

As can be seen from the critique in the preface, the common practice of interpreting the Gregorian chant at the time of the book's reading read each note as a note of exact unit length and allowed no dynamics, no change in speed or power. Such singing was repulsive in its time. (And I would count, I reckon, just as repulsive to us. Today, the usual way of interpreting a chant is different.)

The "oratorio chant" knows different values compared to the contemporary Gregorian note. Its notation is based on the then form of quadratic notation (among other things, it is written in a four-line outline and uses common keys C and F), but it has two types of notes, which allow the expression of six different values with the help of additional signs:



types of notes

- rectangle - long
  - with the previous cross - the longest
  - with a subsequent dot - extended long
  - simple - long
- rhombus - short
  - inclined to the left with a subsequent dot - extended short
  - inclined to the left - short
  - standing on the corner - the shortest

The predominant type of notes (rectangles / diamonds) also allows you to determine the relative "tempo" of a particular song: whether it is rather fast or slow.

Great emphasis is placed on the fact that the length of the note corresponds to the length of the syllable that is sung on it. This can be seen especially in the noticed examples of psalms, where the accented syllable is always extended.

### Repertoire

When I described the book studied above as "antiphony and processional", its scope surprises: it has just over 200 pages. At first glance, it is clear that I was either wrong in my destination, or the fathers of the oratorios made massive cuts as part of the repertoire of officia songs.

The name "antiphony" I have chosen may not be entirely happy. I wanted to express that the book contains a complete set of songs needed to celebrate the office. So far, the name is appropriate. However, to the extent that we are used to finding only medieval antiphons and responsories (+ or anthems) in medieval antiphonaries, and in modern antiphonaries often, in addition to notated songs, all texts of the office, the directorate is no antiphony. It is a thin collection of songs used as a supplement to the breviary. It contains almost none of the antiphons by which the antiphons were named.

So what does it contain? Above all, the melodies of the psalms are given. For most of the year, about seven will suffice: one is for the psalms of the complete (p. 17), the other three for the psalms

of the other watches (p. 1). In vespers and lauds, the first two psalms are sung on the first tune, the third and fourth on the second, and the fifth psalm on the third. In the matutin, the first of these melodies is always used for all the psalms of the first nocturne, the second for the psalms of the second, etc. At Easter, all the psalms are sung to a different melody in vespers (p. 15). In addition, the songbook contains two tunes dedicated to the cantic Magnificat and used depending on the liturgical period. The specificity of the first version of Magnificat, as opposed to the usual psalmodia, is that the canticum was probably not sung in verses, but partly in stanzas (p. 10n). Similarly, there are two tunes for Benedictus (p. 50) and one for Nunc dimittis (p. 20).

For the matutinum, there are three tunes of the Psalm Venite in the hymn (Psalm 95/94 sung at the very beginning of the watch), antiphons to it for liturgical times and holidays, and the hymn Te Deum. The melodies of the psalm are very simple, without ornaments, for the psalm Venite, as a solo piece of the cantor, otherwise typical. Antiphons all have the same, maximally simple, "psalmodic" melody. Te Deum is apparently a modified version of the contemporary Gregorian.

For the time of Easter, there is the antiphon *Haec dies* ("This is the day which the Lord has made ..."; p. 16) and the final *Benedicamus Domino* (I have not been able to find him again now).

Furthermore, we find a collection of responsories for small watches according to times and holidays (p. 66) and a selection of hymns (p. 85nn a).

The final Marian antiphons (p. 22) are not missing, while *Salve regina* reminds all Catholics of the well-known "tonus simplex" with some features.

And with that the fathers of the oratorios seem to have suffered for the whole liturgical year as far as the officium is concerned. Or at least the author of our book was counting on it ...

#### **Another simplification compared to the full choral office**

All the other songs of the office not mentioned above are performed recto tono (p. X). The verses and the chapter are also sung recto tono, but with a final decline of the third. This is a really significant simplification against the classic form of the choral office. This eliminates a large number of original melodies (antiphons), as well as the recitation of some texts on established melodic formulas (lessons and blessings matutina, verses with neum, final verse *Benedicamus Domino* , ...)

#### **Summary and rating: Sung officium "with lower consumption"**

I do not want and cannot evaluate the studied book in terms of the beauty of the songs. I can, but I don't want to evaluate it in terms of the effectiveness of content organization and didactic effectiveness. Let's look at it as a specific project of a sung office.

The duty of choral prayer was maintained in the congregation for which it was formed, and there was a living knowledge that the office was to be sung. This was compounded on the one hand by the dislike of the Gregorian chant, on the other hand by the strong pastoral focus of the institute, which did not provide good conditions for rehearsing and realizing the musically demanding form of the liturgy. (As for the liturgy of the lessons, in which the fathers themselves were to take part in singing. The oratorio liturgy for the people, on the other hand, was famous for its musical richness, but it did not do without choirs and instrumental ensembles.)

The simplification carried out significantly and in several dimensions reduces the musical diversity of the office: it abolishes the diversity of "common tunes" in favor of singing recto tono; makes the

antiphon a recitative instead of a melodic element; reduces the number of psalmodia tunes and "mathematically" links the rules of their use. The musical peculiarity of the liturgical time or day is not completely abolished, but is henceforth limited to the hymns, the responsoria of the small watch, and the final Marian antiphon. (Leaving aside a few exceptions for Holy Week, Easter Octave, and all of Easter.)

Such a radically simplified sung officium (even compared to the office using only all the possibilities of the currently available Sunday-holiday volume of the post-council Antiphonale Romanum!) Has significantly reduced demands on learning. The random part of the singing can easily be involved in most of the singing, the volume of necessary training with the community is minimal.

#### **Transposition into our conditions**

It is no coincidence that some communities today use a very similar model. (Cf. [The Mundelein Psalter](#) and [The Church's Daily Prayer at WYD in Madrid](#) .) But it surprises me that somewhere this "cheap" arrangement of the church's daily prayer is used as a solemn, "sung" to highlight the holidays compared to weekdays recites. The maximally simple musical form just opens up the possibility to sing every day.

Where a similar reduced form of the sung office is considered, I would recommend working with the melodies of the psalms more ingeniously than the oratorian directorate. Definitely take a little more of them (whether it's a set of choral tunes to which I clung, or Korejs's, Olejník's, Šmolík's or another) and not use them with iron regularity day by day as well. It is possible to firmly assign "their" melodies to the individual psalms, as is the case, among other things, in my songbook [Usporous Songs](#) . However, it is also possible to prepare several schemes used according to the liturgical time and holiday. ("interim - fairies - morning praises: to the psalms tunes A, C, A, to Benedict X", etc.) I consider this option very appropriate.

---