

Introduction to Gregorian plainchant and transcription into modern musical notation

1. Short introductory note
2. Transcription of neums from the manuscript family Sankt-Gallen to modern musical notation

1. Short introductory note

This piece is the Introit, the Entrance song of the Roman Catholic service, of the feast of St. Agatha on February 5th. It is given in classical Gregorian plainchant notation and in modern staff notation, though many scholars and other people maintain that it is impossible to notate Gregorian chant in other notation than square notes. The transcription in modern staff notation may be used for performance by a solo voice, a recorder or other melody instrument.

Because midi files sound horrible with this kind of music I did not add it. I will send it however on request.

You may find more transcriptions of Gregorian chant and more extended notes on my website Ottaviano Petrucci, page Gregorian plainchant in modern staff notation (URL: <http://home.planet.nl/~teuli049/petruccigreg>), and the websites I linked to.

The Latin texts have been added, to enable vocal performance too, and to enable correct phrasing in instrumental performance. The translations in the separate file have been made word to word from Latin as much as possible. They do not agree with current bible translations which have been based on the source text.

The recorder, in particular the alto recorder, seems to be the most appropriate because its breathing technique is closest to vocal performance. Other instrumentalists, however, are encouraged to try it, just as solo-singers. The repertory is amazing both in quality and quantity.

Gregorian chant is the one voiced vocal music in use for the services of the Roman Catholic Church, in the form created since the Carolingian Renaissance, circa 800. The more complicated pieces like this one were sung by one solo voice.

The piece presented here has been transformed into modern 5-line staff notation. There are some particular signs:

1. A comma placed above a note called strophæ (=turning or separate note); it is proposed to perform a glissando from the down second or a finger vibrato on that note;
2. A diamond above a note called liquescent (= liquid note); the note has to be sung on the ending consonant of the syllable or in instrumental performance strongly slurred to the preceding note;
3. A ~ or double ~ above a note called quilisma; in the end of the matrix below I suggest two ways of performance.

All pointed notes and graces should be performed fluently and not precisely, the short notes should sound mostly as an upbeat or a long appoggiatura. Other ornaments (shakes) should not be precise either. The time unit is one beat, except the beginning notes of a piece or a sentence, which should be performed like an upbeat. The slurs and ties represent the groups of neumatic signs.

A description of my method of transcription may be found below.

Pieces like this are appropriate as instrumental intermezzi during religious services (not exclusively Roman Catholic) but lend themselves to concert performances too.

The notation and interpretation has changed strongly in 12 centuries. Simultaneously with the beginning Early Music Movement Benedictine monks in Solesmes, France, succeeded in deciphering the original notation from the ninth century and in developing a new performance practice. Their work has systematically been summarised by Eugène Cardine, *Sémiologie Grégorienne*, Solesmes 1970, English translation by Robert M. Fowles, Solesmes 1982. This practice gains increasing acceptance from the 1990-s. The main point of it is a performance with tone lengths that diverge only in subtle distinctions. This is the so called semiological opinion of Eugène Cardine and Alberto Turco. Turco made several recordings with his two scholae on Naxos cd's.

Another school in the performance practice of Gregorian chant came into existence, the mensuralistic school. This school unites every group of musical signs or neumes to basic time units, or more simply a regular beat. At the base of it is the publication of J.W.A. Vollaerts, *Rhythmic proportions in early medieval chant*, Leiden 1960.

The mensuralistic opinion is the most appropriate for performance on a melody-instrument, so my transcriptions have been made in accordance with the mensuralistic method.

The classical manual is: L. Agustoni and J. Berchmans Göschl, *Einführung in die Interpretation des Gregorianischen Chorals*, Regensburg 1987-1992.

Gregorian chant has 8 different church modes (modus, plural modi). Only a part of them is congruent with the more common church tonalities like Doric. That is why the mode has been indicated by a cipher, as usual for Gregorian chant.

Gregorian chant has no fixed pitch. The beginning note and the pitch of the tonic of every individual piece is chosen in a way that the dominant or the recitation tone (tenor) of a corresponding psalm matches with the a' of 440 Hz.

Everybody is free to choose the pitch that is the most appropriate for his instrument, and I am prepared to make transpositions on request. The pitch given here is appropriate for the alto (treble) recorder, when transposed one octave or a fourth up (use soprano fingerings, for instance). (Some low pieces, like the graduale Christus factus est, will also sound well on the tenor recorder).

2. Transcription of neums from the manuscript family Sankt-Gallen to modern musical notation

General

A long nematic sign has a duration of one chronos (tempus, beat) two short ones have the value of one long one.

A neumatic sign is lengthened, usually doubled by 1. addition of a stroke: episema, 2. addition of the letter t = tenete = hold, or the letter a = augete = enlarge, 3. addition of a letter x = expecta = wait for the next tone; this sign also may indicate a rest. The letters t and a are also added to long neumatic signs as an explanation or to short notes as a correction.

A sign is shortened by addition of the letter c = celeriter = quickly. This letter is also added to short neumatic signs as an explanation or to long notes as a correction.

The first or the two first syllables of a phrase usually have one or two short notes, as a kind of upbeat. The last notes of a phrase are lengthened. Both characteristics are not always notated. In principle every combination of signs has a duration of one whole chronos or a multiple.

Most chronoi occur in pairs, making measures of two chronoi (binary metre). The first long syllable and the end syllable of a phrase fall on the strong first beat. Measures are not represented in the transcriptions.

Melismatic passages on one syllable slightly slow down in the end of a piece. This may cause a surplus or deficit of a short note. This is sometimes corrected in the transcriptions by application of two lombardic dotted notes or a triplet with tied second and third note, but it is sometimes accepted as an irregularity.

Signs in combination may deviate from their standard value. Lengthening and shortening signs may be applied to correct this, for instance with the climacus.








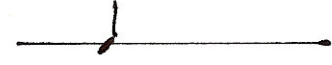

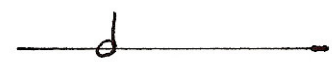







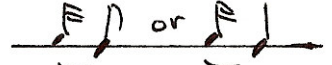

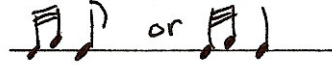


A short first note of a neumatic sign is counted as an appoggiatura in certain positions. The preceding note in that case is shortened by the duration of the appoggiatura, for instance with the pes, torculus and porrectus. The ornaments of the oriscus in combinations are also performed before the beat. Durations of appoggiaturas and ornaments should be performed not exactly dotted and staccato but easily, smoothly and slurred.

Dynamics occur occasionally. The letter l = leniter = softly is represented as piano and m = mediocriter = average as mezzopiano.



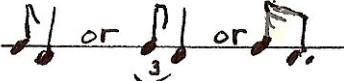



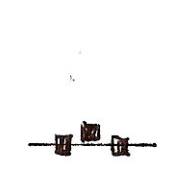

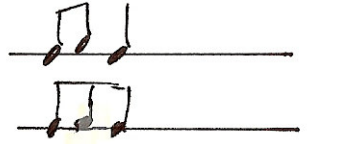
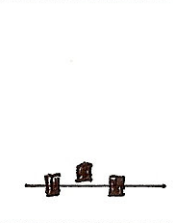

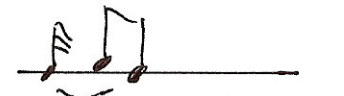
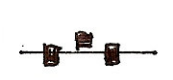




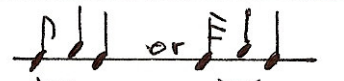



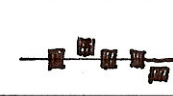





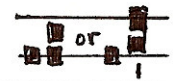

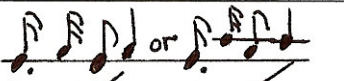
The diagram beneath gives a selection of signs and combinations of signs occurring in the pieces on the site. When I will add pieces with other signs, I will supplement this text and the diagram.

Arnold den Teuling, Februari 5th, 2006; corrected September 17th 2006


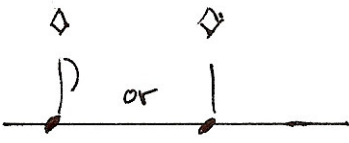
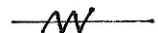

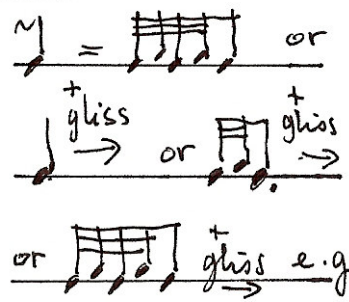
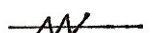

Schema

Classic Gregorian notation	Name of the neum	Neumatic sign	Addition or combination	Notes	Representation in modern notation
	Punctum	.			
	Trigonon	∴			
	Trigonon with extension	∴	+ punctum		
	Tractulus	—		low	
	Tractulus	—	+ episema		
	Virga	/		higher	
	Virga	/	+ episema		
	Oriscus, solitary	S		the solitary oriscus is long; the oriscus begins with an ornament main note - upper second – main note	
	Oriscus in combinations or attached, convex	^		begins with an appoggiatura from the upper second	
	Oriscus in combinations or attached, concave-convex	~		begins with an ornament main note - upper second- main note	
	Virga strata or pressus maior	~	+ oriscus + punctum	mostly in final cadences; both first notes at the same pitch or mi-fa.	

	Bivirga	//		at the same pitch	
	Pressus (minor)	∩	oriscus + punctum	descending, nearly always in combinations; relationship to the virga strata is not always clear to me.	
	Pes or podatus, short	✓		ascending	
	Pes or podatus, short	✓		when the first note has the same pitch as the preceding note and the second ascends a third or more, the first note is an appogiatura.	
	Pes with liquescent	∩		sign resembles the pes; see under liquescent	
	Pes or podatus, long	✓			
	Pes or podatus, partially lengthened	✓	+ episema		
	Pes quassus	✓	+ oriscus	after a short note: after a long note:	
	Clivis, short	∩		descending	
	Clivis, short	∩		before a new syllable or before a lower and longer note sometimes:	
	Clivis, long	↗	+ episema		

	Clivis, partially lengthened		+ episema		
	Clivis, lengthened, with appoggiatura		+ episema	sometimes indistinguishable from the torculus	
	Torculus, short			low – high – low; when applied before a new syllable or a longer and lower note: otherwise:	
	Torculus, short			when the first note has the same pitch as the preceding note and the second ascends a third or more, the first note is an appoggiatura (clivis with appoggiatura or torculus initio debilis, compare clivis)	
	Torculus, partially lengthened		+ episema	first note often appoggiatura	
	Torculus, partially lengthened		+ episema	first note often appoggiatura	
	Torculus, long			often immediately before final cadence	
	Torculus in frequent combination		+ pressus		
	Scandicus			ascending	
	Salicus		= punctum + short oriscus + virga	punctum and oriscus at the same pitch or mi-fa	

	Climacus, short	/.		descending	
	Climacus, long	/=			
	Climacus, partially lengthened	/.	+ episema		
	Climacus, partially lengthened	/=			
	Porrectus	~		high-low-high; when applied before a new syllable or a longer and lower note: otherwise:	
	Porrectus, partially lengthened	~	+ episema		
	Apostropha	˘		often at the same pitch as the preceding note; to perform presumably with a glissando from this preceding note or the lower second	
	Bistropha	˘˘		often at the same pitch as the preceding note; every note to perform presumably with a glissando from the preceding note or the lower second	
	Bistropha, lengthened	˘˘	+ episema		
	Tristropha	˘˘˘ or ˘˘˘	sometimes + episema	two notes or all the three at the same pitch; every note to perform presumably with a glissando from the preceding note or the lower second	

	Liquescent	little loop or curve attached to the preceding note		<p>is sung on certain consonants and u (a schwa is added to d and t, like in English the); duration equal to the note to which it is attached; I distinguished the liquescent from the pes and clivis by putting the consonants l, m, n, ng, r, d or t and the u in -au- in the texts as separate syllables, and putting a diamond above the note.</p>	
	Qulisma, short			<p>the preceding note is always long; occurs in combinations with pes, scandicus, torculus and porrectus and has the value of one chronos; performance not certain: either a double shake starting on the main note or a glissando to the next note, or perhaps a combination.</p>	
	Quilisma, long			<p>the preceding note is always long; occurs in combinations with pes, scandicus, torculus and porrectus and has the value of one chronos; performance not certain: either a triple shake starting on the main note or a glissando to the next note, or perhaps a combination.</p>	