

## **EXPLANATION 1.2: MUSICAL MEDIEVAL WRITING. NEUMATIC NOTATION.**

### **1. THE TETRAGRAM. THE C CLEF. THE F CLEF.**

Gregorian Chant is written in a tetragram (4 parallel lines) because when music writing was developed the staff had not yet been invented. The invention of the four lines was established by Guido d'Arezzo in the 11<sup>th</sup> century as well as the first solfège method, to learn to read music with the notes drawn in the hand (Guidonian hand).

In one of these 4 lines the C clef (middle clef) is located to indicate the line through which the C note would pass. The clef can appear on any line, so that the line in which the clef is will indicate the place of the C note. From this note you can deduct the other notes. The C clef is placed to the left of each tetragram. It's like a "C" traversed by the line. The F clef was also used and looks like an F.

### **2. THE NEUMES.**

Medieval notes are written in neumatic notation (from the Greek: "pneuma": breath, air, spirit). This type of notation can be written in squared signs or in other forms, like lines and dots. This was according to the area in which it was used (Saint Galle, Messine, Aquitaine, etc.) and according to the historical evolution it had.

The square notation is the most similar to our present way of writing. It is also the notation in which Gregorian chant is written today. It consists of square signs representing the notes. Vertical neumes are read from the bottom up. This is: the lowest note of a neume is sung before the others. Examples of neumes are: punctum, virga, podatus, scandicus, clivis, clímacus, torculus, porrectus and salicus (dot, stick, foot, climb, slope, climax, twisted, spread, jump). Some neumes have one note, others have two or even three notes.

Other neumatic signs are:

1. The "custos": small note that is placed at the end of the tetragram. Indicates the first note that will appear in the next tetragram.
2. The "moll", is the modern flat: as a square "b". It was used in the B note to flatten it half a tone.
3. The "punctum-mora": a dot located to the right of the neuma. Indicates that the note lengthens.

### **3. COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS.**

1. **What type of "pentagram" does the Gregorian chant use?**
2. **Who invented the tetragram and the first solfège method? Which century was this?**
3. **In which line is the C clef placed in the tetragram?**
4. **What is the type of neumatic notation similar to the current modern one?**
5. **In what direction are vertical neumes read?**
6. **Name 4 square neumes.**
7. **What is "custos"?**
8. **What is the punctum-mora?**