

Melody's Aspect of Gregorian Compositions

Every musical composition bears features that characterize the artist and reflect era in which it was created. This thesis can be verified by the example of a sonata, which comes into existence as a form of music in the classical period. Therefore it is not possible to find it in the Renaissance or nowadays, in which no one composes music in a classical sonata way. Sonata of the classical period has its own characteristic features which differ it from other pieces.

Turning to the composition of Gregorian chant you can notice its similarity. They were composed in their own time (VII–IX century) and they have characteristic features with main principal among them which is sung word (word that is sung).

Besides of that main principal, Gregorian melody manifests many interesting phenomenons. One of them is singing rhythm, which is called free rhythm. For a contemporary man who is brought up in a culture of mensural rhythm that may be divided into two or three measures, conception of a free rhythm is very strange and also difficult for studying and performing. Liturgical-musical forms are also interesting; they are subordinated to celebrate liturgical rites function.

It appears that even the melodic course includes many interesting phenomenons and information which shows composition unity and existing composition principal.

Every Gregorian piece has its melodic structure which will be evolved by melodic-modal analysis.

Ant. Habitare (Antiphonale Monasticum. Vol. II. Solesmes 2006, p. 100)

4. 1a
H Abi-tá-re * fratres in unum. E u o u a e.
Live together in unity (Ps 132,1)

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in square neumes. A large initial letter 'H' is placed at the beginning of the first line. The text 'Abi-tá-re * fratres in unum. E u o u a e.' is written below the staff. Below the staff, the text 'Live together in unity (Ps 132,1)' is written in italics.

Short text was bestowed with melody; it calls attention that in most cases on one syllable there is one sound. It means that antiphone was composed in syllabic style.

It is noticeable that words in this antiphone were settled on separate degrees of the music scale which is used by composition. Verb *habitare* on LA, *fratres* – SOL while the last expression on final degree RE.

Analysys shows the composition structure: final sound RE is the first degree of the scale and this also classifies piece in the protus, structural notes are on SOL and LA. LA in turn is the furthest distant (perfect fifth) form first degree which is called tonic of mode. In the end analysed antiphone is qualified in authentic protus.

A similar melodic-modal architecture can be seen in different antiphone.

Ant. Domine, Deus meus (Antiphonale Monasticum. Vol. II. Solesmes 2006, p. 186)

4. 1g
D Omi-ne * De-us me-us, in te spe-rá-vi.
Lord, my God, in you I take refuge (Ps 7,2)

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in square neumes. A large initial letter 'D' is placed at the beginning of the first line. The text 'Omi-ne * De-us me-us, in te spe-rá-vi.' is written below the staff. Below the staff, the text 'Lord, my God, in you I take refuge (Ps 7,2)' is written in italics.

Compared with last piece, this one has a longer text which reflects a very different content and for which Gregorian composer composed melody. Antiphone is built with two parts *Domine Deus meus* and *in te speravi*, which form one sentence. Melody of the first half is obviously located on LA degree, then in the second half by SOL it comes to an ending RE *speravi*.

Despite of different content of the text and its length in the composition-modal way, antiphon is identical; composed in authentic protus with structural sounds LA and SOL.

Identical melodic-modal structure can be found in a far more build repertoire.

CO Amen dico vobis... quidquid (GT¹, p. 368)

CO. I
RBAKS
Mc. 11, 24
A - mēn di-cō vo- bis, * quidquid o-rāntes pé-ti-tis,
crē-di-tē quī- a acci-pi- ē- tīs, et fi- et vo- bis.

So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Text of the above communio comes from s. Mark's gospel. This piece is build of one sentence (melodic-word unity) on which there are four parts.

Analysis of this composition shows that every part has its own structural degree. First one *Amen dico vobis* is set on LA, second *quidquid orantes petitis* on SOL, third *credite quia accipietis* on FA and the last one on RE.

What emerges is piece's melodic structure which is very similar to two previous examples. Structural melodic degrees of studied communio are: LA, SOL, FA and RE. In result of the above it is clear that the composition was written also in authentic protus.

Presented three examples, despite of different texts and destination of these pieces (for definite days and liturgical rites), have common feature: every of them is composed in modality – authentic protus and in each of the pieces structural sound of the particular parts can be settled. If you will search all compositions of this modus (authentic protus) you will see that they have these resemblances because they use the same structural sounds: RE which is tonic degree, next – degree FA, SOL and LA, which is a dominant in discussed modus.

It is obvious that there are some compositions of this modus in which melody starts in a different way. For example from lower register (DO, RE or FA). It means then that the melody have a different origin – it evolved not in authentic way but in archaic way.

Most important for our consideration are:

- every Gregorian chant is composed in scale: archaic modality (of DO, RE or MI) or in evolution modality (protus, deuterus, tritus and tetradus),
- not all sounds of the melody are identically important; composition has structural and ornamental sounds,
- there is a composition logic for every piece; Gregorian compositor has many options to form a melody in dependence of text.

Gregorian compositor may use one of quite known composition tools: repetition of the melody fragments (they are called gregorian's formula).

CO. I
RBAKS
A - mēn di-cō vo- bis, *

IN. I
RBAKS
F Actus est

IN. I
RBAKS
R O-rā- te *

IN. I
RBAKS
S Uscé- pimūs, *

S Ancti- fi-cá- vit *

I A - ve Ma-rí- a,

¹ *Graduale Triplex*. Editions M. C. Billecocq, R. Fischer. Solesmes 1979.

In every of the above examples² there is the same melodic formula which is assigned to verbal text. What pays attention is composition rule. On every accented syllable there is a scandicus RE-LA-SI (a case of *Amen* is justified because of its origin in Hebrew language which in accent is set on the last syllable) and afterwards melody is stabilized on LA degree. Yet the melody before accented syllable have variants which depend of text length, for example: one sound RE (*Amen*), pes DO-RE (*Rorate, Suscepimus*) or MI, DO (*Sanctificavit, Ave*).

Another fact is interesting in case when adiastrumatic notation is disposal. If you compare registration of Vaticanian icipits *Rorate* and *Suscepimus* notation you will see that they show no differences. If you exam registration of neumatic notator of sankt gallen adiastrumatic notation then you will see that in botch cases there are used neumatic signs but in introit *Suscepimus* they are provided with letter signs “i”, “m”, “s”, “l”. These letters pay cantor’s attention on rhythmical-interpretational aspects. You neither see these letters in *Rorate* introit nor in Vaticanian notation.

Conclusion is obvious – when Gregorian compositor have melodic formula for his disposition, he applies it according to strict rules and every time the melody is expressed in a different way even in spite of melody’s identity – also Gregorian notator has a tool (notation signs) which allows to clarify the registration.

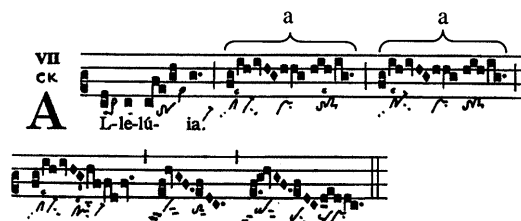
There are in Gregorian singing even longer melodic motives which are used by Gregorian compositor in many pieces. They are called typic melody. Pieces which melodic structure and architectonic construction is identical are called modal stamp.

In cases of Gregorian formulas, typic melodies and modal stamps you can see both resemblances and differences – every time, with regard for different text, Gregorian notator marks the difference with adiastrumatic neumatic notation.

Another interesting thing which can be used as a compositional tool are phenomenons inside of the same Gregorian composition.

Sometimes in melismatic compositions there is a replay of identical melody’s fragment.

All. v. De profundis (GT, p. 367)



Motif “a” of a second jubilus is repeated in the next part. There are no melodic or rhythmical changes so the compositor is using identical repeat of the melodic motif for this purpose to lengthen “musical pronouncement”.

Interesting phenomenon as well is sequence.

Gloria XI (GT, p. 749)



² CO Amen dico vobis... quidquid (GT, p. 368); IN Factus est (GT, p. 281); IN Rorate caeli (GT, p. 34); IN Suscepimus (GT, p. 300); Ant. Sanctificavit Dominus (*Antiphonale Monasticum*. Solesmes 1934, p. 696); Ant. Ave Maria (*Antiphonale Monasticum*. Solesmes 1934, p. 862).

What pays attention is a melody of two laudatory's formulas Gloria from XV formulary. Melodic fragment on *adoramus* (DO-RE-MI-FA-MI-RE) is a model proportional to repeated motif in the next sentence *glorificamus* and shifted at major second up (RE-MI-FA-SOL-FA-MI). This is example of ascending sequence. There are also descending sequences.

IN Exudi Deus (GT, p. 115)



Cadencial formula of last sentence of the Exaudi Deus introit contains progression in which pattern “a” was expressed by scandicus subtripunctis neum (LA-SI-DO-SI-LA-SOL) in accented syllable and then repeated twice – in next neum “a¹” pes quilismaticus subbipunctis (LA-SIB-LA-SOL) and in last syllable “a²” *exaudi* (FA-SOL-LA-SOL-FA).

Interesting musical phenomenon hides in melismatic melody.

All. v. Dies sanctificatus (GT, p. 49)



Superficial study of iubilus of presented alleluia shows only a large number of sounds. If we will take adiaستمatic neumatation notation for the analysis, situation will be far more interesting.

Piece is composed in tertial plagal protus (tonic degree RE, dominant FA). Rhythmical course's analysis of iubilus allows to settle five melodic units.

Subtonic melody after intonation (according to psalm tone) is stabilizing on SOL (first jubilus sound), and afterwards cadencing on RE. In “b” motif melody is deposited on the FA (neumatic articulation) and rests on SOL (torculus with episema). In “c” fragment melody from lower register from DO with widen values is going through FA and is cadencing on RE. “d” part open's FA degree (neumatic articulation) and ends its run to DO (torculus with episema). In the final part “e” melody from FA degree is cadencing on RE of tonic mode.

In conclusion individual fragments were settled on the structural degrees which are arranged in a logical whole.

part	degrees	interval
a	SOL-RE	P4
b	FA-SOL	M2
c	DO-RE	M2
d	FA-DO	P4
e	FA-RE	m3

Therefore as a conclusion you can say that sounds applied by the Gregorian compositor are not “accidental” but melody run keeps clear compositional principle – length of the individual iubilus parts arrange in systematic run: perfect fourth, major second, major second, perfect fourth and it ends with minor third.

It is also interesting to see some kind of sound highness contrast between these parts. Part “a” ends its run on the tonic of mode, “b” is set higher on SOL, in “c” melody again returns to lower register, in “d” melody for a moment is oriented on FA (that is higher than the preceding part). This observation shows that the melody contains some kind of “parts dialogue”: melody is set in lower, higher, lower, higher register.

Last but not least interesting observation is amount of sounds balance which is in all iubilus. If we accept that sounds in unison relation are not counted because they don’t add any “new” content but only lengthen the melody, then it shows that between designated parts there is also a rule.

part	amount of sounds
a	5
b	4
c	4
d	4
e	5

The comparison clearly shows Gregorian composer’s intention: on iubilus consist five melodic-rhythmical parts which first and last have five sounds and three parts in the middle – four sounds. This is another evidence that the piece keeps definite composition rule.

Although there is no written certificate of the Gregorian compositional technique, however the studies over piece allow us to put a thesis that Gregorian piece are composed according to settled and accepted compositional rules. Showed phenomenons: melodic-modal similarity of Gregorian compositions, balance of sounds amount, establish Gregorian composition technique. Also such phenomenons as repetitions and sequences (which are known from classical music period) have to be rated as Gregorian composition technique. There is no doubt that their begining starts in Gregorian singing and afterwards they were just built up.

Summarizing every Gregorian piece was composed according to strict compositional rules so you can’t see there any accidents. Huge number of repertoire and time of its formation (about three centuries) are testimony of many authors who have used the same compositional technique.

Santrauka

Grigališkųjų kompozicijų melodijos aspektas

Straipsnio įvade pateikiamas grigališkosios kompozicijos parametrų aprašymas (agoginės, melodinės, liturginės-muzikinės formos, atitinkančios giedamus žodžius).

Toliau analizuojama grigališkųjų kompozicijų melodika šiais aspektais:

- melodinė kompozicijos struktūra (struktūriniai ir ornamentiniai garsai, gama),
- melodinis panašumas tarp kūrinių – charakteringa melodija: grigališkoji formulė, modalumas, būdinga melodija),
- melodinis tapatumas kūrinyje (įprasti melodiniai pakartojimai, progresijos, dialogai, moduliacijos),
- melodinio balanso efektas melizmatinio stiliaus kompozicijose.

Daroma išvada, kad grigališkosios kompozicijos griežtai pagrįstos tik joms būdinga kompozicine technika.