



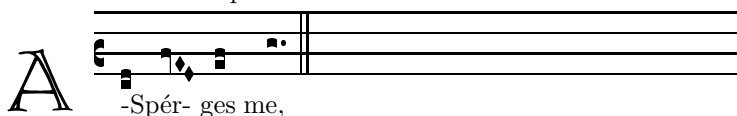
How To Sing Chant

Like books on how to speak French, it is best if you can learn by listening. Since that is not always possible here are a few pointers to help you get started.

Chant is written on a four line staff. That gives enough room for a comfortable vocal range. The melodies can be sung at whatever pitch suits the choir, usually around speaking pitch or higher.

The  clef marks the line for the 'Do' note. The  clef marks the line for the 'Fa' note. The notes are read left to right with a steady rhythm following the natural rise and fall of the text.

Here is an example.





This neat, compact excerpt could be written like this:



Or a little lower like this:



Can you see the advantage of the first notation? The text gives the spacing of the notes rather than being chopped into syllables and spread according to time.

A few notes are a bit puzzling. The  is a pair of notes sung bottom to top. The  is a trio of three notes, the first two at either end of the swoosh and finishing with the last note up on the stick.

Dots and dashes roughly double the time the note is held. The volume swells according to the words. Accent marks show

where to stress the syllable. Latin never stresses the last syllable so two syllable words are not marked to save ink. The voice dies down at the end of a phrase.

The different barlines indicate different separations or pauses. The bigger the line the bigger the pause. The smaller divisions do not warrant a breath. Try to get a whole sentence in one breath, or at least avoid taking a breath in the middle of a word.

There are a few unusual notes to look for. Some say the ♯ was once sung with a wobble. It is tricky to get a choir to wobble all together so now most agree to emphasize the previous note and skip lightly over the ♯. Sometimes notes at the end of a bunch are shrunk to show how the sound diminishes.