

IN the year 1591, Palestrina published his *Missa Jam Christus astra ascenderat*. This Mass is based upon a **HYMN TUNE** used for many different texts. Incredibly, nobody has ever created a naming system for Gregorian tunes. (A musicology student out there should really make this into a dissertation!) Metrical hymns have a “flawed” naming system. It is flawed because sometimes there are numerous names for the same tune: e.g. HALTON HOLGATE is also called SHARON and JERSEY and BOYCE. The opposite problem is also true; e.g. WALTHAM refers to one melody in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (#324), a totally different melody in the *New English Hymnal*, and a totally different one in the *Episcopal 1940 Hymnal* (#259).

On the following pages, we present different texts that use *this same hymn tune*.

It is not a question of which text is “right” and which text is “wrong.” The choir in Los Angeles calls the Mass **TE SAECULORUM PRINCIPEM**—for two important reasons. First of all, those are the lyrics which the Saint Vitus Parish Choir already knew:

MODE I

TE saeculorum Princi-pem, Te, Chri-ste, Regem Génti-um, Te ménti-um, Te córdi-um Unum faté-mur árbi-trum.

Secondly, it is problematic to call the Mass “*Jam Christus astra ascenderat*,” and not just because the first line contains an elision. Owing to the presence of the word “ascenderat,” many people erroneously believe it’s for ASCENSIONTIDE (which it isn’t). For example, the Wikipedia article on Palestrina Masses **erroneously** calls it a “hymn for ascensiontide”:

Missa Inviolata	4	11	Transposed hypolydian		Official melody from Ac
Missa Iste confessor	4	14	Hypodorian	Cantus firmus	Latin hymn
Missa Jam Christus astra ascenderat	4	14	Transposed dorian	Cantus firmus	Ascensiontide hymn

This is not an Ascension hymn. It comes from the season of Pentecost. Written in the fourth or fifth century, it summarizes the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We can see it isn’t an Ascension hymn from the English translation:

Christ had already ascended to the heaven He had left, to send the holy Spirit Who was to be received as the Father’s gift. The day appointed was now at hand that would mark the beginning of the age of blessedness, for the cycle of seven days had revolved in the holy number of seven, when suddenly at the third hour of the day a mighty sound is heard on earth, telling the Apostles at prayer that God had come. From the Father’s light there comes the kindly, gracious fire of love to fill with burning eloquence those that believed in Christ. And they (their hearts filled with the inspiration of the holy Spirit) rejoice, speak in different tongues, and tell of God’s wonders. They are understood by men from all parts, whether civilized (Greek or Latin) or not, as they speak, to the universal astonishment of those present, in their respective languages. Then the Jews, still faithless, are possessed by the spirit of blind anger and hate, and accuse Christ’s sober servants of being drunk with new wine. But Peter confronts them with his Master’s miracles and shows the falsity of what the perfidious ones are saying, proving it to them from the words of Joel.

In ancient manuscripts, we see how this melody was often used for **AD COENAM AGNI PROVIDI**, and notice how this particular scribe wanted to treat the hypermetric syllable on “cum Patre et” (scrawled in the margin) :

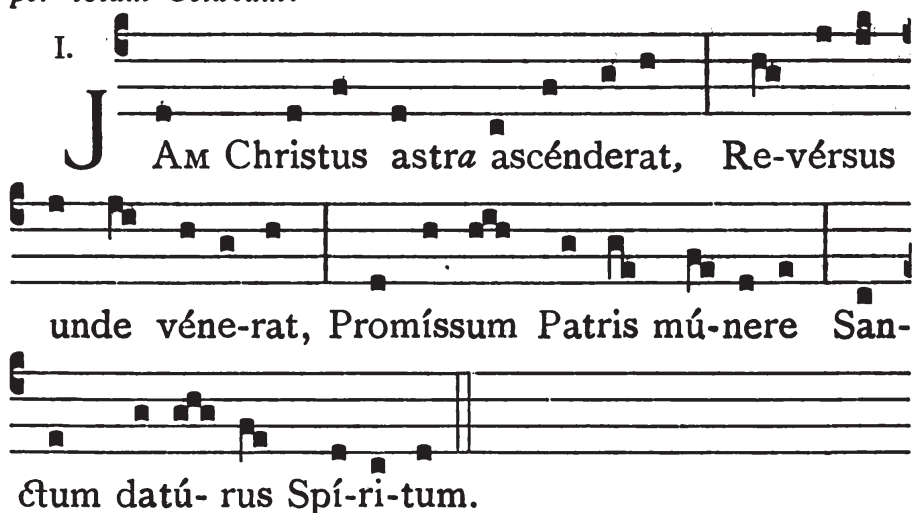
The manuscript page displays a large, ornate initial 'A' for the text 'Ad coenam agni providi et stolis albis candidi post transitum maris rubri xpo canam principi. Quis corpus sanctissimum in ara crucis torridum crucis emens misera custanda in paddysum. Quiesumus actor oim in hoc paschali gaudio ab omni mortis impetu tuum defende populum. Gloria tibi dñe qui surrexisti a mortuis cum patre et scō spū in sempiterna secula. Amen. Isti duo vsus scilicet Quis actor et Gloria tibi dñe qui sur dicantur in fine oim ymnorum eide metri usque ad primas vespas ascensionis nisi in ymnis Quē tra. et O glōsa. qm annūciatio mē pascha celebra

Ancient manuscripts also show the melody being used for **AURORA LUCIS RUTILAT** (changed in 1631 to *Aurora Caelum Purpurat* by Pope Urban VIII) and **SERMONE BLANDO ANGELUS** (a continuation of the same hymn) :

The manuscript page shows two sections of text with musical notation. The first section, 'Aurora lucis rutilat', begins with a large initial 'A' and includes the text: 'uon copotes nos tuo uultu facies. Gloria tibi dñe. Aurora lucis rutilat celi laudibus innuat mundus exultans uibilat gemens infernus ululat.' The second section, 'Sermon Blando Angelus', begins with a large initial 'S' and includes the text: 'Sermon Blando Angelus predixit mulieribus in galy lea dominus uidentus est quantocius. Ille dum pergunt concite aplis hoc dicere uidentes eum uiuere oscul'

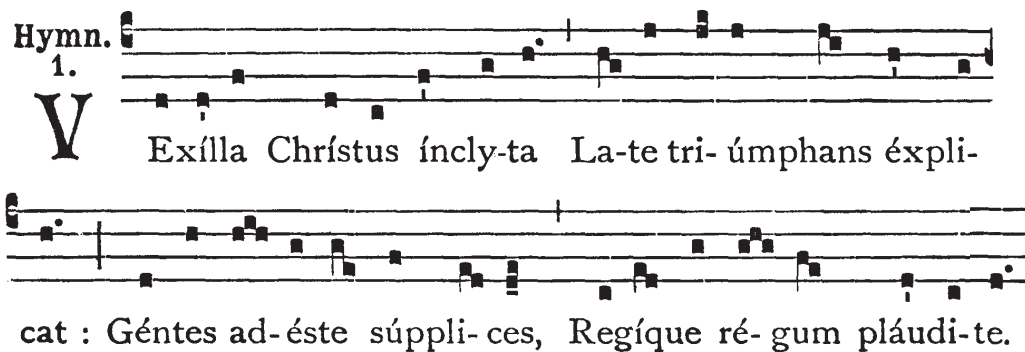
Composers such as Thomas Tallis (d. 1585), Father Cristóbal de Morales (d. 1553), and Robert Parson (d. 1572) set this same hymn melody. The melody appears in an 1885 Hymnary by the monastery of Solesmes for **JAM CHRISTUS ASTRA ASCENDERAT**:

In tono sequenti cantantur Hymni Horarum & Completorii per totam Octavam.

I. 

AM Christus astra ascenderat, Re-versus
unde vene-rat, Promissum Patris munere San-
ctum datu-rus Spi-ri-tum.

The 1962 *Liber Usualis* uses the melody for **VEXILLA CHRISTUS INCLYTA**, a modern hymn:

Hymn. 1. 

Exilla Christus inclyta Late tri-umphans expli-
cat: Gentes ad-este suppli-ces, Regique regum plaudi-te.

Dom Mocquereau's 1904 *Liber Usualis* uses it for **TE LUCIS ANTE TERMINUM**:

I. 

E lucis ante terminum, Rerum Cre-ator posci-
mus, Ut pro tú- a cleménti-a Sis praesul et custódi- a.

“A Manual of Gregorian Chant” (Solesmes, 1903) with a 9 October *Imprimatur* from Rome also uses it for **TE LUCIS ANTE TERMINUM**:

AT COMPLINE.

Hymn.

T E lúcis ante términum, Ré-rum Cre-átor pósci-
mus, Ut pro tú- a cleménti-a Sis præsul et custódi-a.
2. Procul recédant sómni-a, Et nócti-um phantásmata,
Hostémque nóstrum cómpri-me, Ne pollu- ántur córpora.
3. Dé-o Pátri sit gló-ri-a, Et Fí-li-o, quí a mórtu- is
Surréxit, ac Pa-rácli-to, In sæcu-ló-rum sæcu-la.
Amen.

The Saint Vitus Parish Choir often sings the melody with **VERBUM SUPERNUM PRODIENS**, a text by St. Thomas Aquinas:

5. O sa - lu - tá - ris hó - sti - a, Quae cae - li pan - dis ó - sti - um,
Bel - la pre - munt ho - stí - li - a; Da ro - bur, fer - au - xí - li - um.

Editors of the NEW ENGLISH HYMNAL (1986), a Protestant hymnal, associate the tune with “Lucis Creator Optime.” Unaware of the melody’s provenance, they erroneously say it comes from the 17th century:

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

150 Second Tune

LUCIS CREATOR LM 17th century Angers Church Melody
Harmony by Martin Shaw 1875–1958

The ENGLISH HYMNAL (1906), uses the melody as an Epiphany hymn:

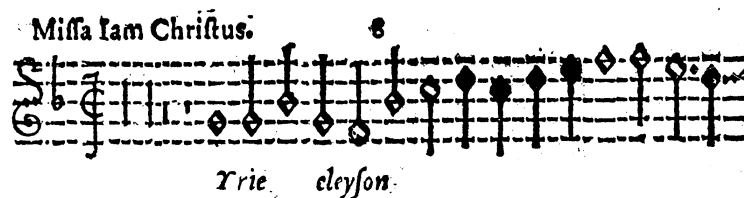
FROM THE EPIPHANY TILL LENT

LUCIS CREATOR. (L. M.) **51** (MODERN TUNE)

*In moderate time ♩ = 144.
To be sung in unison.* *Angers Church Melody.*

The part books (1591AD) make it much easier to notice the plainsong melody:

How the Soprano part appeared in 1591AD :



How the Bass part appeared in 1591AD :



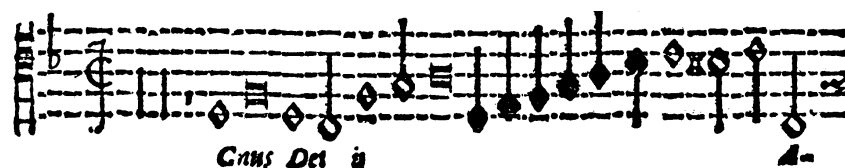
How the Soprano part appeared in 1591AD :



How the Soprano part appeared in 1591AD :

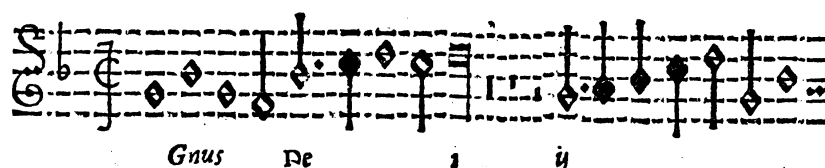


How the Bass part appeared in 1591AD :

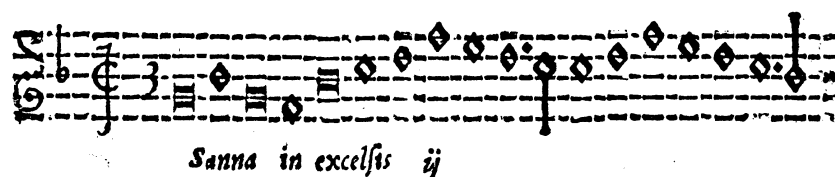


How the Soprano part appeared in 1591AD :

Ofanna
vt supra.



How the Soprano part appeared in 1591AD :



KYRIE

For reference
purposes:

MODE I

T E saeculorum Prínci-pem, Te, Chri-ste, Regem Génti-
um, Te ménti- um, Te córdi-um Ūnum faté- mur árbi-trum.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

5

S

A

T

B

Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - - -

TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI - PEM

Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - - -

TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI - PEM

Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - - -

TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI -

son, Ký -

TE

son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - - -

PEM

TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI -

9

S *son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - son, Ký - ri - e e -*
TE SAE - CU -

A *ri - e e - léy - - - - son,*
SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI - PEM

T *- - - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy -*
TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI -

B *- - - son, Ký - ri - e e -*
PEM TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM

13

S *- léy - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - son.*
- LO - RUM TE SAE - CU - LO - RUM PRIN - CI - PEM

A *Ký - ri - e e - lé - i - son.*

T *- - - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - son.*
PEM

B *-léy - - - - - son.*
PRIN - CI - PEM

Soprano

Ký-ri - e e - lé - i - son.

The first section (polyphony) is repeated;
then the "Christe" section is begun.

How the Bass part
looked in 1591AD :

Hriste eleyson

19

S L S D R D T L Si L D T L

Chri - ste e - léy - - son, Chri - ste

TE, CHRI-STE, RE - GEM GEN - TI - UM

A R D F S F M R D R M D R M F S F

Chri - ste e - léy - - - - -

TE, CHRI-STE, RE - GEM GEN - TI - UM

T L S D R

Chri - ste e -

TE, CHRI-STE,

B

24

S S F S M R R D F S

- e - léy - - son, Chri - ste e -

TE, CHRI - STE,

A M R D R D F M R

-son, Chri - ste e - - léy - son,

T D T L S L F S L T D T L S L Te

-lé - - - - - i -

RE - GEM GEN - TI - UM

B R D F S F M R S

Chri - - ste e - - léy - -

TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM

28

S
F M D R M F S L S F M R M F S F M R
- - léy - - - - -
RE - GEM

A
R D F S F M R D T D T L T D R
Chri - ste e - léy - - - son, Chri
TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM GEN TI - UM

T
L L S D R D T L
son, Chri - ste e - - - léy - son,
TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM

B
R L L S D R D T
- son, Chri - ste e - -
TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM

33

S
son,
Chri - ste e - lé - i - son.
TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM GEN - TI - UM

A
- ste e - lé - i - son.

T
Chri - ste e - léy - son.
TE, CHRI - STE, RE - GEM GEN - TI - UM

B
- - - - - léy - son.

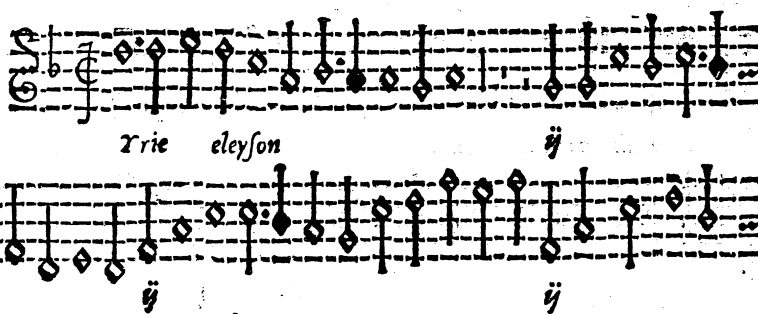
Bass



Chri ste _____ e - lé - i - son.

The second section (polyphonic “Christe”) is repeated; then the final “Kyrie” section is sung.

How the Soprano part
looked in 1591AD :



39

S L L Te L S M F M M R M
Ký - ri - e e - lé - - - i - son,
MEN - TI - UM, TE COR - DI - UM

A M M F M R T D T T L T M M F M R T D
Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy -
TE MEN - TI - UM, TE COR -

T L L R D T S L M S F M T T D T L T L S F
Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy -
TE MEN - TI - UM,

B M M L S F S F M R
Ký - ri - e e - léy -

45

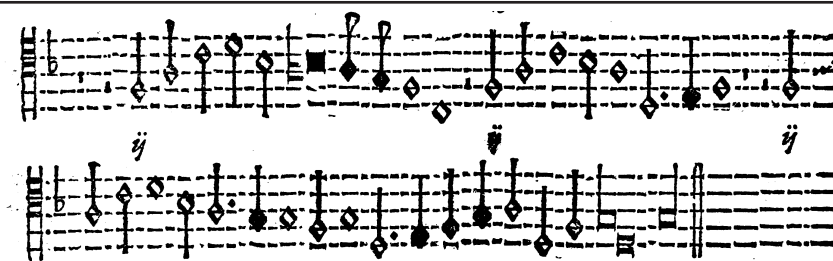
S R R S F S F M R D L T L D M
Ký - ri - e e - léy - - - son, Ký - ri -
U - NUM

A T L T S T R M D T L L Si L T D R M D
- - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - -
- DI - UM U - NUM FA - TE - MUR AR - - BI - TRUM.

T M S Fi S F M R D S
- - - son, Ký -
U -

B D S R S D M S L F M F M R D
- - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - -
U - NUM FA - TE - MUR

How the Bass part
looked in 1591AD :



50

S S F M R S L D T D D M S L F M R
e e - - léy - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - -
FA - TE - MUR U - NUM FA - TE - MUR AR -

A R T D S T R M D T L D R M F S
- son, Ký - ri - e e - - - - -
U - NUM FA - TE - - - MUR

T T R M D T L Si L S M F S L T D T
ri - e e - léy - - - - - son,
NUM FA - TE - MUR AR - BI-TRUM.

B S D M F M L T D D M S
son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - son, Ký - ri - e
U - NUM cf. Tenor "C" U - NUM FA -

55

S Di R M F S L M F S L T D L S F M R M R R Di R
- son, Ký - ri - e e - lé - - - - i - son.
- BI-TRUM.

A M R Di R L F L D T D L L
- - - son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - - son.

T L S L F M D M S L F M R
Ký - ri - e e - léy-son, Ký - ri - e e - léy - son.
U - NUM FA - TE - MUR

B L F M R R Di R L T D R M L D R L R
e - - - - - léy - - - son.
TE - MUR AR - BI-TRUM.