

## Early Influences in the Birth of Opera

### 1. Pastoral Drama

Play in verse (spoken) with songs and music interspersed  
Stories were Greek and Roman myths from ancient pastoral poetry, esp. Virgil  
Idyllic settings involving shepherds and nymphs  
Expressed a modern yearning for an unattainable ancient paradise (arcadia)

First one staged in Florence  
*Favola d'Orfeo* (1471) by Angelo Poliziano

Theme: power of music; relates to story of **Orpheus**

### 2. Madrigals

Composers began setting dialogue in madrigal style and organizing madrigals in cycles called "madrigal-cycles" or madrigal-comedies"

Best-known: *L'Amfiparnaso* (The Slopes of Parnassus, 1594)

### 3. Intermedi

Because there were no curtains in Renaissance drama, intermedi were introduced to separate scenes and mark the passage of time  
Six per play  
Spoken dialogue combined with choral, solo, instrumental and dance numbers  
Staged, with costumes and separate plot

Most famous and influential: **The Florentine Intermedi (1589)**  
Produced between acts of *La Pellegrina* (five act serious play)  
Put on as part of wedding celebration between the Grand Duke Ferdinand de Medici of Tuscany and Christine of Lorraine

Involved the following artists:

Emilio de Cavalieri	producer, composer and choreographer
Ottavio Rinuccini	poet
<b>Jacopo Peri</b>	singer-composer
<b>Giulio Caccini</b>	singer-composer

Theme: power of ancient Greek music

4. **Florence: Activities of Camerata**

Group of men (including all those mentioned in #3) who met to discuss literature, science and the arts and to hear new music

Also included **Girolamo Mei**, a scholar of ancient Greek literature

Group inspired by idea of Greek drama and how it had been performed

Mei believed it was all (dialogue and chorus) sung to a single melody

Wished to attain a similar dramatic effect in a modern musical style

In *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (1581) **Vincenzo Galilei** used

Mei's ideas to argue against vocal counterpoint and to advocate solo

singing (**monody**) to match natural qualities of human speech

Similar groups (often called Academies) met in other cities, including Mantua and Venice

5. ***Le nuove musiche* (The New Music) by Giulio Caccini (1602)**

a. Includes an introduction offering theoretical justification for new style

b. Also describes the new style of singing, including details such as ornamentation

c. Includes music, consisting of madrigals and arias

**madrigals:** through composed of free poetry

reduced to melody/bass texture, with implied realization

standard classical Italian poetic line lengths, i.e. 7 and 11 syllables

**arias:** similar musical style, but in four-line strophic texts

6. **Venice: State entertainments**

Called 'Rappresentazioni' or 'favole pastorali' (pastoral fables)

"Encomiastic" entertainments, i.e. purpose was to glorify state

Placed glories of Venetian Republic in mythological or allegorical context

Praised it as a model of liberality and good government

Performed for state occasions and for feast days

7. **Carnival "comici dell'arte" (singular: "commedia dell'arte")**

Players traveled from South for **Carnival** (festive season before Lent)

Improvised plays with music using stock characters and situations

Performed in open air until permanent theaters built

Appealed to large paying crowds