A short history of music

by Alfred Einstein

One distinguished writer on music, Percy Scholes, drew an illuminating analogy on musical “fabric” when discussing the music of Palestrina. “Woven” he felt, was an appropriate word for this kind of composition. The music consists of the intertwining of a fixed number of strands. And as [the composer] weaves he is producing a “woof” as well as a “warp.” The solo concerto was but a short step from here where a soloist is contrasted with (later pitted against) the orchestra. No concertos of this period have achieved the popularity of Vivaldi’s whose 500 essays in the genre (mainly for strings but sometimes for wind instruments) are the product of one of the most remarkable musical minds of the early 18th century. Monophonic music consists solely of the melody, with no accompaniment. The most famous type of music from this era is the Gregorian Chant, named after Pope Gregory I (590-604). Gregorian chants are meditative and extremely relaxing. Renaissance Music (1400-1600 A.D.) Polyphony, two or more musical voices, became more popular during this time. Music was often written for specific instruments for accompaniment, and to entertain nobility at ballroom dances. The recorder, an early precursor to the flute and piccolo, and the Lute, an ancestor to the modern guitar, were two of the most popular instr