

VOICES OF HISTORY SKILL A

1066: (*Corde natus ex parentis*) Music 1'00" Script 2'20"

[T and B hum first two lines of *Corde natus*. S and A help T and B with props. P exits to change into French knight costume. The monks bring out a large candle and light it. One monk has a large scroll of music and a quill pen. They break into chant, processing into the audience.]

Corde natus ex parentis

[The monks return to stage center, and continue to chant the following.
(The pitch drops a minor 3rd to the tonic on final syl-la-bles, except for the "ah" of a-men, which is a cadential lowered 7th below the tonic. E.g. sol sol sol sol-mi; sol sol sol re-mi.)]

TB We are English monks from the eleventh cen-tur-y.

There is one Christian Church, and it is Catholic;
There are no Lutherans, Episcopalians or American Baptists;
There is not even an A-mer-i-ca!

As monks, we pray and sing most of the day
Because in the eleventh century there is nothing else to do,
Except, maybe, to prepare for the Cru-say-ades.

We can read, but most people cannot,
And all books are written out by hand, so they are called
manuscripts;
Until last year, there wasn't even a way of writing mu-sic.

Wow! What is that in the sky?
I think it might have been a comet.
That could be a bad omen. A-men.

[Norman knight appears, wearing helmet. He speaks.]

P Bon jour! je m'appelle Norman. S'il vous plaît, où est la toilette?

TB [Still chanting] What is this knight saying? What language is he speak-ing?

P O, merci! J'ai faim! Est-ce que vous avez des escargots?

TB Did he say something about Romanesque ar-chi-tech-ture?

P Est-ce que vous connaissez Guillaume le Conqueror?

TB I think his name is Norman, and we've been in-vad-ed! A-men.

[In costume, P steps forward for the next quiz question. All others remove costumes.]

Voices of History SKIT B

1453: (*Bon jour, bon mois* by Dufay) Music 1'30" Script 1'45"

[The scene is Renaissance Florence. S and A are arguing. A has a flat map, S has an inflatable globe.]

A It's flat, I tell you! Whatsa matta, you got macaroni for brains?

S [Sarcastically -] Yeah, right! And if you sail too far, you fall off the edge, too. [She begins to blow up an inflatable globe.]

A Okay, so what do *you* think is out there?

S [Continuing to inflate globe -] China, of course! Look at this. [Pointing to globe.] We've explored the coast of Africa this year, and soon we'll sail west to China and India!

A That's ridiculous! Everyone can see that the ocean is flat! And [pointing to the map] there's nothing out *there* but sea monsters. Haven't you ever read any Greek and Roman stories?

S Look, the Chinese and Egyptians have known for years that the earth is round! Sea monsters? You shouldn't believe everything that Rome tells you - *I* think that even the Church needs some Reforming! Why, the Turks have just captured Constantinople and killed the Byzantine emperor. Rome will be next!

A Blasphemy! Sacrilege! [S & A continue to argue. T & B enter]

T Ladies, Ladies, stop it! Calm down!

B Wait till you see this! [B shows the women a Bible.] This was *not* hand written. It was *printed* by Signor Gutenberg! [All express wonder.]

S These are wondrous times! The Hundred Years' War between England and France is finally over. Our ships bring us spices from the East! And here in Florence there is a great rebirth, a Renaissance, of science and art.

T Speaking of rebirths, that old painter Donatello told me that the da Vincis just had a baby - Leonardo!

B The Columbuses had a boy, too. His name is Cristoforo! But enough small talk! In addition to this Bible, I also brought along a new piece of music, composed by Guillaume Dufay.

A He's a fine composer! Let's see what it sounds like!

[P plays a four bar introduction. SATB do not sing.]

B [SATB look at each other quizzically.] Tim! I'm sorry to have to tell you, but you can't accompany us on this piece.

P Why not? What's the matter?

B The piano won't be invented for another 250 years.

P [P exits, mumbling.] It's not fair. They had organs, etc.

Bon jour, bon mois

[SATB exit, P enters to continue.]

VOICES OF HISTORY SKILL

1689: (*Chorus of the Cold People - Purcell*) Music 1'00" Script 2'30"

[*Chorus of the Cold People* from *King Arthur* starts. During the singing, the pianist, with powdered wig, stops and interrupts the singers. **P** has a strong upper class British accent.]

P Wait, stop the performance! (Name of **B**), do you own your house?

B Well, actually, I rent a small apartment. Why do you ask?

P Sorry, in the 1680's, you can't sing with us if you don't own land.

[The music starts up again, minus the bass.]

P OK, (name of **T**), you're French, aren't you?

T Yes, I'm a Huguenot. I left when Louis XIV chased us out.

P Sorry, in the 1680's, no Huguenots in this group.

[The music starts up again, *sans* **B** and **T**.]

P (Name of **A**) - I heard a rumor that you are a Quaker?

A Yes, I am.

P Sorry, off to the Americas.

A But they're hanging witches there, in Massachusetts!

P Go to William Penn's new colony, then. Get out of here!

[The music starts up again - **S** solo.]

P Hey, (Name of **S**), you're a Catholic, like our King James II? Out!

[**P** continues to play piano by herself. Soon, **SATB** come running in with a newspaper! They throw it in front of the pianist.]

P [Annoyed] I say! What is this cheap, flimsy book?

SATB It's a newspaper! Read it!

P reads: Hmmm. Henry Purcell has a new opera, *King Arthur*, featuring the *Chorus of the Cold People*. Edmund Halley discovers comets orbit around the sun ... first seen in 1066 during the Norman Conquest of England! Newton discovers gravity!

SATB Keep reading!

P reads: The slave trade has been quite good this year, with profits up.

SATB Keep reading!

P reads: The Fire of London, the plague, the Turks invading Vienna again. Bah, humbug! (pause) What *is* this Bill of Rights?

SATB From now on, *Parliament* has the right to tax, run the army, make laws, organize free elections. . . and the king cannot impose excessive fines.

P reads: By Jove! And what's this Toleration Act?

SATB Freedom of religion! You *have* to let us sing with you!

P I guess I've been Baroque about all these things. It's time for me to be more Enlightened.

Chorus of the Cold People [followed by a choreographed bow]

1815: (*Magic Flute* - Mozart)

Music 2'00" Script 1'45"

Magic Flute Chorus

S OK, let's work on the finale of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. [S briefly sets the scene.]

[S conducts as **ATB** sing (with music). The tempo slows down, someone jumps an entrance, misses a rhythm, etc. - a solid performance, but rhythm is awry. It sounds bad. S interrupts . . .]

S OK, Tamino, you're slowing down in bar seven. Mozart wanted an up-beat finale, not a funeral march. Let's try it again.

[Worse rhythmic problems.]

S Wait, wait. This isn't working. Let's try something new. This [taking out a metronome] was just invented - the metronome!

[All gather around it, amazed!]

A Don't get too close to that! It may explode, like Robert Fulton's new steamboat thing. I wouldn't ride on one of those new-fangled contraptions if you paid me!

T Don't be silly! This isn't like a steamboat or steam locomotive. It's like a clock without a face. But what do we do with it?

S Listen to this. [S speeds up the tempo on the metronome.]

B Incredible!

S Now, let's try it again, with a metronome mark of quarter note equals 112. [tick-tick-tick-tick]

Magic Flute Chorus - [Let metronome continue. This time, the music is perfect.]

SATBP [Everybody congratulates everyone else. "Much better!" etc. etc.]

P Do you realize that this piano now has 88 keys, instead of the 60 that old Joe Haydn's piano had?

[More amazement. "No! Amazing!" etc.]

S I've heard that trumpets can now play all of the notes of the scale, not just fanfares, because of a new invention called a valve! Imagine what Mozart would have written if he knew that!

A Well, I, for one, don't think any of this modern stuff will help. Steam engines, gas lights in the streets . . . Nothing really changes: the Turks are invading Vienna again. Halley's Comet is coming back in 1835. We're fighting the French again, this time under Napoleon. What difference does it all make?

B Well, France and America are not ruled by a king any more, after their revolutions!

A Political revolutions! Planetary revolutions! [pause] Even Industrial Revolutions! Next thing you know, we'll be flying through the air in machines! [All laugh.] [Reprise Mozart final bars.]