In 1473, the last year of his life, Guillaume Fillastre, chancellor of the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece, wrote a book for Duke Charles the Bold. In his opening presentation therein, of the illustrious genealogy of the Burgundian dukes, he tells the story of the introduction of Gregorian chant under Charlemagne more or less correctly: I quote - “Having learned from the doctors of the Church and especially from St Augustine’s *City of God*, Charlemagne sought to encourage learning and edify the French clergy. Thus he brought learning from Rome to Paris, since it seemed to him that God was more devoutly served in Rome. And because the chant of the church of Rome was more consonant than that of France or Italy, he wanted to drink from the pure fountain and sent to Rome two notable clerics to learn the chant of Rome, which is that we call the Gregorian Chant. Once they were instructed in the Roman chant, they returned to teach the Franks to sing in that manner which is still today the plainchant that we use. And the first church to be reformed was the church of Metz in Lorraine and the same was done in all of the churches of France.”

As Fillastre explains, the introduction of Roman chant to Francia and the teaching of correct singing were a part of Charlemagne’s program – quote “to encourage learning and edify the French clergy” – unquote. Charlemagne outlined his proposed educational reforms in paragraph 72 of his most famous capitulary, the *Admonitio generalis* of 789, which is reproduced on your handout, page 1. John Contreni has studied the modern reception of this paragraph and offers the following translation:

Let schools be established in every monastery and bishopric for boys to read psalms, notes, chant, computus, grammar, and well-corrected catholic books, for often when someone desires to beseech God effectively, they ask poorly because of uncorrected books. And do not let your boys,
either in dictating or copying, corrupt the books. If the task is to copy a gospelbook, psalter, or missal, let men of mature age do the copying with all diligence.

According to Contreni, the emphasis here is on the importance of correct prayer to God. The psalms were the foundation of the liturgy, and by learning to read and memorize them, boys would learn correct pronunciation of Latin and build their vocabulary. Contreni limits the ‘notas’ to Tironian notes, a Roman shorthand that was introduced in Francia, and some psalters do survive that were written entirely in Tironian notes, but the term had a wider range of meanings according to Isidore of Seville, whose Etymologies were well known at that time. To Isidore notas were a variety of ‘signs in writing’, which extended to punctuation and even written symbols – consider his ‘military notas’. Notas were not musical notes in Isidore’s writings, in our opinion, and in Contreni’s. See handouts p. 2 and 3.

Contreni now comments, “Increasing facility in Latin language, both in vocabulary and pronunciation, taught students how to raise their voices correctly in melodic prayer. Perhaps just as modern Muslim boys chant surahs from the Koran in their madrassahs or Jewish boys chant verses from the Torah in their yeshivas, Christian boys in Charlemagne’s schools learned to sing the psalms correctly, with reading and memorization as a means to that end. In chapter 80 of the Admonitio, Charlemagne mandated that all clergy should learn the Roman method of chant which his father, Pippin, had substituted for the older chant of Francia, the Christian chant preceding the importation of Gregorian chant. Presumably this chant also needed to be sung correctly. Students would learn the chant in lessons and through daily participation in the liturgy - often the youngest singers were the most able to learn and sing the most difficult chant.

Computus was also learned by the boys, that is, the calculation of the date of Easter and therefore of the other important feast days in the church calendar. A diagram of the church calendar is on your handout, page 4.
Grammar, the fifth topic students were to read, taught the boys the mechanics and analysis of language. Many grammar treatises were copied by Carolingian scribes, and they include discussions of how words were constructed and pronounced that are fundamentally important for the origins of musical notation.

Finally the study of the catholic books would teach the boys the mysteries of the Church. Now they could speak to God correctly.

What was the Gregorian chant that young boys were to learn? Our earliest witnesses to the sung liturgical texts that comprised the chant repertory are manuscripts without musical notation dating from around 800. I have listed these in your handout on page 3 as part of a chronology of early Western Christian chant. The first fully notated manuscript only dates from c. 900: it is Chartres 47 (Palmus 11) in Breton neumes (Brittany) from northern France (Redon?).

In the Carolingian Empire, Gregorian chant was sung in two contexts: as part of the mass, the liturgical reenactment of the Last Supper, and of the office, a series of worship services held throughout the day, which were centered around the chanting of the 150 psalms. See handout p. 4 and explain. Offices and masses were held throughout the year. Some commemorated the events in Christ’s life – they constitute the Temporale or Feasts of Time. Others were held to honor the saints of the Church, that is the twelve apostles, Christian martyrs, the fathers of the Church like St. Augustine, holy virgins, notably the Virgin Mary and the events in her life, and so on. In 800 there were few saints, meaning that some days in the church calendar might not celebrate anyone in particular, but by the time of the Council of Trent in 1553, calendars overflowed with them.

The music for the mass and office was composed to complement ritual texts, such as the psalms and readings from the Old and New Testaments, but also later, newly-composed sermons and prayers, which increased in number after Christianity was recognized by the Roman Emperor, Constantine. The music accompanied actions, but also allowed the congregation to reflect on texts that had just been recited.

By the ninth century, the texts for the mass and office fall into two categories. First, ordinary texts were read or chanted on every day of the year, that is, they did not change. Second, proper texts addressed
the devotional topic of a specific day, that is, a saint or an event in the Life of Christ. The repertory of proper texts increased concurrently with the number of saints’ feasts throughout the Middle Ages. As you can imagine, it was not always possible to compose a complete set of proper texts for every new saint. To solve this problem, ‘default’ propers were written to be used for a category of saints and not a single saint. These default propers are the Common of Saints, that is, the office and mass for apostles, the office and mass for martyrs, the office and mass for virgins and so on. In sum, the most elaborate worship in the Christian church is a proper service created for one specific day.

How was music created for Christian worship? Michel Huglo now takes us back to the origins of what later became the Gregorian chant.

MICHEL

class=Section3>

The Development and Ninth-Century State of Antiphonal and Responsorial Singing

In the ninth century, the chants of the office and mass of the Gregorian repertory were antiphons and responsories. These two liturgical and musical genres were not created by Carolingian reformers: they had been invented much earlier in the East before they were introduced to the Latin liturgies of Rome, Milan, Toledo, and Gaul.

The 150 psalms of David, first translated from Hebrew into Greek, then, in the third century, into Latin, were sung in those distant times verse by verse with the interpolation between each verse of a short refrain sung by the congregation: Ps. 64 *Te delect hymnus Deus in Sion* (“God, a hymn at Sion is worthy of you”).

It is likely that this manner of singing came from the psalmody of the Temple of Jerusalem. In fact, in Psalm 134, the response by the assembly for each verse is *Quoniam in aeternum misericordia ejus* (“While his mercy is forever”).
In the third century, Hippolytus of Rome indicated in his work on the ‘Apostolic Tradition’ that the crowd responded to the reader of the psalm with an alleluia, meaning “Praise the Lord”.

At the beginning of the fifth century, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in north Africa often alludes to this manner of chanting in his ‘Expositions on the Psalms’. He writes, “My brothers, you have just responded to the Psalmist by saying, ‘All nations, praise the Lord.’” From his references to such responses in his sermons we can reconstruct to some extent the nature of responsorial singing in the north African church of the fifth century.

From north Africa, responsorial chant passed to Spain and Gaul and to Italy northwards to Milan. This early form of responsorial singing survives in the Gregorian chant repertory, as we shall learn later.

The most interesting witness to early responsorial singing was discovered in the seventeenth century, when the tomb was opened of St. Germain, bishop of Paris in the sixth century. At his side was a psalter in silver lettering on purple parchment. Some fifty-five psalms have indicated next to each verse the letter R traced in gold ink: this letter is an abbreviation for ‘responsorium’ (not ‘responsa’, which is a neologism unknown in Patristic Latin). Each incipit has only four to nine words, not more. See your handout p. 5.

In fact, responsorial singing is certainly the simplest type of musical dialogue, for it requires no musical training of the answering people, who need only repeat the easily learned response. Ethnomusicologists have found ‘call and response’ singing in most cultures.

Another way of chanting the Psalms competed with responsorial singing beginning in the fourth century: antiphonal singing. According to Paulinus the Deacon, the biographer of St Ambrose, bishop of Milan in the fourth century (d. 397), and St. Augustine in his Confessions, the antiphonal singing used in the East had been introduced to the West during the siege of the basilica of Milan by the soldiers of the Arian Emperor Valentinian during his reign of 364-375.

The term ‘antiphon’ has two meanings. One is a type of singing. Whereas the psalm is recited by a lector or psalmist in responsorial singing, in antiphonal singing two equal sides of a choir of clerics or monks sang the psalm verses in alternation. The second meaning is that of a specific genre of chant. In antiphonal singing, what had been the ‘responsorium’ taken from the psalms, was now designated with the
name ‘antiphon’. The antiphon was repeated every two verses of the psalm by the entire choir? In the ninth century, but by the end of the Middle Ages, only once at the beginning of the psalm and once at its end. Yet even in the later Middle Ages, the antiphon of the psalm was repeated every two verses in the Magnificat, but only on the highest feast days. In the sixteenth century, notably in Spain, brief organ interludes took the place of these antiphons. More frequent repetition was also characteristic of the performance of the invitatoy antiphon of Matins. Thus, in the late Middle Ages, the function of an antiphon was to introduce the psalm tone conforming to its musical structure. The antiphon was repeated after the doxology concluding the psalm recitation in antiphonal psalmody by the alternating half-choirs.

We must now return to the musical evolution of the responsory and antiphon. As we have just learned, the responsory, in becoming an antiphon, changed its function – from that of a repetitive exclamation to that of a musical frame for the psalm. The melodic structure of the new antiphon did not change, however, at least not in the first centuries after it was introduced in the West. The musical tone of the responsory sung by the congregation is the same as that of the psalm intoned by the lector or psalmist. To the contrary, in antiphonal psalmody, the antiphon sung by the schola imposes the choice of the psalm tone to be sung by the two half-choirs.

In Ambrosian chant, old Hispanic chant, and Old Roman chant, the flexibility of the psalmody is the rule. Thus, for example, in Ambrosian chant, the adaptation of the psalmody to these very simple antiphons never caused problems, because the cantor had more intonations and psalm tenors to choose from than in Gregorian chant: the cantor could choose six different recitation tones, which only paused in the middle of each line, and adopt a final cadence which would lead directly into the intonation of the antiphon.

In the responsorial psalmody of Antiquity, there were three recitation tones, which have been termed ‘mother-tones’: the pitches of C, D and E. (See your handout, page 6). The structure of the antiphon was unipolar - the final pitch was identical to the pitch of the recitation. This is the case for Psalm 119, Clamavi et exaudivit me (I cried out and he heard me), Ps. Ad Dominum clamavi * et exaudivit me. - Domine libera animam meam a labiis iniquis * et a lingua dolosa. A/ Clamavi et exaudivit me etc. [sung by MH] The responsory is like an echo of the verse of the psalm chanted by the psalmist.
In the ninth century, when Charlemagne unified the chant repertory of the Gauls, the cantors were often confronted with difficult problems. It was necessary to adjust the antiphon so that it would conform to the rules of Gregorian composition, or else a psalm tone which was not part of the Latin eight-mode system would be maintained. This is precisely what happened with the psalm tone of the antiphon *Clamavi*: it is considered an ‘irregular tone’ in the *Antiphonaire monastique* of Solesmes published in 1934. In the margin of the large comparative table for this antiphon at the *Paléographie musicale* of Solesmes, Dom Gajard had added a notice to indicate the problem of the choice of psalm tone and he suggested choosing an Ambrosian tone. This tone was considered irregular, because it did not belong to the Gregorian eight-mode system, or oktoechos.

To explain the origins of the melismatic responsories of the night office and of the gradual of the mass, which was performed in responsorial style, we must return to the origins of responsorial psalmody. In the first centuries of Christianity, the function of responsorial psalmody was on the one hand the central element of the divine office, which included a prescribed number of psalms recited every day, and, on the other, the conclusion to the recited readings from the Old and New Testaments. In the Foremass, the lesson from the Old Testament was followed by responsorial psalmody and the reading of the New Testament by an alleluia and a verse taken from the psalms, which introduced the reading of the Gospel.

It is remarkable that in the ornate graduals of the developed Gregorian chant repertory, we can find vestiges of the antique responsorial psalmody: in fact, in each gradual one finds a first verse of a psalm, either in its main part or in the accompanying verse, that is, its responsorium, and the psalm from which it is taken is represented even today. Before, the entire gradual was repeated after the verse, exactly as was once customary for the responsories of the night office.

In the night office, every lesson is followed by a responsory which is sung by the choir: the verse which follows is sung by a solo singer to one of the eight recitation tones assigned to these verses. The choir repeats the responsory from its beginning, or, as in Gaul and still today in the Roman breviary, at the middle, at a place known as the repetendum and marked by an asterisk in modern editions of chant (P=Presa in Spanish manuscripts). In Spain, in the Hispanic rite, the ancient usage was kept of taking the
responsory and verse from the same Scriptural passage, while elsewhere the verse was from another source. In proper offices for saints, the responsories and their verses are taken from a text recounting the Life or Passion of the saint in question. But this practice, which neglects the psalms in favor of the saint, no longer reveals the slightest trace of the antique responsorial psalmody. Indeed, by this time many formulaic responsory verse tones were replaced by newly composed melodies.

We should now see which genres of liturgical books contain the traces of these ancient ways of singing. There is, of course, the Bible, which, in the sixth century, before it was brought together in a single volume, was distributed over nine volumes, six for the Old Testament, and three for the New.

The psalter, the third volume of the Old Testament, is thus the oldest book of chant: beginning in the eighth century, the Roman psalter generally included the 150 psalms and seven Biblical canticles taken from different books of the Old Testament, plus the *Benedictus*, sung at Lauds, the *Magnificat*, sung at Vespers, and the *Nunc dimittis*, sung at Compline. These three canticles are taken from the beginning of the Gospel of Luke.

In the ninth century, the chants of the Gregorian repertory were divided into two books: the gradual, containing the Proper chants of the mass for all of the festivals of the liturgical year (the introit antiphon, responsorial gradual, alleluia [or tract in Lent], and offertory, and the communion antiphon), but without the chants for the Ordinary of the mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei), which were recited from memory. The six oldest graduals were edited as a synoptic table by Dom Hesbert [SHOW]. Beginning in the tenth century, the new compositions – the tropes, the chants of the mass ordinary, and the sequences added to the alleluia – were copied into a new book, the troper-proser.

The chants of the office for the entire liturgical year comprise the antiphoner. They include the short antiphons of the psalter for non-feast days, but without the texts of the 150 psalms at the beginning of the book, between the Sundays after Epiphany and Lent. Sometimes at the end of antiphoners, one copied Psalm 94, the invitatory psalm, which is sung in the older responsorial manner, that is, that after every two verses sung by the cantor, the choir responds with an antiphon, such as *Regem martyrum Dominus, venite adoremus* (the Lord is the King of Martyrs, come, let us adore him).
The use of these two books, the antiphoner and gradual, contrasts with the practices of other Latin liturgies, those of Milan, of Spain, and of ‘Old’ Rome, which only used a single book, the antiphoner. Such antiphoners grouped chants of the office and mass, because they saw little difference between the musical compositions of the night office and chant of the mass. Thus, for example, in the Old Roman chant that preceded the Gregorian, approximately seventy chants function both as responsories for the night office and offertories of the mass. In the Gregorian chant, the differentiation is very distinct between intonation formulas and cadences in office antiphons on the one hand and mass antiphons, such as the introit or communion, on the other, or between office responsories and mass responsories, such as the offertory. This can be seen clearly by comparing three chants for the Ascension, all composed in mode seven [sung by MH]:

the antiphon for Lauds *Viri Galilaei* (AM 508; LU 850)
the introit antiphon *Viri Galilaei* (Grad. neumé, 264; LU 846)
the French responsory for the night office *Viri Galilaei* (*Responsoriale monasticum*)

Thus, in Gregorian chant, a clear differentiation between liturgico-musical genres resulted in a material differentiation, that is, separate books for the chant of the mass and of the office.

**Classification of antiphonal and responsorial chant by the tones**

In the fifth century, in the Eastern church, liturgical chants were composed following a tonal system known as the octoechos: keep in mind that the term ‘echos’ is only rarely used in the vocabulary of ancient Greek music theory; it is actually part of this Eastern tonal system. The term ‘system’ as in ‘Greater Perfect system’, according to Boethius, signifies a series of two or more tetrachords. In the East, the diatonic system of the eight tones was not that of Boethius, however, but was composed of a series of identical disjoint tetrachords, divided in the middle by the half step: in each tetrachord, the four pitches had the same numerical position: protos (I), deuteros (II), tritos (III) and tetartos (IV), which results in the following schema (see your handout, page 6).
According to this diagram, we recognize the place of the final note in a chant, which must occur in the tetrachord of the finals, or, if the chant is transposed, in the tetrachord of the superiores. Thus a chant was classified as protus (final D), deuterus (final E), tritus (final F), and tetrardus (final G).

The oldest witness to this system of tetrachords is the diagram interpolated into late eighth-century Visigothic manuscripts with the section of music of Isidore of Seville’s Etymologies. The diagram is attributed to Porphyry, a philosopher of the early fourth century, who developed it as part of his commentary on Plato’s Timaeus, which is lost today. In the Timaeus, Plato describes musical harmony as the Soul of the material World (see the upper right corner of your handout, page 7 and notice the scale below the diagram).

In this system, the tetrachords are related to each other by fifth, the most perfect consonance after the octave. Since Gregorian psalmody is bipolar, that is, it ends on a final pitch but recites on a dominant pitch a fifth higher, and not unipolar like the antique responsorial psalmody, the scale of the Isidore diagram is ideally suited to it, unlike the Boethian Greater Perfect system, which omits pitches used in Gregorian chant and is comprised of tetrachords a fourth as well as a fifth apart.

In the oktoechos as in the ninth-century Gregorian chant, psalm tones with a recitation tone a fifth above their final tone are called ‘authentic’ (although this term was abandoned by scholars of Byzantine chant, Heinrich Husmann found it used in a Byzantine manuscript from Mount Sinai); by contrast if the recitation tone is a third or a fourth higher than the final tone, the psalm tone is considered ‘plagal’ (in Greek, the term ‘plagios’ implies an inferiority or dependence with respect to the term ‘authentic’.)

Medieval theorists often distinguish ‘tone’ and ‘mode’ and we should as well. Following Guido of Arezzo, we can say that Gregorian chant (and the ancient Latin and Hispanic chant repertories) only knew four modes or four ‘manners’ of organizing the steps and half-steps of the tetrachords built on the final pitches of the four tones (maneries, following the terminology of a twelfth-century Cistercian treatise on the chant).

In practice, Gregorian chant used for psalm tones for the antiphonal chant of the psalms: the determining criteria for the mode is not the position of the half-step in the scale, but rather the movement of the melody above or below the final (its ambitus).
Once psalm recitation required two pitches instead of only one, there were practical consequences. The choice of a psalm tone had never posed problems for singers in the time of responsorial psalmody, in Milan or in Spain. But when the Gregorian chant repertory had been diffused throughout Europe, singers had to be taught how to choose the appropriate psalm tone and final cadence at the end of the psalm, this when musical notation did not yet exist.

The singers at Charlemagne’s court resolved this problem by creating manuscripts called tonaries. If one examines the oldest office antiphoners, such as that of Compiegne (written between 860 and 870) or the Lucca fragments from the end of the eighth century, one can see that the antiphons follow one another without any space for a psalm tone or final cadence. These two elements, the number of the psalm tone, and the type of final cadence, or differentia, are given in the tonary, which circulated with its antiphoner in the ninth century. (See the reproduction of a Carolingian tonary of c. 800, the oldest known, on your handout, page 6, at the bottom).

In the tonary, the indication of the psalm tone was normative, that is, beyond discussion. By contrast, the indication of the final differentia was a suggestion, which could be modified by the cantor: in fact, one observes many variants in the number and melodic constitution of the differentia between tonaries and antiphoners. For example, for the first tone, there are five differentiae in certain ninth-century tonaries but up to twelve or fifteen in thirteenth-century Parisian manuscripts. Moreover, the tonaries do sometimes assign the same chant to different tones. For example, the tonaries hesitate between an authentic and plagal protus assignment for the introit antiphon ‘De ventre’, because it descends to a low A once just before its final. Tonaries also give conflicting tonal assignments to chants, such as those listed by Regino of Prüm, which begin in one tone and end in another, or to transposed chants.

In hindsight, musical notation was the obvious answer. With it, the Gregorian repertory could be taught and ambiguities about the chant melodies could be resolved. Yet one could argue that Carolingian singers were able to memorize and transmit the melodies accurately without notation - why would they have needed it? Leo Treitler has studied the many ways in which lengthy recited texts, like Homeric epics, were transmitted orally in Antiquity, and he used them as models to explain the transmission of
chant. Indeed, for some of the more formulaic categories of chant, such as the tract replacing the Alleluia during Lent, it would have been possible to remember the formulas and a few rules for their application to a text with relative ease. Guido of Arezzo tells us that singers needed ten years to memorize the repertory, however, this in the eleventh century when neumes had existed for almost two centuries. Yet David Hughes has shown that more variants were introduced to chant melodies after notation on a staff appeared than before, suggesting that Guido’s staff notation did not necessarily improve the transmission of chant.

Let us return to the ninth century and look at some of the earliest known examples of musical notation before we consider where they came from. These early notations are called neumes, but this word was applied to them at least a century after the fact. (See your handouts, pp. 8, then 7)

1. The oldest surviving paleofrank neumes, considered the oldest notational type, are found in manuscripts from northern France and western Germany. Two are the earliest. The first is Valenciennes, Bibliotheque municipale, 148, which can be dated no earlier than 875 on the basis of its content. In two places the scribe of the main text added paleofrank neumes. In other places, a later scribe added similar neumes. Notice that the neumes represent melodies introducing antiphons or cadences terminating psalm recitations, precisely the types of melodies that were codified in tonaries. They include melodies from Byzantium that were sung to introduce the tones [noeane, noeagis etc NB They are still sung today in the Eastern church.] These paleofrank neumes have been associated with the monastery of St. Amand in northern France, above all – it is significant that such neumes were still used there two hundred years later.

2. The other early manuscript with paleofrank notation is a sacramentary also dated from no earlier than the 870s. Written at the abbey of St. Germain des Pres in Paris, it lists the beginnings of the texts of the gradual for the mass in an added gathering, which must date from after the 870s. The main scribe added neumes only in two places, where the same introit text was sung to two different melodies. The neumes were reminders to singers. In this same manuscript neumes were added in the margins later on – these later neumes represent a different kind of neumation, for here entire chants are neumed, not just beginnings or ends. One of the neumed chants is a gloria melody to a Greek text. This ‘missa graeca’ was sung at the Abbey of St. Denis.
3. Other early neumes appear in manuscripts from central France and southern Germany and have never been satisfactorily dated. They are later additions to earlier manuscripts, often written in spaces that were left blank by text scribes. It is interesting that the neumes are applied to new compositions - new alleluias or sequences or to tropes, the subject of your next class – and not to the well-established Gregorian chant melodies of the mass and office. The neumes written in Autun are important and represent another new stage of neumation, because they represent melismas without texts rather than sung texts. By this time the signs clearly had a melodic significance.

Where did these neumes come from and why? Scholars have observed neumes that are identical to accent marks in grammar treatises and to punctuation signs. Michel Huglo has observed small letters that serve as performance indications in the passion narratives of the Bible: similar letters appear in early manuscripts from St. Gall and Laon, where they have the same function. What these types of marks have in common is that they clarify how a text was recited: how the voice should rise and fall, speed up, slow down, or cadence. Such signs are known from other regions and religions, but have not been compared or dated necessarily. Ekphonetic signs for recitation were used in the Eastern church, and special marks appeared in copies of the Torah and Koran to assist recitation. It is not difficult to understand the early neumes derived from such prosodic marks as reminders to singers that assisted them with new or unfamiliar melodies. Levy calls these ‘graphic’ signs.

It is difficult to explain how a complete system of neumation developed from such isolated signs. Kenneth Levy’s diagram shows a ‘zone brumeuse’ or a ‘zone of fog’ leading to the more developed ‘gestural’ notations. Perhaps the earliest fully neumed manuscript is the gradual in Breton notation known as Chartres 47 from c. 900. Thereafter we find the gradual of Laon c. 930 and the famous Hartker antiphoner from St. Gall of c.980 and the more or less contemporary Mont Renaud gradual and antiphoner. See page 9.

If the earliest paleofrank neumes do in fact date from the 880s, those in the Valenciennes and St Germain des Pres manuscripts, then the idea of neumation did spread rapidly indeed, developing into a comprehensive system in fifty years. The date of the 880s is significant also, because manuscripts of Martianus Capella, wherein Charles Atkinson has found isolated grammatical signs serving the function
of neumes, began to circulate in Francia in the 860s and 870s. But if my dates for chapter 19 of the music treatise of Aurelian are correct, that is c. 856-860, and if Aurelian is indeed referring to neumes as his ‘formulas notarum’ and the neumes in the manuscripts of the treatise would suggest, then the origins of neumes may date from as early as the 850s. Moreover, Peter Jeffery has found an Irish source from c. 800 for an anonymous grammar treatise attributed to Sergius, an earlier Latin author, with texts bringing together prosodic signs (sings for analyzing poetry) with musical sound, here produced by instruments. It may be significant that Pseudo-Sergius uses the word ‘nota’ to mean a prosodic mark with musical meaning. [Aurelian uses the same language as Sergius in the title to his chapter 19–see handout, p. 10].

Even more curious is the text penned by Adhemar of Chabannes between 1025 and 1028 and discussed by James Grier, which states that Frankish singers adopted musical notation in the late eighth century, according to Grier between 790 and 810 and probably in Metz. Yet no witnesses to such notation survive, and it seems significant that a progression from partially neumed texts to fully neumed texts to fully neumed melismas can be placed only in the second half of the ninth century. It is difficult to understand how a full system of neumation under Charlemagne could have appeared ‘ex vacuo’.

We mentioned letters of the passion and significative letters earlier, but another type of letter notation came into being in the tenth century, one in which the letters of the alphabet from ‘a’ to ‘p’ represented the pitches of the Greater Perfect System of Boethius. This system was used in Dijon and later came to Normandy where monks from Dijon established the monastery of Fecamp. But this system, like the staff from c. 900 of the treatise ‘Musica enchiriadis’ [and the daseia neumes which DID indicate liquescence] was not practical and lacked the nuances, such as liquescences [NB insert] and quilismas, which were kept well beyond the introduction of the staff. This later history is not ours to tell, however.

In closing, let us observe how scribes from different parts of Europe would have neumed the same melody. Now let us sing the entire introit. The notation you see here is the black square notation used after 1200 throughout Europe, with few exceptions. Above the text are neumes as they appear in the Hartker codex. We hope that singing this chant will help you to understand the genius and flexibility of the neumatic system, which faded away as singers required more prescriptive notations to cope with the greatly expanded chant repertory.