

# Introduction to Church Modes

An aid to sung prayer

Nicholas Lemme

## Three Characteristics of a Mode

1. Tonic
2. Dominant
3. Range

other identifiers: melodic formulas

### Authentic Range

#### Mode 1 (Dorian)

RE mi fa sol *La* ti do **RE**

#### Mode 3 (Phrygian)

**MI** fa sol la *ti* Do re **MI**

#### Mode 5 (Lydian)

**FA** sol la ti *Do* re mi **FA**

#### Mode 7 (Mixolydian)

**SOL** la ti do *Re* mi fa **SOL**

### Plagal Range

#### Mode 2 (hypodorian –Aeolian)

la ti do **RE** mi *fa* sol la

#### Mode 4 (hypophrygian –Locrian)

ti do re **MI** fa *sol* la ti

#### Mode 6 (hypolydian –Ionian)

do re mi **FA** sol *la* ti do

#### Mode 8 (hypomixolydian) Dorian

re mi fa **SOL** la *ti* Do re

- **Tonics** are in **Bold**
- *Dominants* are in *Italics*
- Modern Dominants are underlined.

Mode 1

main tune..... typical Mode 1 cadence

Detailed description: This block shows the musical notation for Mode 1. It consists of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with various note values and rests. A vertical line marks the end of the 'main tune'. The bottom staff contains a bass line with corresponding notes. A second vertical line marks the end of the 'typical Mode 1 cadence'.

Mode 3

typical Mode 3 incipit    main tune.....    typical Mode 3 cadence

Detailed description: This block shows the musical notation for Mode 3. It consists of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line. A vertical line marks the end of the 'typical Mode 3 incipit'. The bottom staff contains a bass line. A second vertical line marks the end of the 'main tune'. A third vertical line marks the end of the 'typical Mode 3 cadence'.

Mode 5

main tune..... typical Mode 5 cadence

Detailed description: This block shows the musical notation for Mode 5. It consists of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line. A vertical line marks the end of the 'main tune'. The bottom staff contains a bass line. A second vertical line marks the end of the 'typical Mode 5 cadence'.

Mode 7

main tune beginning    typical Mode 7 melodic formula    main tune resumes.....    shorter Mode 7 cadence

Detailed description: This block shows the musical notation for Mode 7. It consists of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line. A vertical line marks the end of the 'main tune beginning'. A downward arrow points to a specific melodic formula. A second vertical line marks the end of the 'typical Mode 7 melodic formula'. A third vertical line marks the end of the 'main tune resumes'. A fourth vertical line marks the end of the 'shorter Mode 7 cadence'. The bottom staff contains a bass line.

# What is a mode?

*a mode is a way of arranging certain tones—sometimes in a formulaic way—with some tones having more prominence than others, thus allowing the ear to discern the rise and fall (tension and release) and the variety of movements and colors within the human soul via the melodic line*

# MOTHER MODES (C, D, E)

Cantillation: sung stylized reading

**C** g a \* C d e (f)  
*sol la DO re mi (fa)*

*ex. In Manus tuas (p. 269)*  
*ex. In splendoribus (p.395)*

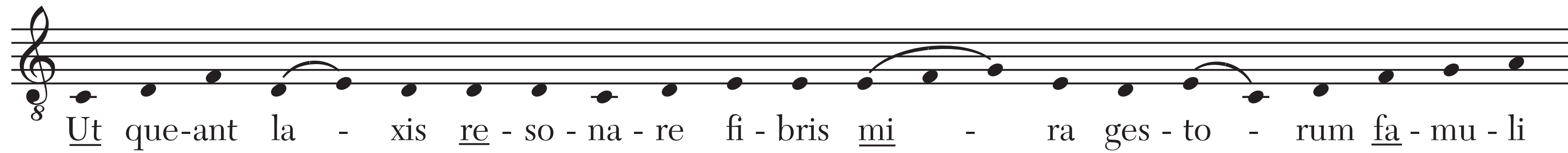
**D** a \* c D e (f)  
*la do RE mi (fa)*

**E** c d E (f) g  
*do re MI (fa) sol*

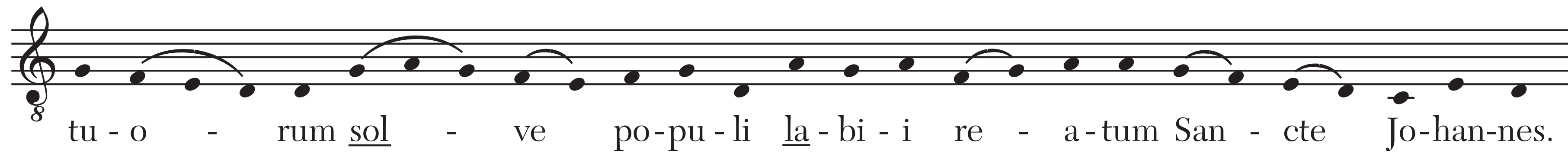
## MODAL EVOLUTION DURING THE FIRST 11TH CENTURIES OF THE CHURCH

- Cantillation —stylized reading
- Psalmody without refrain—ornamentation over some syllables
- Responsorial Psalmody—a choral response by the choir after each line
- The antiphon—a unique melody that compliments the Psalm tone
- Frankish-Roman confluence, Gregory's Schola Cantorum, and the birth of the OCTOECHOS (8 Ecclesiastical Modes)

# Solmization

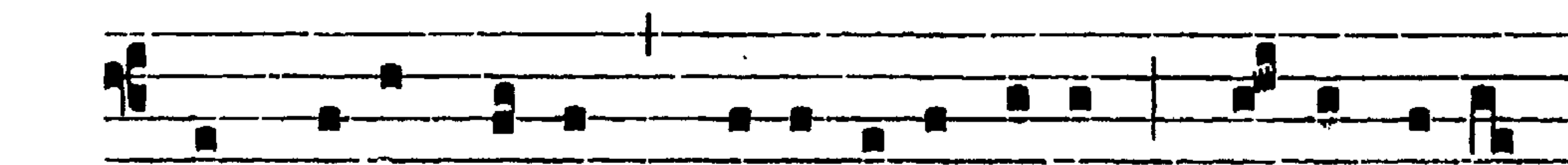


Ut que-ant la - xis re - so - na - re fi - bris mi - ra ges - to - rum fa - mu - li

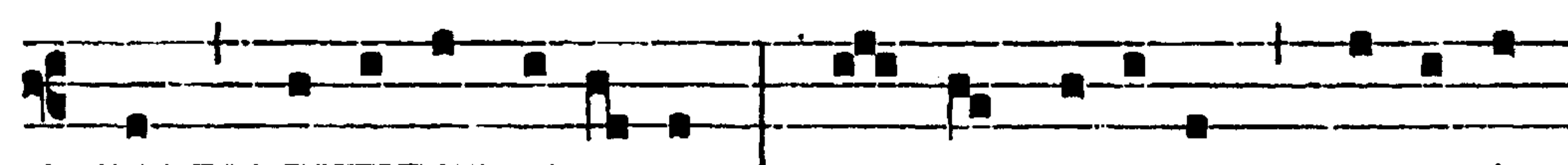


tu - o - rum sol - ve po - pu - li la - bi - i re - a - tum San - cte Jo - han - nes.

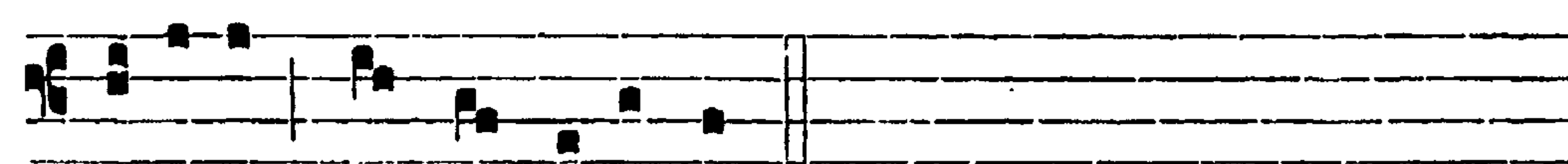
That your servants may sing with deeper notes of your wondrous deeds, St. John, cleanse the guilt of unclean lips.



*Ut* qué- ant lá-xis *Re*-so-ná-re fíbris *Mí*- ra gestó-



rum *Fá*-mu-li tu- ó-rum *Sól*- ve pollú-ti *Lá*-bi- i



re- á-tum Sáncte Io- ánnes.

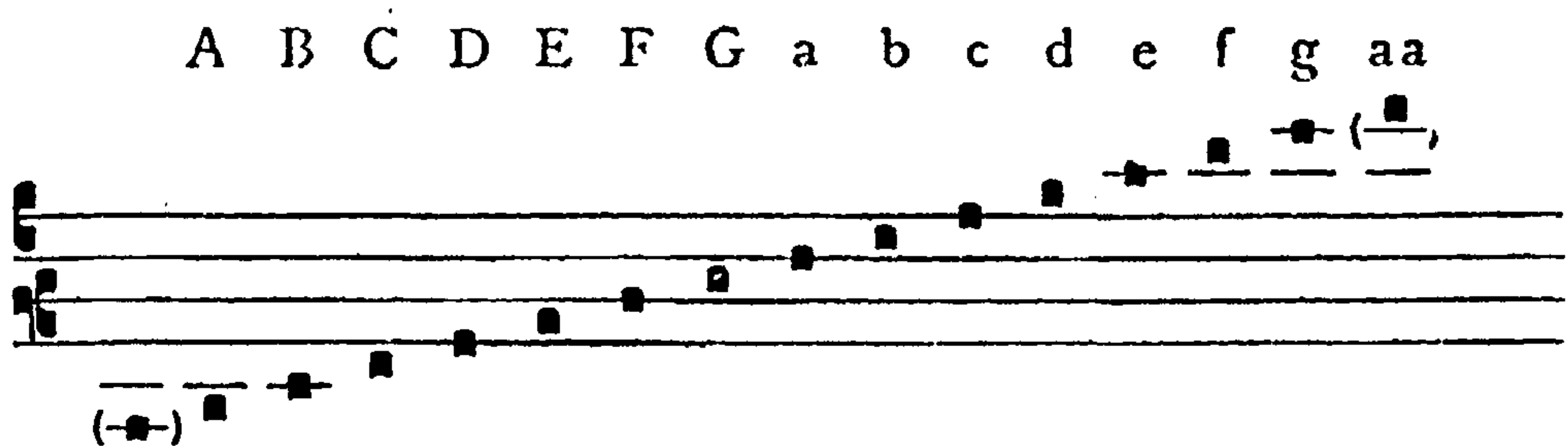
The Gamut: (gamma + *ut*): here, a succession of seven hexachords

The image shows a musical score for the seven hexachords of the gamut. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The notes are arranged in a sequence that spans across both staves. The notes are: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. The notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F are on the bass staff, and G, A, B, C, D, E are on the treble staff. The notes are grouped into seven hexachords, each starting with a solfège syllable: 1. ut (G), 2. re (A), 3. mi (B), 4. fa (C), 5. sol (D), 6. la (E), 7. ut (F). The notes are connected by a single melodic line that moves from the bass staff to the treble staff. The notes are marked with solfège syllables and letter names. The letter names are: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. The solfège syllables are: 1. ut, 2. re, 3. mi, 4. fa, 5. sol, 6. la, 7. ut. The notes are marked with solfège syllables and letter names. The letter names are: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. The solfège syllables are: 1. ut, 2. re, 3. mi, 4. fa, 5. sol, 6. la, 7. ut. The notes are marked with solfège syllables and letter names. The letter names are: G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. The solfège syllables are: 1. ut, 2. re, 3. mi, 4. fa, 5. sol, 6. la, 7. ut.

7. ut re mi fa sol la  
 6. ut re mi fa sol la  
 5. ut re mi fa sol la  
 4. ut re mi fa sol la  
 3. ut re mi fa sol la  
 2. ut re mi fa sol la  
 1. ut re mi fa sol la  
 G A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E

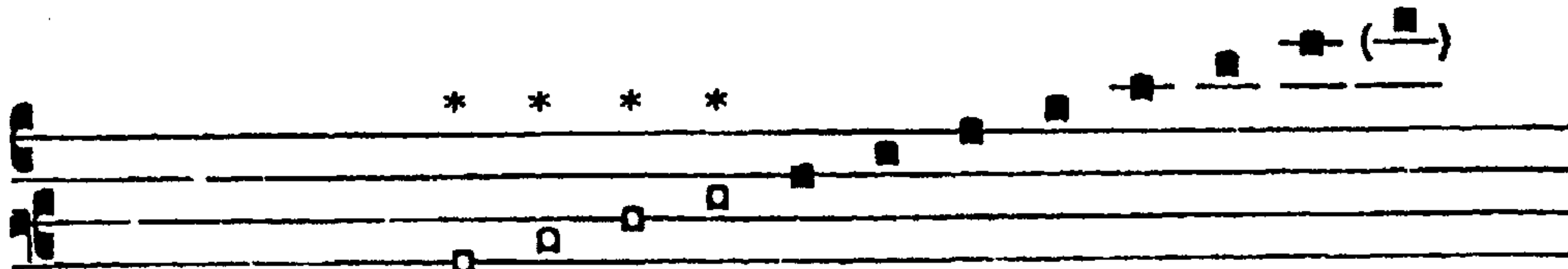


# The Gamut (full range of notes) used in Gregorian Chant



# THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MODE

1. Tonic, root note, home base
2. Dominant, tenor, reciting tone
3. Range, compass



Tetra chord + Tetra chord

RE MI - FA SOL  
LA TI - DO RE

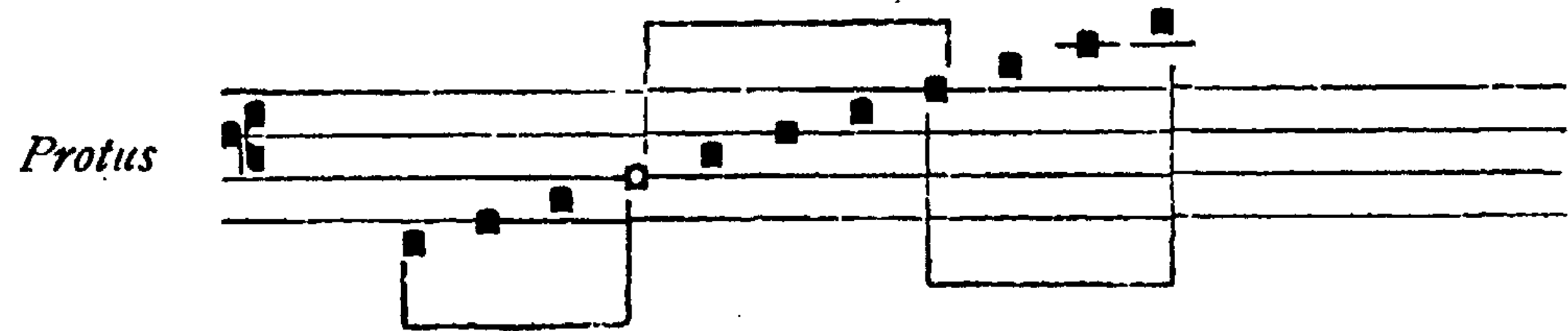
MI - FA SOL LA  
TI - DO RE MI

FA SOL LA - T(EH)  
DO RE MI - FA

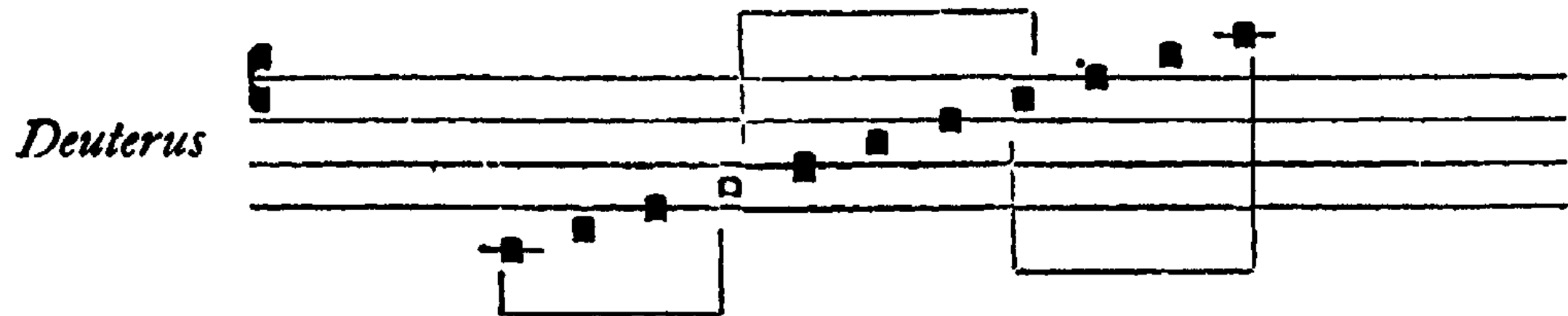
SOL LA - T(EH) DO  
RE MI - FA SOL

AUTHENTIC AND PLAGAL MODES  
tonics and range

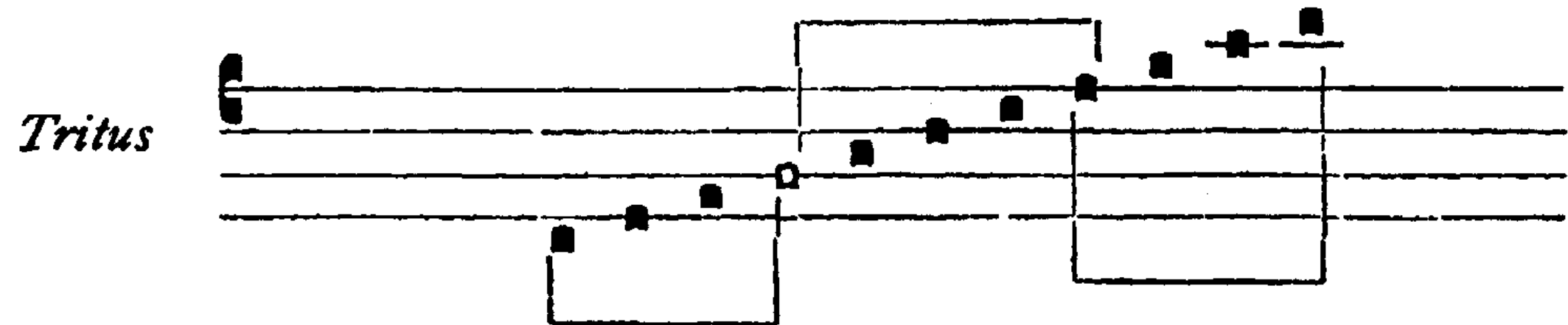
Modes 1 and 2 — “Re” is tonic



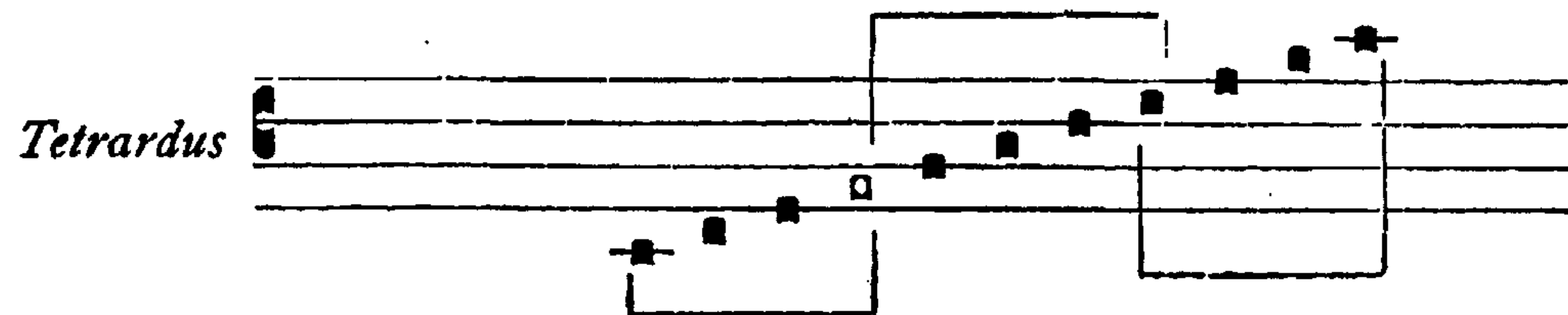
Modes 3 and 4 — “Mi” is tonic



Modes 5 and 6 — “Fa” is tonic



Modes 7 and 8 — “Sol” is tonic



AUTHENTIC AND PLAGAL MODES  
tonics, dominants, and range

Protus { Upper Range  Lower Range	<i>Ancient Terminology</i>	<i>Modern Terminology</i>		<p><b>Mode 1</b>          Tonic = Re          Dominant = La          Range: Re - Re</p> <p><b>Mode 2</b>          Tonic = Re          Dominant = Fa          Range: la - RE - la</p>
	<b>Authentic Protus</b>	<b>First Mode</b>		
	<b>Plagal Protus</b>	<b>Second Mode</b>		

AUTHENTIC AND PLAGAL MODES  
tonics, dominants, and range

Deuterus	Upper Range	Authentic Deuterus	Third Mode	
	Lower Range	Plagal Deuterus	Fourth Mode	

**Mode 3**  
 Tonic: Mi  
 Dominant: (ti) Do  
 Range: mi - mi

**Mode 4**  
 Tonic: Mi  
 Dominant: (sol) La  
 Range: ti - Mi - ti

AUTHENTIC AND PLAGAL MODES  
tonics, dominants, and range

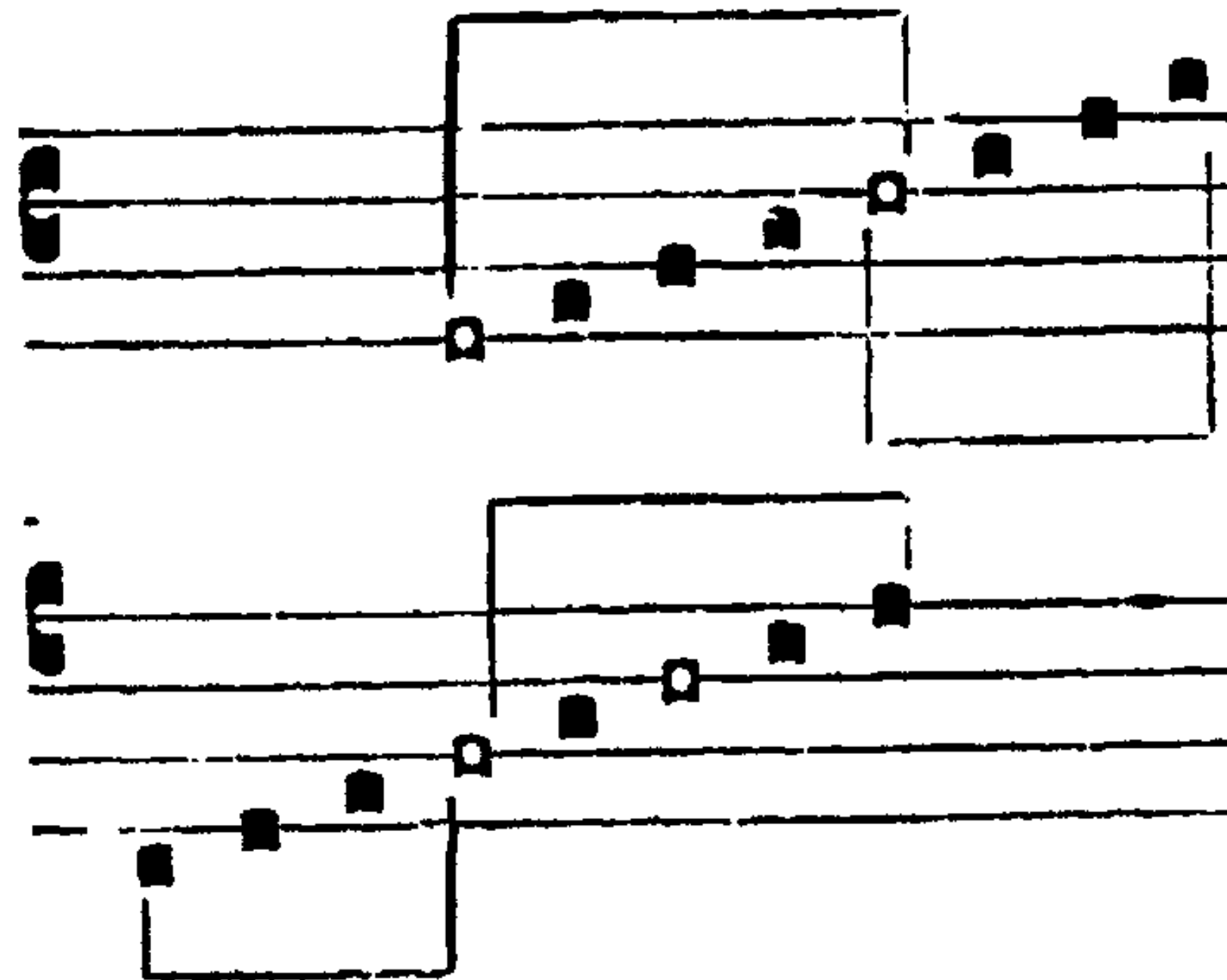
Tritus  
 Upper Range  
 Lower Range

Authentic  
Tritus

Plagal  
Tritus

Fifth Mode

Sixth Mode



Mode 5  
 Tonic: Fa  
 Dominant: Do  
 Range: Fa - Fa

Mode 6  
 Tonic: Fa  
 Dominant: La  
 Range: Do - Fa - Do

AUTHENTIC AND PLAGAL MODES  
tonics, dominants, and range

<b>Tetrardus</b> { Upper Range       Lower Range	<i>Ancient Terminology</i>	<i>Modern Terminology</i>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mode 7</b>          Tonic: Sol          Dominant: Re          Range: sol - sol</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mode 8</b>          Tonic: Sol          Dominant: (ti) Do          Range: re - Sol - re</p>
	<b>Authentic Tritus</b>	<b>Seventh Mode</b>		
	<b>Plagal Tritus</b>	<b>Eighth Mode</b>		

## Authentic Range

### Mode 1 (Dorian)

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do re mi **FA** sol *la* ti do

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re mi fa **SOL** la *ti* Do re

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- Modern Dominants are underlined.

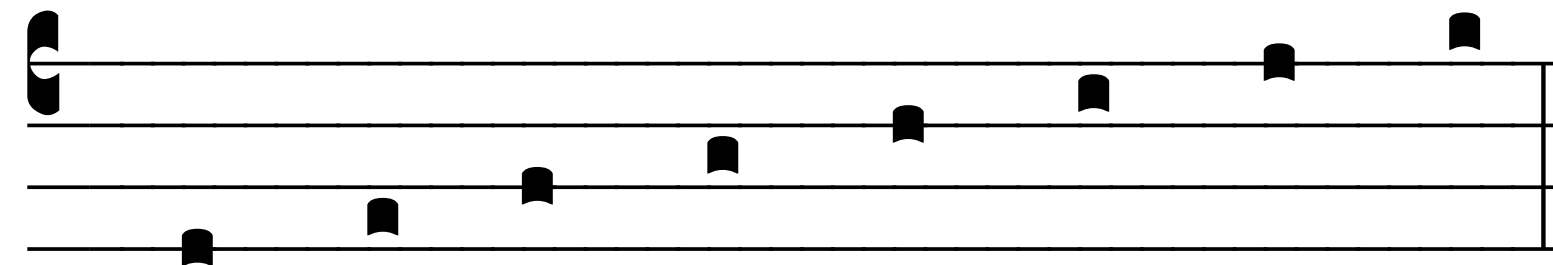


# Modes and their ethos

Some have attributed general feelings to each mode. Dom Guido D'Arrezzo (11th cent.) gives us these.

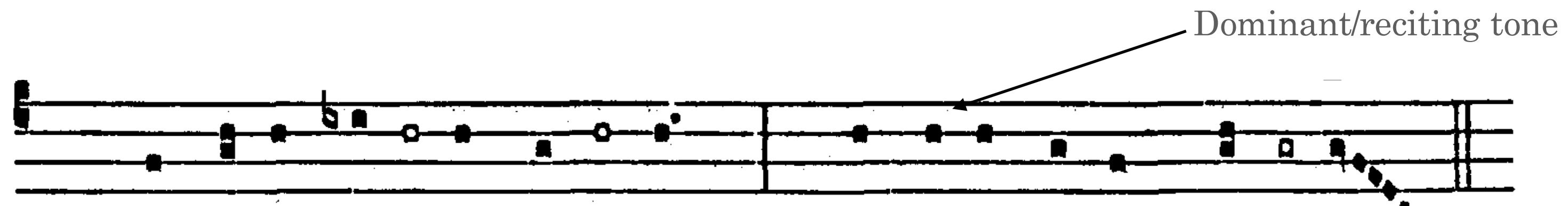
- Mode 1 seriousness (*e.g. Solemn Salve Regina, Kyrie XI, Ave Maris Stella, Ave Maria*)
- Mode 2 sadness (*e.g. Offertory De Profundis, Lenten tracts*)
- Mode 3 mystery (*e.g. Pange lingua from Vesper hymn for Corpus Christi*)
- Mode 4 harmony (*e.g. Sanctus Mass X*)
- Mode 5 happiness (*e.g. Viderunt omnes Christmas Day gradual. Christus factus est*)
- Mode 6 devotion and rest (*e.g. Requiem introit*)
- Mode 7 angelic (*e.g. Puer natus est (Christmas), Hosanna filio David (Palm Sunday)*)
- Mode 8 perfection (*e.g. Ad te levavi—Advent I Introit; Easter Vigil canticles*)

# MODE 1



RE mi fa sol *La* ti do RE

Psalm Tone

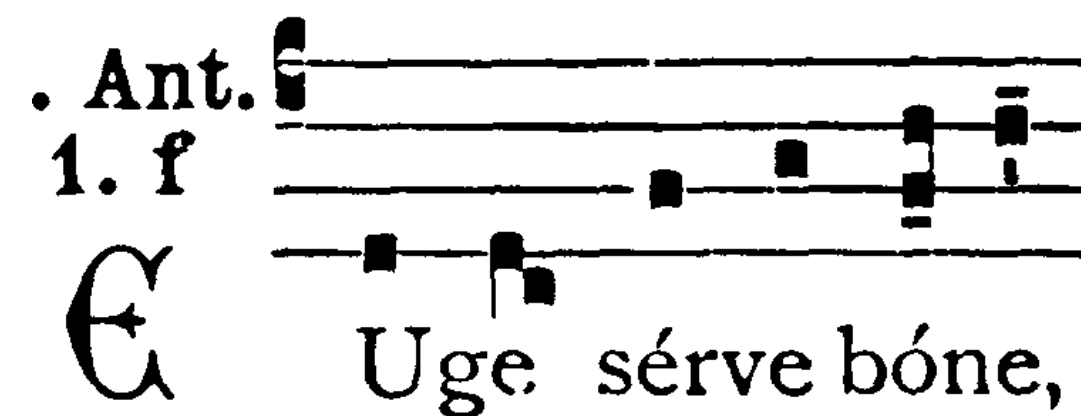


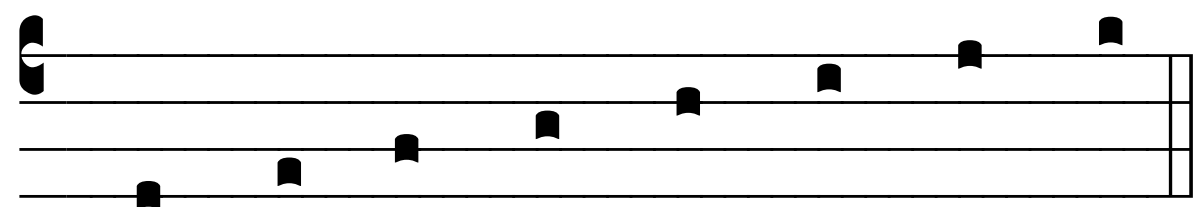
1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri DÓmi-num : \* laudá-te *nómen* DÓmi-ni.

Typical Antiphon



Typical Incipits





RE mi fa sol La ti do RE

# MODE 1

*seriousness*

*The Lord made unto him a covenant of peace  
and made him a prince;  
that the dignity of the priesthood  
should be to him forever. Ecclus. 45:30  
Introit for a Confessor Bishop*

Intr.

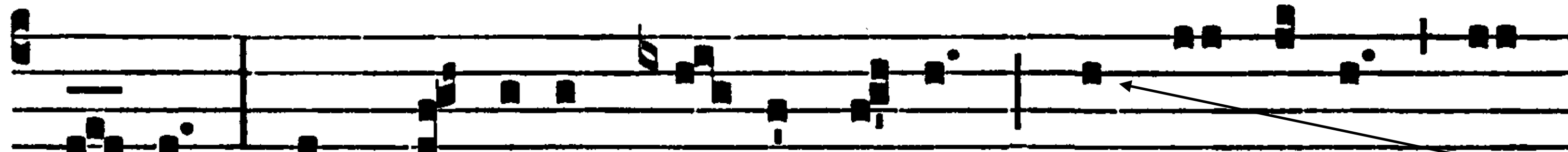
1.

**S**



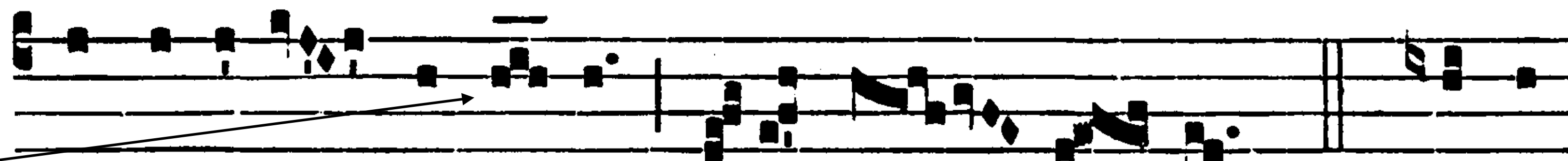
Tá-tu-it \* é- i Dó- mi- nus te- staméntum

typical Mode 1 incipit  
rising to the dominant



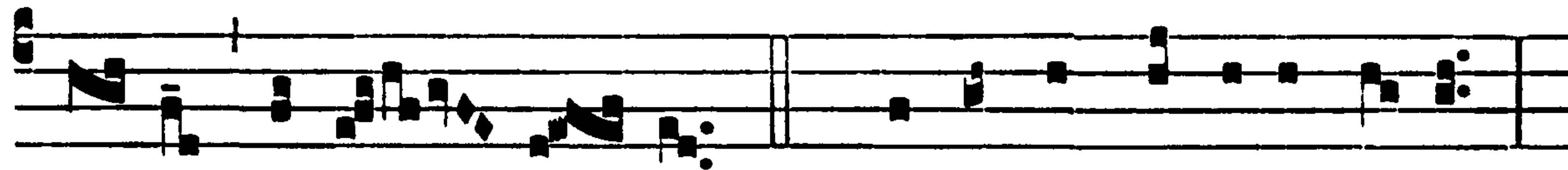
pá- cis, et príncipem fé- cit é- um : ut sit íl- li sa-

La becomes a new tonic  
acting like re in mode 2  
with Do  
becoming new dominant  
a minor 3rd above



cerdó- ti- i dígni- tas in ae- tér- num. *T. P.* Alle-

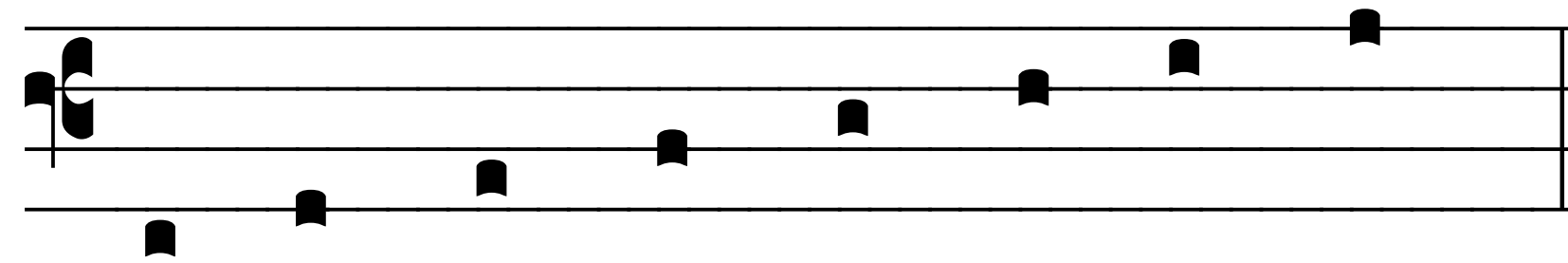
typical Mode 1 cadence  
coming to final rest on  
tonic Re



lú- ia, alle- lú- ia. *Ps.* Meménto Dómine Dá- vid : \*

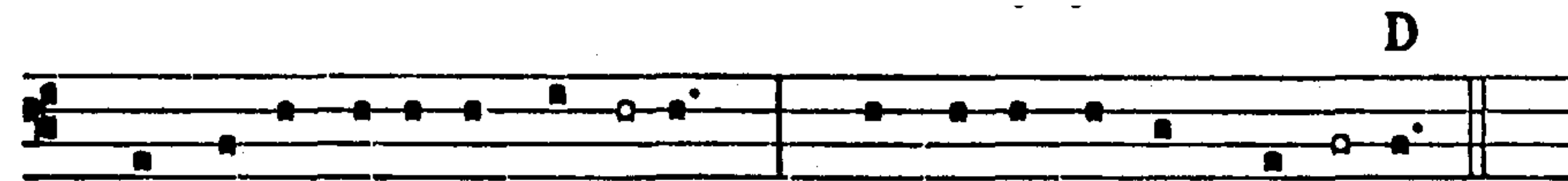
Cadence the same  
as "paxis" only a P5th  
higher

# MODE 2



la ti do **RE** mi *fa* sol la

## Psalm Tone



1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dóminum : \* laudá-te nómen Dómi-ni.

## Typical Incipits

Ant.  
2. D  
**O**

Sa-pi-énti- a,

transposed mode  
"la" = tonic re

Grad.  
2.  
**h**

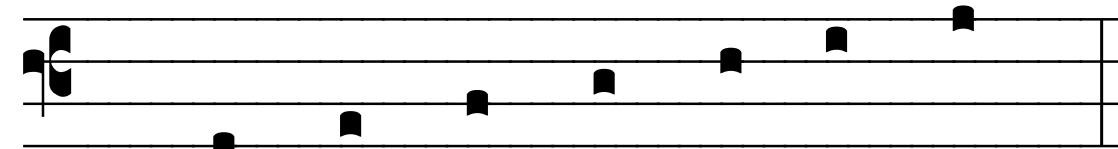
O-di- e \* sci- é- tis,

Intr.  
2.  
**S**

Alve \* sáncta Pá- rens,

Offert.  
2.  
**D**

E pro-fún- dis



la ti do RE mi fa sol la

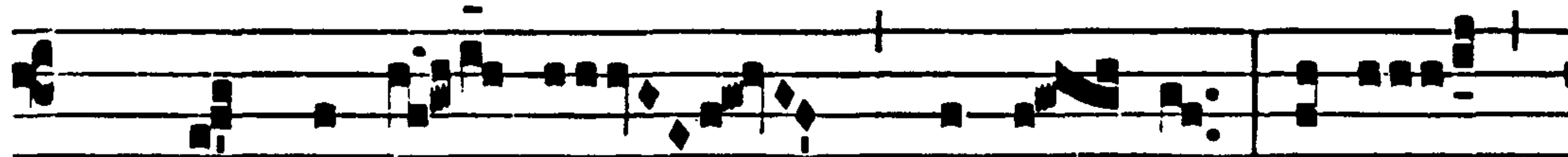
# MODE 2

sorrow

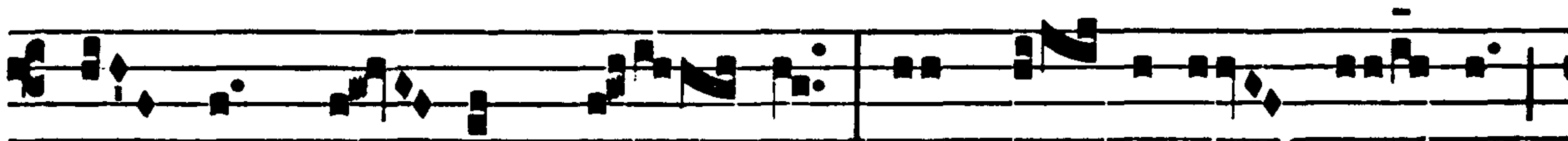
Offert.

2.

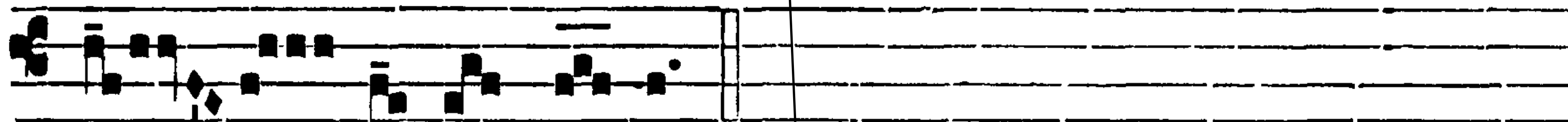
**I**



N te spe-rá- vi, \* Dómi- ne : díxi :



Tu es Dé- us mé- us, in má- nibus tú- is



tém- po-ra mé- a.

a "deceptive" cadence  
alluding to the subsequent clause that will follow.

*Offertory 13th Sunday after Pentecost*

*In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped:*

*I said, Thou art my God,*

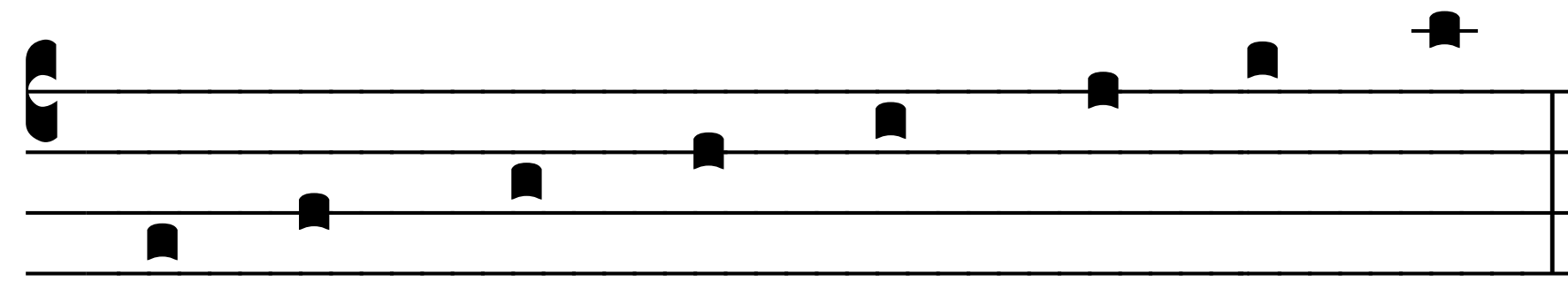
*my times are in Thy hands.*

*Ps. 30: 15, 16*

Notice the  
prominence of  
the  
reciting character  
of fa and the  
range only a 5th  
above tonic.

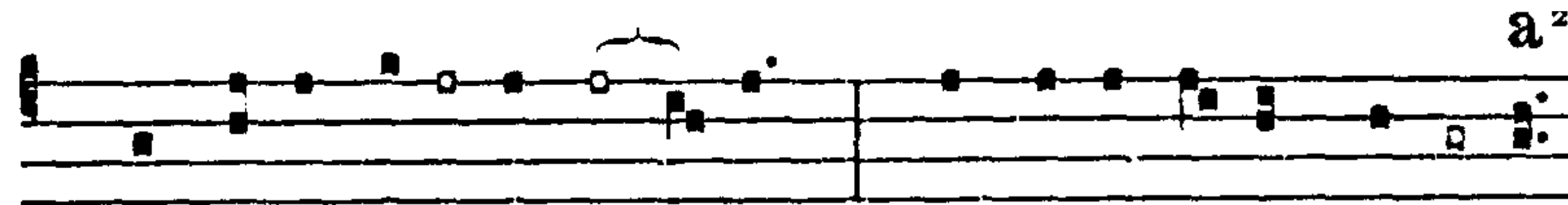
typical Mode 2  
incipit  
rising from the  
depths  
highlighting tonic  
re  
and the dominant  
fa  
along the way

# MODE 3



MI fa sol la *ti* Do re MI

## Psalm Tone



1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dómi-num : \* laudá-te *nómen* Dómi-ni. *ε*

## Typical Incipits

Intr.  
3.  
**V**

O-cem jucundi- tá-tis

Hymn.  
3.  
**P**

Ange língua glo-ri-ó-si

# MODE 3

*mystery*

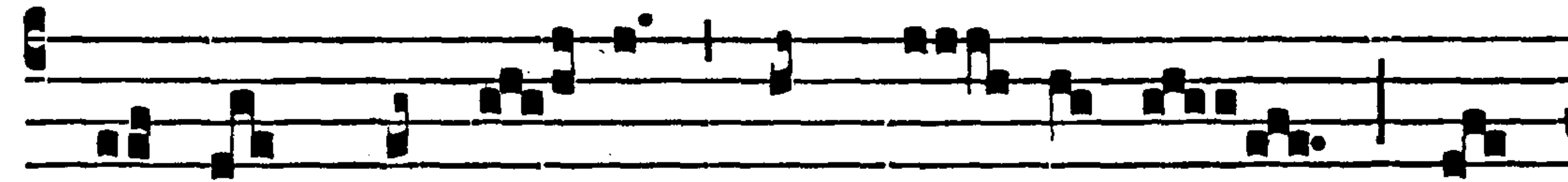


MI fa sol la ti Do re MI

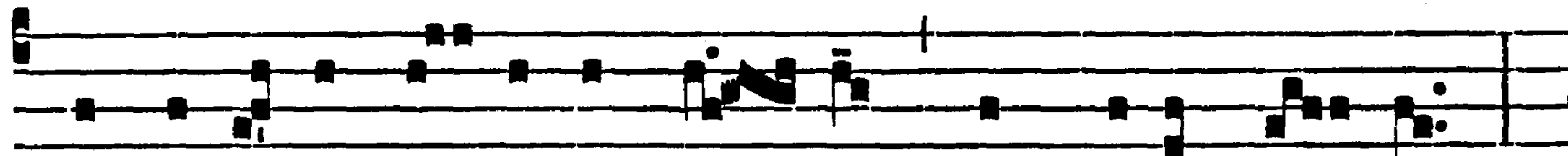
Intr.

3.

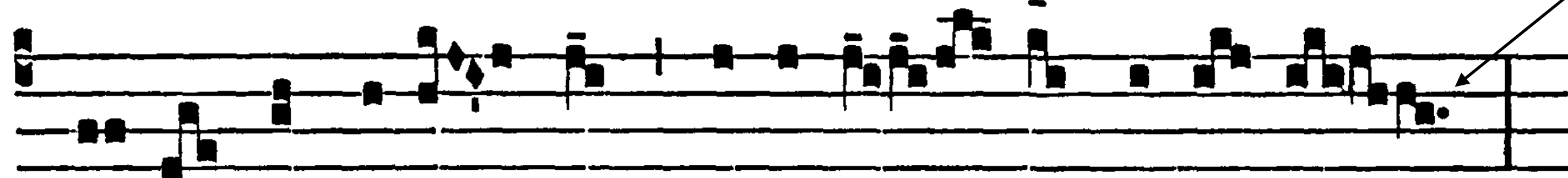
G



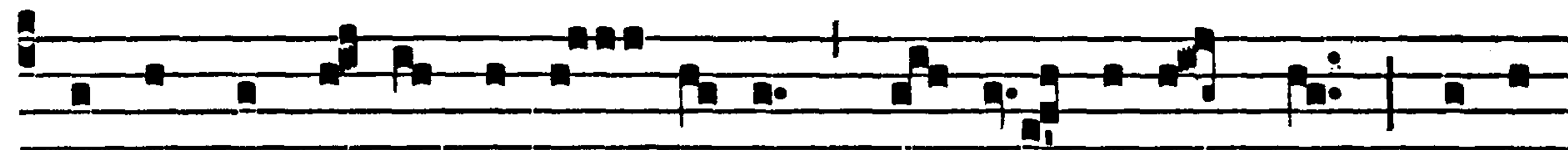
Audens gaudé- bo \* in Dó- mi- no, et



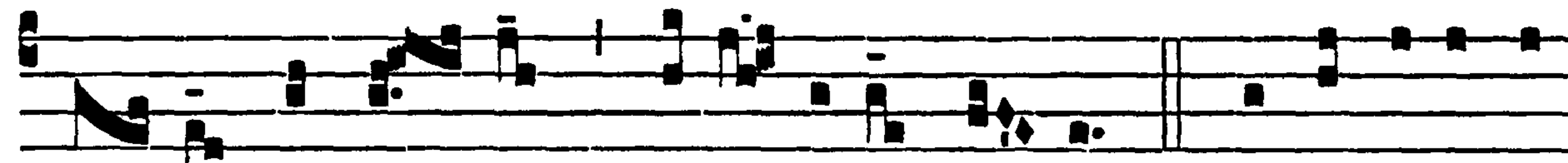
exsultá-bit á- nima mé- a in Dé- o mé- o :



qui- a índu-it me vestimén- tis sa-lú- tis,



et induménto justí- ti-ae cir-cúm-dedit me, qua-si



spón-sam orná- tam moní- libus sú- is. *Ps.* Exaltábo te,

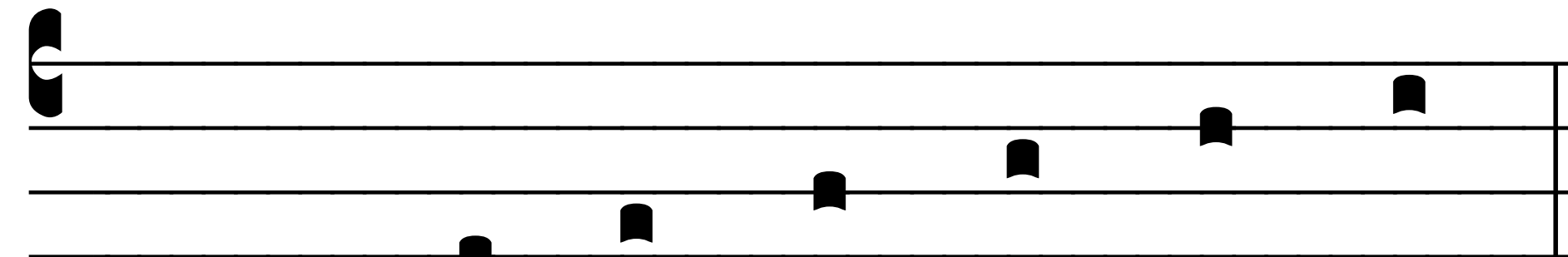
Cadence in Mode 8,  
which also has "Do" as its  
dominant

Introit  
Immaculate Conception Dec. 8

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,  
and my soul shall exult in my  
God,  
for he hath clothed me  
in the garments of salvation  
and hath wrapped me in the  
robe of justice,  
like a bride adorned with her  
jewels. (Is 61: 10)

Nearly identical to the typical  
mode 3 incipit at the  
beginning of the chant

# MODE 4



ti do re **MI** fa *sol* la ti

## Psalm Tone



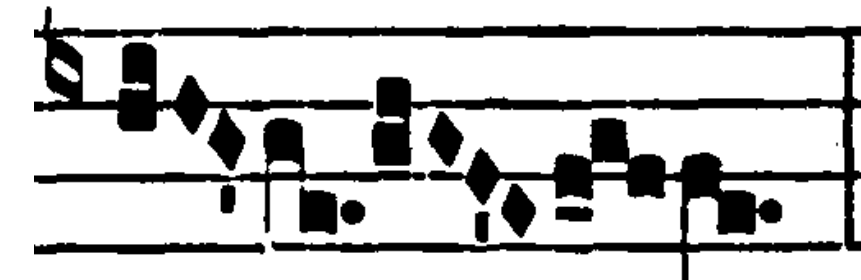
E

1. *Laudá-te pú-e-ri DÓminum : \* laudá-te nómen DÓmi-ni.*

## Typical Cadence



al- le- lú-ia.



nó- stris.



# MODE 4

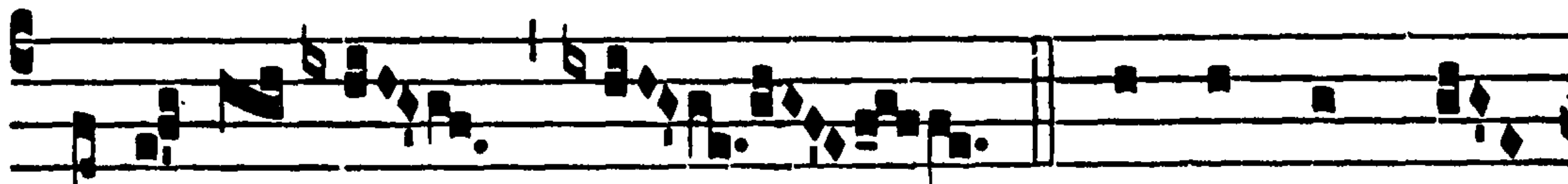
harmony


“centonization”  
from the Greek cento:  
“patchwork garment”

later became known as a  
poem completely made of  
quotations from other  
poems.

Here the music is borrowed  
and made to fit the different  
text

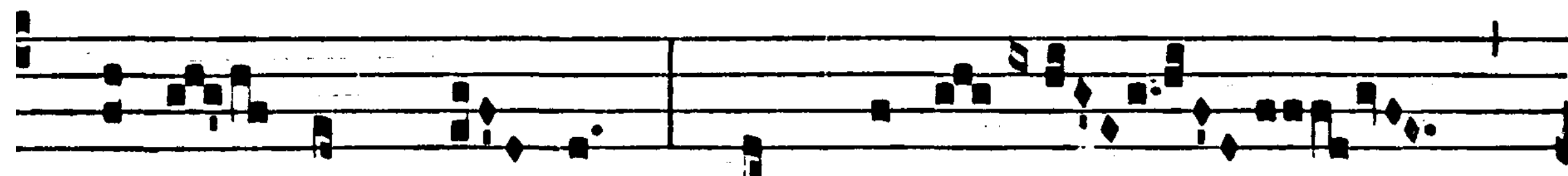
The Alleluia's are the same.  
The verses both begin on La  
dominant and use similar  
melodic sequences and  
formula.

4.  
**A**   
Lle-lú- ia. \* *ij.*      ∇. Ascéndit Dé-

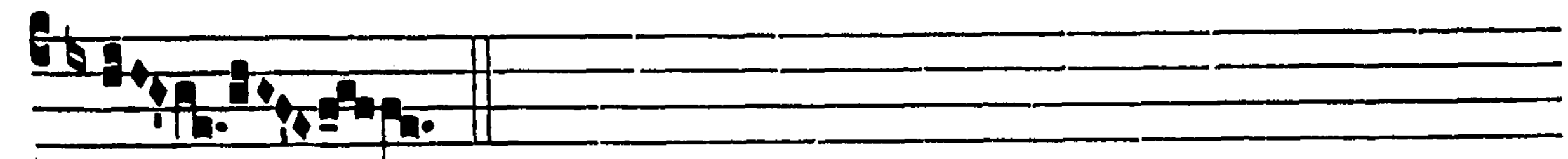
  
us in jubi-la- ti- ó- ne, et Dómi-nus

  
in vó-ce \* tú- bae.

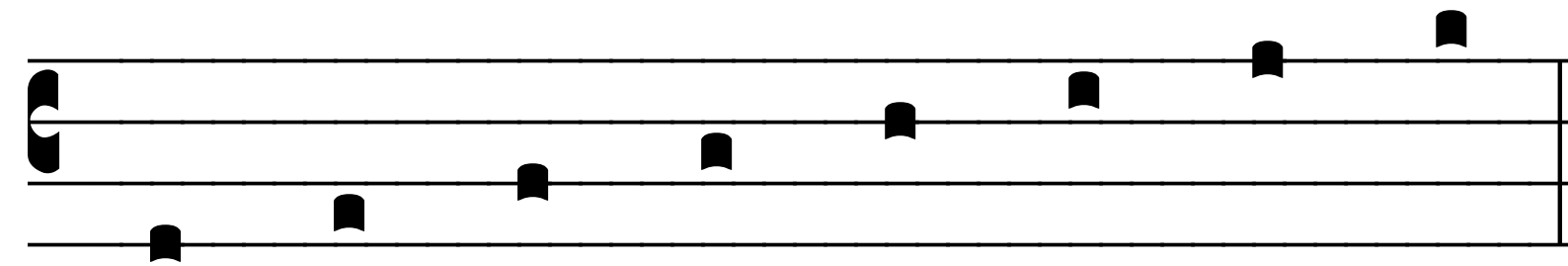
4.  
**A**   
Lle-lú- ia. \* *ij.*      ∇. Emít-te

  
Spí-ri- tum tú- um, et cre- a- bún-

  
tur : et renovábis fá-ci- em \* tér- rae.

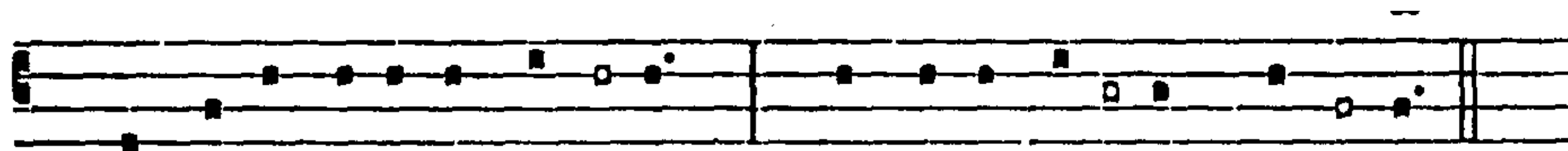


# MODE 5



FA sol la ti *Do* re mi FA

Psalm Tone

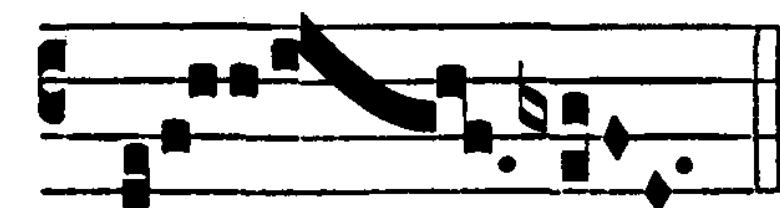


1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dóminum : \* laudá-te nó-men Dómi-ni.

Typical  
Formulas

Grad.  
5.  
**V**

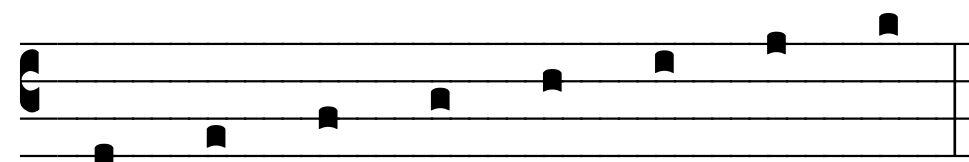
Idérunt ó- mnes \*



Grad.  
5.  
**B**

Ene-dí-cta es tu,

é- OS :  
*La*



FA sol la ti Do re mi FA

# MODE 5

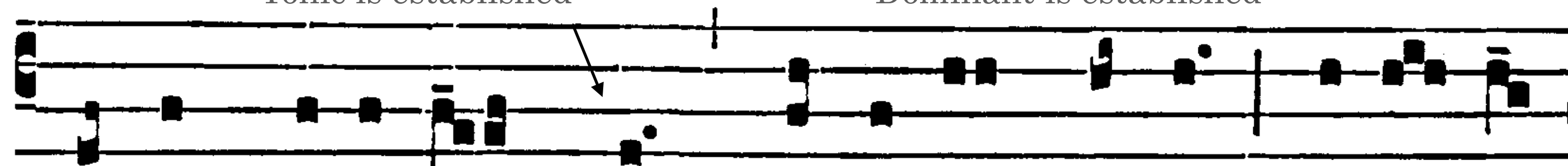
*happiness*

Tonic is established

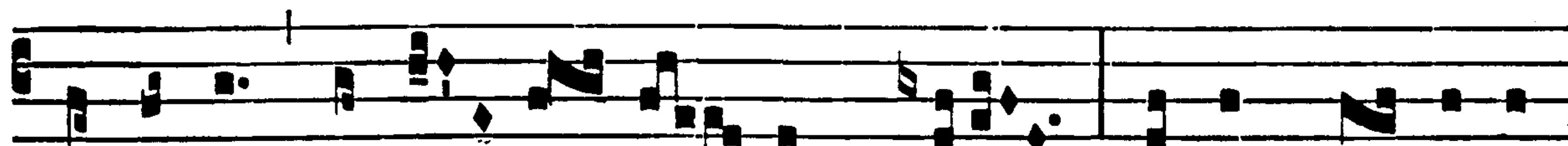
Dominant is established

**Intr.**

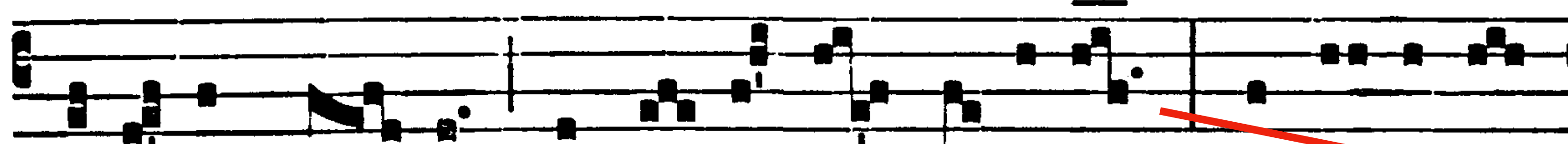
**5.**  
**C**



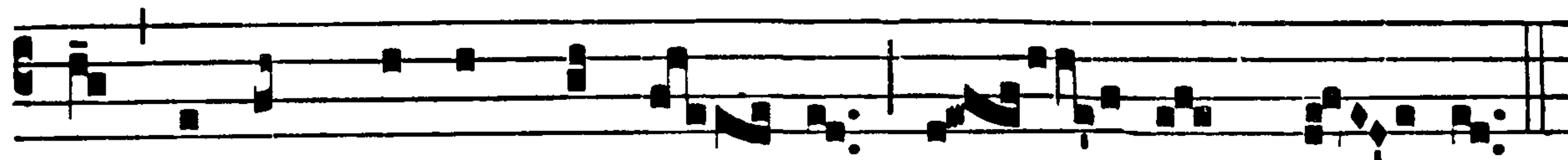
Ircumdedé-runt me \* gémi-tus mórtis, do-ló-res



inférni circum-de- dé- runt me : et in tri- bu-la-



ti- ó-ne mé- a invo- cá- vi Dóminum, et exaudí-



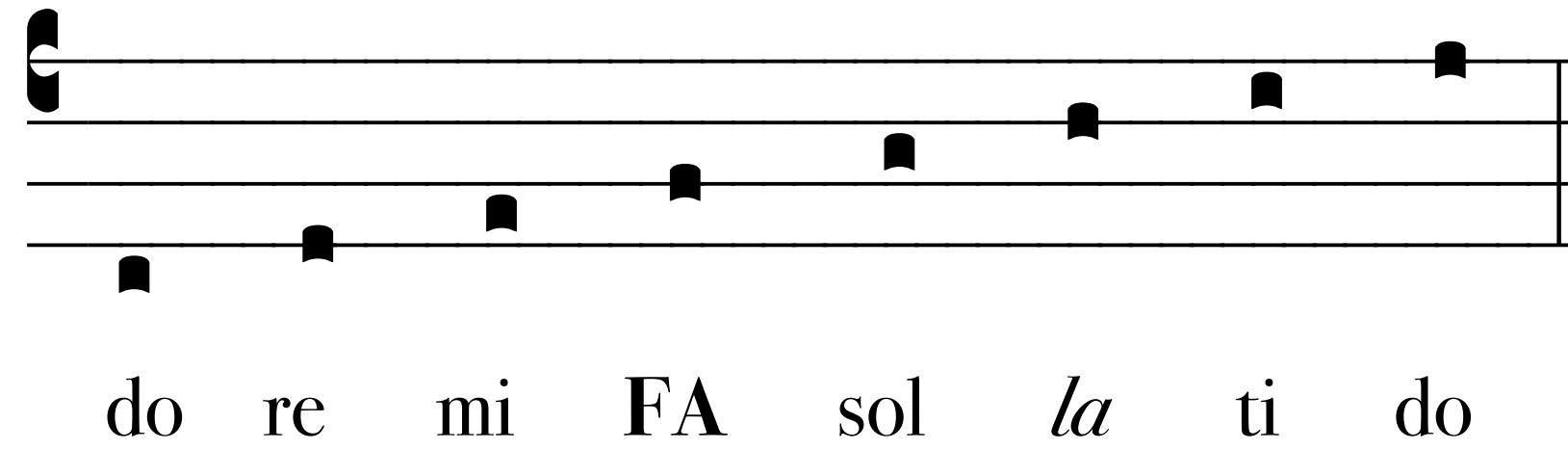
vit de témplo sáncto sú- o vó- cem mé- am.

*The sorrows of death surrounded me, the sorrow of hell encompassed me : and in my affliction I called upon the Lord, and He heard my voice from His holy Temple. (Ps. 17: 2,3 )*

Cadence on "la" alludes to mode 2, a more sorrowful mode.

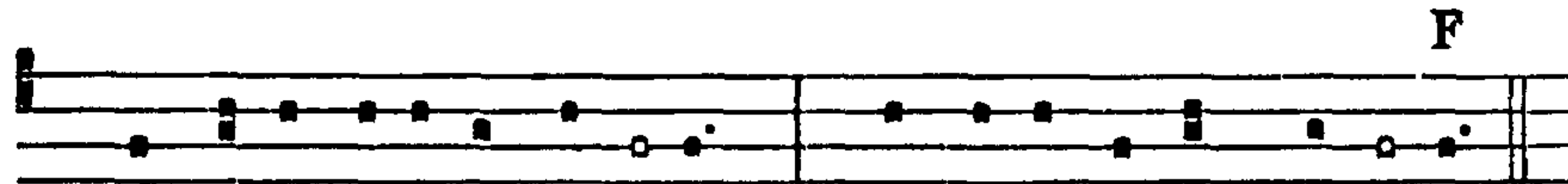
the Tonic and Dominant is once again established followed by a typical Mode 5 cadence

# MODE 6



do re mi FA sol *la* ti do

Psalm Tone



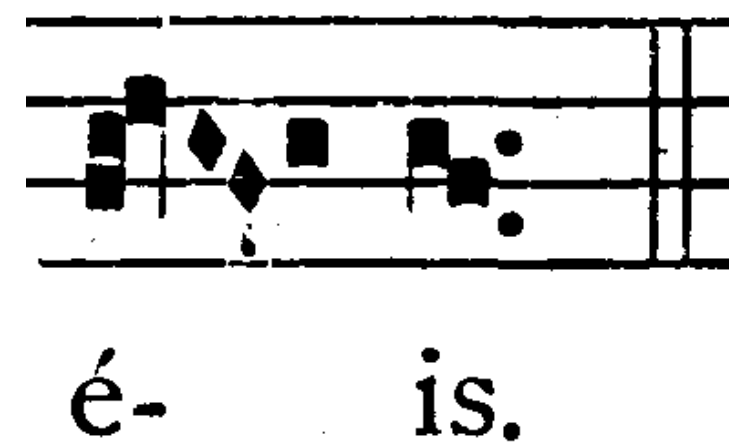
1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dóminum : \* laudá-te *nómen* Dómi-ni.

Typical  
Formulas

Intr.  
6.  
E



-sto míhi



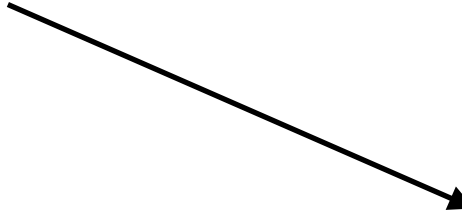
é- is.

do re mi FA sol la ti do

# MODE 6

*devotion / rest*

Mode 5's range representing the steward's emphatic proclamation of the miracle.



Comm. 6. **D**

Recitation range of Tone 6      lower range representing our Lord on the seat of wisdom.

Icit Dó- mi- nus : \* Impléte hýdri- as á- qua

back to narration

et férté architri-clí- no. Cum gu- stás- set architri-

cadence on sol sets up what follows

clí- nus áquam ví- num fá- ctam, dí- cit spónso :

back to narration

Servá- stí ví- num bó- num usque adhuc. Hoc sígnum

fé- cit Jé- sus prí- mum coram discí- pu- lis sú- is.

Jesus saith to them:

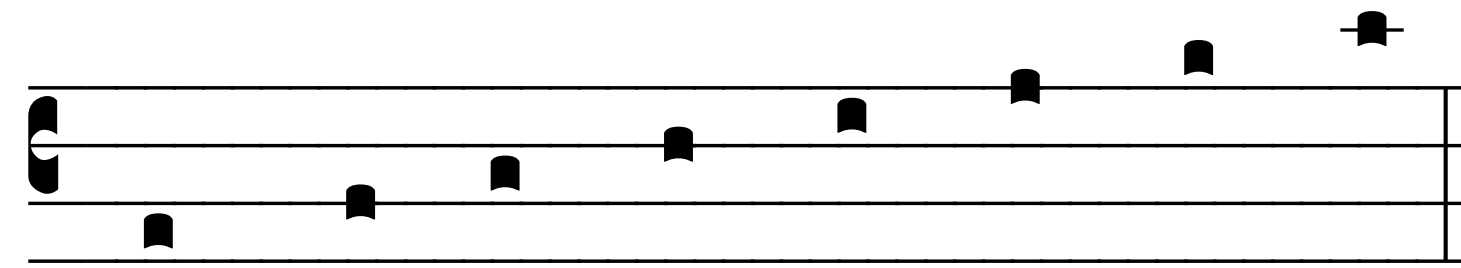
Fill the waterpots with water and carry to the chief steward of the feast.

When the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, he saith to the bridegroom:

Thou hast kept the good wine until now.

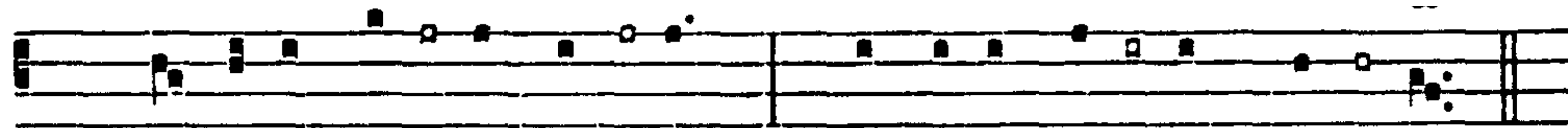
This beginning of miracles did Jesus in the presence of his disciples. Jn. 2 : 7-11

# MODE 7



SOL la ti do *Re* mi fa SOL

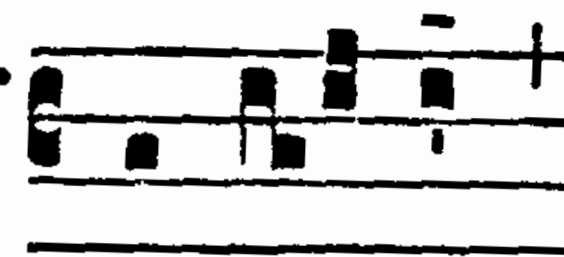
## Psalm Tone



1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dóminum : \* laudá-te nó-men Dómi-ni.

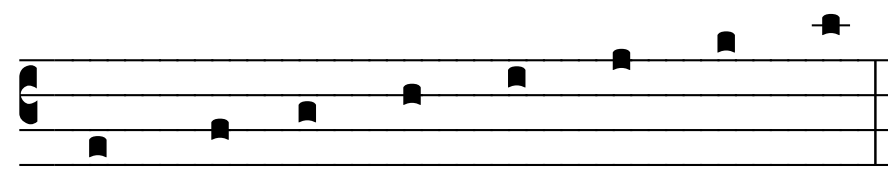
## Typical Incipits

Ant.  
7. c  
**V**   
Oce mé- a.

3. Ant.  
7. b  
**C**   
Lamá- vi, \*

4. Ant.  
7. a  
**M**   
Agni-fi-cávit Dómi-nus

Intr.  
7.  
**P**   
U-er \* ná-tus est nó- bis,



SOL la ti do Re mi fa SOL

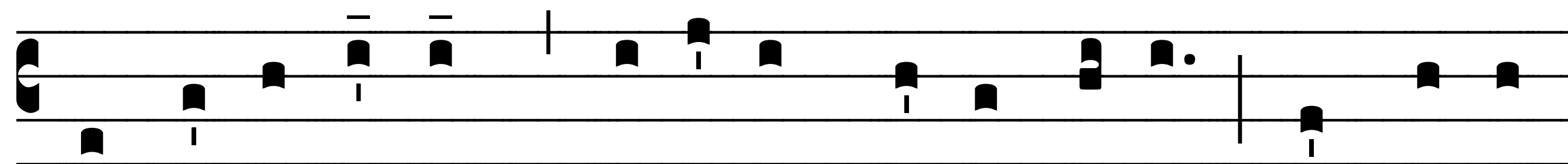
# MODE 7

*angelic*

## *Final Commendation (or at the Burial)*

Typical Mode 7  
antiphonal beginning

VII

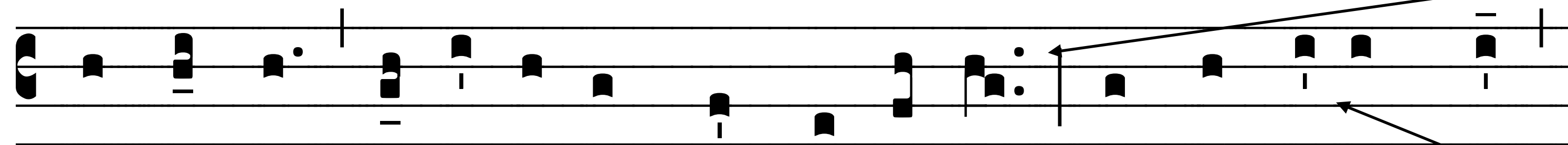


Do becomes reciting/  
dominant perhaps  
alluding to Mode 8

I

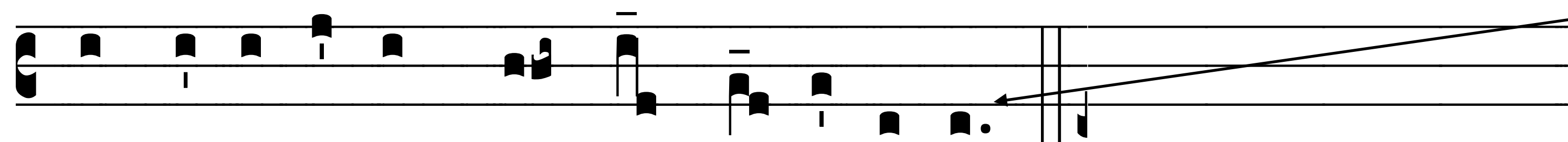
N pa-ra-dí-sum \* dedúcant te Ange-li: in tu- o

a cadence on "ti"  
perhaps representing  
the pain of the martyrs'  
death



advéntu suscí-pi- ant te Márty-res, et perdúcant te

Back to Mode 7's dominant  
and then tonic



in ci-vi-tá-tem sanctam Je-rú-sa-lem.

May the Angels lead you into paradise: may the martyrs receive you at your coming, and lead you into the holy city, Jerusalem.

# MODE 8

re mi fa **SOL** la ti Do re

Psalm Tone

**G**

1. Laudá-te pú-e-ri Dóminum : \* laudá-te *nómen* Dómi-ni.

Typical Formulas

Intr.  
8.

**J** Ubi-lá- te Dé- o

4. Ant.  
8. G

**B** Ene-díco te,

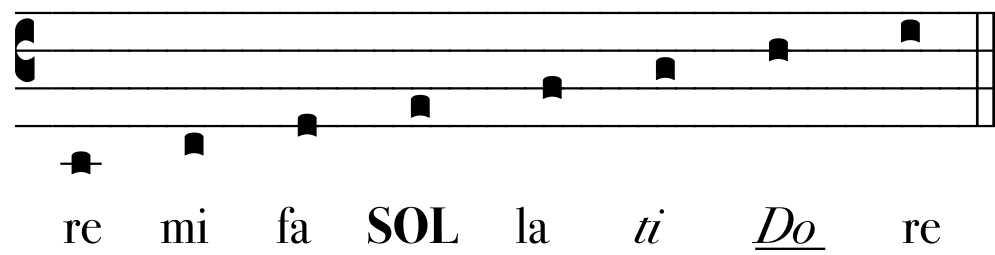
Canticle

*Ex. 15, 1 and 2*

8

**C** Anté- mus \* Dómi-no : glo-ri-ó-se e- nim

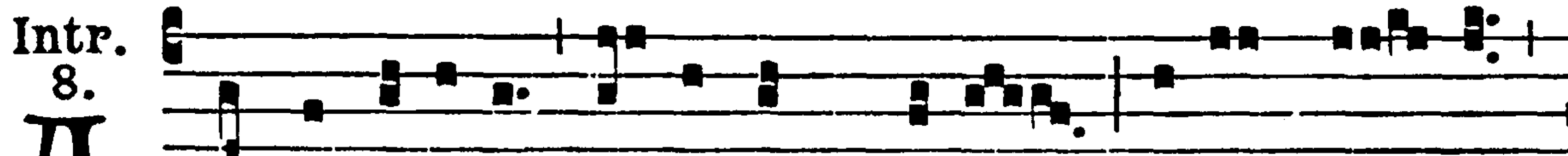




# MODE 8

*perfection*

Mode 8 beginning establishing the range and tonic and then dominant with the leap of the fourth up to do.



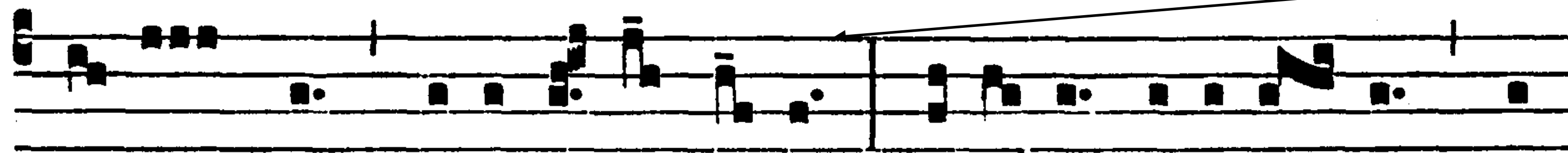
D te levávi \* á-nimam mé-am : Dé-us mé-us

The phrase begins on the dominant communicating an emphatic affect.



in te confí-do, non e-ru- bé-scám : neque irrí-

ending on note below tonic renders the idea of resignation but hope in what is to come

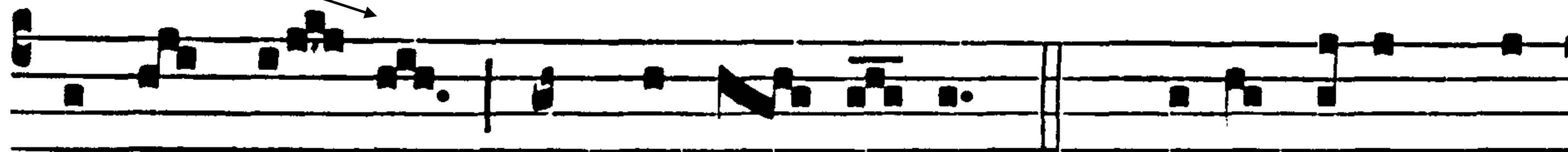


de- ant me inimí- ci mé- i : ét-e-nim univér- si qui

ending on note on la gives the ear a sense of mournfulness (mode 2) until our Lord comes.

*Introit for Advent I*

*Unto thee, O Lord, will I lift up my soul; my God, I have put my trust in thee: O let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me.*



te exspé- ctant, non confun- déntur. *Ps. Ví- as tú- as, Dó-*

and when he does come we will not be confounded

*For all they that hope in thee shall not be ashamed. Ps. 25: 1-2*

# Recapitulation

Identifying a mode by its characteristics and applying it

- Look for the tonic notes at cadence points
- Look for the dominant (tenor, reciting tone)
- What is the range/ambitus of the melody (in relation to tonic)
- Look for other important “architectural” notes that make up the melodic skeleton
- Look for typical melodic constructs or familiar formulas (sequences)
- Discern how the “ethos” of the mode relates to the scriptural text
- Discern how similar modes and formulas are used for other parts of the liturgical year and what that means for the specific chant in question

# Reasons We Should Pay Attention to Modes

- Modes help us sight-read and recognize patterns; allowing us to focus more on praying the text
- Modes help us recognize tonic notes and helps us to tune against them, thus achieving a more artful and prayerful rendering of the chant
- Modes help us to analyze the chant and give insight into its text and placement within the liturgy. i.e. allowing for more prayerful contemplation
- Modes help us to pray by giving our intellect an ethos to meditate on and interact with in addition to contemplating the text

## A LAST WORD

*“Sacred chant appeals to the higher part of the soul. Its beauty, its nobility depend in large measure on the fact that it borrows nothing, or the least possible, from the world of the senses. If it passes through them it does so without tarrying to parley, for it has nothing to say to the passions or the imagination. It can voice terrible truths, express forcible sentiments without ever departing from its characteristic restraint and simplicity.*

*“Modern music can be the mouthpiece of violent and gross passions (thou there are great exceptions as we know); it may even give birth to such; whereas plainsong cannot be thus abused. It remains always wholesome and serene, it does not act on the nervous system nor seek to waken a response in that fallen world of which it refuses to make the least use.*

*“With its frank tonality and entire absence of chromatic progressions, expressing incomplete notions by semitones, it seems incapable of representing anything short of perfect beauty, pure truth. The ear which has once become attuned to its wonderful freshness can no longer bear to listen to those soft airs which infect with a sort of sensualism even the very music which is meant to be expression of heavenly love. There is something angelic in the rigidity of the plainsong scale, impervious to the least shadow of alteration.*

*L'Art grégorien, son but, ses procédés, ses caractères, Solesmes, 1896*