

# Music At Our House

The Ultimate Music Resource for Homeschoolers

## Music at Our House

### *Music History & Appreciation*

Jr. & Sr. High School Course

Grades 7-12, Ages 12-18

November 5, 2010

Prepared by Mr. Johnson

## Introduction

This syllabus presents the general objectives and an overview of the content for Music at Our House, Junior & Senior High School Course.

Students learn the history of Western music as a continuous narrative from ancient Greece to the 20th century. Each period of music history is considered from the point of view of the emotional content of its music, and the ideas and thinking which created that style and feeling. Students become acquainted with the music, the historical context that gave rise to it, and the meaning its creators attached to it.

To delineate the periods, the course emphasizes essential turning points and key developments. This allows a clear characterization and definition of each period, and gives the framework within which the student can remember details.

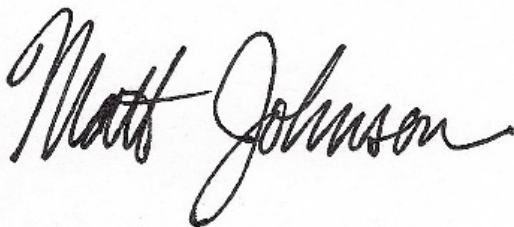
It is important to understand the history of music in the context of the wider historical events and trends. Therefore every effort will be made to connect the musical studies to the developments and historical figures the students are learning about in their other history courses, or that they are familiar with from prior study.

The course uses concepts of the structures of music (such as interval, scale, tempo) to clarify the feeling and style of the music. However no prior musical knowledge is assumed. The concepts are explained from the ground up and illustrated in a basic manner to make the meaning clear.

The outline below gives an indication of the topics to be covered. The precise content and progression will be determined by what is suited to and interesting to the class. Therefore some deviation from this initial plan will be appropriate and necessary. Some topics will require further elaboration, while others may have to be trimmed or even eliminated to allow for more important things.

I look forward to exploring the substance of the West's music over time with you and your child--to learning a lot and enjoying the passions and sentiments mankind has expressed in this form of art.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Zachary Johnson

## Course Outline

### The Periods of Western Music History

**Greece:** what kind of music expresses manliness? (weeks 1-3)

- Pythagoras
- The concept of *ethos*
- Apollo vs. Dionysus
- Plato's Mind-Body Dichotomy
- Aristoxenus: summary of Greek musical thought
- Roman Music

**Medieval Europe:** duty of self-denial in service to Heaven (week 4)

- Christ
- Augustine
- Pope Gregory the Great
- Gregorian Chant

**Renaissance:** the rediscovery of sensuality (weeks 5-8)

- The birth of polyphony:
  - Charlemagne
  - *Musica Enchiriadis*
  - Guido of Arezzo: solfege, the development of music notation
- Further development of polyphony:
  - The Notre Dame School
  - The Ars Nova
  - The Burgundian School
- Tonality:
  - Gioseffo Zarlino
  - Composers of the 1500s, especially Palestrina

**The High Renaissance & Baroque:** appeal to the common man, inspire awe (wks 9-11)

- The harmonic way of thinking:
  - The homophonic ideal replaces the polyphonic
  - Monteverdi
  - Basso Continuo
  - The Florentine Camerata & the birth of opera
  - Martin Luther & congregational chorales
  - The Council of Trent--homophony in the Catholic Church
- The rise of instrumental technique:
  - Bach
  - Handel
  - Vivaldi

**Enlightenment/the "Classical" Period:** formal elegance and rational clarity (wks 12-14)

- "Primacy of Chord" overtakes "Primacy of Line":

- Sauveur & the overtone series
- Jean Philippe Rameau's *Treatise on Harmony*
- Fux systematizes the art of counterpoint
- Haydn settles the large-scale musical forms:
  - Sonata Form
  - Rondo Form
- Mozart

**Romanticism:** enlightenment infused with passion (weeks 15-17)

- The Development of Romanticism:
  - Beethoven - revolutionary expansion of the scope of self-expression
  - Schubert - melodic lyricism
  - Chopin - richness of harmony
  - Brahms - the "classical romantic"
  - Schumann, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff
- Subjective Romanticism:
  - Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, Debussy & Impressionism
- Heinrich Schenker - understanding musical cognition

**Modern Era:** the destruction of civilized values (weeks 18-20)

- Formalism:
  - Kant
  - Hanslick
- Primitivism & Madness:
  - Stravinsky
  - Schoenberg (atonality, the "liberation of the dissonance")
  - Berg's *Wozzeck*
- African Influences mix with European:
  - Ragtime (& syncopation)
  - Jazz (& swing rhythm)
  - Blues
  - Gershwin
- Lowbrow Rebellion
  - Chuck Berry "Roll over Beethoven"

### **Course Resources:**

*Naxos Library of Recorded Music* -- online database of audio recordings

*Dancing with the Muses: A Historical Approach to Basic Concepts of Music*

by M. Zachary Johnson (to be available in print and e-book formats)

Various other internet resources

**M. Zachary Johnson** is a composer and writer on music who has taught music theory and music skills to elementary, junior high and high school students in the Preparatory Division of the Mannes College of

Music in New York for many years. His new book *Dancing with the Muses: A Historical Approach to Basic Concepts of Music*, an outgrowth of his teaching, uses stories from history to bring the elementary concepts of music to life. [www.MZacharyJohnson.com](http://www.MZacharyJohnson.com)