At the present day, two notations are in use for the Plainsong melodies: the square traditional notation, and its modern transcription on the five-line stave; we give them side by side.

A musical notation must represent *melody* and *rhythm*. The melodic signs, or notes, show the relative pitch of the sounds; rhythmic signs help to indicate their length and the rhythmic movement of the melody.

I. The melodic signs or neums.

1. Their different forms.

A. Single notes.

a. *Square punctum*  
   ![Square punctum notation]

b. *Diamond note*  
   ![Diamond note notation]

c. *Virga*  
   ![Virga notation]

d. *Apostropha*  
   ![Apostropha notation]

e. *Oriscus*  
   ![Oriscus notation]

f. *Quilisma*  
   ![Quilisma notation]

All these have the value of a single beat $= \text{♩}$

B. Neums of two notes.

*Podatus* or *Pes*  
   ![Podatus notation]

*Clivis*  
   ![Clivis notation]

C. Neums of three notes.

*Porrectus*  
   ![Porrectus notation]

*Torculus*  
   ![Torculus notation]

*Scandicus*  
   ![Scandicus notation]

*Climacus*  
   ![Climacus notation]

*Salicus*  
   ![Salicus notation]
D. Neums of more than three notes.

E. Liquescent Neums.

2. Duration and value of the notes.

In themselves, all the notes in Plainsong, whatever their shape, and whether they occur singly or in groups (neums), are worth one single beat: the indivisible unit of time, that can be represented in modern notation by a quaver. This idea of the equal value of each note is very important, for it is the basis of rhythm.

Two signs may occur to change the length of a note:

a) the dot (•), which doubles the length of the note it follows, giving it the value of a crotchet:

b) the horizontal episema (−), which may affect a single note or a whole group, and indicates a slight lengthening of the note or of all the notes of the group.

When the horizontal episema affects the last note or notes of a section or member (see below) it indicates nothing but the slight lengthening just mentioned; but if it affects a note or group within the section or member, it adds, as a rule, a shade of expression; in this case it is principally an expression mark.

Neither the dot nor the horizontal episema in themselves are marks of intensity.

N. B. — The vertical episema (') has of itself absolutely no connection with length or intensity; it is purely a rhythmic sign, that is sometimes added to show the smallest steps of the rhythm or the rhythmic ictus that will be described below.
3. Remarks on some of the preceding notes or groups.

1. The *virga* is often repeated; it is then called a *bivirga* or double virga, represented in modern notation by a crotchet or two tied quavers.

2. The *apostropha* never occurs singly; it is found in a group of two (*distropha*), or three (*tristropha*), or even more.

Formerly these notes were distinguished by a slight impulse or inflection of the voice. In practice, less skilful choirs are advised to sing the whole group of notes as one; though there may be a slight crescendo or decrescendo as the case may be. The ideal would be a light repercussion, as it were a fresh layer of sound, on each apostropha.

A repercussion is always necessary on the first apostropha of each group (*strophicus*); ex.: *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*; also on the first note of the following group when on the same degree of the scale; ex. *e*, *f*.

3. The *oriscus*, a kind of apostropha, ends a group on the same degree of the scale as the preceding note or a degree above: it should be sung lightly.

4. *Quilisma*. This jagged note is always preceded and followed by one or more other notes; its value is no less than that of others; but it is prepared for by a well-marked *ritardando* of the preceding note or group. When a group precedes the quilisma, the first note of that group is lengthened most, and the first note of a podatus or clivis is usually doubled, ex. below: *Sub throno*.

5. *Podatus*. Two notes, the lower coming first.

6. *Porrectus*. Three notes; the first and second at the two ends of the broad oblique stroke.
7. *Scandicus, climacus*. These two groups can be formed of three, four, five or more notes, without change of name.

8. *Salicus*. Not to be confused with the *scandicus*. It is marked in the Solesmes books by a vertical episema under the last note but one. Like the *scandicus*, it can be formed of more than three notes; but there is always an ictus on the note before the last.

9. *Flexus* (means: turned down). The neums are thus described which, normally ending on a higher note (e.g. the *porrectus*) are *inflected* or turned downwards by a further note.

    *Resupinus* (turned up). Describes neums that, normally ending on a lower note (*torculus, climacus*), are **turned upwards** by a further note.

    *Subpunctis*. Describes neums that, ending with a *virga*, are followed by diamond notes; if there are two of these, the neum is *subbipunctis*; if three, *subtripunctis*; and so on.

10. *Liquescent notes*. These are printed in smaller type. They occur where two vowels form a diphthong, or at the junction of certain consonants: to indicate that they must be sung lightly and carefully pronounced.

11. *Pressus*, two notes occurring side by side on the same degree of the scale, the second of which is the first of a group. This may happen in two ways:

    a) by a *punctum* preceding the first note of a *clivis*:

    b) by the juxtaposition of two neums, the last note of the former being on the same degree as the first of the latter:

The two notes side by side are combined, and sung as one of double length; the ictus falling on the earlier of the two.

II. General principles of rhythm.

1. **Rhythm and the elements that compose it.**

Rhythm, St. Augustine says, is "the art of well-ordered movement"; and Plato, "the ordering of movement". Essentially, then, rhythm is ordered movement; it results from that process of synthesis by which all and each of the
General principles of rhythm.

Syllables of a word, all and each of the notes of a melody, surrender their individuality and enter into relation with the others, so as to form a new unity, that of the period or musical sentence.

This synthesis comprises a series of unities, each greater and more comprehensive than the last, linked together and completing one another, and which may be called respectively: elementary rhythmic units or rhythms, phrases, members, periods. The period is made up of members, the member of phrases, the phrase of elementary rhythms. These last are formed in turn of two or three single notes or beats, of equal value, as described above (p. x).

There is then, as all authorities agree, at the base of rhythm, a series of elementary rhythmic units, of small but complete steps, each formed of an élan or impulse and a coming to rest; or, as the ancient writers called them, an arsis and thesis. Thus rhythm can be compared with the movement of a man advancing step by step, or with that of the sea-waves, each step or each wave necessarily comprising a rise and fall, an impulse and a coming to rest. The rhythmic thesis or down-beat is nothing else but this coming to rest of the preceding impulse, the end of a step. Therefore it has nothing to do with intensity or force, but only with movement or rhythm.

It is precisely this thesis, the end of the elementary rhythm or step, that is also called the "rhythmic ictus"; and the vertical episema is merely a distinctive sign placed under (occasionally over) the note (\(\uparrow\)), to show the place of the ictus where there may be a doubt of this.

In the same way, the musical "punctuation marks", or bar-lines, form a graduated series; and thus all the rhythmical units are clearly shown, from the greatest to the smallest:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g |
\end{array}
\]

a) marks the end of the piece, or a change of choir,
b) » » of the period,
c) » » of the member,
d), e) » » of the phrase (incise),
f) » » of still smaller units (as a rule),
g) » » of the elementary unit, the single step\(^1\).

In this descending scale of signs, all alike are quite unconnected with intensity of sound; they all belong to the order of movement; each is no more than a musical punctuation-mark. Thus, at the very first glance, the progress of the rhythm is orderly and clear: steps, phrases, members, periods, are distinctly shown; and all these units respectively, clearly marked out and defined, with their individual existence, coalesce with one another to express finally the unity of the whole piece. — It should be noticed that, except for the horizontal episema, none of these various signs exists as such in the manuscripts, neither bar-lines, dots, nor vertical episemas.

\(^{1}\) The comma \(\downarrow\) is only a breathing-sign, to be subtracted from the length of the preceding note.
2. The rhythmic ictus.

From all that has been said it results that the ictus is in no way a musical accent or impulse; neither does its distinctive sign, the vertical episema, indicate a greater intensity of voice. As is now clear, the ictus does not belong at all to the dynamic order — that is, of force or expression — but purely to the rhythmic order, that of movement, which is concerned with the progress of the melody, its motion and coming to rest.

The ictus is essentially, in the flow of the melody, the moment when the movement, having taken flight, touches earth again; either to come to rest, or, on the contrary, to continue its course. For, just as in the case of walking, or of the rise and fall of the sea-waves, the point of arrival of one movement may be the point of departure and a fresh impulse for the next, so at this point the successive rhythmic steps meet and interlock. In other words, the ictus, the end of the step, far from being an element of separation and division, is the junction of the rhythmic steps and a pivot in the rhythm of the whole.

The ictus and intensity. By its nature, the ictus is absolutely independent of intensity; in itself, it is neither strong nor weak, and adapts itself with equal ease to the character of every syllable or note on which it falls. One must notice, besides, that intensity is not renewed with every elementary rhythmic step, but is spread over the whole length of the member of the period, strengthening its cohesion and unity.

The ictus and the tonic accent. In just the same way, the ictus is independent of the tonic accent of a Latin word, with which it is most important not to confuse it. It may or may not coincide with the tonic accent, at the composer's pleasure; according to the well-known and ancient saying, "Musica non subjacet regulis Donati", the music takes precedence of the grammatical structure of the words.

Since the ictus is the thesis or coming to rest of a rhythmic step, it will fall more naturally on the final syllable of a word. The tonic accent, on the other hand, because it never falls on the last syllable, belongs, as the old masters taught, rather to the arsis. And this arsic character of the accent accords entirely with its nature: in the order of quantity (length) it is prompt and light, in that of melody (pitch) it is high, of intensity, fairly strong though without heaviness or materiality; in short, it has a spiritual quality: "Accentus, anima vocis". One may say in passing, that the Latin accent must never be hit hard, but sung gently and with restraint; it adds a delicate shade, a gentle and measured strength, as the voice takes flight before alighting on the final syllable of the word.

Place of the ictus. In accordance with the natural laws of rhythm, as illustrated in all the poetry and music of antiquity, the ictus, the end of a step, is always repeated after two or after three single beats. In modern measured music it recurs at fixed and regular intervals; but in the free rhythm of plainsong it can come at irregular intervals, every two or three beats; in other words, the rhythmical steps of two beats (binary) or of three (ternary) succeed one another freely at the composer's pleasure.

The place of the ictus can easily be recognised by the following rules.

The ictus falls:

1. On all notes marked with the vertical episema: * * *
2. On all sustained\(^1\) notes, that is:

- \(a\) dotted notes:
  
- \(b\) the first note of the pressus:
  
- \(c\) the note that precedes a quillisma:

3. The first note of each group, unless it is immediately preceded or followed by an ictus; since two ictus side by side would produce syncopation.

\(N. B.\) — In purely syllabic chant, the ictus falls naturally on the last syllable of a word, and in the case of a dactyl (with two syllables after the accent; a spondee has only one), also on the tonic accent. But this is only a general guide, not an absolute rule; since the rise and fall of the melody and the literary context often modify the character of a particular word.

Kyrie XIII is here given as an example of the application of the above rules (each ictus is marked with an asterisk):

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
\hline
* & * & * & * & * & * & \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Ictus 6 is shown by the vertical episema (1);

3 and 7 by the dotted note (2a);

5 by the beginning of the pressus (2b);

1, 2 and 4 by the first note of a group (3).

Since then it often happens that the place of the ictus is shown by the notes themselves, without need for the vertical episema, this is usually added only when the notation does not make it sufficiently clear. It must be fully understood that an ictus marked by the vertical episema is neither stronger nor more important than the rest; it is only given a special sign in order to be identified more readily.

Each ictus has its particular importance according to the syllable corresponding to it and the place it holds in the flow of the melody; and equally it is due to this syllable and this place that it has its special role in the general arsis or thesis of the phrase or member, as will be shown in the following paragraph.

3. The rhythmic synthesis.

All the units of rhythm enumerated above — elementary steps, phrases, members, periods — have a part to play in the general rhythm, for which alone the exist. This is why, after having made sure of the internal unity of each of them, one must co-ordinate them in relation to the whole.

\(^1\) Note that the horizontal episema (¬) does not imply a rhythmic ictus, since it does not always indicate a considerable lengthening of the note, but merely a shade of expression.
In just the same way as the elementary rhythm, so the phrases, members and periods are each made up of an arsis and thesis on a larger scale; to these the old writers gave the names of protasis and apodosis. These are formed, in the phrase by the various elementary rhythms, in the member by the various phrases, in the period by the various members; and their respective limits are determined in each of these units by the flow of the melody, whose culminating point makes, as a rule, their common centre and point of convergence: intensity, by its double movement of increase and decrease, here serves most usefully to emphasise the movement of the rhythm.

Finally, all these rhythmic units are distinguished in the notation by a system of appropriate signs, shown above, p. xiii; and in performance must make themselves heard by pauses proportionate to the significance of each one.

As regards these pauses, and breathing, here are some general principles, meant rather as guides than as fixed rules of mathematical precision;

- on a rhythmic ictus (p. xiii, g), no pause or breath;
- at the end of a phrase, the last note is slightly lengthened (f, e) or doubled (d); but a breath is not allowed, or at most is barely tolerated;
- at the end of a member (c), a breath is usually possible, or even necessary, but must be subtracted from the length of the preceding note;
- at the end of a period (b) a silent pause and breath is obligatory; in modern notation this is shown by a quaver-rest, placed before or after the bar-line, as the case demands;
- finally, at the end of a piece (a), the final pause is prepared for by a ralentando in proportion to the length of the final phrase.

Some examples follow of the synthesis or general rhythm that has just been outlined. For simplicity's sake the protasis and apodosis of the period only have been expressly shown; those of the members and phrases are clear enough from the signs of intensity, crescendo and decrescendo.

**Kyrie XI.**

![Rhythmic Notation]

Kyri- e e- lé- i- son.
III. Psalmody: elementary ideas.

The method of printing employed later in this work for the Vesper Psalms grouped in tones (p. 147) allows the remarks here, though indispensable for an intelligent and easy use of this present Psalter, to be reduced to a few lines.

\* Cf. in particular Nombre Musical Grégorien, a study of Gregorian Musical Rhythm by Dom Mocquereau of Solesmes (Descée et Cie). n° 702.

The Rhythm of Plainsong, by Dom Gajard, trans. by Dom A. Dean, pp. 64. Liverpool, 1943. (Rushworth and Dreaper).
The sung psalm-verse, when complete, contains: a) the intonation (initium); b) the recitation or dominant; c) the cadences, of which the first occurs at the end of the first half-verse, and is called the mediant (mediatio); and the second, at the end of the second half-verse, called the ending (terminatio).

When the first half of the verse is too long, it is divided by a half-cadence, known as the flex (flexa †), because the melody is inflected; and the voice makes a very brief pause in order to take breath.

The simple or solemn forms for the eight tones and the Peregrinus are given complete at the beginning of each Psalm or Canticle.

**Intonation.** The intonation is the section of the melody which, at the beginning of each psalm, connects the ending of the Antiphon with the recitation. It is formed of two or three notes or groups, adapted to the same number of syllables.

In ordinary psalmody the intonation is used only for the first verse; the others begin at once with the recitation. Where the intonation is repeated in each verse, as in the Magnificat, this is always shown.

When several psalms, each concluded by Gloria Patri, are sung under a single antiphon, the first verse of each must be intoned by the cantor as far as the mediant with the full intonation. (See Compline, p. 228). This is shown in each case.

**Recitation and Flex.** The recitation consists of all the notes sung on one degree of the scale between the intonation and the mediant, and between the mediant and the ending. To sing it well, the rules of good reading should be observed, above all of accentuation. The recitation must not be broken by any pause, except that of the flex when it occurs. In this case, the melodic interval is shown after the first verse.

**Cadences.** The melodic cadences — mediants and endings — are shown at the head of each psalm according to the mode in which it is to be sung. The choice of ending, if more than one exists, depends on the preceding antiphon.

The cadences in psalmody, whether mediants or endings, are of two kinds:

A. Cadence with one accent

- spondaic (\(\text{\,\,}\) )
- dactylic (\(\text{\,\,}\) )

Dómi-no mé-o
pú-e-ri Dóminum

B. Cadence with two accents

- a) dispondaic (\(\text{\,\,}\,\,\text{\,\,}\) )
- b) didactylic (\(\text{\,\,}\)\(\text{\,\,}\) )
- c) dactylic-spondaic (\(\text{\,\,}\)\(\text{\,\,}\) )
- d) spondaic-dactylic (\(\text{\,\,}\) )

in tó-to cór-de mé-o
pú-e-ri Dómi-num
có-ram te fé-ci
cogno-vi-sti me

It will be seen that wherever a dactylic form occurs, an extra note, (a hollow note \(\text{\,\,}\)), on the weak penultimate (last but one) syllable, is added to the melody.

Besides this, a large number of cadences — mediants or endings — have before the last accented note or group one, two, or three preparatory syllables. In the psalmody of the Office these cadences are easily recognised, because they
Psalmody: elementary ideas.

leave the recitation note for a lower note (except the mediant of the solemn V mode).

Preparatory syllables before the accent of the cadence:

one syllable:

Dómi-nus Dó-mi-no mé-o

two syllables:

Dómi-nus Dó-mi-no mé-o

three syllables:

Adjí-ci-at Dó-mi-nus súper vos

Some practical remarks:

1. Before each psalm will be found a brief note explaining the nature of the cadences, both mediant and ending, to which the words must be adapted.

2. The accented syllables in each cadence, whether a tonic accent, secondary accent, or some syllable that takes the accent's place, that are to be sung on the accented notes, are all printed in heavy type.

3. The syllable or syllables preparatory to the melodic accent are printed in italics.

4. The position of the notes added on weak penultimate syllables is shown by the hollow notes in the cadences, which are always given in full for the first verse of each psalm.

Additional notes on the accent. Some cadences, both mediate and final, provide a difficulty. When the last melodic accent of a spondaic cadence is a clivis, A, the dactylic cadences are treated as shown in line B:

A

Spondaic Form

séde a déxtris mé-is in córde mé-o

B

Dactylic Form

órđinem Melchí-se-dech ópe-ra Dómi-ni

In this case the accent of the text is not sung on the clivis, as for a spondaic cadence, but on an anticipated additional note; and the clivis takes the weak penultimate syllable. This is to preserve the smoothness of the melodic cadence.
How is one to recognise these cadences and where the additional note on the accent falls? Attention is drawn to them before each psalm in which they occur; and in the music they are shown by a bracket over and including the additional note and the clivis. The place of the additional note itself is shown at the beginning of each psalm. In the text, the anticipated accent and the penultimate syllable on the clivis are both printed in heavy type. See line B, above.

Solemn psalm-tones. The solemn forms of each tone are given at the beginning of the *Magnificat*, p. 218-223. They all fall into the same classes as the simple forms. The solemn cadence of I and VI modes is, in the Vatican Edition, included among mediants of two accents; but one is now authorized by Rome to consider this at choice as a cadence of one accent with three preparatory syllables¹. If this is done, all the cadences of the same melodic pattern are treated in the same way, thus avoiding an extra difficulty²:

![Tones Diagram]

**Tones**

- 1, 6
  - *spiritus meus*
- 2, 8
  - *spiritus meus*
- 4
  - *spiritus meus*

*Tonus peregrinus.* One is also allowed to add a sol before the si to the mediant of this tone: the older form of cadence. It will then conform to the general rule, having one accent with three preparatory syllables.

*N. B.* In spondaic cadences one could, if preferred, double the length of the tonic accent; but it is much better merely to sing it more broadly, leaving it on the up-beat of the rhythm.

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¹ This cadence is not derived from the simple form of 1st tone, but from a simple form of 6th with one accent and three preparatory syllables.

² When this authorisation was given, one of which all can take advantage, it was pointed out that this procedure is in the spirit of the *Motu proprio* of 25 April 1904, and also in accordance with the Decree of 8 July 1912 on the singing of monosyllables and Hebrew words in the Lessons, Versicles and Psalms.