What late medieval chant manuscripts do to a present-day performer of plainchant

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Chapter One

Challenges

Today is Friday 23 March and our *Tenebrae*-tour continues with a performance at Utrecht's *Leeuwenbergh* venue. Compared with the locations of yesterday (Rotterdam's *Laurenskerk*) and the day before yesterday (Castle *Huis Bergh* in 's-Heerenberg), this is once more a totally different situation.[xli] Speaking only of acoustics, of which the castle may have had too little and Rotterdam's big church too much, the Utrecht venue promises an easier, less challenging situation. The beautiful but somewhat awkward building has a long and complex history, having been built as a *leprosarium* in 1567 although it never served as such, and subsequently becoming a hospital, a military hospital, an army barracks, part of two University faculties, an exhibition centre and a church. Finally, as of 2008, *Leeuwenbergh* has primarily functioned as a concert hall, with events programmed within the framework of Utrecht's music centre *Vredenburg*.[xlii]

Indeed, this feels more like a concert hall, less as a church — although acoustically it does have the smoothness, the vibrations and hence (for us as plainchant performers) the comfort of a not too small stone church.

xli For a more detailed account of our performances in 's-Heerenbergh and Rotterdam, see the Introduction.

xlii Information retrieved from www.leeuwenbergh.org (last accessed August 2013).

A stage is erected, there are comfortable red velvety chairs, and there is professional sound and lighting equipment. This means that finally, for the first time in our tour and with the aid of a light technician, the extinguishing of the fifteen candles of the *candelabrum* until total darkness will be taken to the highest level of dramatic effect.[xliii] As a musical high point however, our performance of the 'title song' *Tenebrae* will do. Let us have a look at it.

Of note-heads, clefs, and ledger lines

Figure 2 shows the responsory *Tenebrae factae sunt [Darkness fell]* in its version from the source we have been using in the *Tenebrae*-tour, the CH-Fco 2 Franciscan antiphonary from Fribourg.[xliv] As we know (see Introduction), this manuscript dates from the second half of the thirteenth century. It was certainly made after 1260. Thus, the musical score we have before our eyes is some 750 years old, and yet, at first glance, we are not really challenged when reading this. If you have some experience with singing plainchant from square notation, even in books as young as the (randomly selected) 2002 Nocturnale Romanum, to name but one, you would know where to start and how to proceed when faced with the responsory *Tenebrae* from the Fribourg antiphonary. Figure 3 shows the same responsory in the Nocturnale Romanum mentioned.[xlv] The similarities are obvious (although the version from the Nocturnale is longer, but more on that below), and on a certain level astonishing, considering the 750-year span between the two versions. I am aware of the fact that this is

xliii The extinguishing of a series of candles during the *Tenebrae*-services of Holy Week is a distinctive feature, whereby normally one candle (sometimes referred to as the Maria-candle) is allowed to remain lighted but hidden behind the altar — its replacement on the top of the candelabrum afterwards symbolizing the Resurrection of Christ. In our *Tenebrae*-evocation, we opted for a brief moment of total darkness at the end of the concert, accompanied by the equally traditional *strepitus* or 'great noise', referring to the earthquake following the death of Christ. More on the strepitus later in this chapter.

xliv Earlier, I have used the more 'politically correct' Fribourg/Freiburg, since this is officially a bilingual French/German-speaking city. However, the city is predominantly French-speaking, so limiting ourselves to 'Fribourg' should be permitted.

xlv (Nocturnale Romanum, 2002, pp. 402-403)

a somewhat forged observation, since modern editions of chant books are actually presented primarily as echoes of manuscripts of up to a thousand years old.[xlvi] In that way, the two versions of the *Tenebrae* that I compare here, could be considered to be separated from each other not more than 300 years. More on aspects of restoration of chant in Chapter Three.

The Fribourg antiphonary has basically nothing more than three shapes of note-heads, namely the square (although in different sizes), the oblique (just three of those in this *Tenebrae*, at for example the *mag- of magna*, see also below) and the *rhombus* (often almost without discernible difference between the square note and the diamond-shaped note, due to the normal square note generally being tilted). The Nocturnale Romanum has considerably more variation in note-heads, adding to the square note, the oblique and the *rhombus* which we have encountered in the Fribourg manuscript very specific forms such as the serrated *quilisma*, the twisted *oriscus*, or the smaller-sized liquescent note-heads.[xlvii]

Leaving all our theoretical and practical knowledge aside for a moment, then what do we see (in Figure 2), how has the scribe attempted to inform us on how to perform the *Tenebrae?* A red four-line stave holds black square notes in different constellations (see below), and the key to what notes are to be sung is given through the position of the clefs, which in this case are C-clefs placed on either the second, third or fourth line (counting from bottom to top). Between the second and the third stave, the clef-change is unannounced except for the custos c on the fourth line: the third stave jumps to a clef on the third line. The next change of clef occurs on the fourth stave after the first word (*magna*). That clef, now on the second line, can quite easily be mistaken for two notes, since it occurs

xlvi The Praefatio of the Nocturnale Romanum (p. ii) says: *"Restituimus secundum fontes vetustissimas et exelentiores codices, quorum caput nisi aliud Codice Hartker, Sancti Galli 390/391 manuscripto. Translatio neumatum in notas quadratas diligenter et accurate respectu plurimorum codicum diastematicorum facta est." [We have restored following the oldest and most excellent manuscripts, of which the most important one is the Codex Hartker, Sankt Gallen 390/391. The transfer of the neumes into square notes has been made with care and accuracy, and with many diastematic manuscripts taken into account.]* The Codex Hartker dates from the last decade of the first millennium [CH-SGs 390/391].

xlvii For more elaborate considerations of neumes and note-heads in different manuscripts and their possible implications for perfomance, see Chapter Three — Morphology.

in a tight squeeze between two syllables with rather similar neume-forms. In fact, many manuscripts with square notation use clefs that look like a *podatus* turned upside down, and that is certainly the case in this Fribourg antiphonary, with its almost careless hand resulting in many different and highly irregular forms of (not so) square note-heads. However, it is to be observed that the scribe must have been aware of this potential danger, since he[xlviii] makes use of a hairline completing the vertical dimension at the position of the clef, when it is not placed at the beginning of a stave. This is noticeable in the case of the two clef-changes on the fourth stave, where the low-placed clef has a hairline continuing up the stave, and where in the second case the higher-placed clef is accompanied by a hairline continuing down the stave. In the middle of the word *dereliquisti* on that same fourth stave, the scribe has made an error, placing a fourth-line clef and then erasing it, but without erasing the downward facing hairline, which is still present. It almost looks like a deliberate incisum, an indication to split the word *dereliquisti* in two.

Three more clef-changes occur in the responsory: a) the already mentioned clef just before the *Et inclita* on the fourth stave, where it goes back up to the third line, b) between the fifth and sixth stave, where the clef drops again to the second line, again without warning but secured by the *custos*, and c) in the word *spiritum* between the sixth and the seventh (and final) line of the responsory.

These clef-changes apparently have only one goal: keeping the notes within the range of the four red lines of the stave. Occasionally in manuscripts like these, we may see clef-changes occurring to avoid notes mingling with the pen and ink work of decorated initials, even if the notes would normally remain respectably between the stave borders. But this is not the case here: the clef-changes make the stave into a kind of adjustable spanner, between the extremes of which the notes lead their lives. How different this is in the Nocturnale Romanum version of the *Tenebrae*, given

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xlviii I am sorry to say that it is highly improbable that the scribe of the Fribourg manuscript might be a 'she', although I do not want to exclude that possibility. So whenever I use a 'he' when talking about scribes or even singers in the Late Middle Ages, I invite the reader to think of a possible 'she' as well.

in Figure 3. The clef has been chosen wisely and never changes. It is a C-clef on the third line, ensuring that downwards oriented fragments remain within the range of the stave (the g on the bottom line being the lowest note), while in the case of upwards oriented fragments (the g' being the highest note of the responsory) the editor has made use of ledger lines.[xlix]

As an interim conclusion to this description of the visual aspects of the Fribourg *Tenebrae*, the performance implications of what we see on the page seem to be minimal to say the least. Notes are presented in a certain order, but apart from that, other performance instructions lack. Maybe a more detailed look at the neumes used or at the text itself could help.

Of words, hyphens and incisi

We will consider details about the forms of neumes in this *Tenebrae* from Fribourg later on. Let us turn to the text first. The script employed here is a southern *Textualis Formata*, of which Belgian manuscript authority Albert Derolez, commenting on a 1298 manuscript from Toulouse with clear resemblance to the script in this antiphonary, remarks its closeness to the Italian *Rotunda*.[l] It shows many fusions, and has a remarkable hair-line extension of the **h** and **x** below the baseline (often extending into the lower stave). The readability of this script is quite high. The unedited text reads line by line as follows:

1 Tenebre facte sunt/
2 dum crucifixissent ihesum iudei et circa ho/

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xlix Although the Fribourg antiphonary makes no use of ledger lines, the phenomenon was not unknown in the Middle Ages. See for instance the music of Hildegard of Bingen as seen in B-DEa 9 (the Dendermonde codex, one of the only two known sources with music by Hildegard), where the stave is extended upwards or downwards with long ledger lines into a stave of up to six lines.

l "The Mediterranean forms of *Textualis* can for reasons of convenience be brought together under the generic name of Rotunda, although some of them are not particularly rounded, and may even be quite angular. But in general, the Southern version of *Textualis* is first and foremost characterized by the roundness of its bows, visible especially in **b**, **c**, **d**, **e**, **h**, **o**, **p**, **q**, round **s**." (Derolez, 2003, p. 102)

3 ram nonam exclamauit ihesus uoce/
4 magna deus ut quid me dereliquisti. Et inclina-/
5 to capite emisit spiritum. V. Exclamans ihe-/
6 sus uoce magna ait pater in manus tuas commendo spi-/
7 ritum meum. Et incli/

If our knowledge of Latin would be less than minimal, we might have met with some trouble reading the many words that have multiple non-connected syllables, which could be read in wrong groupings (*iudei* in 2; *nonam*, *exclamavit*, *ihesus* and *uoce* in 3; *magna*, *deus* and *dereliquisti* in 4; *capite*, *spiritum* and *exclamans* in 5; *meum* in 6). Although no hyphens are given within these words, some hyphens do appear at the end of a line/stave, indicating that a word is not finished and will continue in the next line/stave. This hyphen, a light and thin diagonal stroke away from the word and at quite a distance from it, is often barely visible. But it is there for the words *inclinato* in 4-5, *ihesus* in 5-6 and *spiritum* in 6-7. The word *horam* between 2 and 3 most probably had a hyphen too, but it has disappeared due to the (once sewed, but now open) scar in the vellum.

We know that words being split into syllables combined with the absence of hyphens glueing them together make up a deadly cocktail for singers not all too familiar with Latin. Figure 4 shows a fragment from a fourteenth-century winter antiphonary from Tongeren, Belgium.[li] The rubric at the start of the second half of the page calls for two boys (*duo pueri*) singing the hymn *Lumen clarum*.[lii] Every word is separated (and thus its syllables assembled) through the use of *incisi*:

(Lumen) clarum / rite / fulget / orto / umbra / mortis etc.

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li [B-TO olv 63 f48^{r}]

lii The rubric *…cantent hanc antiphona* is misleading, since the *Lumen clarum* is a hymn rather than an antiphon, although, with the repeat of the *Christo nato* after each verse, the piece resembles the oldest performance practice of antiphons, repeatedly sung as they were between verses of a psalm. The hymn is ascribed to one of the great writers and teachers of the Carolingian age, the Benedictine monk and later archbishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus. (Blume & Dreves, 1886)

But when, for the *Christo nato*, a chorus is called for, presumably adult singers, these *incisi* have disappeared. Then just one stave later, when a rubric again calls for *pueri*, the *incisi* return. So the *incisi* may have had a didactic function first, acting as a helpful sign for singers not so competent (yet) in reading Latin.[liii] It obviously may also mean, that the correct grouping of syllables into a word as a whole was considered an important feature of a good performance. As we shall see, however, this does not mean that our knowledge of how exactly the medieval singer did this has been sharpened.

Some sources employ *incisi* between words throughout the manuscript. An interesting example of that is the Einsiedeln Antiphonary CH-E 611, from the fourteenth century (see Figure 24). The *incisi* isolate words from each other or/and group a few words into a small entity, while some *incisi* are placed within the longer melisma of a word. It will be worth considering what the performance practice implications of this habit could be (Chapter Three).

Of Psalm 21

Back to the text of the responsory. The *Tenebrae* is paraphrasing Matthew 27:45-46, with the verse *Exclamans* taken from Luke 23:46 (one of the alternative 'last words' of Christ). Here it is in a normalized spelling, with (my) punctuation, grouped into meaningful (parts of) sentences, and with a translation.[liv]

(a) R. Tenebrae factae sunt,
(b) dum crucifixissent Jesum Judaei.
(c) Et circa horam nonam exclamavit Jesus voce magna:
(d) Deus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
(e) Et inclinato capite, emisit spiritum.

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liii We will return to this page from the Tongeren antiphonary later in this chapter, where we will see that the *incisi* can have another function than the didactic one it has here.

liv As stated in the Introduction, my translations are usually based on the revised Roman Breviary of 1961. (Newton, 2012)

(v) V. Exclamans Jesus voce magna, ait:
(w) Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.
(x) Et inclinato…

(a) R. Now there was darkness
(b) whilst the Jews did crucify Jesus.
(c) And at about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice:
(d) God, why hast thou forsaken me?
(e) And he bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost.
(v) V. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said:
(w) Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.
(x) And he bowed…

The very dramatic scene from Matthews' story about the passion of Christ is not quoted in full in this responsory. Matthew 27:45 would normally start with the indication of time (before a): *A sexta autem hora [Now from the sixth hour]* and of place (after a): *super universam terram [over the whole earth]*. And then there is the omission (at d) where Jesus just cries out *Deus [God]* instead of the more usual text *Deus meus, Deus meus [My God, My God]*. In fact, the omission of the word *meus* could be considered as being a simple mistake of the Fribourg scribe. When we return to the responsory *Tenebrae* (in Chapter Three), we will see how of other sources, most have a simple *Deus meus*, quite a few have *Deus Deus*, only one has the original *Deus meus, Deus meus*, and one has *Deus Deus* (but without any notes on the second *Deus*). These adaptations, manipulations and mistakes may come as no surprise considering that this responsory, like so many other elements of the chant repertoire, is to be found in sources of more than a thousand years apart. Or, again: it is quite amazing that all these sources present versions of the same piece of music with, after all, so few variations.

But there may be another reason why Jesus' cry of despair is not quoted in full in the responsory. Earlier in the same service, almost at the very start of the combined office of matins and lauds of Good Friday, the

Psalm 21 is recited in full. It is from this Psalm that Matthew took the words *Deus, Deus meus, respice in me. Quare me dereliquisti? [O God, my God, look upon me! Why have You forsaken me?]*. When the composer of this responsory, someone living in the first millennium, distilled the text from Matthew to be used for his work, he may have felt that quoting the line from Psalm 21 again in full would be overdoing it. Even when responsories belong to the most virtuoso pieces in the office repertoire, the composer of such pieces apparently exercised restraint as a first command.

The beating of the drum: some advice, some questions

Restraint. That may have been my first command too when building the *Tenebrae*-programme which we are presenting this weekend at Maastricht (yesterday Saturday 24 March) and Amsterdam (today Sunday 25 March). Two places in the same country, but so far apart — we might say that they are as far apart as plainchant and polyphony. The 80-minutes programme is one of the most sober, even austere productions we have ever presented. Of course the theme of the programme dictates such a sobriety, with all material taken from the Dark Hours, the repertoire of which is as calm and solemn as chant repertoire can be. As I pointed out above, the *Tenebrae*-responsory may work as a dramatic high point, but even when it is one of the great responsories of the Night Office, it too is sober and austere, except maybe for Christ's outburst of despair — and even that phrase feels balanced and stable. This remains the case even when I decide, here in Amsterdam, to complete Fribourg's *Deus* with a *meus*, and double this into an almost hysterical *Deus meus, Deus meus*. Somewhat emotional, over-dramatic maybe, but today I feel like edging the millstone. Even our traditional long silence after the *emisit spiritum* feels curt, cruel.

Meanwhile it really looks like our *Tenebrae*-tour of The Netherlands is turning into a sample sheet of the most diverse locations to sing in. So far we have had a castle salon, a cathedral-like church, and a church-like hall. Today, in Amsterdam, at the *Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ*, the air-conditioned silence of its stunning main auditorium has created an unparalleled atmosphere of focus, colour, continuity and intensity.

Yesterday, at one of Maastricht's hidden gems, the *Ursulinenkapel*, we have explored the acoustic comfort of a typical neo-Gothic church. The vaulted ceilings reverberated our voices in a somewhat harsh and uncontrollable way, making us sing slower than ever, ending up with the programme over 85 minutes long. The *strepitus* or 'great noise' that we had anticipated into the last lamentation by way of a regular drum-beat every few words, was difficult to balance acoustically with the prosody of the eight-minute long prayer *Recordare, Domine [Remember, O Lord]*. It made a listener post this comment on our website:

> *I certainly do not think that singers of the past would have beaten any drums while singing chant, as Psallentes has done disturbingly during a concert (singing chants for Sabbato Sancto!). Singers who do such things have no understanding [of] the liturgical circumstances for which the chants were intended. Sabbato Sancto would very likely have called for lower pitch and slower tempi than usual, not for the disturbing and ridiculous beating of a drum!*
>
> *As long as so many 'historically informed' performers are unwilling to thoroughly study and FOLLOW historical 'rules' for good chant performance, we will never have a revival of the beautiful chant repertoires which approaches the aesthetical ideals of the great ancient masters. So many performers today see themselves as 'artists' — they should rather see themselves as pupils in a long and old chain of tradition and LEARN, LEARN, LEARN!*[lv]

Well, speaking of restraint, this is quite a programme. What have we learned from this comment? First: do everything according to the liturgical tradition — ergo: plainchant is liturgical music and should be respected as such. You just have to follow the rules. Second: leave out all

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lv This is actually the second half of the original post by a German organist (his capitals), posted on 5 May 2012 on www.psallentes.com, in reaction to our message about completing the *Tenebrae*-tour. In the first half of the post (not given here), the commenter advises us to sing "in more or less equal rhythm values" and to read contemporary treatises. He also thinks that the ensemble is too small "to perform antiphonally with good effect".

your artistic ideas and ideals, certainly when they do not match up with the supposed aesthetical ideals of the great ancient masters or/and the liturgical prescriptions. Third: look at the tradition and learn.[lvi]

I think we need to address three essential questions, or sets of questions — challenges, if you like — before we can go on with this project:

1. *Can plainchant be treated not (only) as the liturgical music it originally was and in many ways still is, but as genuine concert music (as well)?*

2. *Is it important that a performer is 'historically informed'? What does that mean, being 'historically informed'? What is your status as an artist, if you are (not) 'historically informed': better or worse, respected or despised?*

3. *What can we learn?*

Before we think about these three questions, I would like to raise two other issues briefly. Both can be phrased as questions as well. Why do we sing (or listen to) plainchant? And who is it for? Although we should consider these two topics as essential, even quintessential, I feel them to be difficult to answer, or maybe even unanswerable, and certainly beyond the scope of this book. However, some observations can and should be made.

I began singing plainchant in an amateur ensemble when I was fourteen.[lvii] This was in 1980, after a decade in which many musicians active in the Catholic Church had begun to form specialist chant choirs aimed at securing the position of Latin liturgy (i.e. plainchant). The Second Vatican

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lvi "Look at the tradition and learn" — it is the underlying thought in most literature on 'authentic' or 'historically informed' performance practice. A good example would be the inaugural address of Dutch early music icon Ton Koopman as professor at Leiden University. He stresses the importance of research into the intentions of the composer, the notation, the instruments, and the role of improvisation, style, tempo and such. All this should be aimed at learning to make music as a contemporary of the composer, where 'authenticity' is not an empty word but the search for the truth: "...om als een goede tijdgenoot van de barokke meesters te musiceren. Zo is authenticiteit geen leeg woord, maar een streven naar waarheidsvinding". (Koopman, 2008, p. 11)

lvii I refer to the *Scola Gregoriana Brugensis*, founded and directed by Bruges cathedral organist Roger Deruwe (see also Acknowledgements).

Council (1962-1965) had given the impression to have abolished the use of Latin in the liturgy,[lviii] and the old books with plainchant had indeed been largely replaced by books with songs in the vernacular. Objections against the presumed abolishment of the use of Latin have persisted up to this day, mainly from a more reactionary corner of the Church.[lix] I do not think that the formation of the mentioned *scholae* came out of a reactionary reflex. I have always felt it as genuine attempts to try and preserve the rich musical heritage of the plainchant itself for future generations, while in some cases even doing this more or less outside of liturgy.

The appeal of (the singing of) plainchant is not hard to fathom. It is fundamentally a simple and quite singable kind of music, never extremely complicated, with a realistic vocal ambitus, seldom too high or too low, strongly connected to word and text (although often enough beautifully disconnected from it through the use of excessive melismas), born out of Christian ritual and brewed into all aspects of liturgy (we will come back

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lviii I chose these words with extra care. At the Second Vatican Council, the basic idea of a more active participation of the laity in the liturgy led to the encouragement of a greater use of the vernacular: "But since the use of the mother tongue … may be of great advantage to the people … the limits of its employment may be extended." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, 36.3) Understandably, progressive forces in the sixties were eager to take this to the extreme, hence the presumed 'abolishment' of Latin in the liturgy, and hence also the precarious situation plainchant found itself in. However, the instruction on Music in the Liturgy, the *Musicam Sacram*, 5 March 1967, clearly states that "Gregorian chant, as proper to the Roman liturgy, should be given pride of place" (50.a). And also: "Above all, the study and practice of Gregorian chant is to be promoted, because, with its special characteristics, it is a basis of great importance for the development of sacred music." (52) (Both citations taken via www.vatican.va, last visited January 2014)

lix Pope Benedict XVI: "But in some regions, no small numbers of faithful adhered and continue to adhere with great love and affection to the earlier liturgical forms." Benedict therefore established an "extraordinary form" of the Roman Rite, which de facto promoted (the use of) Latin in the liturgy to a status it had before the Second Vatican Council (*Summorum Pontificum*, 7 July 2000, Introduction & Art. 1). In one of his last Apostolic letters before his retirement, Pope Benedict even established the Pontifical Academy for Latin, to "support the commitment to a greater knowledge and more competent use of Latin", with as one of the arguments for the establishment the fact that "the liturgical books of the Roman Rite … are written in this language in their authentic form". (*Latina Lingua*, 10 November 2012, 4 & 3, consulted via www.vatican.va, last visited January 2014).

to that soon), and it has many elements of attractive collectivity to it — although the solo virtuoso singer does have his place. It is also very diverse in its monotony.

Plainchant is made and is used as liturgical music, and it is very good at that. Almost all elements of any liturgical situation can be turned into plainchant: from prayers and lessons, through psalm recitations and antiphons, to interludes between lessons, or dialogues and responses — you name it, plainchant can provide it. This does not necessarily have to happen in Latin only (some attempts have been made at plainchant-like music in the vernacular but otherwise all of plainchant is in Latin), but it is an excellent language for this purpose. No special complexities of consonants, excellent openness of vowels, and since as a language it has given so many words and concepts to other modern Western languages, there is always enough concrete connection with content and meaning. It is not too difficult to understand, and on the other hand it remains a foreign language to anyone confronted with it, lending it a particular level of mystique.

But to many, listening to and/or singing of plainchant may (also) give a feeling of connection with another world, to another time, and both of these, the other world and the other time, may be defined rather vaguely. This of course touches the aspect of a spirituality not necessarily connected to a specific religion or liturgy, nor to any music featuring therein, but, to quote Marcel Cobussen, as "something that happens in life in the form of a command, a call, or a perspective which adopts a critical attitude towards the existing and the given". In that way, it may refer less (or even not) to otherworldliness, but to "a space between category and reality" where an experience of the spiritual becomes possible. An experience "which both feeds upon and undermines the structures with which we try to assure, secure, and insure our existence".[lx]

If we look at Christianity as one of these possible structures, and at singing of or listening to plainchant as an experience feeding upon that structure, we look at a combination (Christianity/plainchant) that has

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lx (Cobussen, 2008, pp. 60, 61)

been around for up to two thousand years (depending on where you want to situate the birth of plainchant). For many churchgoers in the Catholic world, the experience is strongly connected or even identified with the core of Christian spirituality. It is a strong part of orthodoxy in liturgical worship. But the combination need not be exclusive. What if the plainchant experience (if I may call it that for a moment) would feed upon the above mentioned vagueness, even within the Christian religion? Dutch historian of religions Wouter Hanegraaff describes it thus:

> *If [the academic theologian] could read the minds of the churchgoers, he would find that many of them are playing, although to various extents, with ideas for which his professional training has never prepared him: beliefs about reincarnation and karma, angels as spiritual messengers and helpers, paranormal assistance from the divine world, new channeled revelations ..., newly discovered gnostic gospels, Celestine prophecies, and a whole complex of ideas and assumptions intimately connected with them.*[lxi]

If churchgoers' experiences of plainchant may feed upon any or all of these things, de facto undermining existing symbolic systems of Christianity, the same or other types of 'feeding upon' may happen with other structures as well. The huge commercial success of the recordings of the monks of Santo Domingo de Silos towards the middle of the 1990s may well have been feeding upon some kind of New Age religion, or upon people's desire to manage stress, much more than it would have signaled an evangelical revival, although there were attempts at portraying the success of the Spanish monks as such.[lxii]

Even atheists may find it useful to sing plainchant at their meetings. The Sunday Assembly, describing themselves as "a godless congregation that celebrates life", has weekly gatherings where "wisdom from all sources" can help the attendees being "energized, vitalized, restored, repaired, refreshed", with the possibility of "injecting a touch of tran-

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lxi (Hanegraaff, 2000, p. 311)

lxii I have unfortunately been unable to trace exact references to such attempts in the 1990s.

scendence into the everyday". I think plainchant is ideal for those kinds of actions.[lxiii]

And of course, the singing of plainchant and the experiencing of it, may well feed upon that other strong structure: medievalism. I started singing plainchant in my hometown Bruges, a quiet and quite famous Belgian city with a high level of medievalism, albeit in a mainly nineteenth-century version. (Later, I came to realize how important the nineteenth century is in our relationship with the Middle Ages — and this certainly applies to the world of plainchant.) Starting to sing chant at the susceptible age of fourteen, and living in such a medievalesque city as Bruges, this soon led me to my very own 'Gothic revival'. Adolescents in many ways resemble nineteenth-century people: both could/can be very responsive to the appeal of the medieval past. Dutch historian Ronald van Kesteren (2004) describes how the hypostatization and the reification of the medieval past led many nineteenth-century men or women to a "discovery" of the millennium as a "foreign country", where you would want to have lived.[lxiv] Meanwhile it seems that the nineteenth century extends into the present-day, judging by the abundance of literature available where such an imaginary and medievalesque foreign country is described.

But if we sing plainchant because of its musical, liturgical, spiritual, experiential, historical and/or other grounds and appeal, then who is it for? It would be beyond the scope of this book to enter into a specific branch of the sociology of music and try to define the medieval or present-day listener. It could be anyone at anytime and any place for any reason or for no reason at all. But there is one small part of an attempt at an answer

lxiii Information retrieved from www.sundayassembly.com, last accessed February 2014.

lxiv "De hypostasering, inkleuring en reïficatie van het middeleeuwse verleden leidden ertoe dat velen, vooral vanaf de achttiende eeuw, het millennium gingen 'ontdekken'. De evocatie van de Middeleeuwen als algemene cultuurperiode gedurende Verlichting en Romantiek was zo bezien niet minder ingrijpend dan de ontdekking van de Oudheid door de humanisten. … Na de Renaissance … ontstond in de negentiende eeuw een Wedergeboorte van de Middeleeuwen. Toen de Middeleeuwen niet direct meer werden gevoeld, kon de uil van Minerva in de schemering van de avond zijn vleugels uitslaan. Sindsdien beschouwden velen het middeleeuwse verleden als een 'foreign country', waar het soms goed toeven was." (Van Kesteren, 2004, p. 389)

to this question which is particularly relevant to the topic at hand. That is when we rephrase the question into 'Who *was* it for?'

The obvious answer to that question is, that plainchant (and religious music in general, including polyphony) was considered prayer first and then music, and that therefore our classic view of the performer/listener duality may not apply to (historical or present) liturgical circumstances. The performer was the listener, the listener the performer, and he/she was part of a community listening. No one was actually listening, or everyone was, or everyone was contemplating. Moreover, to the medieval singer what mattered was not, speaking with Harold Copeman's words, "the individual's personal response, but the discipline of the observance by all present".[lxv]

But then, these obvious answers seem to imply that music was not really made or performed, or allowed to be listened to only for personal consideration, education, or even pleasure and enjoyment. The reality must have been much more complex. Aesthetics certainly were involved: a singer singing a solo verse beautifully would have been thanked for making the heart rejoice, and he may even have been envied for his talent.

It is my firm belief that every kind of music goes beyond its occasional usefulness, and listening to it is essentially (and fortunately) an act that may be beyond control or disciplining. Therefore, our question 'who was it for?', whether put in the past or in the present tense, will necessarily remain unanswered, although attempts at answering it make excellent reading. When the renowned journal Early Music celebrated its 25 years of existence in 1997/1998, a special issue on 'listening practice' was published. This is how Bonnie Blackburn answers the question 'For whom do the singers sing?':

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lxv (Copeman, 1997, p. 131) Copeman passionately argues for performers of religious music to be well informed, thus avoiding a lack of knowledge leading to a superficial understanding of the text, which in its turn would lead to a performance that is not heart-felt.

> *This is not a question that is asked very often, and it is probably one that singers themselves rarely think about. If it is chant, the easy answer would be 'for the glory of God'. Often the answer will be that the singers sing for themselves, for the sheer love of singing. Sometimes it is just a job: they sing for their supper. The question becomes more pressing in the case of sacred music: do the words matter to the singer? Is it necessary to be a believer in order to sing a confession of faith, as we must do when we sing the Ordinary of the Mass? Of course the answer, for many people, is 'No'. Yet I suspect that many will sing what they might not be willing to say.*[lxvi]

After which Blackburn nicely works up towards one of her conclusions, being that every time a work by a deceased author is sung, his prayer is "to be heard once more, spoken from beyond the grave", and that every time we sing *Ave Maria... virgo serena*, we also sing for Josquin. This may remind us of the many instances in which music was ordered, via endowments and wills, to be sung as part of a commemoration of a deceased. One notable example of that being the presumed foundations that Guillaume de Machaut and his brother Jean made at Reims Cathedral. Part of that endowment may have consisted of the polyphonic setting of the Ordinary, within the context of a Marian-commemorative Mass in memory of the two brothers, thus maybe ensuring that Machaut's famous Messe de Notre Dame would be listened to in Reims cathedral until well into the fifteenth century, many decades after Machaut's death.[lxvii]

Question 1 — Concert music (?)

With the two issues above (the why-do-we-sing-plainchant and the who-is-it-for) more or less out of the way, albeit largely unanswered, we can now return to the first of three questions we need to address. Can plainchant be treated not as the liturgical music it originally was and in many ways still is, but as genuine concert music? Can it be pulled out of the

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lxvi (Blackburn, 1997, p. 594)

lxvii (Robertson, 2002, p. 269)

context of the divine service? The answer is undoubtably a firm yes. I have described several reasons why we may want to sing plainchant, and I consider all of them equally valuable and valid. It is understandable that the connection between plainchant and religion (i.e. Christianity or Catholicism) is viewed by many as being so strong that the cutting of plainchant out of its liturgical context is considered almost a sacrilege, but frankly this does not have to be any different from the way the concert performances of a Lassus Mass or a Bach Passion are experienced — examples of religious music more easily accepted as independent works of art, as viable aesthetic objects, as concert music.

As a performer, I want to develop my present-day performance practice of plainchant and related polyphonies. Although many of my projects are hugely respectful for the liturgical circumstances in which particular plainchant is born or has been used or transmitted, I feel no urge to give account to anyone whenever I decide to disconnect from those circumstances, be it historical or present-day. So the answer is definitely yes, plainchant can be treated as genuine concert music. And it is great at that too. In all its simplicity and sobriety, plainchant is also strong and forceful, monotonous as well as varied, fluent and expressive. Because of its strong connection with the spoken word, with intonation of speech, with rhetorics, plainchant as concert music is exceptionally direct and eloquent, assuring that listeners may connect not only with the intellectual side of the music, but also or even more with its aesthetic and sensuous capacities. Seen that way, plainchant has an enormously rich concert potential, to which many people, ranging from the passionate believer to the most ardent atheist may respond with an endless variety of emotions.

Question 2 — 'Historically informed' (?)

Musicians agonize. Whether it be in the performance of a Bach cello suite, a Chopin nocturne, Perotinus' Viderunt Omnes or any other piece from any other period in music history, the worries are usually big. "Is this the right bowing for the Allemande — should I take a look at Bach's handwriting to decide? Should my left hand have a stable tempo in this

nocturne, while my right hand plays rubato and adds ornaments without restraint — like Chopin himself is said to have done? To what rhythmical mode should the upper voices move in this organum — is the answer suggested in some contemporary treatise?"

These questions are often related to a certain level of what I would call historical obedience. Or to put it more precisely: these questions are related to many musicians' belief or conviction — sometimes obsession — that the performance of music should relate to what the composer is generally assumed to have intended, or to what is believed to be idiomatic to the specific performance style of the historic context in which the piece was born. People go at great length to achieve this blessed state — the state of being 'historically informed' as to the performance practice of a certain kind of music.[lxviii]

I do believe that music is often best served when someone with a good artistic knowledge of the historical or idiomatic context performs the music. To put it naively: I often think that Norrington's Beethoven works better than Von Karajan's, and I assume that this has to do with the former's historical obedience (with for example the use of period instruments as a result). Rhythms are sharper, the overall feel is less pompous, there is a wonderful transparency, the woodwinds sound emancipated in relation to the strings — does Norrington's performance not sound really genuinely-Romantic-with-a-touch-of-Viennese-classic? Yet musically and artistically, Von Karajan's interpretation is no less convincing. The dance-like character of the second movement of the Seventh Symphony seems to me to have a much more intense and obsessive atmosphere in the Von Karajan performance from the seventies, than it has in the Norrington performance from the nineties. It just seems to work better, it has more

lxviii American professor of philosophy Peter Kivy notoriously goes as far as to claim "that we have a strong obligation to honor the performance intentions of dead composers", and that "this obligation is usually strong enough to justify our honoring the performance intentions of dead composers even when doing so will make the music sound worse than if the intentions were ignored". (Kivy, 1993, p. 114) How oppositional this sounds to French philosopher Roland Barthes's ideas about authorship. To the benefit of our discussion here, I would paraphrase him thus: that the birth of the performer must be at the cost of the death of the composer. (The original quote is "…the birth of the reader must be requited by [or: at the cost of] the death of the author".) (Barthes, 1986, p. 55)

effect on my listening experience. But then I grew up with Von Karajan's recordings, less so with Norrington's. So maybe it's all more a matter of taste?

A remark from Sarah Fuller (perhaps unwillingly) gives us a small proof of how difficult it may be to distinguish between appreciating a musical performance because of its 'historically informedness' or because of its effectiveness to the modern ear. In her article on the polyphony of Saint Martial de Limoges in the New Grove Fuller writes: "Recorded realizations of Aquitanian polyphony by informed scholar-performers (e.g. Marcel Pérès, Dominique Vellard and the Sequentia ensemble) should be regarded as equivalent to scholarly editions. They demonstrate that performance in regular, flexible rhythms is both practical and aesthetically effective."[lxix]

A well-known fortepiano player once told me that he could no longer stand the Beethoven sonatas as played on a Steinway.[lxx] For him, the sonatas were "raped" when played on a modern piano. Asked for his opinion on Artur Schnabel's interpretation of the piano sonates[lxxi], he looked at me with a mixture of irritation and compassion and said: "That is even worse." Faced with this kind of radical attitude, I usually start praising Uri Caine's equally "radical" interpretation of Bach's Goldberg Variations. I subsequently portray Uri Caine as a risk-taker, taking more than his share of liberties with the famous variations, and how absolutely adorable I find his interpretations of Bach — or, to speak with the words of

lxix This quote is also particularly interesting in the light of the discussions about the outcomes of artistic research. Fuller's statement about the equivalence between certain performances and scholarly editions reads as a plea for non-verbal transmission of practical knowledge. (Fuller & Planchart, last accessed June 2014)

lxx I will not name this pianist because I do not want to discredite him. He is one of the best — and I know for certain that he does love a good old Steinway piano. I believe his exact words were: "I hate it when a Beethoven sonata is being played on a black Steinway".

lxxi The Austrian pianist Artur Schnabel (1882-1951) has been praised as a pianist and a pedagogue, especially in the field of the interpretation of Beethoven. In my own work as a piano teacher, I have often referred to his views, as recorded in both his discography and his editions. It is particularly noteworthy in this context that Harold C. Schonberg, in his book The Great Pianists, refers to Schnabel as "the man who invented Beethoven" (although Schnabel himself often said that it was his *limitation* that he played so much Beethoven). (Schonberg, 1963, p. 11)

Marcel Cobussen (actually referring to Zacher's *Kunst einer Fuge*): Caine's *encounters with* or *invitations to* the work of Bach.[lxxii]

Moreover, what is this 'history' that informs us exactly? Books, treatises, manuscripts, note-heads, eye witness reports? But how can we know for certain that what we see as history or historical context has any claim to accuracy? We can not, it is impossible. There are simply too many things we can not know. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson stresses that the chances of arriving at an accurate reconstruction are very poor:

> *Whatever the evidence, part of the process of historical recovery is interpretative: what is evidence and what it means are matters of judgement that can be shaped by the way we view the world. Here we face the difficulty, so much stressed in recent thought, of escaping from the preconceptions of our own culture.*[lxxiii]

The difficulty of escaping our preconceptions. I have to confess that, for example, I find it impossible (even if sometimes I want it very badly) to free myself of my personal listening history when singing plainchant or polyphony. The opposites of old school Solesmes and the interpretations of Marcel Pérès, and many of the things in between I have ever listened to, even John Zorn's *Filmworks XXIV* playing at this very moment, are constantly trying to wiggle themselves into my ears, often enough even while performing. But as we shall see in Chapter Two, the inescapability of our listening history is actually not a hindrance, but an asset on the road towards a healthy and happy creativity.

So in trying to answer the question whether it is important for a performer to be 'historically informed', I even struggle to move beyond the definition of what exactly historically informedness might mean and bring about. Even if I acknowledge that being informed about historic facts can (not necessarily will) alter my performance of plainchant, there are so many things I am not informed about historically, and so many

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lxxii (Cobussen, 2002, via www.deconstruction-in-music.com, last accessed September 2014)

lxxiii (Leech-Wilkinson, 2002, p. 218)

other non-historical facts I am informed about and can (or will) not erase. Just another simple example of that. In 2012, knowing that one of my female singers was pregnant and not able to keep standing for the whole of a 85-minute concert, we (the whole group, including myself) last-minute decided that everyone would remain seated during our performance of the forty odd pieces that make up the office for the feast of Corpus Christi. It probably was one of the most important changes in style and character of singing we have ever experienced. Informed, but not historically — and with the biggest impact on our performance practice.

Finally, by rephrasing the question whether it is important to be 'historically informed' into the question what knowing things about the performance practices and circumstances of times past can (if so desired) bring about in our present-day performance strategies, I will now be moving into a more useful "what-we-can-learn" mantra, thus answering our third question.

But before we embark on the consideration of things we can learn, I must admit that one part of our second question has remained unanswered. It is the part about the status of a performer being 'historically informed' — better or worse, respected or despised. In a striking example quoted above, Artur Schnabel was despised for not being 'historically informed' enough — his artistic integrity did not really seem to matter. I will leave the question open, since I consider it a false one, keeping in mind the above mentioned impossibility of historical obedience, the necessarily inescapability of our preconceptions, and my impression being that presenting yourself as a 'historically informed' performer is first and foremost part of a marketing strategy.

I may conclude by stating that whatever historical evidence we are scrutinizing, often with interesting, even exciting acts of research into many aspects of historical situations, the ultimate goal of our exertions always lies in the present, rather than in the past. If I would want to taste a cup of coffee as if it was made in fifteenth century Yemen, I would need to go at great length to recreate many coffee brewing situations, materials and circumstances as known in the Sufi monasteries around Mokha, where coffee drinking is supposed to have been born. My research may be

as profound as can be, but many elements will necessarily remain related to the present: the fresh beans, the water, my taste buds, my tasting history — to name but a few.

Question 3 — What we can learn

We can learn from anything, and if not, we should look again. I am paraphrasing fashion designer Paul Smith, one of whose popular sayings is: "You can find inspiration in anything, and if you can't, please look again".[lxxiv] In the introduction, I have briefly set out the many domains in which we face questions, challenges even, when examining plainchant performance practice related issues in different episodes of music history. These questions and challenges touch on many different disciplines including music performance, music theory and musicology, history, art history, liturgiology, theology, paleography, codicology and iconography. Before turning to the single most important source for our knowledge about and development of plainchant performance practice (i.e. the manuscripts themselves and the notes they contain), let us have a more detailed look at a few of the issues mentioned, with emphasis on voice-related matters. We consider these matters from different angles, defining 'what we can learn', while keeping in mind, however, that things we learn do not necessarily or automatically translate into performance. There are an incredible amount of things to be learned from all aspects discussed, and all of these can have a small, a larger, or a big influence on how we work with plainchant — or no influence at all.[lxxv]

For the sake of clarity and inspiration, I have made an attempt at organizing the things (about which) we can learn into a mindmap. Figure 5 shows the result of that attempt. I allow some uncertainty in my wording

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lxxiv (Moore, 2013, p. 78)

lxxv More extensive hints at 'things we can learn' are found in Berry (1968), Kelly (1992) and Hiley (1993b), as well as in the other chapters here in this book, in Mannaerts (2008) and certainly in Mannaerts (2009), which is particularly interesting on the level of things we can learn about the situation of chant performance practice in the Low Countries. See also Brunner (1982).

here, because even in a not too strict layout of these kinds of mindmaps, there still are not enough tools to portray the relations and the connections between the different categories. For instance, the aspect of 'repertoire' is in itself important enough to allow for an independent category, but it should obviously have its place too as a sub-subcategory within the subcategory 'manuscripts', itself being part of the category 'sources', while the relations with 'repertoire' and 'polyphony', 'notation' or 'performance' should be considered too. We encounter many of these interrelations throughout this book.

Concordia

We may start learning things through practice, notably the use of our voice, both as a soloist and as a singer within an ensemble, the latter being focused mainly on the one thing that is most striking and highly characteristic about performing plainchant: the monophonic, unison singing — the coincidence in pitch and sounds, in notes, syllables, words, sentences, melodic lines, rhythm, tempo, character. It requires a *concordia* among singers, as evoked by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*:

Io sentia voci, e ciascuna pareva
pregar per pace e per misericordia
l'Agnel di Dio che le peccata leva.

Pur 'Agnus Dei' eran le loro essordia;
una parola in tutte era e un modo,
sì che parea tra esse ogne concordia.

"Quei sono spirti, maestro, ch'i' odo?",
diss'io. Ed elli a me: "Tu vero apprendi,
e d'iracundia van solvendo il nodo".

[I heard voices, and each one seemed
to pray to the Lamb of God,
who takes away sin, for peace and mercy.

'Agnus Dei,' was their only commencement:
one word and one measure came from them all:
so that every harmony seemed to be amongst them.

I said: 'Master, are those spirits, that I hear?'
And he to me: 'You understand rightly,
and they are untying the knot of anger.'] [lxxvi]

Acquiring this ultimate concord among singers, the "one word and one measure", may be the biggest challenge of all in plainchant performance, and a unique one as well. It is, as described by William Mahrt, "a communal act that binds the singers in a common enterprise", which makes for a most intimate bond "because it is unison".[lxxvii] Making plainchant happen with multiple singers but as if performed from one mouth — if that is indeed our goal — will start with the mastery of the use of our own voice. The common goal of the unison is highly dependent upon the type of voice and the range of the individual singer, and on her or his vocal technique. This has been a point of concern among practitioners for many centuries.

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lxxvi I first came across this reference to the passage from Dante's *Purgatorio* in Mahrt (2000). The quote is taken from the online edition of the *Divine Comedy* at www.divinecomedy.org, last accessed November 2013. The English translation, taken from the same online source, is by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

lxxvii (Mahrt, 2000, p. 2)

Aided by a sweet voice

Much has been said about the use of the singing voice in the Middle Ages.[lxxviii] The *Instituta partum*, an early thirteenth-century Cistercian source is particularly interesting (although not exceptional) in this respect.[lxxix] According to the anonymous writer, psalms should be sung "at a steady tempo that is not excessively drawn out, but at a moderate pitch, not too quickly, but with a full, virile, lively and precise voice". So, whereas the writer calls for some moderation in tempo and pitch, the ideal use of the voice seems to him to be somewhat more confident, maybe even extrovert, calling for a "full, virile, lively" voice.

In his *Tractatalus de differentiis et gradibus cantorum*, Arnulf of St. Ghislain (ca. 1400) warns against an all too virile or lively use of the voice. Here is how he describes the first (and worst) of four kinds of musicians he had defined:

> *... illis qui artem musice prorsus ignari, nullo etiam naturalis dispositionis suffragante beneficio, per fatue sue presumptionis ausum temerarium, planam nondum gnari musicam, musicales actamen consonantias avido morsu rodere et verius devorare precentando satagunt, et in sue corrixationis latratu dum clamore rudunt altius asino et brutali clangore terribilius intubant, cachephaton evomunt ...*
>
> *[... those who are utterly ignorant of the art of music, who do not profit from the benefit of any natural aptitude, who are not yet acquainted with plainchant, but who none the less try to gnaw — indeed to devour — musical consonances with a hungry bite as they lead the singing through the impetuous rashness of their ridiculous presumption. When they bray with the din of their brawling bark louder than an ass, and when they trumpet more terribly than the clamour of a wild animal, they spew out harshsounding things ...]*

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lxxviii Joseph Dyer has brought together references to the singing voice in medieval sources in Potter (2000, pp. 165-177).

lxxix (Dyer, 2000, pp. 171-172)

In contrast, Arnulf praises the fourth (and best) category of musicians, those who have expertise in performance, the pleasing musicians, lacking in nothing:

> *... illis quos naturalis instinctus, suffragante mellice vocis organo, figuraliter reddit philomenicos, meliores tamen multo Nature munere philomenis et laude non inferiores alaudis, in quibus nobilis acquisitio artis cantorie organum naturale dirigit regulariter in modo, mensura, numero et colore, miro modulamine in consonantiis vicissitudines variando, et varietate pluriformi modorum novelle recreationis adducit materiam in animo auditoris ...*
>
> *[... those whom natural instinct, aided by a sweet voice, turns into very nightingales as it were (although better than nightingales in their natural gift) who yield nothing in praiseworthiness to the lark. The acquisition of the noble art of singing guides such a singer's voice according to rule in modus, measure, number and color, in varying changes of harmony with a wonderful melodiousness, and it gives the listener a fresh means of recreation in a manifold variety of ways ...]*[lxxx]

Is there any other way to try and carry out these suggestions, these images of ideal musicians, than by researching them through practice? How can one sing in a virile and lively yet sweet and noble manner, in wonderful melodiousness, all the while holding back on the richness of the individual voices in the interests of the group's overall blend? The singing of polyphony can accommodate quite a lot of personal character and richness in the voice, but in group singing of chant, the singer will have to be aware of his/her own sound and take great care to blend in continuously with the other voices — that is, when our goal is the *concordia*. In my experience, the key factor in this exercise does not necessarily lie in levelling the differences between voices or smoothing divergent uses of voice, but in the preciseness with which we enter into each other's sound quality via

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lxxx Quotes and translations taken from Page (1992, pp. 15-19).

the very nucleus of the tone production: the vowel. Focus on vowel uniformity may not only improve the combined play of the ensemble, it can also effectively tackle intonation problems.

Which brings us to another voice-related matter: the pronunciation of the Latin. It is a very complicated matter which needs special attention in rehearsal and performance. It seems logical (although it is not to be considered a prerequisite) that performers should use a pronunciation in accordance with the provenance and period of the manuscripts in question. But what Latin should this be? Erasmus lamented the absence of an international pronunciation, and poked fun at contemporary ways of speaking Latin. He also described how the French pronounced Latin, with striking features such as the vernacular 'u'.[lxxxi]

In our performances with Psallentes, we have often used so-called Franco-Flemish Latin, a mixture of different pronunciations closely resembling the French accent, but without the nasalization.[lxxxii] This sometimes has had a startling effect on listeners who are accustomed to singing or listening to chant in the more Italianate Roman pronunciation. However, singing in Latin with this Franco-Flemish pronunciation has often helped us to streamline our vocal-technical efforts. For example, the use of the 'u' ([y], as in the French *volume*), has its repercussions on the consonants surrounding it, making these smaller and lighter. And that vowel in particular, the 'semi-front high rounded'[lxxxiii] [y] has a directness and a slenderness that the 'high back rounded' [U] (as in 'good') lacks. Consequently, the use of Franco-Flemish Latin considerably changes the enunciation and prosody of our singing, with serious consequences for the overall performance. Working with Franco-Flemish Latin helped us to develop a smoothly elegant, more fluid style of singing late medieval

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lxxxi As described in Copeman (1990, p. 9).

lxxxii See Appendix One — Singing in Latin, for an overview of the three main schemes of Latin pronunciation that I have used with Psallentes over the years: the classical, Italian inspired 'church latin'; the French pronunciation with the typical [y] in *saeculi*; and the German variant, with the typical [kv] in *quoniam*.

lxxxiii I refer to the nomenclature used in McGee (1996, pp. 297-299). Terms such as 'high', 'front' and 'back' refer to the position of the tongue, while 'rounded' (as opposed to 'unrounded') refers to the position of the lips.

plainchant. Starting from a historically 'more correct' position, the artistic concept evolved by way of the practice of rehearsal and performance.

Learning from the sources

If working with voices and thinking about the use of the voice is the alpha of plainchant performance practice, then the connection we make with the sources is the omega — or vice versa. Much is to be learned from the sources. It is tempting to write The Sources, capitalized, to stress the importance of having manuscripts at the core of our endeavours.

As an illustration of the importance of looking at the manuscripts time and time again, let us return to our responsory *Tenebrae*. It is number 7760 in René-Jean Hesbert's Corpus Antiphonalium Officii.[lxxxiv] Hesbert notes a longer responsory than the one we see in the Fribourg antiphonary, with after (e) the John 19:34 phrase (f/g) added:

(a) R. Tenebrae factae sunt,
(b) dum crucifixissent Jesum Judaei.
(c) Et circa horam nonam exclamavit Jesus voce magna:
(d) Deus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
(e) Et inclinato capite, emisit spiritum.
(f) Tunc unus ex militibus lancea latus ejus perforavit,
(g) et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua.

(f) However one of the soldiers pierced his side,
(g) and blood and water came out.

Hesbert's index also informs us that the oldest sources do not have the verse *Exclamans* as seen in Fribourg (v/w), but use either *Et velum templi* or *Cum ergo accepisset* as verse.[lxxxv] Figure 6 shows the responsory in this longer version and with the *Cum ergo* verse, but not from an early source as might

lxxxiv (Hesbert, 1963-1979)

lxxxv More on this in Chapter Three — Manuscripts.

have been expected — that could be the tenth century Codex Hartker, a version we will discuss later on — but from the Ghent antiphonary that once initiated this project: the B-Gu 15 from 1481 (volume 1), already described in the Introduction. The comparison of these two versions (one from 1260-1300 and the other from 1481) has a few things to tell us.

First, returning to our earlier observation on note-heads, we may want to have a look at the different notational characteristics of the two sources. I defined the notation in the Fribourg antiphoner (Figure 2) as a 'quick black square notation', which, mainly due to its neumes being slightly inclined towards the right, bears some resemblance to the so-called Norman notation.[lxxxvi] The notation of the Ghent source (Figure 6) shows quite a few similarities. Four red lines form the stave, carrying black square notation, which in the Ghent case has a 'slower' feel, compared to Fribourg's 'quick' notation. The Ghent notation has greater rigidity, the note-heads usually being genuinely square-shaped, with many of the isolated as well as some of the combined notes showing vertical lines that extend beyond the simple lift-off mark of the pen that we notice in the Fribourg book.

A marked contrast between the two sources is the form of the *podatus*, in Fribourg written as two notes vertically aligned (although, as remarked, somewhat tilted to the right) but in Ghent always diagonally placed if on two consecutive notes (on *–bre* and *–fac* in the first two words *Tenebre facte*). This is merely a calligraphic issue, since note-heads in Ghent obviously had become too big in relation to the stave to allow a vertically aligned *podatus* with consecutive notes. Placing the notes diagonally avoids creating a neume that would extend too high into stave, or worse, a *podatus* that would rather resemble a stain than a group of notes.

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lxxxvi I follow the nomenclature presented by Dom Jacques Hourlier (Hourlier, 1991). The Norman notation example given in his *The Musical Notation of Latin Liturgical Chants* is the one from a gradual and trope book form Saint-Alban, written around 1140 [GB-Lbma Roy. 2 B IV, f54^{v}-55^{r}]. However, I merely point out the resemblance because of the notes being tilted to the right. Other characteristics of the Norman notation are not present in the Fribourg manuscript: the square tending to be stretched out into a rectangle (the stretching is vertical in Fribourg), and the subtly connected form of special neumes, notably the *porrectus*.

Another calligraphic issue is the middle note of *scandicus*-like figures, such as the one on the *–cla* of *exclamavit*. In the Ghent source, that middle note is usually nicely adapted (drawn slightly diagonal) in order to keep the corners of the note aligned with the top right corner of the lower note, and the bottom left corner of the higher note. If the scribe had not done this, the middle note's top right corner would end up being too high, with the next note attached to it in an awkward way, or again, placed too high to be unambiguously recognized as the intended note.

Furthermore, the Ghent scribe uses the oblique more frequently than the Fribourg scribe, with a remarkable example of such a neume at *-sit* of *emisit*. Obliques in the Ghent source are almost invariably drawn at an angle of 15 to 25 degrees relating to the horizontal line of the stave.[lxxxvii]

We will return to notational characteristics (and the possible implications for performance) in Chapter Three — Morphology. Here, I want to briefly continue comparing the two manuscripts, drawing some preliminary conclusions as to possible 'messages' the respective notations convey to the attentive performer.

We have noticed a difference in length between the Fribourg and the Ghent version of the responsory *Tenebrae*. For the sake of clarity, I will limit my short comparison here to the lines a to e, the point where Ghent continues with the addition *Tunc unus* into a longer respond.[lxxxviii] On the level of text, which in the Ghent case is in a *Textualis Formata*, there are no differences between the thirteenth- and fifteenth-century versions, except for the abbreviations of three words on *–um* in the Ghent source: *du[m]*, *ihesu[m]*, and *spiritu[m]*. That aside, the text is exactly the same, including the *Tenebre facte* instead of *Tenebrae factae*, and other spellings such as *ihesus* instead of *Jesus* or *iudei* instead of *Judaei*.

Figure 7 has the two fragments from Fribourg and Ghent in a modern transcription, showing (at first sight) how similar the two versions are.

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lxxxvii If in rehearsal or/and concert we work with manuscripts like these, the sometimes extremely long obliques may, at least unconsciously, affect the tempo or the rhythm of our performance. More on this in Chapter Three — Morphology.

lxxxviii I am following Hiley (1993b) in the nomenclature of a responsory being made up of two parts: the respond and the verse.

But we can learn from the differences. The word *sunt* (at 1 and 2) has eight notes in both versions, with the Ghent version avoiding the note b and ending with an extra g before the last note f. That extra g in the Ghent version, the penultimate note and part of a *clivis* (at 2), seems to suggest to the performer that this part of the sentence should be concluded. The use of a *climacus* on the same spot (2) in the Fribourg version, with its typical double *rhombus*-notes, feels less 'final' and seems to suggest an immediate continuation into the *dum crucifixissent*.

Performance-related conclusions like these are only useful or applicable if we consider note-heads and groups of neumes to be decisively affecting our performance. As we shall see, this may not apply, at least not rigorously, to the world of neume notation in late medieval sources. But it is tempting, possibly unavoidable, and sometimes fun too, to read instructions into the way the notes are organized, leading to different interpretations with every new version of the *Tenebrae* that we encounter.

In the transcription in Figure 7, I have decided on the grouping (by way of slurs) of individual neumes within the syllable, breaking complex neume-forms into smaller units. The movement on *sunt* (1) for example, already mentioned above and not showing identical notes, seems to be divided into three groups of notes (2/3/3) in Fribourg, but has a clear division into four groups of two notes (2/2/2/2) in Ghent. In performance, even the slightest amount of extra stress at the start of each of these groups will result in a quite significant change in interpretation. In the case of the Ghent *sunt*, naturally, the c' (at 1) will attract more attention (it is the highest note of the current movement, arriving there with a small jump from the a upwards, and it is the first note of a new group), whereas in the Fribourg case at the same spot, the b may 'steal' some of the attention away from the c'. This may affect the appreciation of the modality of the piece (see below).

Something similar may happen to the *iu-* of *iudei* (at 4). In the Fribourg version, the grouping of the neumes on that syllable into a *podatus* and twice a *podatus subbipunctis* again seems to attract some stress to the b rather than to the c'. In the Ghent source, the scribe has made a connection between the first and the second *podatus* (written diagonally instead

of vertically, as we have seen), suggesting a continuous movement up to the c'.

Indeed, there is some avoidance of b noticeable in the Ghent source, in favour of the c'. Apart from the examples above, there is the small ornamentation at (6) returning to the already dominant c'; the return to the c' instead of the b at (8); the extra c's at (10-11); the simplification and subsequent avoidance of b at the end of the syllable *mag-* (12). On the other hand, however, some b's are added in certain movements in the Ghent source: on *-ci-* (3); on *ho-* (7, c' substituted by b); on *-na-* (18); and at (19) where an extra ornament on the stressed syllable of *emisit* occurs. Taking all these instances into account, but without jumping to conclusions, an image may occur of singers being tempted to think of the responsory *Tenebrae* as a mode 8 piece (more stress on the c'), instead of what it actually is, a mode 7 piece.[lxxxix] The verses in these two sources (*Exclamans* in Fribourg, *Cum ergo* in Ghent) do use the typical standard melody for mode 7 verses, but in the respond some formulas used seem more typical of mode 8 (e.g. the concluding passage on *Et inclinato…*). The Fribourg source of the *Tenebrae* seems to acknowledge the importance of the third degree b, which is a noticeable mode 7 feature, whereas the Ghent source tends to move up to the c', which of course is a central note in mode 8.[xc]

We have been lingering over this *Tenebrae*-case quite long, as an example of what we can learn from manuscripts and the notes they contain (to which we will return in Chapter Three). But the category 'sources' is of course much broader than the chant manuscripts themselves.

We can learn from archival, foundational and legislative documents, including staff lists, rules, constitutions, statutes or financial books. Two

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lxxxix At cantusdatabase.org, of the seventy *Tenebrae*-responsories listed, a few have a question mark in the 'mode' field, and six entries place the responsory in mode 8 instead of mode 7 (last accessed February 2014).

xc See also Helsen (2008). Canadian musicologist Kate Helsen has analysed the responsory repertoire of a Saint-Maur-des-Fossés source, focusing on recurrent musical material, and comparing her findings with other sources. The formula used at *Et inclinato* in our mode 7 *Tenebrae*-responsory, is classified by Helsen as G1x, "the most frequently found final element in mode 8" (p. 244).

graduals surviving from the *leprosarium* of St. Mary Magdalene in Bruges, Belgium, are interesting sources for chant in early sixteenth-century Flanders (Figure 8). Quite uniquely, the books bear the signature of the scribe, brother Pancratius de Lyra, working at the Ghent scriptorium of the Jeronimite Brothers. Pancratius finished the books in 1504 and 1506.[xci] With Bruges at that time being part of the diocese of Tournai, we may assume that the books reflect the liturgy of that diocese. This could possibly be deducted from the contents of the gradual, but only the preserved financial records from the leprosarium of St. Mary Magdalene confirm this unequivocally: three entries show payments being made to the Ghent scriptorium for a gradual "following the rite of the diocese of Tournai".[xcii]

We can also learn from ordinals, representing the *ordo* for celebrations of all kinds in a given place at a given time. These instructions can often be found as rubrics within all types of (chant) manuscripts as well, but an ordinal usually contains much more detail and will be more elaborate.[xciii] A most impressive and inspiring ordinal is the *Liber ordinarius* from Tongeren, Belgium, made for the Church of Our Lady's Nativity. Written in 1435-1436, the book evidently served as a guide for the order of the liturgy in the collegiate church for many centuries, with the book being chained to a lectern so as to remain in the choir at all times (it is called a *liber catenatus*, a chained book), and with changes being made to the book as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century.[xciv] The ordinal

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xci See also Strohm (1985, p. 59) and Bloxam (1987, p. 18). [B-BRocmw Inv. O. SJ 210.1 and O. SJ 211.1] One of the signatures reads *Iste liber scriptus et contus est in domo fratrum sancti Iheronymi Gandavi per fratrem Pancratium presbyterum anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo quarto*. Detailed description of the 1504 graduale is found in Smeyers and Van der Stock (1996, p. 31). The 1506 graduale has a more personal 'per me, frater Pancracius' in the signature statement.

xcii B-BRocmw Magdalenahospitaal Rek. 87, 1505-1506, f55r.

xciii A collection of ordinals is to be found in Andrieu's edition of no less than fifty Ordines Romani (Andrieu, 1931-1961). These are descriptions of the liturgy in Rome, with the oldest source dating from the seventh century. Material from ordinals reached other types of manuscript by the twelfth or thirteenth century. (Hiley, 1993b, p. 290) (See also Palazzo, 1998)

xciv The edition is by Lefèvre (1967), a description of the ordinale is also to be found in *Cantus Tungrensis*, Mannaerts (2006).

describes or prescribes the liturgy in detail, which can be very inspiring to a present-day performer. On the performance of the responsory *Verbum caro factum est [The Word was made flesh]* as (partly) seen in Figure 4, the ordinal has the following instruction:

> *Tunc cantor incipiat Responsory Verbum caro factum est, tres domini cantent versum* In principio, *vertentes se versus orientem, post repeticionem tres vicarii cantent* Gloria Patri, *vertentes se versus occidentem.*
>
> *[Then the cantor intones the responsory* Verbum caro factum est, *three canons sing the verse* In principio *facing the east, and after the repetendum the* Gloria Patri *is sung by three vicars facing the west.]*[xcv]

These kind of punctilious 'stage directions' for the performance of the plainchant repertoire may be rather exceptional, but the description of who is to sing what (and what vestments to wear while doing so) is widespread. Throughout the ordinal, detailed division of roles is noted. *Scolares*, for example, are to read two lectios and sing the subsequent responsories, then *capellani et canonici* will sing other responsories two by two, and finally the *matricularii* sing the last responsory.[xcvi] Instructions like these can be found on virtually every page of the Tongeren ordinal (which runs for almost six hundred pages in Lefèvre's edition) — and of course in many other ordinals.

Now is the time to return, as promised above, to the page from the Tongeren antiphonary as shown in Figure 4. We reflected on the apparently didactic function of the *incisi* that seperate the words in the hymn *Lumen clarum*. But that same folio from the late fourteenth-century antiphonary seems to hold a different function for the incisi as well. From stave 5 onwards, the page shows an exceptional situation, where the repe-

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xcv (Lefèvre, 1967, p. 30) My (free) translation.

xcvi Similar examples are to be found in abundance. This one originally reads: "*... scolares legant duas primas lectiones et cantent duo prima responsoria, et capellani et canonici, duo et duo simul, cantent alia responsoria ..., matricularii vero cantent tercium Responsory simul...*" (Lefèvre, 1967, p. 448)

tendum *Plenum gratia* is not limited to its first word and notes, as would be normal, but given in full. It is only when we take a detailed look at the *Et veritate* (Figure 9) that we see why this is so: first of all this second *Et veritate* has two extra incisi in the middle of *-ri-*, so not between words but right in the middle of a word. (We must however note that we can not be sure whether this is something written by the original scribe, or if this is a later addition.) Continuing, the *Et veritate* has been extended with a textless melisma (the *Iubilus Eve*, as indicated by the rubric — elsewhere a *Iubilus Ade* can be found as well) which occurs in other sources as the texted trope *Quem ethera et terra*.[xcvii] The textless trope in our Tongeren manuscript has two peculiarities: the melisma is cut into larger and smaller fragments bearing the 'dexter', 'sinister' and 'uterque' labels, i.e. the right hand part of the choir, the left hand part, and the whole of the choir; and the first and second of these fragments show *incisi* dividing the melisma into six separate neumes or groups of neumes.

From this point on, I present a construction which, although based on a reading of historical sources, could represent nothing more than an attractive artistic impression (Figure 10). In the Tongeren ordinal, one of the series of instructions surrounding the performances of the responsory *Verbum caro* mentions that after the Gloria Patri a 'cauda' ('tail, last part') is sung 'super' ('above', 'during' but also 'beyond') the *Et veritate*.[xcviii] I propose to consider this instruction as a suggestion of simple polyphony, combining the *Et veritate* (cut up in six parts due to the incisi) vertically with each of the first ('dexter') and second ('sinister') sections of the melisma. In that case, the *Et veritate* is first sung by the left hand side of the choir, combined with the first part of the trope, and then by the right hand side, combined with the second part of the trope — which has almost the exact same notes. Continuing from there, the stereophonic game is performed as

xcvii A musical transcription of a version of the texted trope *Quem ethera* is to be found in Mertens and Van der Poel (2013, p. 401). The Tongeren manuscript also contains a so-called *neuma triplex*, a name given by Amalarius of Metz to a melismatic interpolation with similar performance instructions to the ones in the *Verbum caro*. Kelly (1988) has an elaborate discussion of the *neuma triplex* phenomenon.

xcviii *...et cum Gloria istius responsorii cantatum est, dum canitur cauda super Et veritate...* (Lefèvre, 1967, p. 27).

suggested, ending with the four final notes sung by both sides ('uterque').

But there is even more inspiration to be found in ordinals, or in rubrics. Often, processions are prescribed, with singers moving around in the church building, with the cantor intoning a Marian antiphon upon entering the crypt, or the choir singing a responsory in the middle of the church.[xcix] Immediately, an image emerges of a music practice which is much less static than what we are used to in modern day concert practice. Figure 11 shows two imaginary concert situations in an imaginary church. One (11a) has the 'normal' layout, with the ensemble at the crossing (or into the choir) and the listeners sitting on chairs or benches in the nave of the church. In a possible alternative (11b), inspired by ordinal prescriptions regarding processions and halts, the ensemble makes its way through the church in procession-like movement, holding stations wherever appropriate, and inviting the listeners to experience the music and the building in a new way, by walking along or moving about.[c]

Finally within the category 'sources', there are many things to be learned through the consultation of treatises. Music treatises make for interesting reading, although specific practical performance instructions may sometimes prove hard to distil. And often enough the music theorist proclaims things of which we may doubt the claim's status in relation to reality.

When Paris-based Dominican Hieronymus de Moravia writes in his famous *Tractatus de Musica* that "all plain and ecclesiastical chant has notes which are first and foremost equal notes", we may wonder if this is a description of an existing performance practice, or if Jerome is merely

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xcix As a random example, not from an ordinal but taken from a rubric in B-Gu 15 f120r: *Ad processionem eundo in cripta cantor incipiat* Regina celi, and *Ad stationem in navi ecclesie*.

c I have done this with Psallentes several times, but not always entirely succesfully. I remember a project we had in the Utrecht Early Music Festival, at the Nicolai church, where approximately 400 listeners moved about as described above, resulting in a rather frustrating event for ensemble and audience alike. Although the Nicolai church is to be considered as a very suitable place for such events, and although all chairs were taken out creating a nice open space, the large number of people on the move resulted in a very restless and noisy concert. Some members of the audience even came up to me during the concert (when I was not singing) asking questions about our pronunciation, about the repertoire, even about my glasses (sic).

prescribing how, in his theorist view, chant should be performed. More importantly we may wonder if his detailed and complicated system of how and why certain notes should be made longer than others — effectively resulting in a proportionally measured plainchant performance practice — is more than just a writing-table concoction that originated in the mind of someone educated to the view that the *ars musica* is first of all a mathematical science.[ci]

Reference to the basic equality of notes in plainchant performance can be encountered in many treatises, but most of them subsequently move on to explain how and why exceptions to this basic rule may apply. The author of the *Speculum Musicae*, for example, writing in the fourteenth century, stresses that plainchant is free from any precise measurement of time, adding that one note may be sung more slowly than the other.[cii] Another author, in *De musica mensurabili*, continues from here stating that in plainchant the notes can be sung with a certain amount of freedom, in line with the will of the singer.[ciii]

In contrast to this wonderfully 'liberal' statement regarding the length of notes in plainchant performance practice, theorists from the late fifteenth and the sixteenth century began to stress that there was to be no variety of notes.[civ] Again, we may assume that this means that in practice plainchant was performed rhythmically, or at least not in equal notes. Proof of this is given by Conrad von Zabern in his *De modo bene cantandi*

ci *"Omnis cantus planus et ecclesiasticus notas primo et principaliter equales habet"* F-Pnm 16663, f61v. The quote goes on to say that these equal notes are "of the value, that is, of one tempus of the moderns but three of the ancients". The treatise is to be consulted online via www.gallica.bnf.fr. Even in transcription, Jerome's treatise is notoriously complex and difficult to understand. In addition, the manuscript version (dated between 1274 and 1306) shows a staggering amount of Latin abbreviations. See also Cserba (1935) and certainly Meyer, Lobrichon, and Hertel-Geay (2012).

cii *"…ut quod una morosius decantetur quam alia." Speculum Musicae*, Book VI. The *Speculum Musicae* was thought to have been written by Johannes de Muris, but is now attributed to Jacobus Leodiensis. See Berry (1968) and Harne (2010).

ciii *"…et immensurabilis est, quia sine certo numero temporum cantatur, secundum voluntatem cantantis pronunciatur."* (De Coussemaker, 1864-1876, p. II/303)

civ Mary Berry, referring to Molitor, lists many of these theorists, with treatises called *Practica musicae* (1496), *Harmonicae institutiones* (1516), *Fior angelico di musica* (1547) and others. (Berry, 1968, p. 128)

choralem cantum (1474).[cv] Conrad, a priest and musical scholar educated at Heidelberg University, must have felt it was his mission in life to improve the quality of chant singing in the divine worship. To that end he travelled widely in the Rhineland, offering instruction in the proper performance of plainchant. And in the treatise mentioned — the earliest of three treatises to have survived by Conrad — he offers practical advice to the aspiring singer. One of his proposed essentials in singing is, that chant should be performed *mensuraliter*, with equal rhythmic values. Each note should be held for the correct value, he says, complaining that the rhythmical (by which he obviously means non-equal) performance of plainchant is a widespread abuse (*"una de communissimis abusionibus"*). He adds that all too often singers (the majority of which are clerics) lengthen the highest note of a phrase or word, shortening the following note.[cvi]

Many of the treatises about chant performance practice seem to be a reflection of (and on) the personal musical and aesthetical views of the writer, often mixed with quotes or larger extracts and interpretations from earlier treatises. Conrad is no exception to this, and his many pieces of advice (on the unison singing, on pitch in relation to range, on tempo in relation to occasion, and his list of undesirable singing practices) turns his treatise into an interesting and very practical window on chant performance in the fifteenth century.

In Chapter Two, I will quote from a thirteenth-century manual for singers, the *Summa musice*, and I will discuss another treatise, by a French contemporary of Conrad, Jean Le Munerat, who in his *De moderatione et concordia grammatice et musice* tries to "settle a dispute" that has arisen "over the observance of the measure or quantity of syllables" — essentially again a problem of rhythm and mensuration, very much concerned with the daily practice of chant performance in the fifteenth century and beyond.

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cv (Dyer, 1978)

cvi This is the whole of that passage: *"Cuius contrarium in plerisque collegiatis ecclesiis plures personae sine numero saepe agunt unam notam plus ceteris protrahentes et aliam vel alias nimium et multo plus reliquis breviantes, et illa est una de communissimis abusionibus maioris partis cleri in cantando."* (Gümpel, 1956, p. 262)

Tenebrae pragmatics

It is Sunday 1 April, 5 pm. We have arrived at *Muziekcentrum De Toonzaal* in Den Bosch for a last rehearsal before we conclude our *Tenebrae*-tour tonight. With our performance yesterday at the beautiful and cosy seventeenth century village church of Bloemendaal (near Haarlem), built as a *Predikhuys* for protestant services, and with our concert tonight in a former synagogue from the nineteenth century, the conclusion of our tour of The Netherlands has quite an exotic flavour. Yesterday, there was a vague ecumenical feeling to the event — *Tenebrae*-services are well-known within Protestant practices too. And today, here on the very spot where many Jewish prayer services have been held over the past two hundred years, it feels so appropriate to recite Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem, including the ostinato *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum [Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord, your God]*.

The leadership for the seven pre-concert rehearsals of this tour has been pragmatically distributed over the seven singers equally, each of us taking care of their 'own' rehearsal. We decided on this as an experiment in ensemble democracy, using everyone's input to its fullest extent, and it has worked to our satisfaction. Last week in Amsterdam, one singer had focused on our singing position, raising the stands by at least twenty centimeters, in order to improve on our throat management. Another singer had devoted a rehearsal exclusively to aspects of breathing, concentrating on breath control, listening to each other's intake of breath, agreeing on breath as a tool to make better chamber music.[cvii] Yet another colleague had returned to the topic he is most passionate about: quality of vowels, enhancing the blend of the ensemble, possibly with an ameliorating effect on intonation (see above).

This is the final concert of the tour, and today the pre-concert rehearsal is my responsibility. We do not really need to rehearse anything specific. After six concerts in a row (or eight, counting two try-outs in Belgium), this seventh (ninth) concert will surely feel comfortable enough.

cvii This singer even quoted from Potter (2000): "Breathing is not just for survival — it is an important part of performance rhetoric, a carrier of essential signals."

But we need to get the feel for the acoustics of the space, we have to warm up, 'tune our ears', and we need the focus.

Unlike most other projects we have been presenting, this project is being sung from transcription, in modern notation. I have added the integral score of this programme in Appendix Four. We see chants in modern notes, in the bass clef, pitched to the middle register (occasionally higher). The transcription is made with music notation software Sibelius, and no attempt has been made to alter the automatic spacing of notes, resulting in a dramatic change from the original manuscript notation style, where notes are grouped in neumes and by syllable. Here, all the black notes are positioned at a more or less steady distance from each other, regardless of groupings or syllables. Neume groupings have been indicated through slurs (my decisions), not through the re-positioning of notes. White notes (see below) generally take up the space of two black ones. Some staves have been bracketed to indicate that this is material not taken from the Fribourg manuscript. Rehearsal numbers have been added, as well as breath marks, barlines as structure marks and even fifteen black flags, each carrying a number from one to fifteen, indicating the spot where one of the fifteen candles should be extinguished.

Both in construction and rehearsal, my general concern for this *Tenebrae*-programme has been a dramaturgical one. Earlier, I have spoken about the intimate set-up of the programme, with a deliberately monotonous design, but also with its dramatic turning points (notably the faux-bourdon rendering of the *Jerusalem, Jerusalem* at the end of each reading of a Lamentatio, rehearsal mark 49 and similar) and with an obsessive, four-page eight-minute long version of the *Oratio Jeremiae Prophetae* (at rehearsal mark 243, the one with the infamous beating of the drum, see above).

This ninth performance here in Den Bosch will work too, I am sure of that, and *De Toonzaal*'s technician helps to create the theatrical set-up we envisage, with a very gradual darkening of the scene and the dramatic extinction of the fifteen candles one by one. So I decide to focus on the one piece in this programme that carries a somewhat higher level of dramaturgy in its heart: our favourite, the responsory *Tenebrae*.

The responsory is given in Figure 12 (and at rehearsal mark 157 in

Appendix Five). To the 'naked' transcription of Figure 7, I have now added white notes. These white notes represent longer notes than the black ones, obviously, but not necessarily in the ratio of 2 to 1. The problems and difficulties I have faced deciding on where to place longer notes while singing (or transcribing) from certain manuscripts were once the germs from which the whole of this artistic research project has grown. The pragmatical transcription I have made here is a reflection of my six main ambitions and objectives interpreting the *Tenebrae* from the Fribourg source.

1. Re-organize the score into bite-sized chunks. A decisive factor is how long a sentence may last without turning to staggered breathing, which we do not want to use here. The chunks represent sensible groups of words, logical parts of sentences: *Et circa horam nonam / exclamavit Jesus / voce magna* and so on. The only spot where I did not manage to do this is in the first line. While avoiding to breathe between *sunt* and *cum* (after 2 in Figure 12) because I did not want to isolate the *Tenebrae factae sunt*, the compromise was to have a somewhat awkward breath mark between *Jesum* and *Judaei* (before 4).

2. Start from an equal note idea, at least visually. Hence the black notes proportionally positioned. In practice, the duration of the black note may alter significantly depending on its position within the neume, group of neumes, syllable, accent, word. As a general rule, black notes grouped in a slur (e.g. 13) will individually be performed shorter than single isolated notes carrying the entire syllable (15).

3. Conclude sentences, groups of words, or musical lines. In some cases, one white note suffices as a temporary conclusion (end of 2 and 3), more often lengthening the penultimate note will also help the ending of a fragment (after 8), and in a few cases I have used three long notes, mainly to avoid stress on the last, unstressed syllable of a word (around 6).

4. Be aware of stressed syllables. Particular syllables in the text receive some kind of accent in speech, and composers of chant usually reflect this in their melodic handling of words. This may seem obvious as a basic rule, but in reality it is a very complex issue, one that has been struggled with throughout the centuries. Jean le Munerat's treatise *De moderatione…*, referred to above and discussed in Chapter Two, reflects this struggle.

Words such as *factae* and *Jesum* have two notes for the stressed syllable, and only one for the unstressed syllable. In the eyes of fifteenth century humanists, this is how it should be. The trouble began with their view on words like *Tenebrae*, where the first and stressed syllable does not only have one note and the unstressed syllables two, but the stressed syllable also carries a lower note than the next, unstressed syllable. We will return to this in Chapter Three. Notice how certain notes on stressed syllables have received a white note in my transcription (9, 10 & 18).

5. Lengthen the highest note of a word or melodic line. This is a practice condemned by Conrad von Zabern (see above), but taken from his account we may assume that the late medieval singer had a habit of doing this. I have used this feature at (4, 7 & 17).

6. Dramatize. Have a long pause after *ut quid me dereliquisti [why hast thou forsaken me?]* at (after 17) or/and after *Et inclinato capite [And he bowed his head]* at (before 19). This makes the structure of the text more audible, and the sense of drama is heightened.

By exercise and practice

Finally, an important remark is made by the somewhat dubious Flemish or Dutch musician Adrianus Petit Coclico, in his music theory treatise *Compendium musices* (1552). Claiming that he was a pupil of Josquin Desprez (but no records confirm this), he portrays his master as an example of a man weary of too many words, instead focusing on exercise and practice.

> *Take my master Josquin Desprez. He never lectured to us or wrote a "Musica", but he succeeded in a short time in educating us as accomplished musicians, because he did not waste his pupils' time with long and frivolous instructions but taught the rules in a few words, by singing together, by exercise and practice.*[cviii]

cviii Quote taken from Tolin (1986, p. 7).

Chapter Two will have exactly this as a motto. Apart from all the things we can learn, the facts and observations related to treatises and manuscripts, singing and singers, notes and rhythm, the final focus is on the kind of research we conduct, by *doing*, by singing together, by exercise and practice. Ultimately, our considerations on how to sing plainchant from late medieval sources turn to quite the opposite: what these sources make us do in present-day circumstances. Or how these manuscripts and their often non-existent singing instructions make us do what we do today.