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## A TWELFTH-CENTURY MUSICAL MANUSCRIPT IN THE RUTGERS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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**A** LONG-OVERLOOKED manuscript of medieval Christian liturgical chant written in diastematic (“heighted”) neumes, one of the earliest stages in the evolution of musical staff notation, rests among the miscellaneous manuscripts located in Special Collections and Archives of the Rutgers University Libraries in New Brunswick.<sup>1</sup> Judging from comparison with similar manuscripts now in Padua and the Vatican, this rare musical document was probably written in the twelfth century in or near Ravenna, the historic capital of the western Roman empire after the fall of Rome and later an outpost of the Byzantine empire. It may represent in part a survival of the local liturgy and chant of Ravenna, distinct from the so-called Gregorian chant which by the tenth century had come to dominate the liturgy of the Roman church in western Europe.

The Rutgers manuscript is a vellum bifolium measuring 28 x 21 centimeters, glued to a wooden board that once served as the back cover of an otherwise lost book. This board still bears remnants of a brown, tooled leather covering. Modern pencil inscriptions on the wood refer to its date (“A.D. 1479”) and recent provenance (“From Drews T. Seminary, March 31 — 1893”). The bifolium presumably was employed as a flyleaf when the book, now detached, was bound in the fifteenth century. The Rutgers library has no record of its receipt, but the manuscript appears to

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is identified as Ac. 3660.

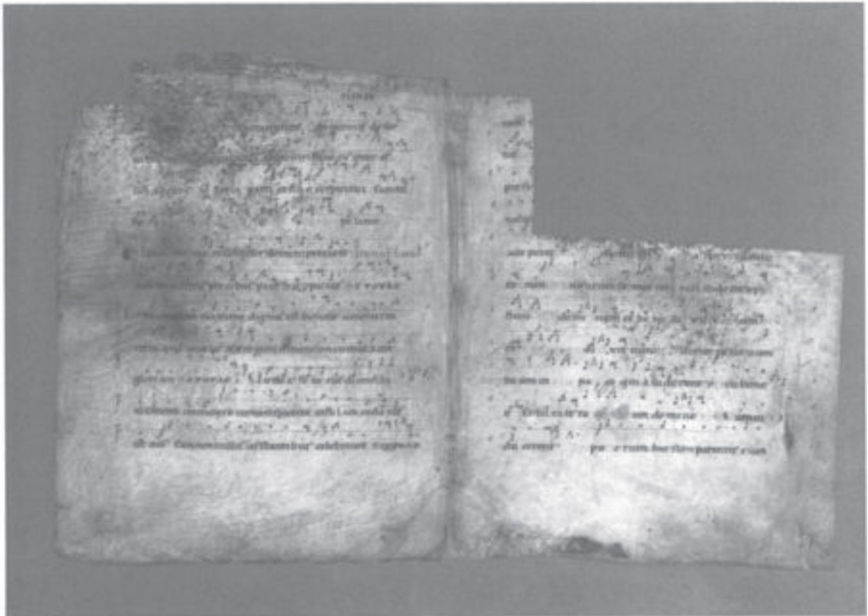
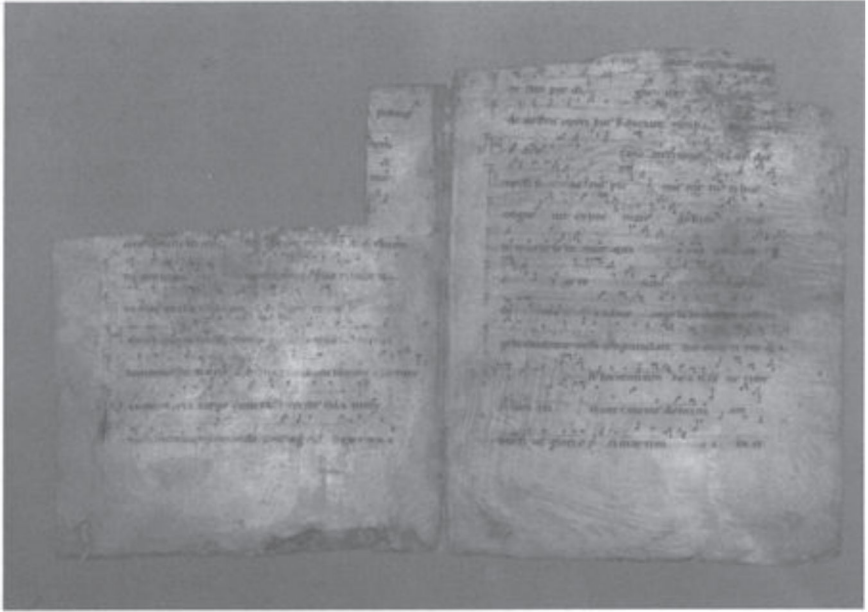


Plate 1. Rutgers University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, MS Ac. 3660, (after restoration)

have been acquired by the library in or around 1893, as indicated by the date written on it. Only three pages are presently visible, since the fourth is still attached to the wooden cover.<sup>2</sup> The upper part of the first folio is curled and rubbed, resulting in some loss of music and text, but the greater part of both sides is easily legible. Folio 2 has suffered the loss of about one-third, since most of the upper part has been cut from it. The missing portion had been replaced by a fragment of a Latin manuscript in a Gothic hand, unrelated to the bifolium and probably dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Even here the remaining portion of the page is legible.

What we see in the three visible pages are, on fol. 1 *recto*, responsories with their verses; on fol. 1 *verso*, antiphons with the rubric "In mat. laud."; and on fol. 2 *recto*, another responsory and verse. The chants and rubric identify this manuscript as a fragment of a monastic Antiphoner, a medieval book of chants for the Divine Office, including those for the hours of Matins and Lauds.

The musical notation consists of neumes on a four-line staff incised on the parchment. One line is inked in red, and both F and C clefs are indicated. The neumes are precisely written on the staff and offer little difficulty in transcription. The notational style they represent is distinctive. While generally similar to the Beneventan neumes of southeastern Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the unusual *virgae* with curved tails identify this as having been written in or near Ravenna, the old capital of the Western empire (5th cent.), residence of the Byzantine governors of Italy (6th to 8th cents.), and cornerstone of the Papal States (from the 8th cent.). Comparison with a twelfth-century Gradual from Ravenna (Padua, Bibl. Cap. MS A.47) makes its Ravennate provenance clear.<sup>3</sup> (See Pl. 1 and 2.) Only three complete Graduals or Missals and a few fragments of Antiphoners of this period from Ravenna survive.<sup>4</sup> The Rutgers fragment thus adds significantly to the known sources of the Ravenna Office liturgy.

The liturgical contents of the Rutgers fragment, while pointing to the

<sup>2</sup> Since this article was written the manuscript has been removed from the cover and the fourth page (fol. 2 *verso*) is now visible. Its contents are indicated at the end of the article.

<sup>3</sup> Pl. 2 is reproduced from Padua MS A.47 after E. de Coussemaker, *Histoire de l'harmonie au moyen âge* (Paris, 1852; reprinted Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966), pl. XXXVIII. For an earlier, staffless example in an eleventh century Missal from Ravenna now in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, see The Toledo Museum of Art, *Medieval and Renaissance Music Manuscripts* (1953), pl. III (no. 8).

<sup>4</sup> See Kenneth Levy, "Ravenna rite, music of the." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), XV, 622.

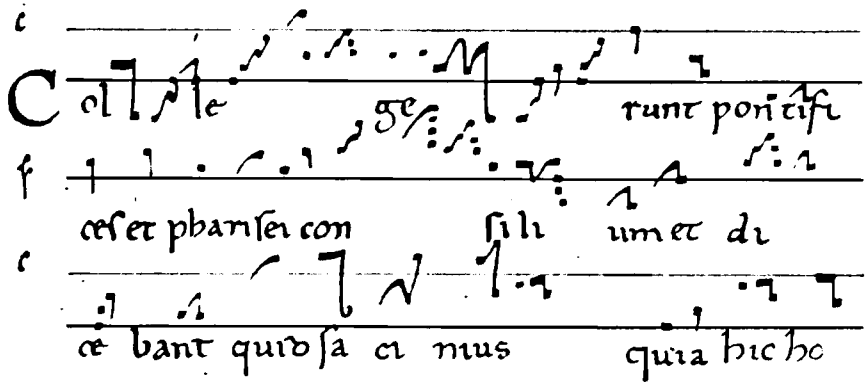


Plate 2. From Padua, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS A.47. Reproduced from E. de Coussemaker, *Histoire de l'harmonie au moyen age* (Paris, 1852), Pl. XXXVIII, no. 1

local rite of Ravenna, also display characteristic elements of the Roman rite. The responsories on fol. 1 *recto* commemorate the martyrdom of St. Severus, a Bishop of Ravenna in the fourth century, celebrated on 1 February.<sup>5</sup> These responsories are not found in the standard Roman liturgy. The antiphons on fol. 1 *verso* also refer to St. Severus, but analogous texts and melodies appear in the Roman liturgy associated with other saints. The responsory on fol. 2 *recto* is for the Purification of the Blessed Virgin (2 Feb.) and is also found in the Roman liturgy. An outline of the legible items follows below, with references to related chants in the 13th-century Worcester Antiphoner (Worcester Cathedral Library, MS F.160), a Gregorian monastic *antiphonale* of remarkable completeness and clarity.<sup>6</sup> A transcription of the first responsory, "Hodie sanctissimus sacerdos Christi Severus," is presented at the end of this article.

As Professor Kenneth Levy of Princeton University has pointed out, Ravenna was the principal point of contact between Rome and Byzantium during the period of Byzantine rule in Italy (540-751), and elements of Byzantine liturgy and chant were adopted in the Latin rite of Ravenna during that period.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not Byzantine elements are found in the Rutgers fragment can only be determined after close study by specialists,

<sup>5</sup> *Enciclopedia Cattolica* (Vatican City, 1953), XI, 466f.

<sup>6</sup> Facsimile edition, *Antiphonaire monastique, XIII siècle. Codex F.160 de la Bibliothèque de la Cathédrale de Worcester*. Paléographie Musicale, XII. (Solesmes, 1922; reprinted Berne: H. Lang, 1971).

<sup>7</sup> Levy, "Ravenna rite," 621f, and "The Italian Neophytes' Chants," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXIII (1970), 184ff.

but it can at least be said that our knowledge of the liturgy of Ravenna in the twelfth century is significantly augmented by the addition of the Rutgers fragment to the small known repertory of Ravennate chant manuscripts.<sup>8</sup>

*Contents of the Rutgers Fragment*

- Fol. 1r: R(esp). Hodie sanctissimus sacerdos Christi Severus . . .  
 V(ersus). Gaudent angeli letantur . . .  
 R(esp). O felix nimium beati Severi . . .
- Fol. 1v: V(ersus). O — sacramentis Dominicis deserviret . . . Gloria  
 Patri et Filio . . .  
 A(nt). Sancte Severe confessor Domini . . .<sup>9</sup> In mat. (et) laud.  
 A(nt). Iste et enim maximo dignus . . .<sup>10</sup>  
 A(nt). Vir Dei Severus diem sibi . . .<sup>11</sup>
- Fol. 2r: R(esp). . . . acceperet Symeon a Spiritu Sancto . . .<sup>12</sup>  
 V(ersus). Cum inducerent puerum . . .
- Fol. 2v: A(nt). Hec est que nescivit . . .<sup>13</sup>  
 A(nt). Gaude Maria virgo . . .<sup>14</sup>

*Text and translation of responsory “Hodie sanctissimus”*

- R. Hodie sanctissimus sacerdos Christi Severus, plenus virtutibus,  
 migravit ex hoc mundo hinc. Exultemus et letemur: Quia reddita  
 est ei coronam justicie.
- V. Gaudent angeli, letantus archangeli, exultant justii, congratulantur  
 martires.
- (R.) Quia . . .

(Transl.) Today the most holy priest of Christ, Severus, full of virtue,  
 was carried thence from this world. We exult and rejoice: because the  
 crown of justice is restored to him.

The angels are glad, the archangels rejoice, the just exult, the martyrs  
 wish (him) joy: because (the crown of justice is restored to him).

<sup>8</sup> The author is grateful to Prof. Kenneth Levy for identifying the provenance of the manuscript and for various helpful suggestions in the preparation of this report. He also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Prof. Ruth Simmons, Director of Special Collections and Archives, and Janice Kraus, Curator of Rare Books and Exhibitions, Rutgers University Libraries, New Brunswick.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Worcester Antiphoner, 294: “Sancte Cuthberte confessor Domini . . .”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 342: “Isti etenim maximo digni . . .”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 342: “Vir Dei Gamaliel . . .”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 269: “Responsum acceperet Symeon a Spiritu Sancto . . .”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 353: “Hec est que nescivit . . .”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 268: “Gaude Maria virgo . . .”

R. Ho-die sanc-tis-si-mus sa-cer- dos  
 Chri- sti Se- ve- rus, ple- nus vir-tu- ti-  
 bus, mi-gra- vit ex hoc mun- do  
 hinc. E- xul-te- mus et le- te- mur:  
 Qui- a red- di- ta est  
 e- i co-ro- nam  
 ju- sti- ci- e.

V. Gau- dent an- ge- li, le- tan- tur ar- chan- ge- li, e- xul- tant  
 ju- sti, con- gra- tu- lan- tur mar- ti- res:  
 Qui- a etc.