GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agnus Dei	A supplicatory prayer, part of the mass ordinary.
Alternatim	A kind of performance practice in which sections of polyphony alternate with sections of plainchant.
Altus	A voice-type a little higher than a tenor, now known as alto.
Augmentation	The systematic increasing of the written note values.
Bassus	A voice-type a little lower than a tenor; usually the lowest voice.
Bicinium	A polyphonic piece in two voices.
Cadence	A musical "full stop", usually using standard harmonic and melodic formulas.
Canon	Lit. "rule"; a verbal explanation indicating that the notation is to be read in a special way. Often involves two or more singers singing the same music but starting at different times (and perhaps also on different pitches), but may involve other procedures too, such as singing with note values twice as long, or with the melody in reverse.
Cantus	See *Superius*.
Cantus firmus	Lit. "fixed song"; a borrowed melody which serves as the basis for a polyphonic composition, and around which other voices are arranged in counterpoint.
Chant (plain-chant, plainsong)	The traditional music of the church, consisting of a single line of melody (monophony).
Chansonnier	A musical source primarily containing secular song in French.
Chapel	A group of people connected to a court or church.
Choirbook	A manuscript or printed edition in which all the voice-parts are notated on the same page-opening.
Contratenor	Lit. "against the tenor"; a secondary voice-part added to that in which borrowed material was placed. Can be above the tenor part (*altus*) or below (*bassus*).
Counterpoint	The technique of composition whereby two or more independent melodic lines are combined.
Credo	A profession of faith; one of the parts of the mass ordinary.
Custos (pl. *custodes*)	The signs at the end of a line that indicate the pitch at the beginning of the subsequent line
Cyclic mass	See *Mass cycle*.
Discantus	See *Superius*.
Fauxbourdon	A type of improvised polyphony, where melodies are added in fixed intervals above and below a pre-existent chant melody.
Finalis	In Gregorian chant, the pitch on which the melody closes; in chants in regular, untransposed modes, four pitches are possible: *D*, *E*, *F*, or *G*.

Gloria A song of praise; one of the parts of the mass ordinary.

Imitation One of the fundamental compositional techniques of the sixteenth century. A voice announces a motive which is then sung by another voice or other voices in succession after a certain time period. Can be "pervasive" if used routinely and involving all voices.

Integer valor A singing a part with its written note values, rather than with systematically applied manipulation, such as doubling or tripling.

Introit The opening item of the mass; the text varies from feast to feast. Consists of a short phrase often referring to the feast, and a verse from the psalms. Can be sung in plainchant or in polyphony.

Kyrie A supplicatory prayer; one of the parts of the mass ordinary.

Liturgy The actions and words that together form an official service of worship.

Mass The central element of the liturgy, commemorating Jesus's sacrifice. A mass was performed every day. It may be spoken, sung in chant, or sung with certain sections in polyphony. The events of mass are divided between *ordinary* and *proper*.

Mass ordinary (ordinary of the mass) The parts of the mass whose texts remain the same in every mass. Five of these texts were usually set in polyphony by Renaissance composers (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei).

Mass proper (proper of the mass) Those parts of the mass whose texts change from day to day. Those of musical importance include the introit, gradual, alleluia, tract, offertory, sequence, and communion.

Mass cycle The polyphonic setting of the mass ordinary texts, in which all the movements are based on the same borrowed material or compositional principle, so that they together form a unity.

Melisma Setting one syllable of text to many notes of music.

Mensuration The Renaissance equivalent of modern-day time signatures, indicated by four basic signs: C (meaning 4/2), O (meaning 3/2), ⊙ (meaning 9/4), and C (meaning 6/4). Signs can be modified by a stroke, indicating an increase in tempo.

Mode The theory by which pitch organisation in Gregorian chant is classified. Eight modes exist, defined according to *finalis* and the range in which the melody moves in relation to the *finalis*.

Monophony Music that consists only of a single melodic line.

Motet A polyphonic work with a Latin text. Usually (but not always) sacred in intent.

Musica ficta A convention by which, in specific circumstances, certain notes are raised or lowered by a half-step, without the alteration needing to be explicitly indicated.

Office The other services that take place within the day, apart from the mass. Usually matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers, compline.

Partbooks A manuscript or printed edition in which the separate voices are contained in separate books.

Plainchant	See *Chant*.
Plainsong	See *Chant*.
Polyphony	Lit. "many sounding"; a technique of composition in which several independent melodies are combined in counterpoint.
Prolation	The name given to the way a semibreve is divided into minims; can be major, if a semibreve is formed of three minims, or minor, if the semibreve is formed of two minims. Indicated by adding a dot to the basic mensuration signs, thus: 𝅝 or 𝅝. When major, this often also implied augmentation in relation to the other parts.
Repercussa	In Gregorian chant, a pitch of the scale second in importance to the *finalis*, typically (though not always) either a fifth or a third above the *finalis*.
Retrograde	Presenting a melody backwards.
Sanctus	A song of praise; one of the parts of the mass ordinary.
Sequence	(1) A Latin, poetic addition to the mass, specific to individual feasts. Most were removed from the liturgy in the mid-sixteenth century, with the notable exception of the *Dies irae*, from the Requiem mass; (2) A music-technical procedure in which material is (multiply) repeated at successively lower or higher pitches.
Stretto	A form of imitation in which the voices are only one beat apart.
Superius	The highest voice-part in a piece; often equivalent to today's soprano.
Tempus imperfectum	A Renaissance time signature with a fully binary division at every note level. Indicated thus: 𝅝 or 𝅝. Equivalent to modern 4/4 or 4/2.
Tempus perfectum	A Renaissance time signature, in which breves are comprised of three semibreves. All other divisions are binary. Indicated thus: 𝅝 or 𝅝. Equivalent to modern 3/1 or 3/2.
Tenor	The part that, originally, "held" borrowed material on which the composition was based; eventually came to mean a specific, moderately high male voice-type.
Transposition	Moving a melody from its original pitch-level to another, either higher or lower.
Triad	A chord containing three notes.
Tutti	A texture involving all performers simultaneously.