



Josquin des Prez

circa 1450–1455 – August 27, 1521

Josquin Lebloitte dit des Prez (or Josquin des Prez as he would come to be known) was one of the most famous composers of the Renaissance, a time of great change and creativity in Europe. He was born around 1450 in Flanders (then part of the Kingdom of France). Records about his early life are scarce, but we do know that Josquin grew up surrounded by church music, which shaped his future as a composer.

As a young man, Josquin may have served as an altar or choirboy, which likely influenced his music. He later worked for powerful rulers and churches across Europe, including several kings and popes.

Part of his career was spent in Italy, where he worked for the Duke of Ferrara, and he later served in the papal choir in Rome, which was a high honor. His signature is etched on the choir gallery wall of the Sistine Chapel, where it can still be seen today. The various positions he took allowed him to travel widely, learn from other musicians, and share his own musical ideas.

Josquin became well-known because of his talent for writing music that was both beautiful and expressive. He used techniques such as imitation, where one voice would echo another, and he often matched the mood of the music to the words being sung, a technique known as word painting. His style was innovative and unique, and he helped popularize these new techniques, which spread like wildfire and shaped much of the music of the Renaissance.

He wrote many different types of music, including sacred works for the church, like masses and motets, as well as secular songs. His compositions spread across Europe, and people admired him so much that later composers tried to copy his style, causing many works to be mistakenly attributed to him after his death. This led to a well-known saying at the time, "Now that Josquin is dead, he is producing more compositions than when he was still alive." This influence is evidence of how greatly esteemed he was both during and after his lifetime.

Josquin's influence was so strong that his music continued to be sung long after his death in 1521, which was unusual at the time. He is considered the first Western composer to remain famous after his lifetime. Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, even called Josquin "the master of the notes," showing how important his work was considered by his contemporaries. He left behind a legacy that greatly influenced future generations of musicians and still inspires people to this day.

Classical Pieces

Week 1 - Missa Pange lingua

Week 2 - Miserere mei, Deus

Week 3 - Ave Maria, Virgo Serena

Week 4 - Missa l'Homme Armé Super Voces Musicales

Week 5 - Missa Hercules dux Ferrariae

Week 6 - Missa de Beata Virgine