

The Rhythm of the Chant

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THE RHYTHM OF THE CHANT

BY SYDNEY GREW

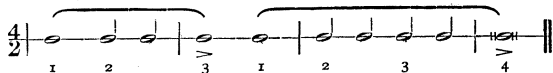
The serious intellectual and artistic defects of the singing of the psalms to the Anglican chant, come about because the rhythm of the chant-form is misunderstood. The analysis that is accepted, and that naturally has governed pointing, is wrong not only as regards abstract musical form but also as regards prose-rhythm. Each section of the double error would be enough to make chanting difficult and in result unsatisfactory; combined, the error makes good work impossible.

There is nothing defective in the Anglican chant as a form of music. It is intrinsically fluid, and—when analysed as below—quite as adaptable as the Gregorian. It is far more practicable than its elder companion, and is not likely ever to be put aside. But as at present analysed, the Anglican chant is neither fluid nor adaptable.

I offer a new explanation of the form, and suggest how the psalms should be pointed to make words and music congruent. I make the offer with considerable nervousness, because my idea, if adopted, means the scrapping of every pointed psalter in existence.

The chant has been variously explained as an eight-bar sentence with one bar missing, also as an 'irregular' form. Such explanations lead nowhere. A thing exists by virtue of what it is, not by virtue of what it would be were it something else; and there are no irregularities in art—the leaning tower of Pisa obeys mathematically exact laws. The chant truly is a seven-bar sentence, containing two clauses, the first three bars long, the last four. Such forms are not rare: they abound in Bach; Beethoven and Schubert use them freely, and Brahms uses them fairly readily. From Weber to Wagner they were rather infrequent.

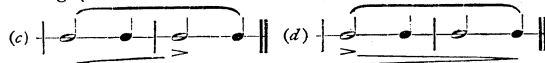
The chief error in the accepted analysis of the chant, however, is in respect of its rhythm, *i.e.*, its cadential character, or accentuations. It is explained as ending with a strong bar in each of the two clauses, which means that if barred to show the 'strong' bars it would stand thus:



The theory of rhythm applied in this analysis is that which was finally formulated by Riemann and adopted in England by Prout. It is that all rhythm is a progression forward; and that the last bar (or pulse) in a phrase is the point of strongest cadential power—in other words, that all rhythm is iambic (*a*), never trochaic (*b*):



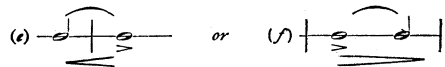
or, in other words again, that all cadential progressions (and each complete rhythmical unit of a piece is a 'cadence') are rising movements (*c*), never falling (*d*):



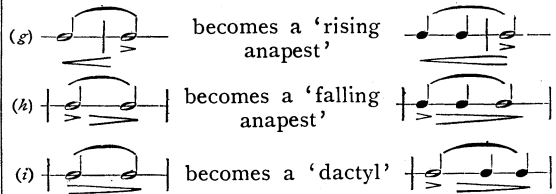
I have satisfied myself by a general study of rhythm that this theory is erroneous, and that falling rhythm is as natural and as largely used as rising. The chant contains both rising and falling motives.

A measure of rhythm is made up of either two or three pulses (or bars) of equal length. These particles are cadentially related according to the

rising or the falling power. The two-pulse measure may be either iambic (*a*) or trochaic (*b*); the three-pulse must resolve itself into either an iambus or a trochee, naturally with one of its particles twice as long as the other:



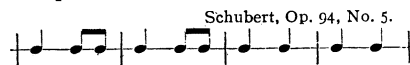
In the case of the two-pulse measure, either of the pulses may be broken into half-beat notes:



The falling anapest is the foundation of most modern rhythmical measures, and the rising anapest is the foundation of most four-pulse phrases or clauses:

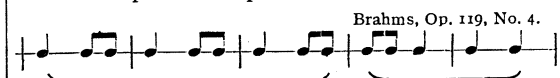


The dactyl is not often used as an independent movement in the measure or in the phrase. It is unstable and impulsive, requiring to steady itself with whole-pulse measures (*i.e.*, spondees):



Schubert, Op. 94, No. 5.

or with anapests and spondees:

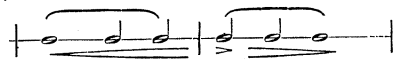


Brahms, Op. 119, No. 4.

One of the more frequent rhythmical patterns for the four-pulse clause is the alternation of dactyl and anapest, with the point of cadential stress striking on the beginning of the anapest:

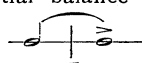



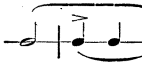
Now this is the rhythmic pattern of the latter half of the chant; and so the chant, barred to show its rhythm, stands thus in its second half:



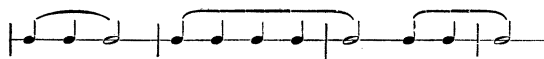
The pointing or scanning of the psalms should be so devised as to throw on the strong cadential point of the phrase the last strong syllable of the verse, be that syllable the last, or the last but one, two, three, or even four:

	for	he hath	done	marvel-lous	things.
build thou the	walls	of Je-	ru - sa -	lem.	
the day of tempt-	ation	in the	wil - der -	ness.	
and	cleanse	me from	my . .	sin.	
rejoice in the	strength of	our sal-	va - -	tion.	
visited and re-	deemed	his . .	peo - -	ple.	
we will go into the	house	of the	Lord. . .		
	O . . .		Christ. . .		

In general, the cadential balance of the three-pulse measure is iambic:  not trochaic:

 The long particle is generally made anapestic:  This three-pulse

measure comes regularly in Beethoven as an expansion of the movement of the music at the moment when a new section is entered upon (especially at the point of recapitulation). It appears regularly in all composers when the rhythm is to be changed from falling to rising:

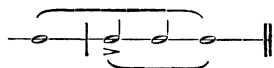


In nearly all such cases the cadential stress agrees with the long particle of the so-formed iambus, *i.e.*, with the first half-beat note of the resultant anapest:

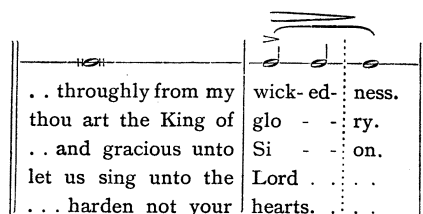


thereby converting that anapest into itself a falling rhythm, exactly as in the case of the regular *dactyl-anapest* phrase given above.

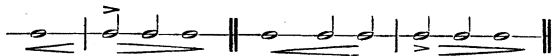
The fore-phrase of the chant is thus rhythmically iambic, with its 'long' rendered anapestic:



The text of the psalms should therefore be so scanned as to bring the last important syllable upon the beginning of the anapest:



If the organist will take a psalm and read it in flowing monotone, first fixing in mind the rhythm of the chant as thus accentuated and stressed:



he will find that with a little thought the ends of the half-verses fit into the rhythm as beautifully as in grave emotional reading the verses cadence themselves according to the natural rhythm of the speaking voice. He will find that new meanings and fresh poetic beauties and significances enter into the text, and also that the words move with a curious combination of rapidity and leisure. Particularly will he find that the innumerable false antitheses and illogical suggestions made by the present system of scanning and prolongation of syllable, are all abolished.

Mr. Harry Alexander Matthews, of Cheltenham, who has long been a prominent musician at Philadelphia, has received the honorary degree of Doctor of Music from the Lutheran University College of Muhlenburg, Allentown.

ELECTRIC ORGAN AT THE LETTISH CHURCH, LIBAU, RUSSIA

In our January issue we published a short note, with photograph, of the very large, old-fashioned organ in the Lutheran Church at Libau. We now give the specification and a short description of the wonderful electric organ built in 1913 in the Lettish Church in that town.

The specification is as follows:

ECHO ORGAN (In box)		SWELL I. (continued)	
	Ft.		Ft.
Super-Octave		Leiblich Gedakt ...	8
Octave		Harmonica...	8
Super-Pedal		Dolce ...	8
Bourdon ...	8	Voix Celeste	
Echo Gamba ...	8	Æoline ...	8
Vox Angelica ...	8	Flöte...	4
Spitzflöte ...	4	Piccolo ...	2
Campanella ...	4	Planifeir ...	8
Vox Humana ...	8	Oboe...	8
Tremolo		Trompette ...	8
		Clarion ...	4
		Bassoon ...	16
		Sub-Octave	
		Super-Octave	
PEDAL		SWELL II. (In box)	
	Ft.		Ft.
Principal Bass ...	16	Principal ...	4
Violone ...	16	Principal I. ...	8
Sub-Bass ...	16	Fugara ...	4
Leiblich ...	16	Principal II. ...	8
'Cello ...	8	Leiblich Gedakt ...	8
Octave ...	8	Salicional ...	8
Quintaton ...	10 3/4	Leiblich Gedakt ...	16
Posaune ...	16	Flautina ...	2
Super-Octave		Mixture ...	3 rks.
		Horn ...	8
		Clarinet ...	8
		Super-Octave	
		Sub-Octave	
GREAT		COUPLERS	
	Ft.		
Principal ...	8	Great to Pedal	
Gedakt ...	8	Swell I. to Pedal	
Gemshorn ...	8	Swell II. to Pedal	
Postunal Flöte ...	8	Echo to Pedal	
Flöte Harmonique ...	8	Swell I. to Great	
Principal ...	16	Swell II. to Great	
Quintaton ...	8	Swell I. to Swell II.	
Bourdon ...	16	Swell II. to Echo	
Hohlflöte ...	4	Echo to Swell	
Octave ...	4	Subs and Supers as above	
Octave ...	2		
Rausel Quint ...	2 3/4		
Mixture ...	3 rks.		
Cornett ...	8		
Trompette ...	8		
SWELL I. (In box)			
	Ft.		
Doppel Flöte ...	8	26 Combination pistons	
Quintaton ...	8	6 Composition pedals	
Fugara ...	8	120 Adjustable pistons	

The Echo organ is played from the top manual and the Great organ from the lowest of the four manuals, there being no Choir organ. In place of the ordinary draw-stops we find the knobs common to most electric organs, these being arranged on either side of the keys and placed to correspond with the manuals they control. Above each 'stop' are two small ivory draw-stops. These are about 1/4-in. diameter and draw to about 1/2-in., and control the stops over which they are placed. Their purpose is for preparing beforehand any special combination which may be desired, and which becomes operative as soon as a corresponding piston—placed underneath the keyboard—is pressed. The pistons and miniature draw-stops are coloured red, green, yellow, and white. The combination required is therefore brought into play by pressing the coloured piston underneath the keyboard which acts upon the stops already pre-arranged by the 'small' stops. The colour scheme is merely a means of selecting at a glance the combination which it is desired shall be used. There are in all a hundred and twenty of these small 'stops,' and at first the effect is distinctly bewildering: a mastery of their use however is essential to control the full resources of variety obtainable; infinite variety can be derived from them.

Immediately above and directly in the centre of the pedals is a revolving wheel about 16-in. wide,