

Translations and some comments on the pieces on the page Gregorian plainchant in modern staff notation on the website Ottaviano Petrucci

by Arnold den Teuling

I made the translations word to word as much as possible.

1. Esth. 14 12, 13

Remember me, Lord, who bears sway on all powers;
put the right expressions into my mouth, so that my words will find favour
in the countenance of the prince.

Esther has to persuade the Persian king to save the Jews in his empire from Haman's
conspiracy.

That's why she speaks this prayer.

The music has an extraordinary dramatic power containing an unusual number of
sound volume indications.

The name of the Lord is sung humile and softly, "on all powers" loudly.

At the end of the singing there is an extreme long melisma on the e of conspectu:
the fa, repeated endlessly, is painting the rows of columns in the enormous throne
hall, where the king is seated at the other end on his throne: only in the end the
melody modulates back from the low, plagal third to the authentic proterus,

2. Ps 118 (119) 22, 24

Spare me shame and humiliation, for I observe your rules, Lord.
for I meditate on your guidelines.

The beginning of the melody is reflecting the despair in the text.

3. Ps. 129 (130) 3,4 1,2

If you kept track of sins, o Lord
O Lord, who could stand up to you? Because (But) with you is forgiveness.
From the depths I call to you, O Lord. O Lord, listen to me!

The dominant is hesitating between si and do, as usual with the thrid mode.

The graduale romanum had even "corrected" numerous si's into do's. This has been
made undone.

4. Ps. 147 1

Alleluia, Praise the Lord, Jerusalem: praise your God, Sion

5. Phil 2 8, 9

He came to obey to the point of death - even death on a cross.
That is why God exalted him and gave him the name
that is above every name.

The sound painting in this melancholy melody is obvious.

The alternation between si and sa makes that this piece is in a real 5-th mode, and not in a diguised F major.

6. John 9 6, 11, 38

He made mud from his saliva, the Lord, and spread it on my eyes.
So I went and washed, and was able to see, and I believed in God.

7. Acts 2 2,4.

There suddenly came from heaven a sound of a violent wind blowing (at the place)
where they were sitting, alleluia.

And they were filled, all of them, with the Holy Spirit, speaking of the great works
of God, alleluia, alleluia.

8. Ps. 124 (125) 1-2

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion;
Unshakable forever
will be he who lives in Jerusalem.
The mountains surround the city,
And the Lord surrounds his people,
from now and in eternity.

Here the dominant is consequently the do, contrary to the Si iniquitates (mode 3).
This melody is used again in the tractus De profundis of the Requiem-mass and in
the seven Cantica post lectiones of Easter vigil, in all cases with minor
accomodations to the words. This tractus is sung in the Easter vigil as the second
canticle. Because the texts have a very different character, it is evident that there is
no sound painting in this composition.

www.home.plamet.nl/~teuli049/petruccigreg.htm