

St Gall Level 1 Group 1-2

Single-note Neums - Examples

Transcript

Let's take a look at a few examples of these neums in a manuscript. This is the Communion chant *Visionem quam vidistis*.

On the upper left side of the screen we have the chant in modern notation as found in the Graduale Romanum. On the lower right side of the screen we have the chant as found in the manuscript St. Gall 390, which is also known as the Hartker Antiphonary – often just called Hartker.

(singing) *Visiónem quam vidísti nemími dixéritis, donec a mórtuis resúrgat Fílius hóminis*.

Let's take a look at the very first word, *Visionem*. Here on the left in modern notation we see a single note followed by two higher notes. In Hartker, this first note is a tractulus because the following neum of two notes is higher.

The third syllable of the word is also set with a single note. It is the highest note of the incise, that is, the highest note of this small melodic grouping of notes. It is followed by a lower note for the last syllable of the word. In Hartker, this highest note is a virga, and the following lower note is a tractulus.

Now let's look on the left at the second line of music at the text, *Donec a mortuis resurgat*.

The first syllable is set with a two-note figure, which we'll study later. Then, the next six syllables are each set to a single note. The first of these six syllables is

higher than the previous note, so when we look at it in Hartker we see it set as a virga.

Back on the left, the third note of these six is the highest note of the series. It is higher than the note before it AND higher than the note that follows it. Logically, when we look at it in Hartker it is a virga.

One more time, back to the left - the sixth note of the series is just the opposite. It is lower than the note before it AND lower than the note that follows it. So, logically, when we look at it in Hartker we see it as a tractulus.

But what about the other notes in this series? They are simultaneously both higher and lower notes. For example, on the left, the second note, over the syllable “a” is both higher than the previous note AND lower than the following note. The fourth and fifth notes, over the syllables *tu –is* are each lower than the previous note AND higher than the following note. In Hartker every one of these notes is expressed as a virga.

Now before we leave these examples, I want to show you something a bit unusual. If we look back on the left, up on the first line of music – at the word *nemini*, we see that the first note is higher than that last note of the previous word AND it is lower than the next note. As we might expect, this note in Hartker is a virga. (It also happens to have the letter “L” written next to it, to indicate *levate*, or “lift up” – to remind the singer that this note is quite a bit higher than the previous note.

And, back on the left, if we look at the last syllable of the word, *ni*, we see a note that is lower than both the preceding note and the following note. And as we would expect, Hartker gives us a tractulus for this note.

Now the curiosity. The note for the middle syllable of the word, *mi*, is higher than previous note AND higher than the following note. When we look at Hartker, we would expect to find a virga, but, in fact, we find a tractulus. Why?

The most likely answer is that the notation in Hartker represents a melodic tradition that is slightly different from what is preserved in the Graduale Romanum. Indeed, most scholars today believe that the Hartker notation reflects this melody – which conforms perfectly to the ancient notation.