

## THE INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE *SPIRITUS DOMINI* INTROIT

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**SUMMARY.** In the glorious days of the Gregorian chant, the melodies were performed by heart; therefore, those who interpreted them had to master a great number of titles, which could suffer small variations at any time. Consequently, the necessity of recording these piece was imminent, a process which was - for the first time in music history - distinctive for every single monastery. This recording method was mainly in reference to the interpretation of such works; the neume recording the gesture of that particular conductor, augmented by certain additional signs. This is a testament of an extremely finely nuanced interpretation, a process that we have chosen to illustrate for you with the help of the *Spiritus Domini* Introit.

**Keywords:** Gregorian chant, Introit, Antiphon, pes subbipunctis, Metz notation, Doxology, Mass, interpretation, recording.

The first chant of the Mass is the Introit, which is an antiphon<sup>2</sup> chant, also referred to as *Antifona ad introitum* by the liturgical editions due to its arrangement as well as inner structure. The chant is sung during the entrance of the priest and his attendants, at the same time expressing the fundamental theological idea of the Mass<sup>3</sup> itself. The *Introit* has three components: *Antiphon*, *Psalm*, and *Doxology*.

Ex. 1



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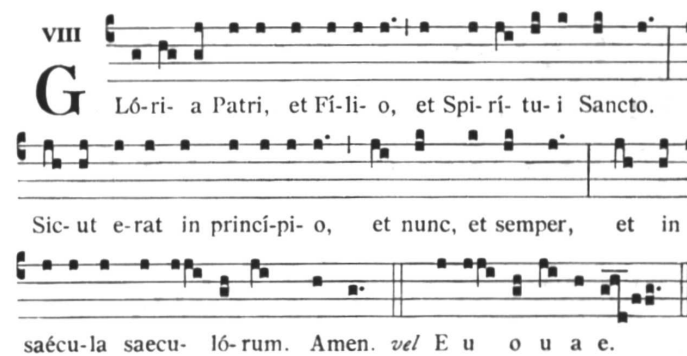
<sup>2</sup> The other Proper chant of the Mass is Communion, which is sung during the distribution of Communion.

<sup>3</sup> In the Middle Ages Sundays were named after the beginning of the *Introits*. E.g. *Spiritus Domini* Sunday.

ANDRÁS VÁNYOLOS



vo- cis, alle- lú- ia, al- le- lú- ia, alle- lú- ia.  
*P.* Exsúr- gat De- us, et díssi- pētur in- í- ml- ci e- ius : et  
fú- gi- ant, qui o- dē- runt e- um, a fá- ci- e e- ius.



VIII  
**G** Ló-ri- a Pa- tri, et Fí- li- o, et Spi- rí- tu- i San- cto.  
Sic- ut e- rat in prin- cí- pi- o, et nunc, et semper, et in  
saé- cu- la saé- cu- ló- rum. Amen. *vel* E u o u a e.

#### Graduale Triplex<sup>4</sup>,

*Antiphon* is the first and last section of the *Introit*. Its text is nearly always a text of a psalm, although in rare cases it can be some other Biblical text or simply an invented or compiled one. *Psalm* is the first verse line of a psalm, as it follows the *Antiphon* chant. The final section of the *Introit* is *Doxology*, a liturgical formula of praise addressed to the Holy Trinity, which has a fixed form text.

The *Introit* from *Domenica Pentecostes: Ad missam in die*<sup>5</sup> includes the seventh verse from the first part of the Book of Wisdom and the first verse of Psalm 68.

The translation of the *Antiphon* is “For the Spirit of the Lord filleth the world: and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice.”

<sup>4</sup> Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes, France, 1979, pp.252, 824.

<sup>5</sup> Whitsunday: Everyday Mass.

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The translation of the *Psalm* says “*Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.*”

The translation of the Doxology is as it follows “*Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*”

A literal translation of the text is vital in order to know the true meaning of each word and each structure, and to have a clearer picture as regards to the meaning of the text. This process will be an inevitable one also throughout the different stages of the analysis.

**Ex. 2**

Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum,  
 (For the) Spirit (of the) Lord fills (the) world,

et hoc quod continet omnia, scientiam habet vocis  
 and that which contains all things, knowledge ↔ has (of the) voice.

The second verse line gets meaning through the context of the next verse: “*Therefore he that speaketh unrighteous things cannot be hid: neither shall vengeance, when it punisheth, pass by him.*” (Book of Wisdom, 1:8)

The last line of the *Antiphon* may have the following meaning: *The One who fills the world hears every word.* This “*scientia habet vocis*” sends us back to the miracle of Whitsunday, the miracle of the word, a Biblical part representing the exact opposite of the Tower of Babel episode, in which the Lord had confounded all the languages. However, this is the contrary of that example, for the Holy Spirit sent by the Lord, gathers all the languages, and they all have one language, and they all understand the same verb. (The studies of St. Thomas Aquinas bear relevance in this case, especially his *Summa Contra Gentiles* treaty where he discusses the numerous earthly languages as opposed to the uniqueness of the one in heaven.)

The melody conforms to the lines of the verse, ending each line with a “*Hallelujah*”, thus articulating two phrases. They both are made up of different *membrum* that also can be divided in several so-called *incissums*:

**Ex. 3**

membrum 1		membrum 2			membrum 3
<i>incissum</i> 1	<i>incissum</i> 2	<i>incissum</i> 3	<i>incissum</i> 4	<i>incissum</i> 5	<i>incissum</i> 6
Spiritus	Dómini	replévit	orbem	terrárúm,	allelúia

membrum 4			membrum 5		
<i>incissum</i> 7	<i>incissum</i> 2'	<i>incissum</i> 3'	<i>incissum</i> 3'	<i>incissum</i> 4	<i>incissum</i> 5'
et hoc quod	cóntinet	ómnia,	sciéntiam	habet	vocis,

membrum 6		
<i>incissum</i> 8	<i>incissum</i> 3'	<i>incissum</i> 6'
allelúia,	allelúia,	allelúia

The *episema*<sup>6</sup> *clivis*<sup>7</sup> that ends the first *membrum* concludes the word *Dómini*, thus preparing the tonic accent on the word *replévit*. The *double virga*<sup>8</sup> suspends the melody with certain unrest leading toward the *Hallelujah*<sup>9</sup> exclamation that ends the entire phrase with a cadence passage.

The subject of the first musical phrase constitutes a single unit (m.1).<sup>10</sup> The word *Spíritus* is an intonation formula that leads up to the tonic accent<sup>11</sup> of the word *Dómini*. Since the tonic accent of the word *Spíritus* falls on the first note – the lowest one – of the *membrum*, the *torculus*<sup>12</sup> and *epiphonus*<sup>13</sup> neumes that follow must be mildly intonated. This is also reflected by the Metz notation<sup>14</sup>, which uses the same neumes in order to portray the tension build-up. The melodic line to which the *Domini* word is sung is actually a

<sup>6</sup> An additional sign used in conjunction with neumes.

<sup>7</sup> A neume signifying two notes, the second lower than the first. Its shape often resembles that of the oratorical circumflex accent, from which it is probably derived.

<sup>8</sup> A neume signifying a single note. It usually consists a single vertical stroke of the pen (hence its name), often with a small *episema* (adjoining stroke). It generally represented a note higher than those on either side did. In this case, we are witnessing a group of *virgae* of the same pitch.

<sup>9</sup> Has derived from three Hebrew words: Halle lu Jah (we) which means: *Praise Jahwe*.

<sup>10</sup> From here on out we will use the following abbreviations: “m.” for membrum; “i.” for incissum and “ph.” for phrase.

<sup>11</sup> As is many other editions of Gregorian chant, in *Graduale Triplex* the tonic accent is marked by a diacritical mark. In case the word does not have an accent, it will always receive one on the first syllable.

<sup>12</sup> A neume signifying three notes, the second higher than the others.

<sup>13</sup> A neume signifying two notes of which the second is higher than the first and semi-vocalized.

<sup>14</sup> In order for us to have a clearer picture on the actual interpretation of the analyzed Introit, we will sometimes follow the manner in which the three Saint Gall notations, the Metz notation as well as the quadrat notation reflect certain melodic and interpretational aspects of the work. Therefore we will use the following abbreviations for these notations, consequently Saint Gall will be E. (from the 121<sup>st</sup> codex from Einsiedeln), Metz notation will be L. (from the 239<sup>th</sup> codex of Laon), while quadrat will be referred to as Q.

cadence formula<sup>15</sup> composed of a *virga*<sup>16</sup>, a *pes subbipunctis resupinus* and an *episema clivis*, which reflect an inner symmetry. This membrum (m1) that contains an intonational formula, as well as a cadential one reveals a condensed version of Whitsuntide. However, the reason for celebration is the coming of the Holy Spirit, thus the word *replevit* (fills) is in the middle of the sentence. Therefore, the *episema clivis* that concludes the word *Domini* must aim to the ascent of the tonic accent of the word *replevit*, consequently the two cannot be separated by a *caesura*<sup>17</sup>.

The *ple* syllable reaches the climax of the verse by a *scandicus*<sup>18</sup> of which the first two notes are identical. Although we will encounter a higher pitch sound next (a liquescent *E* note) above the *or* syllable, the same well demarcated *ple* will be the well prepared culmination that precedes the resolution and coincides with the accent of the word as well as of that of the meaning of the text.

*E.* articulates the *scandicus* by neumatic articulation (*stacco neumatico*) thus preparing the *pes rotundus*<sup>19</sup> by way of the episemic *virga*<sup>20</sup>.

The word *orbem* reaches the highest note of the verse by way a *pes liquescens* surpassing the highest *mediatio* sound of the *psalm tone*.<sup>21</sup>

The third sound of the *tristropa*<sup>22</sup> receives a *liquescens* form through the addition of a literal sign (*i - inferus* – lower pitch), which shows that in the Einsideln an added note was sung.

The *quadrat* notation does not distinguish between the *tristropa* and *bivirga*, whereas the two neumatic notations record them in different forms. The inner symmetry of the *terrarum* (that could also have an expressive connotation) reveals the interpretive difference between *tri-(bi-) stropa* and *bi- (tri-)virga*.

The Hallelujah begins with a *climacus liquescens (cephalicus)*<sup>23</sup>, than concludes the musical phrase with a cadential formula.

<sup>15</sup> The composition technique is based on the use of certain closely knit formulas is called centonization (*centonizatio*).

<sup>16</sup> *E.* does not use an episema here, for the tonic accent is obvious.

<sup>17</sup> From this standpoint, *Q.* uses an unsuitable articulation (*minima*).

<sup>18</sup> This is the transfiguration of an accentuated *pes* that appears in the psalmody.

<sup>19</sup> *e (equaliter)* which is a literal notation (*litterae significativae*) shows that the melody starts on the same note.

<sup>20</sup> *L.* notes a *virga* instead of a *pes*, therefore they have sung an additional note in Laon, a note that unfortunately is not noted in *Q.* At the same time a *literal sign* (*T, a*) is also used to show the importance of the syllable.

<sup>21</sup> A psalm tone is composed out of: intonatio, tenor, flexa, tenor, mediatio, reintonatio, tenor, finalis.

<sup>22</sup> *L.* prolongs the third note, thus preparing the accent of the word.

<sup>23</sup> *Q.* only notes the *virga*.

The neume of the *le* syllable (*porrectus flexus*) uses an indicated neumatic articulation as well as one with an *episemic virga*<sup>24</sup>, followed by an *articulated torculus*<sup>25</sup> on the tonic accent of the *lu* word. The articulated torculus calms the melody that lingers on a cadential *G*<sup>26</sup>.

We can easily notice that the melody of the antiphon pursues the melodic line of the psalm tone, although in an ornamented form. (See the psalm tone in the 5-6th row of the aforementioned example).

The next phrase is built on three *membrums* (see the table above); the first membrum is oscillating between the base note and the tenor (C note), the second one moves around the voice of the tenor, while the third one starts from the base note only to then touch the tenor before returning on the G note.

According to *E.*, the first *membrum* (*m4*) is a *G* for it uses an equaliter<sup>27</sup> and not a *pes* on the *F* note such as *Q.* records it. The *scandicus* neume on the *hoc* syllable emphasizes the *C* note by neumatical articulation, also confirmed by *L.* through the *augete* indication. The *et hoc quod* incissum forms an independent unit that prepares the central word of *membrum 4*. The word *continet* brings forth the same cadential formula as *Domini*, although transposed to a note higher.<sup>28</sup> The neumatic articulation<sup>29</sup> on the *con* syllable emphasizes the *G* note. The *pes subbipunctis resupinus* differs from its original appearance escorting the *Domine* word by the fact that the *pes* receives an *episema* that underlines the second *B* of the *membrum*.

The parallel identity<sup>30</sup> between *Domini* and *continet* carries on; *omnia* reaches a *C* as did *replevit* earlier, with the exception of the fact that previously the base of the jump is a *G*, emphasized by neumatic articulation. Due to the fact that the *C* note appears on several times, and the note *B*<sup>31</sup> has such an important function, the word *omnia* is linked in an organic manner rather to the cadential formula (*continet*), thus forming an independent unit with the latter. Therefore, this cadence does not end the melody, although it augments it clearly, but it prepares the accent of the word *omnia*, that reaches a *C* note due to a *scandicus liquescens* that has a *neumatical articulation*. The main characteristic of the *scandicus* neume is that of emphasizing its last note, a note that in this case has slightly been modified by way of the underlined

<sup>24</sup> *L.* indicates this with a *T* (*tenete* – sustain).

<sup>25</sup> *L.* discomposes them in *uncinus*, also using an *a* (*augete* – to prolong), which emphasizes the restrained cadence of the phrase.

<sup>26</sup> The basic note of the melodies in the eighth voice is *G*.

<sup>27</sup> *L.* also uses a single *uncinus* at the same height.

<sup>28</sup> With the difference that the tonic accent of the word *continet* is not a *virga*, but a *torculus resupinus liquescens* with a neumatical articulation.

<sup>29</sup> *L.* records the *torculus resupinus* without a neumatic articulation.

<sup>30</sup> A general procedure that reminds us of the psalm parallelisms.

<sup>31</sup> The third note of the *forculus resupinus* neume already prepares the second *episema* note of the *pes subbipunctis resupinus* neume.

first note due to the neumatic articulation<sup>32</sup>, but still aims for that last note. The *tenor* note that settles on the last syllables evokes the word *terrarum*, ending this hereby *membrum*.

By using the centonization composition technique certain parallels can be drawn between the conceptual elements of the text, as is this instance the use of the same formula is also portrayed by the sounds as well as underlines the interpretation of the text *The Lord is the one who holds everything together*.

The second *membrum* (m5) starts with a *B*, that it isn't corroborated by *E.*, for it does not use *tractulus* – as it would be the rule in this case – but *virga*, that could not be any note other than *C*. The *pes accentuat* neume (*epiphonus* in this case) that is on the second syllable of the word *scientiam* is followed by an *episema clivis* that broadens the melodic line. The neumatic group situated on the last syllable of the word prepares the climax through a *tristropa*<sup>33</sup> followed by an ample, cadenced *torculus*. The culmination located on the tonic accent of the word *habet* (*pes quadratus*) represents the pinnacle of the entire *Introit*, thus expressing its essence: *The Spirit of the Lord has the knowledge*. This phrase expresses the omnipotence of the Lord. The climax is very carefully prepared; the ending of the precursory word realizes a thorough preparation by way of the *tristropa* and *torculus*, with an ending that is just as methodical achieved by a *tristropa*. The cadence is closely tied to the *hallelujah*, for the beginning note of the *hallelujah* matches the last cadential note. Consequently, this cadence is suspended, as well as the cadence of the *terrarum*, thus rushing the declamation of the *hallelujah*. The *salicus* neume from the first *hallelujah* accelerates the pronunciation of the tonic accent on an extremely different *porrectus subbipunctis*, by using some opposite literal signs.

The second *hallelujah* takes us back to the word *replevit* through the *scandicus* that has a neumatic articulation. The neumatic articulation located on the tonic accent is circumscribed by an extremely refined nuance: the Saint Gall notation says that between the *clivis* and the *porrectus* the *statim* (immediate) literal sign – which instead of underlining, and broadening of the second note of the *clivis* neume, it imposes an immediate and simple continuation, however, due to the *mediocriter* (mediocre, moderate) literal sign that refers to the first two notes of the *porrectus*, it – in this case – eases the melodic development<sup>34</sup> to a moderate pace. Through this method of recording, a particularly nuanced interpretation is suggested, emphasizing

<sup>32</sup> Using the impulse energy of the first note, the next two follow ever so easily.

<sup>33</sup> *E.* puts an *episema* on the last note, a fact also confirmed by *L.*, thus the *episemic* note prepares the *torculus*.

<sup>34</sup> *L.* records this neume in a distinctive manner by using a different neumatic articulation. The interpretive difference between the two versions is minimal.

the emotional charge that is emitted by way of the exclamation of the word *hallelujah*. The last two notes of the *pes subbipunctis* sign on the *ia* syllable concludes the melodic line and at the same time amplifies it. The last *hallelujah* represents the underlining of the hallelujah located at the end of the first phrase, differentiated by the fact that the neume situated on the first syllable is not a *cephalicus* but an *epiphonus*, which increases even more the final declamation of the hallelujah.

Throughout the analysis, we must also bear in mind a different aspect of Gregorian chant. Not unlike the laws of nature, music also applies the tension generating relationship manifested by way of the creative alternation of tension and relaxing, called *arsis* and *tesis* from the standpoint of Gregorian chant analysis. The dynamic force of these two aspects can be observed equally at a macrostructural and microstructural level. Consequently, the *arsis* of a phrase unfolds to the climax of the same segment, and a returning to the initial relaxing stage follows it.<sup>35</sup> The resolve of a *membrum* takes place after reaching the tonic accent of a central word, whereas the tense *arsis-tesis* relationship in the case of the *incissum* is conditioned by the inner structure of the word, and for a neume or a neumatic group, the dynamic rapport is reflected on a microstructural level. The extreme polarities of *arsis-tesis* are suggested more or less throughout the Introit. Taken as a whole, the bigger proportions finalize themselves through a single trajectory of *tesis* and *arsis* which then they also subordinate the smaller proportions of the subsidiary culminations.

This intricate relationship between the macro and microelements bears a particular importance in the interpretation process. In the beginning, during the phase of mastering of the work, the chiromantic gestures also concentrate on the details. In the final stages after mastering this technique, the conductor circumscribes only the outline of the whole piece, thus uniting the piece into a harmonious whole. Naturally, the more difficult parts or the more lengthy ones can be conducted in a most detailed manner even in final stages of mastering the piece. The neumatical notations accurately designate the *arsis-tesis* rapport; therefore, we must bear in mind the particular characteristics of the neumes<sup>36</sup> when searching for the turning points<sup>37</sup> of the work.

The turning point of the *Introit* coincides with the tonic accent of the word *habet*, which we have to apply towards all throughout the interpretation of the piece, respecting the natural arch of the melodic line. In the case of the

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<sup>35</sup> This facet reveals itself to us during the analytical process; consequently we can define the dynamic rapport between the two moments.

<sup>36</sup> In some cases the dynamic rapport is not reflected by the neumes, thus the text will become crucial in establishing this aspect. This is easily understandable for the purpose of the composition is the interpretation of the text, consequently the melody and the neumes themselves follow the meaning of the words.

<sup>37</sup> We define as a turning point all those cases that involve the meeting point between tension and relaxation.



first phrase, the moment of maximum tension is produced together with the tonic accent of the word *habet*, where the episema virga receives the most important role, followed by the slow ending of the same first phrase. The arsis of the first membrum strives toward the tonic accent of the word *Domini*, thus achieving a tension-relaxation arch. The *incissum* of the word *terrarum* represents the gravest note, for the tonic accent falls on this note.<sup>38</sup>

The issue of the arsis-tesis rapport in the case of the neumes is far more complex:

- usually the melody aims toward the last note of the neume
- the neumatical articulation moves this moment to the note that precedes the articulation
- the long melismas represent particular cases from this standpoint<sup>39</sup>

The neumatic articulation of the first *hallelujah* in the second phrase emerges right after the beginning, therefore we must intonate a long note in order to facilitate the unraveling of tension. The tension accumulation of the torculus, which acts also as a microelement that aims toward the last note, then thrusts the process into the phase of the *tesis*.

Throughout the performance of the piece, we must take into consideration all these rapports, whereby the breaths of the soul are transposed into a musical-dynamic as well as a musical-poetic process, achieving the permanent creative alternation of the tension-relaxation rapport.

After the *Antiphon* of the *Introit*, the first verse of the indicated psalm is sung, followed by the *Doxology* and the repeated *Antiphon*. The psalm verse is set on the psalm tone following certain guidelines: the first row of the psalm begins with an intonation, followed by the recitation of the *tenor note*. In the case of an inner cadence of the first row, the melody climb descends on *flexa*, returns on the tenor reciting and finally ends the first row with a medial cadence. The second row begins with a *reintonatio*, followed by a *tenor* reciting and the final cadence (*finalis*). At the end of the *finalis* the *differentiae* is found, that leads the psalm tone to the *Antiphon*.

The *Doxology* follows the same principle of text placing on the psalm tone with the exception that it spreads on three rows.

Through our analysis, we conclude that the two different neumatic notations assert the necessity of a much more nuanced interpretation than the *quadrat* notation, which serves both the interpretation of the text as well as its transcendental function.

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<sup>38</sup> This is not characteristic to Gregorian chant, however in some cases the interpretation of notions within the text come before the natural articulation of the words.

<sup>39</sup> In this case, the dynamic process of articulating the arsis-tesis rapport is realized by the use of episemas, lettering and augmented forms of neumes.

ANDRÁS VÁNYOLOS

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