



Music for Dance
Reference Department
Albert S. Cook Library

Listed below are some definitions that will help you understand the differences between types of choral works that you may examine for this class.

Some of these choral works will be *sacred* (used in a religious ceremony) and some will be *secular* (used for entertainment purposes in a social setting).

Definitions of terms relating to choral music

A cappella – performed without musical accompaniment

Gregorian Chant/Plainchant/Plainsong – religious works sung in Latin or Ancient Greek, usually part of the Roman Catholic Mass and sung a cappella

Motet – generally a work for a small number of voices – subjects can be secular or sacred – change over time in terms of form and subject matter

Madrigal – small ensemble – text usually of a pastoral/poetic theme, often performed *a cappella*

Vespers - liturgy-based texts, evening prayer service

Chansons/Cansos– secular songs, some based on poetry, often in French

Requiem – funeral mass

Oratorio – dramatic choral work, often based on religious themes, with soloists and chorus

Ode – larger ensemble – text based on lyric poetry or relates to a specific event or honorary personage

Anthem – larger ensemble work with a sacred text sung within a religious service

Art Song – song composed for a concert setting whose text is usually derived from a poetical work, often arranged for solo voice

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