

Laon Level 1 Group 5-2

Four- and Five-note Neums – Examples

Transcript

Since, there is no one single chant with examples of all the neums in this unit, I will show you various appearances of these neums in several different chants. We'll start with the scandicus flexus.

Here is the Introit *Dum clamárem*. On the bottom right side of the screen you see the chant as it appears in the manuscript Laon 239. On the upper left side of the screen is a modern transcription. Take a look at the manuscript on the bottom right. In the manuscript, on the second line, over the accented syllable of the word *humiliávit*, we see a scandicus flexus.

On the upper left, in the transcription, the scandicus flexus is on the second line, here. We see that the scandicus rises for three notes, *and* that the third note is a skip above the second note. The notation in Laon gives us the direction of the melody, but not the pitches. The neum in Laon would be the same even if these notes were stepwise. Then, the neum reverses direction for one lower note.

The recording is just of the text *et humiliávit eos*.

(singing) ...*et humiliávit eos*,...

Now let's take a look at the Offertory chant *Pérfice gressus meos*. On the bottom right side of the screen you see a portion of the chant as it appears in the manuscript Laon 239. On the upper left side of the screen is a modern transcription. Take a look at the manuscript. Here on the third line, over the word *inclína*, we see a scandicus flexus, but it's a slight variation of the neum from how we normally see it. If you look in the blue box just above the manuscript, you see this neum in its

more common form: three puncti with a clivis. The meaning of the two forms is the same. It is possible that the scribe used a torculus after the second punctum to draw attention to the skip, that is, the break in the stepwise pattern of the melodic line, between the second and third notes, maybe, for, if we look on the upper left, in the transcription, the scandicus flexus is on the second line, here. We see that the scandicus rises for four notes, *and* that the third note is a skip above the second note. So, perhaps this is why the scribe chose to use a torculus for the top three notes, that is, to show the intervallic break between the second and third notes. Then, after the rise of four notes, just as we expect, the neum reverses direction for one lower note.

While we are looking at this manuscript, there is also an example of a porrectus subbipunctis. On the lower right, in the manuscript, it is on the second line, over the first syllable of the word *tuis*, here. This neum is also a little different from what you might expect. You might expect it to look like what you see in the blue box underneath the manuscript: a porrectus with two puncti underneath.

Well, the neum as we see it in the manuscript tells us two things. First, the use of an uncinus at the end, here, instead of a punctum, tells us that the last note is lengthened.

Second the separation of the second note of the neum from the third, here where I have drawn a blue line, is called a neumatic break. When a neum is broken, that is, part of it is separated from the rest of it, sometimes it has rhythmic implications, and sometimes it does not. This is something we will study in the last unit. In this particular case, it does not have any rhythmic implication. It is more likely in this case that it is a subtle reminder that the distance between the second and third notes of the neum is a skip and not a step.

We see this when we look at the transcription. This neum is on the first line, over the first syllable of the word *tuis*, here. We can see the skip between the second and third notes.

(singing) *Pérfice gressus meos in sémitis tuis, ut non moveántur vestigial mea: inclína aurem tuam, et exáudi verba mea: mirífica misericórdias tuas,...*

Now we'll take a look at the same chant, but just the last line, which wouldn't fit onto the previous slide. Here we'll take a look at a torculus resupinus. On the bottom right side of the screen, in the manuscript, over the second syllable of the last word *Dómine*, we have a torculus resupinus.

In the modern transcription this torculus resupinus it is here, but oops! This is not the low, high, low, high pattern we expect. Instead, its high, low, high, and then a repeated note.

Well, this is a very normal use of the torculus resupinus, even if it is not a part of the exercises in the unit.

(singing) *...qui salvos facis sperántes in te, Dómine.*

Lastly, this is the Introit, *Laetétur cor*. Here on the bottom, we have the chant as it appears in the manuscript Laon 239. On the top we have a modern transcription. In the manuscript, toward the end of the first line, over the first syllable of the word *Dóminum*, we have a porrectus flexus.

In the modern transcription, it is also toward the end of the first line, here. Note the high, low, high pattern of the porrectus followed by a single lower note.

Now, as for the remaining neums of this unit, the longer scandicus, the longer climacus, and the scandicus subbipunctis, they are extremely rare in unaltered, isolated forms. Typically, they are either altered to show a rhythmic nuance, or they are part of larger melismatic figures.

For example, there is one in this chant. If you look at the manuscript, on the second line, over the end of the word *eius*, there is a scandicus subbipunctis, here.

This is a variation from the form as we might expect to see it. We would normally expect to see it as it appears in the blue box just to the right of the manuscript, either like this, or like this. This is another example of a neumatic break. However, for purposes of what I want to show you, the differences between these variations are irrelevant.

In the transcription it is on the second line, here. We see the pattern of the three ascending notes, followed by two descending notes.

However, as I mentioned earlier, this neum is rare in isolation. Indeed, this scandicus subbipunctis is really part of a larger neum of eight notes that is created by joining a clivis, a scandicus subbipunctis, and a virga.

(singing) *Laetétur cor quaeréntium Dóminum: quaérite Dóminum, et confirmámini: quaérite fáciem ejus semper.*