

## Johannes Ockeghem

### *Missa prolationum*, “Kyrie”

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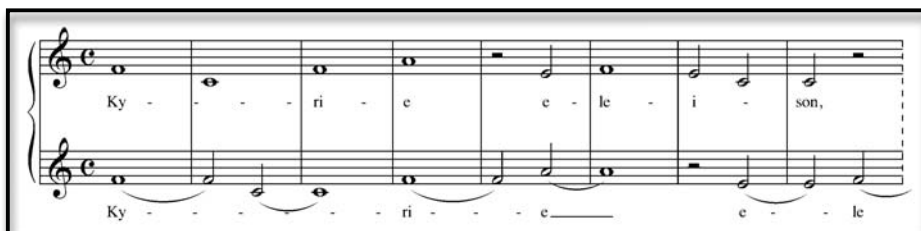
<b>Testable Name:</b>	Ockeghem
<b>Pronunciation:</b>	OCK–a–ghem
<b>Dates:</b>	ca. 1410–77
<b>Nationality:</b>	Flemish
<b>Testable Title:</b>	Missa prolationum
<b>Date Completed:</b>	Mid 15 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Genre:</b>	Mass movement
<b>Instrumentation:</b>	Four voices

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One of the main technical developments in composition that separated the Renaissance from the earlier Medieval period was the emergence of counterpoint—a method of writing two or more interdependent musical lines in which vertical considerations of consonance and dissonance are just as important as horizontal considerations of good melodic writing. Counterpoint sometimes involved a pre-extant melody, or *cantus firmus*; Johannes Ockeghem was among the first to dispense with the *cantus firmus* in favor of imitative counterpoint. (See the Josquin entry for more on imitative counterpoint.)

Among the early contrapuntalists, Ockeghem is perhaps the greatest. Not only was he able to write difficult counterpoint, but the end result never sounded forced; rather, it exemplified the Renaissance taste for clarity and simple beauty. Many contrapuntal composers, like Ockeghem, used their talents in setting the text for the Catholic Mass. The piece on the CD is one such



example. It features two pair of voices; in each pair, one line is performed against itself, but at a different speed, a type of canon known as *prolation canon*; see above.

This work is part of the *Missa prolationum*, a mass whose every movement is a prolation canon at a different interval. It begins with a canon at the unison (prime) and progresses, movement-by-movement, to a canon at the seventh. The Kyrie, the movement on the CD, is the first movement of the Mass, and the only Mass text in Greek (rather than Latin). Given the tripartite text (see below), composers often relied on a three-part structure; Ockeghem is no exception. Each line of the text comprises a canon at a different interval.

Kyrie eleison.  
Christe eleison.  
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy on us.  
Christ have mercy on us.  
Lord have mercy on us.

Canon at the unison  
Canon at the second  
Canon at the third