

## *De Organo.*

Dictis autem, prout potuimus, his, quibus ostendendum erat, qualiter unusquisque in tetracordo sonus propria conditione distet ab altero eorumque concordi quodammodo dissimilitudine quattuor tonorum vel modorum formae genus diversum prodeant, adhuc de diatesseron simphonia quomodo melos diaphoniae nascatur, videamus, quam usitato vocabulo organum nuncupamus. Etenim <ea> lege melos istud ab hinc meat, quod in quartis locis ducentem se cantum organum comitatur hoc modo

<quod> quartis ad invicem locis hi et hi soni disiuncti consonant in alios.

Deinceps, qualiter novissima simphonia, quam diatesseron dicunt, sese habeat, prosequamur. Simphonia diapason sicut maior caeteris, ita prae caeteris optinet, ut et in unum, et consequenter dicendi consonantiam faciat, diapente non in unum, sed consequenter, diatesseron non consequenter, sed in unum. Hac collatione quotquot voces iunxeris sive humanas seu alias quaslibet, utpote si praesentis descriptionis binas voces aut ambas aut alteram per diapason duplicaveris vel per disdiapason, senties huius distantiae voces suaviter ad invicem consonare.

Ex hac simphonia nascitur ea nobilis cantilena, quam diaphoniam vocitamus, id est organicum melos. Dicta autem diaphonia, quod non uniformi canore constet, sed concentu suaviter dissono in unum dulciter modulamen coeat. Bina vero lege melos istud hinc meat: Una, quod in quartis locis cantum comitatur organum. Alterum autem ius habet, quod haec quartanae collationis lex suos limites habet. Nam usque ad illum sonum pertingit, qui in quolibet modo sub sono finali fuerit subsecundus, quem cuiusque modi sonus finalis habuerit

## *Concerning Organum*

*trans. Rob C. Wegman*

Having said, as much as we have been able to, the things by which we were to demonstrate how far one sound, in a tetrachord of the proper condition, is removed from another, and how the forms of their four *toni* or *modi* produce a different *genus* through some kind of concordant dissimilarity, let us now look into the question how the *melos* of diaphony, which by its customary name we call organum, is born from the *symphonia* of the diatessaron. For that *melos* moves from here [?] according to this law, that organum accompanies the chant which leads it by steps of a fourth, in this way:

[example missing]

so that these disjunct sounds make consonant sound in others, on the fourth steps relative to each other.

Next, let us explore how the last *symphonia* which they call diatessaron is constituted. Just as the *symphonia* of the diapason is greater than the others, so it prevails over the others in that it makes a consonance both in one and in consequence, yet the diapente [does so] not in one but only in consequence, and the diatessaron not in consequence but only in one. However many voices you shall have joined together, whether human or other [voices], for example if you double either or both of the two voices in the present example at the diapason or disdiapason, you shall perceive that voices at this distance make smooth consonant sound.

From that *symphonia* [i.e. the fourth] is born the distinguished song which we call diaphony, that is, organal *melos*. And it is called diaphony because it does not consist of a uniform tune, but rather, through blended song that smoothly sounds apart, it combines sweetly into a single melody. Now, that *melos* moves from here according to a twofold law: one, that the organum accompanies the chant on steps of a fourth. The second law holds that the rule of this quartal combination has its peculiar boundaries. For it pertains only as far as the sound which in any mode shall be the undersecond under the final sound, [that is,] the one which the final sound of any mode shall

subsecundum. In hoc enim sono stat organum, nec inferius descendere licitum est. Ab quo sono incipit in levatione particulae, semper in eo subsistit in depositione, et inferius organum progredi prohibetur.

Ad ostendendum vero planius, quod dicitur, conemur hoc diaphoniae melos et alia descriptione imaginari, ut dicta rationis oculis quodammodo subiciantur. Utique positis a latere sonorum signis ex singulis procedant suae veluti cordae, quibus cordis inserantur puncti et iacentes virgulae, quae purae cantionis modos expriment; hos rursus punctos seu virgulas alii puncti coloris dissimilis comitentur pro ratione organi suis locis inserti, ita ut quemadmodum conlatis ad invicem sonis diversis diaphonia resonat, sic in hac dispositiuncula puncti punctis respondeant. Sane punctos ac virgulas ad distinctionem ponimus sonorum brevium ac longorum, quamvis huius generis melos tam grave, ut dictum est, esse oporteat tamque morosum, ut rithmica ratio vix in eo servari queat. Sit utique descriptio talis.

In hac exempli descriptione sonus  $\text{F}$ , quem corda penultima habet, finalis ponitur et rector modi, unam cordam sub se habens a sono  $\text{Y}$  ductam, in qua organum subsistit; et ideo antipenultima, quae a sono procedit  $\text{F}$ , legitimum organi responsum deest, etenim si quartus sub se sonus organum ei respondeat, transgresso naturali termino absonum fiet, et haec est lex organi naturalis, a qua ubi deviat, non regulare organum fit, quamvis in superioribus exemplorum descriptiunculis figurae quidem in inicio versus illi sono, qui finalis et rector extat in modo, sonus respondeat de subquart<o>.

Et ut eadem lex organi per omnes modos clareat, hanc eandem neumam secunda transpositione tono faciamus altiolem, ut modus frigijs transmutetur ex dorio ita. In hoc modo finalis et rector extat sonus  $\text{F}$  subsecundum a se habens  $\text{F}$ ; ab hoc sono organum ius est incipere et in illum usque pervenire. Faciamus et tertia transpositione modum lydium

have as undersecond. For on that sound organum ends, and it is not permitted to go lower. This is the [lowest] sound from which it [may] depart when ascending in a section, and on which it [must] end when descending, and the organum is not allowed to go any lower.

In order to show more plainly what is being said, let us try to imagine the *melos* of diaphony in another example, so that the said things may be placed before the eyes of reason in some way. Having marked the signs of sounds at the [left] side, let strings proceed from each single [sign], and on these strings, let *puncti* and horizontal *virgulae* be inserted that express the modes of pure song; let other *puncti* of a different color, inserted on their own steps, accompany those *puncti* or *virgulae* according to the principle of organum, in such a way that in this little disposition, *puncti* answer *puncti* in the same way that diaphony resounds when different sounds are brought together. Of course we write *puncti* and *virgulae* to distinguish short and long sounds, although *melos* of this kind must be so solemn, as already said, and so slow, that it is scarcely possible to maintain any notion of rhythm. Let this be the example.

[example missing]

In this example, the sound  $\text{F}$ , which is held by the penultimate string, is placed as the final and ruler of the mode, having beneath it only one other string, drawn from the sound  $\text{Y}$ , at which the organum ends; and therefore organum cannot lawfully respond to the antepenultimate, which proceeds from the sign  $\text{F}$ , for if the fourth sound under it were to answer [that antepenultimate] in organum it would produce a harsh sound, since it transgressed the boundary set by nature. And that is the natural law of organum, and when there is a deviation from [that law], there is no organum according to rule, even though the sound does in fact respond at the underfourth to the figure on the first sound of the versus, in the above examples, which is the final and ruler of the mode.

And in order that the same law be clear throughout all modes, let us make that same melody higher by transposing it to the second modus, so that the Phrygian mode is fashioned out of the Dorian, like so. [Example missing.] In this mode, the final and ruler is the sound  $\text{F}$ , having the undersecond  $\text{F}$ ; it is lawful for organum to depart from this sound and to conclude in it. Let us make the Lydian mode by means of a third transposition, in this way.

hoc modo. Fiat et quarta transpositio in quartum modum. Itaque canentes modos singulos eandem rationem reperiemus in singulis.

Et quoniam de diaphonia vel organo aliquantum loqui ceptum est, et in ecclesiasticis canticis honestissime assumitur, adhuc de eius naturae ratione latius exploretur. Organo duo accidunt, id est locus cum spacio. Loca autem organi sunt tria: organum medium **.C-C.**, organum superius **.S.**, organum inferius **.I.**. Unaquaeque particula organo habilis sive medium **.C-C.** seu superius **.S.** vel inferius **.I.** habet. Particulae autem suae cantionis cola  $\downarrow$  et commata  $\uparrow$ , quae sunt distinctiones maiores  $\downarrow$  et minores  $\uparrow$ , quibus ita cantio intexitur, ut oratio membrum  $\downarrow$  ac cesis  $\uparrow$ . Maiores  $\downarrow$  in quovis tono deponuntur in sonum suum terminalem, qui scilicet cantum regit et cantus in eum finitur. At minores  $\uparrow$  non in terminalem desinunt, sed in alios quoslibet seu supra illum sive subter illum. Finales autem particularum soni secundum loca sua loca dant organo, ipsorumque vim maxime sequitur. Etenim terminalis  $\downarrow$  et unus ex inferiore ipsius latere unusque ex superiore medium **.C-C.** organum ponunt. Terni vero et terni ex horum trium lateribus superius **.S.** et inferius **.I.** organum faciunt.

Hoc autem ita fit: Particula ubi vel in terminalem deponitur vel in alterum e duobus ex latere sibi coherentibus, medium **.C-C.** ibi moratur organum. At ubi non in horum aliquem deponitur, nec sequens quoque particula aut saltem tertia ab his vel incipit vel in eos desinit, sed potius supra terminalem tertium  $\rightarrow III$  aut quartum  $\rightarrow IIII$  seu quintum  $\rightarrow V$ , tunc utique, dum hi terni moduli superiori **.S.** organo deputentur, medio hic uti non licet. Similiter ubi infra terminalem  $\downarrow$  in tertio  $\leftarrow III$ , quarto  $\leftarrow IIII$  aut quinto  $\leftarrow V$  positio consistit, inferius **.I.** organum erit. Sic plane finales particularum soni organo dominantur, et praecipue is, qui toni illius terminalis  $\downarrow$  et rector est.

Antequam particula eius  $\downarrow$  locum transcendat **A**, profecto organum legitimum silet; si non ultra quam ad secundum **B** supra terminalem pertingit, ibi similiter responso organi caret. Ubi vero trium spaciolorum  $\Gamma$  fuerit a terminali suo, ibi primus, qui terminali proximus **X** subest, quarta collatione organum dicit. Si vel sursum vel deorsum flectendo quattuor **A** a terminali fuerit

[Example missing.] Let there also be a fourth transposition to the fourth mode. [Example missing.] Thus, singing the single modes in this way, we shall find the same principle in each.

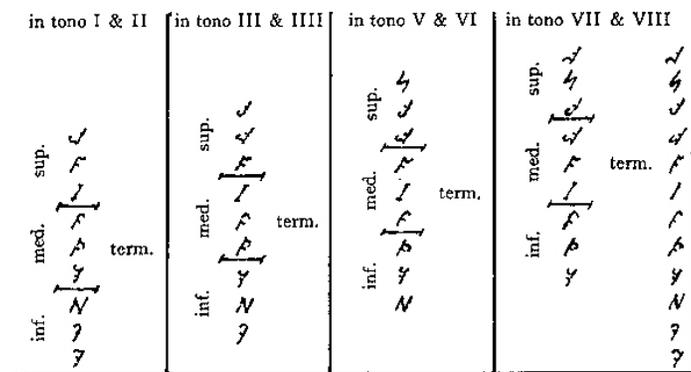
And since we have begun to say a little about diaphony or organum, and since it is adopted most honorably in ecclesiastical chants, let us explore the rationale of its nature more extensively. There are two things to organum, namely, region and space. Now the regions of organum are threefold: middle organum **.C-C.**, higher organum **.S.**, and lower organum **.I.** Any section suitable for organum has a middle **.C-C.**, higher **.S.**, or lower **.I.** [region]. Sections [are] colons  $\downarrow$  and commas  $\uparrow$  of its song, which are the major  $\downarrow$  and minor  $\uparrow$  distinctions from which song is woven together, in the same way that a speech [is composed] of members  $\downarrow$  and caesa  $\uparrow$ . In any mode, the major [distinctions]  $\downarrow$  land on its terminal sound, that is, the one that rules the chant, and the chant ends on that [terminal]. But the minor ones  $\uparrow$  do not end on the terminal, but rather on some other [step], either above or below it. In accordance with their regions, the final sounds of the sections give organum its regions, and [organum] observes their power as much as possible. For the terminal  $\downarrow$  and the one below it and the one above it make up middle organum **.C-C.**. But on the higher **.S.** and lower **.I.** of those three [sides], it is the three and three each that make organum.

This happens like so: when a section ends either on the terminal or on one of the two [sounds] next to it, then middle **.C-C.** organum resides there. But when it does not end on one of those, and the following section, and even the third, does not begin or end on them either, but rather on the third  $\rightarrow III$  or fourth  $\rightarrow IIII$  or fifth  $\rightarrow V$  above the terminal, then so long as these three modules are assigned to the higher **.S.** organum, it is not permissible to use the middle [region]. Likewise, when it ends on the third  $\leftarrow III$ , fourth  $\leftarrow IIII$  or fifth  $\leftarrow V$  position below the terminal  $\downarrow$ , there shall be lower **.I.** organum. Thus, plainly, the final sounds of sections control the organum, particularly the one which is the terminal  $\downarrow$  and ruler of the modus.

Before its section  $\downarrow$  moves beyond the region **A**, legitimate organum is indeed silent; if it does not extend further than the second **B** above the terminal, then likewise it receives no response from the organum. But when it should be [at a distance] of three spaces  $\Gamma$  from its terminal, then the first, which is the nearest **X** under the terminal, produces organum at the fourth. But if, going either upwards or downwards, it should be [at a distance] of

spaciorum, tunc aut alter ex praedictis aut utriusque organum faciunt, et terminalis V scilicet eique subherens X. Porro ubi quinque E aut sex Z spacia a terminali habuerit, quotis sonis in eadem particula ultra eum, qui quartus est a terminali, disceditur, totis sonis a terminali organum comitando sequitur. Ptingus vel modulus, qui terminali subiungitur, ut in arsi organi initium est, sic in thesi finis; ratum organum suo limite cohibet.

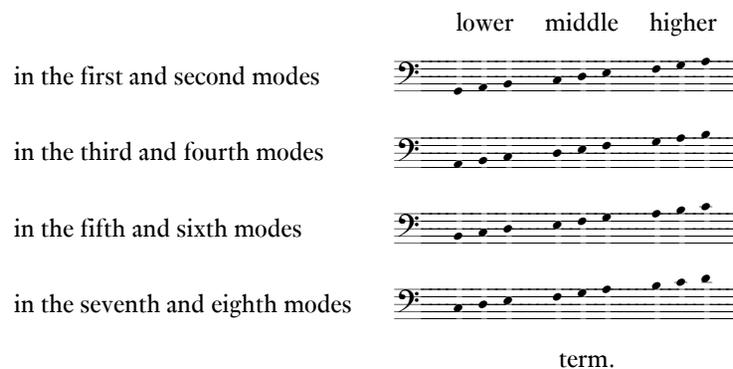
Non potest, ut iam dictum est, ab inferiori quolibet sono organum in elevando incipere, nec in descendendo <in> inferiorem deponi, quam qui in quovis toni genere proximus terminali subiacet, excepto, cum positio particulae in tercio ◀ vel quarto ◀ aut quinto sub terminali ▼ constiterit, quod inferioris .I. est organi. Haec prorsus est lex organi naturalis, a qua ubi deviatur, non regulare fit organum, sed abusivum. Auditum quoque, nisi usus perversior sensum hebetaverit, organum magis vel minus rectum discernitur, quia naturaliter magis delectat, quod magis naturali armonia coadunatum est. Et ut evidentius clareant, per tonos quattuor annotentur terna organi loca quattuor sonorum dispositiunculis.



Media autem sonorum series per singulos quattuor ordines medio **⋈-C** praesidet organo, superior superiori, infima inferiori. Describantur ad modum supradictum singulorum, quae nunc dicta sunt, exempla et, ubi medium **⋈-C.**, ubi superius inferiusve organum, praefixis his litteris designetur: **⋈-C.** **.S.** **.I.** Similiter caeterorum exemplis suae, quae et superius, litterae praefigantur,

four **▲** spaces from the final, then one of the aforesaid or both make organum, and the terminal **V**, that is, the next one under it **X**. Further, if it should be at five **E** or six **Z** spaces from the terminal, then by however many sounds in the same section it moves beyond the one that is fourth from the terminal, by so many sounds does the organum follow it as a companion. Just as the *phthongus* or *modulus* under the terminal is the beginning of organum in arsis, so it is the end in thesis; it confines the fixed organum with its boundary.

As has already been said, organum cannot, in any *genus* of mode, depart ascending or conclude descending on a sound lower than the one under the terminal, except when the section comes to a close on the third ◀ or fourth ◀ or fifth ◀ under the terminal ▼, which is of lower .I. organum. This, moreover, is the natural law of organum, and wherever there is a deviation from it, there the organum is not [made] according to rule but rather misused. And unless wayward use shall have blunted the sense, organum is judged [to be] more or less correct also by the hearing, for the more something is made one through natural harmony, the more it pleases by its nature. And in order that these things should be made clear in more ready fashion, let the three regions of organum be indicated in the four modes, by little dispositions of the four sounds.



The middle series of sounds in each of the four orders presides over middle organum, the higher over higher, and lowest over lower. Let the things that have now been said be shown, in the abovesaid manner, in the examples of single ones, and let it be shown where is middle **⋈-C.**, higher, or lower organum, with these letters **⋈-C.** **.S.** **.I.** In like fashion in examples of the others, above, let letters be prefixed, in order that the characters notated

ut exempli locum praenotati monstrant characteres <et> exempli ratio canendo exploretur.

Ergo in praesenti descriptione cernere est signo huius characteris **.C-C** . medium organum designari, et aut terminalem ibi esse sonum et distinctionem commaticam, quod nota ista portendit **↓**, aut alterum ex terminali **V** adiunctis, hacque figura colon **↑**, id est minus membrum, monstrari. Item uno spacio non amplius infra terminalem **V** sonum organum descendere, et, ne inferius dimittatur, signum istud **X** obstare. Ibi quoque idem soni, qui videlicet terminali subcoherent, qualiter terciis sonis supra terminalem primi organum respondeant, **‡** asterisco ostendi. Denique tibi nota terminales sonos, qui utrique in hoc exemplo, quod praemissum est, antequam toni mutatio fiat, soni tetrardi **ƒ** existunt, post mutationem vero, quae praesenti melo contingit, sonari archi **ƒ**.

His inspectis videbis non plus uno sono medium organum subtus terminalem, superius et inferius subtus finales suos rite posse deponi, ibique rati organi inicium constare et terminum. Rursus id organum, quod superius dicitur quodque hac figura **.S.** monstratur, ut superiori incedat loco nec particulae eius deponantur aut in terminalem aut in alterum a latere sibi coherentibus, qui medii organi loca sunt, sed potius in tercio quarto quinto supra terminalem, his notis ostenditur **III→**, **IIII→**, **V→**. At inferius organum, quod dicitur quodque **.I.** littera insinuat, ut inferiori loco incedat quam medium, nec ibi quoque membra vel particulae deponantur aut in terminalem aut in alterum a latere sibi coherentibus, sed potius in tercio **←III**, aut quarto **←IIII**, seu quinto **←V** infra terminalem, figurae istae, item, ubi tribus sonorum spaciis terminalis transscenditur **Γ**, ubi quaternis **Δ**, ubi quinis **E** vel amplius **Z**, hae litterae in signo sunt **Γ Δ E Z**.

earlier demonstrate the region of the abovewritten example, <and> the meaning of the example is explored by singing.

[Example shown below, after this translation.]

Therefore one must observe in the present example that middle organum is to be designated with the sign of this character **.C-C**, and that the terminal sound and commatic distinction must be there, which this mark signifies **↓**, or, alternatively, that another of those adjoining the terminal **V** [must be there], and that the colon, that is, the lesser member, be indicated with this figure **↑**. Also that the organum must not descend by more than one space below the terminal **V** sound, and that the sign **X** should prevent it from going any lower. Also, that one must indicate with an asterisk **‡** how those same sounds under the terminal should be the first to respond in organum to the third sounds above the terminal. Lastly, note for yourself that the terminal sounds, both of which were tetrardus sounds **ƒ** in the preceding example before there was a mutation of mode, sound the archous **ƒ** after the mutation which affects the present *melus*.

Having looked into these things you shall see that middle organum cannot properly go lower than one sound under the final, or higher and lower [organum] under their finals, and that the beginning and termination of correct organum must be there. Again that the kind of organum which is called higher and which is marked with this figure **.S.**, moves in a higher region and that its sections do not end on the terminal or on another next to it, which are the regions of middle organum, but rather on the third, fourth, and fifth above the terminal, indicated by these marks **III→**, **IIII→**, **V→**. And that lower organum, as it is called, and which the letter **.I.** signals, moves in the lower region rather than the middle, and that the members or sections do not conclude [in the middle], whether on the terminal or on either step next to it, but rather on the third **←III**, or fourth **←IIII**, or fifth **←V** below the terminal, those figures, again, and that where one climbs above the terminal by three spaces of sounds **Γ**, or four **Δ**, or five **E** or six **Z**, these letters are used as a sign: **Γ Δ E Z**.

Al le lu ia

<dupt> seq̄ sem̄

A dupt seq̄ sem̄

PE

seq̄ sem̄ Repete

X hic mutatio toni

E

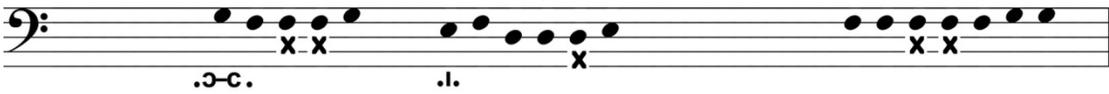
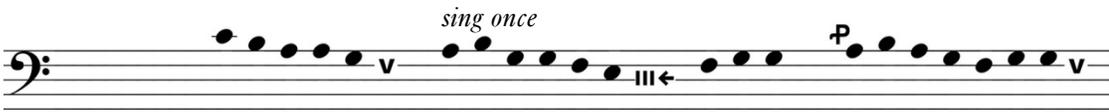
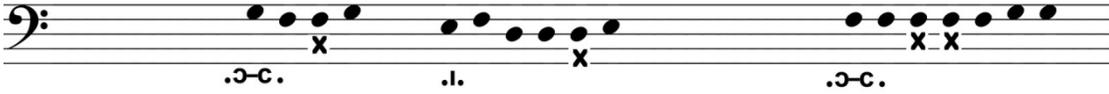
E dp

E



*Al le lu ia.*

- x** boundary note
- v** comma
- III←** underthird final
- Δ** fourth above terminal
- .ᵛ-c.** middle organum
- .l.** lower organum
- P** protus
- n** ?naturaliter
- E** fifth above terminal



*sing once*

*repeat*

.c-c.      .c-c.

- Γ third above terminal
- Z sixth above terminal
- ⚡ asterisk
- .s. higher organum
- ↑ minus membrum
- V overfifth final

Z      Δ *here a mutation of mode*

.s.

E      E      E      Γ

V      V      V

.c-c.      .c-c.

X      X      X      X

E      Γ

V      ↑      V

.c-c.      .c-c.

X      X



Alle lu ia

Ergo ipsentis descriptione cernere e signorum characteris. & c. mediu org designari q aut  
 tminale ibice sonu & distinctione. com mca q nota ista portendit. y. aut alter u ex  
 tminali adiunctis. hacq figura. A. colen id min mebru monstrari. hie uno spatio a plur  
 ista tminale sonu org descendere. ceteris us dimittat signu istud x ob stare. Ibi q q de sonu qu  
 deliquit tminali subcoherere. qut tuissonis sup tminale p mo organu respo x n deant. x.

Melbourne, State Library of Victoria, MS 091/B.63 (Phillipps 3345), fol. 55v  
<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/102876>

Et in eadem clarum pronos. in. annotatur tna organo loca  
an. sonorū disposita uncutis.

*Musica dicitur*

Ad cetia aut sonox scrip  
singulos in. ordines me  
dio p̄sict organo. superior  
superiori. infim inferiori. de  
scribunt admodū sup̄ die  
tū singulox. q̄ n̄ dicitā s̄e  
empla. ubi m̄clū. ubi su  
p̄is inferius. ut organū p̄  
fixis h̄is literis designet. &c. s. r.  
Similit̄ cetox exemplū s̄e q̄  
superius literis p̄figant. ut  
exempli locū p̄notati mon  
strent h̄aucteres. exempli  
n̄mo cavendo exploretur.  
al l r l v r



Brugge, Stadsbibliotheek, MS 531, fol. 61v  
<http://www.flandrica.be/items/show/899/>

