece

- The Greeks were concerned with explaining and defining the natural world.
- Pythagoras theorem, Pi,
- Music came from god Apollo, plus the musician Orpheus and other divinities
- Music reflected in microcosm the laws of harmony that rule the universe and that music influenced human thoughts and actions.
- Pythagoras also discovered the mathematical relationships between music frequencies and intervals.
- Aristotle laid the foundations of modern music theory.
- Aristotles' student: Aristoxemus of Tarentum formalized the Greek system of modes.

The Roman Empire

- Musical principles discovered by the Greeks were preserved by the Romans and Julius Caesar.
- Roman music was influenced by the many kingdoms conquered by the Roman Empire.
- Slave musicians and dancers were recruited, musical theatre flourished, Greek and Roman musicians had their own professional organizations.
- Fall of Roman Empire in 476 C.E – music and cultural center moved northward – big changes!

Why Western Music Sounds Western

- 12 tone scale
- An Octave is divided into 12 pitches, spaced at equal intervals.
- The relationships between the pitches create major and minor scales.
- Frequency of “A” is 440Hz
- In other cultures and times, this was different.

Musical Examples

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVE052V0ung>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q56A2Jh74_E&index=6&list=PLC19BCD3D80DBE132