MUT 1001
FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC

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Who should take this course

1) music majors who did not place into Theory I or who wish to review fundamentals before starting the music theory sequence

2) non-music majors with a fairly strong background in music, for example someone who took some years of private music lessons or someone who played in a school ensemble for at least a few years and wishes to brush up on their knowledge, fill some gaps, and so on.

3) someone with little or no prior musical experience but with a very strong interest in music notation and theory, and who is willing to work hard to keep up!

Who should not take this course

If you are looking for an easy course to fulfill your credit requirement and do not have a strong background in music, then this course is definitely not for you. This course is intended for music majors and the pace reflects that. I expect all students in the course to reach the same level of mastery of the material, regardless of their previous experience.

More about this course

The intent of this course is to prepare music majors for the music theory sequence (Music Theory I-IV). The music theory sequence in turn prepares students for more advanced theory courses such as Counterpoint, Analytical Techniques, Form and Analysis, and Orchestration.

This course covers all basic aspects of notation, including clefs and durations, and the basic elements of tonal theory (scales, triads, etc.) but it moves through these basics fairly quickly. While it is possible for someone with no prior experience to pass this course, most students in the class will have several years of experience playing in ensembles and taking lessons.

If you have no prior experience with music notation your main challenge will be gaining fluency; learning how to read music is not difficult, but doing this fluently can take years of practice. Most music majors start playing an instrument and reading music several years before entering college. Some students start music lessons as early as 5 years of age (though many start much later). A strong musical background is not a requirement but will naturally give you an advantage. All this being said, it is entirely possible for someone to start from scratch.

What you can expect from this course:

-you will learn how to read and write music using the standard Western notation system

-you will become familiar with all the common elements and symbols used in scores

-you will be able to spell and recognize the fundamental building blocks of tonal music, such as scales, intervals, and triads

-by the end of this course, you will be ready to start the music theory sequence

MUSIC NOTATION

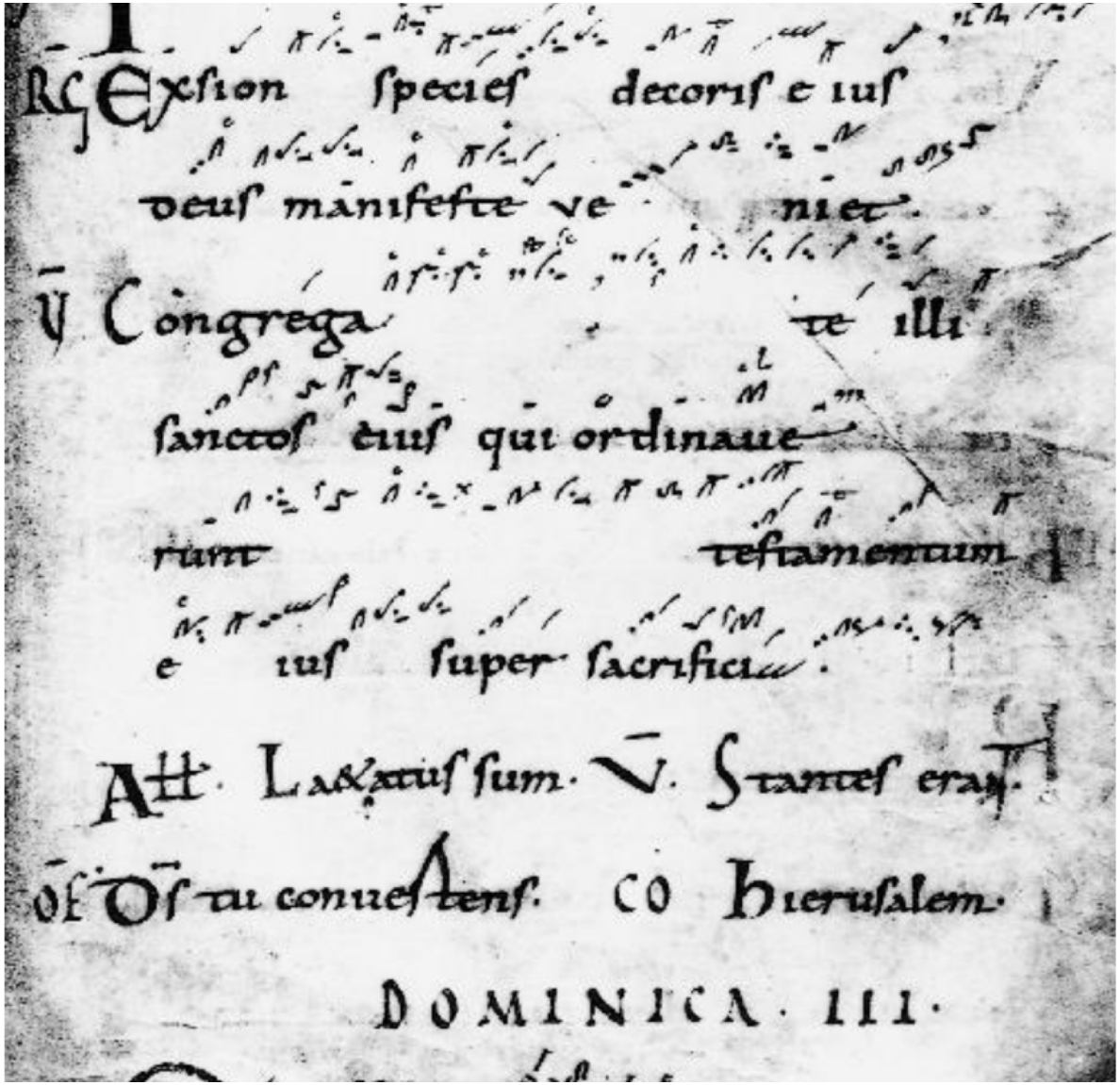
The Western music notation system is a versatile tool designed to give performers the information they need to reproduce a composition or arrangement as the creator intended it (more on this later). Before recording devices, it was the only way to preserve music. But even now that music can be easily recorded, music notation continues to play an essential role in the life of many musicians.

MUSIC NOTATION

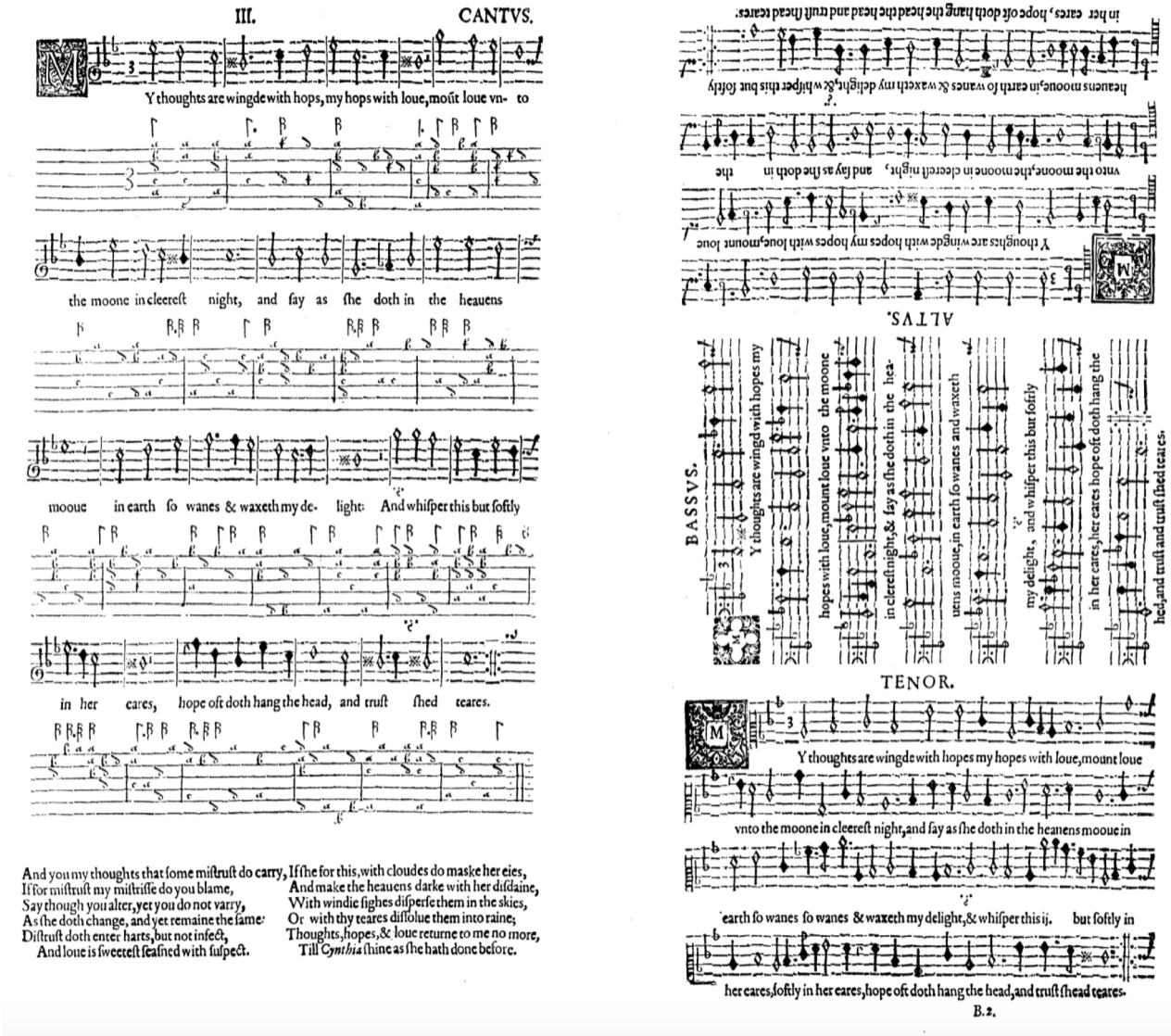
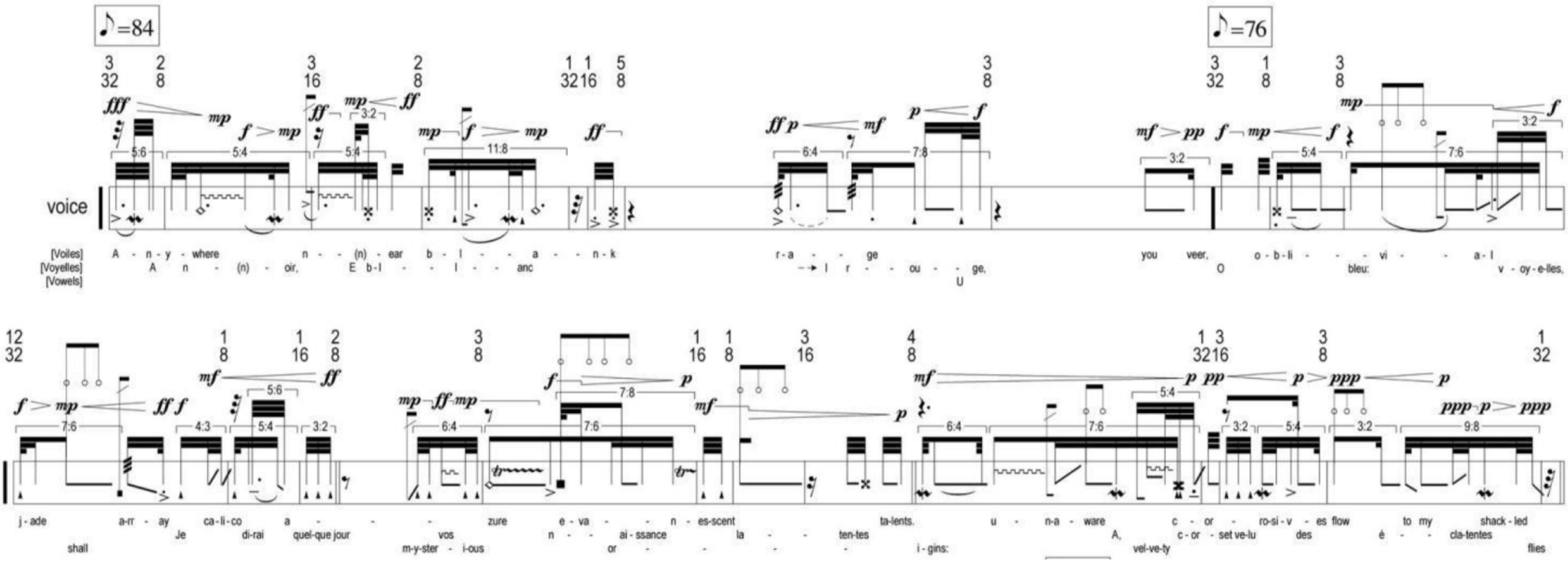
Music notation has a long and fascinating history. Early examples of it can be traced back to at least 500 BCE in Greece. Instrumental tablatures as early as the 6th century CE in China and the 15th century in Europe.
All aspects of the Western notation system went through many permutations before settling into a clearly defined system which has remained essentially unchanged since the 16th century. While our notation system has been in constant evolution and new symbols are constantly being added to it, most of the conventions we use today have been in use for centuries.

- Example of neumatic notation from the 9th century.

A century later, Guide of Arezzo proposed a new system of notation using clefs and lines and staves, which became widely popular.



An song from John Dowland's First Book of Songs (1597)
The score contains a lute accompaniment (written in tablature) as well as individual vocal parts.



An excerpt from a work for voice and electronics by Aaron Cassidy (2004-6)