DIMITRI CONOMOS

EXPERIMENTAL POLYPHONY, 'ACCORDING TO THE . . . LATINS', IN LATE BYZANTINE PSALMODY*

No-one has ever seriously questioned the exclusively monophonic character of medieval Byzantine ecclesiastical chant. The introduction of the drone, or *ison* singing, so familiar in contemporary Greek, Arabic, Romanian and Bulgarian practice, is not documented before the sixteenth century, when modal obscurity, resulting from complex and ambiguous chromatic alterations which appeared probably after the assimilation of Ottoman and other Eastern musical traditions, required the application of a tonic, or home-note, to mark the underlying tonal course of the melody.[1] Musicians in Constantinople and on Mount Athos were probably oblivious of the rise of polyphony in the West, particularly after the formal break between the two Churches in the eleventh century, which was preceded by a long period of increasing estrangement. And with the Latin occupation of a part of the Byzantine Empire between 1204 and 1261, there was a general distaste for and rejection of the culture of the 'Franks'. The remarks of a fifteenth-century Russian writer, attacking the Ferrara–Florence Council of 1438 and 1439, which attempted to establish a rapprochement between the Eastern and Western Churches, typify the prevailing negative Orthodox attitude to Western Christianity:

What have you seen of worth among the Latins? They do not even know

  1 The earliest notification of the custom appears to have been made in 1584 by the German traveller, Martin Crusius; see K. Levy, 'Byzantine Rite, Music of the', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie, 20 vols. (London, 1980), II, p. 561.

how to venerate the Church of God. They raise their voices as the fools, and their singing is a discordant wail. They have no idea of beauty and reverence in worship, for they strike trombones, blow horns, use organs, wave their hands, trample with their feet and do many other irreverent and disorderly things which bring joy to the devil.[2]

One can only wonder in which Florentine church the writer had such an experience!

Although popular resistance prevented the union from materialising, there were in Greece, at least until the year 1500, a small number of Latin sympathisers – among them the poet, theologian, calligrapher, singer, diplomat, scribe and priest Ioannes Plousiadenos, who later became Joseph, Bishop of Methone.[3] Born in Crete around 1429, he was too young to attend the Council of Ferrara–Florence, and later, like most Cretans, he was a strong anti-unionist. His opinions changed, however, once he had studied the acts of the Council during his formative years in Constantinople, and after 1454 he became one of the twelve Byzantine priests who officially supported the union in the celebrated debates that followed the Council meetings. As a result, he and his companions were generally boycotted as religious and national traitors. In an encyclical dialogue he tried in vain to justify the group's position, and eventually they had to ask for financial aid from Venice and the pope. Cardinal Bessarion selected Ioannes as 'head of the Churches' (ἄρχων τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν) in the Orient and 'vice-protopapas' (c. 1466/7 – c. 1481). He spent considerable time in Italy, chiefly in Venice, employed in copying manuscripts from 1472 to c. 1492, when he was elected to the See of Methone in the Peloponnese and took the name 'Joseph'. In 1497 he visited Venice again and in 1498 he chanted the Gospel in Greek, and in the Greek manner, at the Papal Mass in

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[2] Quoted in N. Zernov, *Moscow, the Third Rome* (London, 1937), p. 37.

[3] The following information on Ioannes (Joseph) Plousiadenos has been gathered from numerous sources, including L. Petit, 'Joseph de Méthone', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. A. Vacant and E. Magenot, VIII (Paris, 1925), cols. 1526–9; G. Hofmann, 'Wie stand es mit der Frage der Kircheneinheit auf Kreta im XV. Jahrhundert?', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 10 (1944), pp. 106–11; N. Tomadakis, Μιχαὴλ Καλοφρενᾶς Κρής, Μητροφάνης Β′ καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὴν ἕνωσιν τῆς Φλωρεντίας ἀντίθεσις τῶν Κρητῶν, Ἐπετερὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντιῶν Σπουδῶν, 21 (1951), pp. 110–39, esp. pp. 136–9; M. Candal, 'La "Apología" del Plusiadeno a favor del Concilio de Florencia', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 21 (1955), pp. 36–57; M. Manoussakas, 'Recherches sur la vie de Jean Plousiadénos (Joseph de Méthone) (1429?–1500)', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 17 (1959), pp. 28–51; S. G. Papadopoulos, Ἰωσήφ, Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ ἠθικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία, VII (Athens, 1965), pp. 117–19.

Rome. He was about to visit Crete in 1500 when he was informed of the impending Turkish attack on Methone; he hastened to see and, cross in hand, was killed there by the onrushing Turks.

Plousiadenos is best known for his constant support of the union of Florence, notably in his *Defensio synodi Florentinae*, a patristic defence of the five main elements in the decree of union, written after 1455 and often printed under the name 'Gennadios Scholarios'.[4] He propagated his admiration for the Roman Church in the *Sermo apologeticus pro synodo Florentina adv. Marcum Ephesium*, the *Disceptatio de differentius inter Graecos et Latinos*, and in poetry, homilies and other minor works, most of which are published in Patrologia Graeca.[5] For example, there exist by him two parahymnological kanōnes, one entitled 'Kanōn to St Thomas Aquinas' (Κανών εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Θωμᾶν τὸν 'Αγχίνουν) which glorifies the great Catholic theologian, and the other, 'Kanōn for the Eighth Ecumenical Council which assembled in Florence' (Κανών τῆς ὀγδόης συνόδου τῆς ἐν Φλωρεντίᾳ γενομένης). The latter is modelled on the metrical and rhythmical patterns of one of the Resurrection kanōnes in mode 4 plagal by St John of Damascus, but it was hardly likely to have been used in the Greek Church because of its pro-henotic sentiments, triumphantly celebrating the outcome of the Council of Florence at which Orthodox acceptance of the 'filioque' phrase in the Credo was allegedly secured:

'Ωδή III
Εὐσεβείας οἱ πύργοι, ἐκκλησιῶν πρόμαχοι
    καὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ποιμένες [τε] καὶ δάσκαλοι,
    οἱ θεολόγοι λαμπρῶς ἐκ το[ῦ] πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ τε
    εὐσεβῶς ἐκήρυξαν τὸ π[νεῦμα] σήμερον.

'Ωδή V
[Τὴν σεβάσμιον τ]αύτην [καὶ ἁγίαν σύνοδον]
    πιστῶς γεραίρομεν, τὴν ἐν [Φλωρεντί]ᾳ

4   The work's full title is 'Ερμηνεία ὑπὲρ τῆς ἁγίας καὶ οἰκουμενικῆς ἐν Φλωρεντίᾳ συνόδου, ὅτι ὀρθῶς ἐγ ένετο ὑπεραπολογουμένου τῶν τῷ ὅρῳ αὐτῆς πέντε κεφαλαίων; it was published as the work of Gennadios, ed. J.-P. Migne, in Patrologia Graeca 159 (Paris, 1857), cols. 1109–393.
5   'Απολογία εἰς τὸ γραμμάτιον κὺρ Μάρκου τοῦ Εὐγενικοῦ . . . ἐν ᾧ 'εκτίθεται τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δόξαν, ἥν εἶχε περὶ τῆς ἐν Φλωρεντίᾳ ἁγίας καὶ ἱερᾶς Συνόδου, ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 159, cols. 1024–93; Διάλεξις . . . περὶ τῆς διαφορᾶς τῆς οὔσης μέσον Γραικῶν καὶ Λατίνων, ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 159, cols. 960–1024.

ἱερῶς συναχθεῖσαν ἐν πν[εύματι
καὶ τὰς] ἐκκλησίας διερρηγμένας ἀν[ιάτως]
ἐν ἑνώσει αὐτὰς κατευθύνασαν.

Ode III

Towers of piety, defenders of Churches, shepherds and teachers of the universe, today the theologians proclaimed in piety that the Spirit clearly proceeds from both Father and Son.

Ode V

We loyally honour this venerable and holy Council devoutly assembled in Florence by the Spirit, who has guided the irremediably sundered Churches to unity.[6]

Now for the first time, evidence has been discovered of Plousiadenos's involvement in musical composition to serve the same end. In an attempt to introduce Western polyphony into the Greek Church, Plousiadenos wrote at least one, or possibly two, communion verses in a primitive kind of two-voice discant. Both pieces are preserved in a late-sixteenth-century anthology from the Monastery of Docheiariou on Mount Athos. The first, a setting in mode 4 plagal of Psalm 148.1, 'Praise the Lord from the heavens', the communion for Sundays (Example 1), is preceded by the remark 'A double melody according to the chant of the Latins' (Διπλοῦν μέλος κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἐλατίνων [sic] ψαλτικήν). It is written in close score, with both lines of notation – the upper voice in black ink and the lower in red – inscribed above the text. The second is a setting of John 14.9 with 6.56: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father and he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him' (Example 2a), the communion antiphon for Mid-Pentecost.[7] Following a different

6 The kanōn to St Thomas Aquinas is published in R. Cantarella, 'Canone greco inedito di Giuseppe vescovo di Methone (Giovanni Plousiadeno: sec xv) in onore di San Tommaso d'Aquino', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 4 (1934), pp. 145–85, see pp. 151ff. That for the Eighth Ecumenical Council, ed. Migne, Patrologia Graeca 159, cols. 1095–101, forms part of a discussion of this genre of Greek medieval literature in K. Mitsakis, 'Byzantine Parahymnography', *Studies in Eastern Chant*, v, ed. D. Conomos (New York, forthcoming).

7 MS Docheiariou 315, fols. 66ᵛ–67ʳ. These unusual items are noted in G. Stathis, *Τὰ χειρόγραφα βυζαντινῆς μουσικῆς. Ἅγιον Ὄρος*, ι (Athens, 1975), p. 352; Stathis also provides excellent colour facsimiles on pp. 350–1. Although only the Mid-Pentecost communion is directly attributed to Plousiadenos, Stathis is obviously correct in assuming that the Sunday chant, immediately preceding and in the same unique style, is the work of the same hand. Plousiadenos's musical compositions are preserved in many liturgical anthologies (for example, Mount Sinai, St Katherine's Monastery, MSS 311, 312; Lesbos, Leimonos Monastery, MSS 238, 243, 249, 255; Athens, National Library of Greece, MSS

Experimental polyphony in late Byzantine psalmody

Example 1 Ioannes Plousiadenos, Psalm 148.1; Mount Athos, Monastery of Docheiariou, MS 315, fol. 66ᵛ

Rubric: Διπλοῦν μέλος κατὰ τὴν τῶν ἐλατίνων ψαλτικήν. ('A double melody according to the chant of the Latins.')

886, 893; etc.) but these are the only known examples of polyphony by him. See V. Beneshevich, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum graecorum qui in monasterio S. Catharinae in Monte Sina asservantur*, I (St Petersburg, 1911), pp. 165–632; A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη*, I (Constantinople, 1884), pp. 115, 116, 118, 119; I. Sakkelion, *Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς ἐθνικῆς βιβλιοθήκης* (Athens, 1892), pp. 160–1.

Example 2 Ioannes Plousiadenos, John 14.9, 6.56; Mount Athos, Monastery of Docheiariou, MS 315, fol. 67ʳ

format, the scribe has written the music out in two separate voice parts; the part for the lower voice is entitled 'to keimenon' (τὸ κείμενον = 'the text') and is in mode 4 plagal, and that for the upper voice is entitled 'to tenōri' (τὸ τενώρει = 'the tenor') and is in mode 4 authentic – a curious reversal of normal nomenclature.[8] (For convenience this has been rewritten in close score as Example 2b.) Below this arrangement the scribe has noted: 'This verse is chanted by two domestikoi[9] together; one sings the keimenon and the other the tenōri.' (Ὁ αὐτὸς στίχος ψάλλεται ὑπὸ δύο δομεστίκων ὁμοῦ· καὶ λέγει ὁ εἷς τὸ κείμενον καὶ ὁ ἄλλος τὸ τενώρει.)

[8] But see note 26, below.
[9] A domestikos is the precentor in a Byzantine choir; see K. Rallis, Περὶ τοῦ ἀξιώματος τῶν δομεστίκων, Πρακτικὰ τῆς ἀκαδημίας ἀθηνῶν, 12 (1937), pp. 294–6.

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(b)

τὸ τενώρει

mode 4 authentic

τὸ κείμενον

mode 4 plagal

Rubric: Ὁ αὐτὸς στίχος ψάλλεται ὑπὸ δύο δομεστίκων ὁμοῦ· καὶ λέγει ὁ εἷς τὸ κείμενον καὶ ὁ ἄλλος τὸ τενώρει. ('This verse is chanted by two domestikoi together; one sings the keimenon and the other the tenōri.')

Plousiadenos was not the only Latinophile musician among the Greeks. In 1971 Michael Adamis announced his discovery of two Sunday communions on fols. 328ʳ and 216ᵛ of Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 2401 (fifteenth century), composed in a very similar style of experimental polyphony to that of Plousiadenos by the lampadarios Manuel Gazēs.[10] The first (Example 3) carries the rubric: 'This communion is sung [by] two [chanters]; one [follows]

[10] M. Adamis, 'An Example of Polyphony in Byzantine Music of the Late Middle Ages', *Report of the Eleventh International Musicological Society Congress, Copenhagen, 1971*, ed. H. Glahn, S. Sørensen and P. Ryom (Copenhagen, 1972), ii, pp. 737–47.

Example 3   Manuel Gazēs, Psalm 148.1; Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 2401, fol. 328ʳ

Rubric: Τὸ τοιοῦτον κοινωνικὸν ψάλλοντο δύο· ὁ εἷς τὰ μαῦρα εἰς ἦχον δ´· ὁ δὲ ἄλλος τὰ κόκκινα εἰς ἦχον πλ. δ´. ('This communion is sung by two chanters; one follows the black neumes in mode 4 authentic, and the other the red neumes in mode 4 plagal.')

the black [neumes] in mode 4 [authentic], and the other the red [neumes] in mode 4 plagal.' (Τὸ τοιοῦτον κοινωνικὸν ψάλλοντο [sic] δύο· ὁ εἷς τὰ μαῦρα εἰς ἦχον δ´· ὁ δὲ ἄλλος τὰ κόκκινα εἰς ἦχον πλ. δ´.) The second (Example 4) bears the simple statement: 'The red [neumes are] in the fourth plagal [mode].' (Τὸ κόκκινον εἰς τὸν πλάγιον τοῦ τετάρτου.)[11] In the proceedings of the Copenhagen congress, Adamis published a facsimile of the piece given here as Example 3, with a transcription and an analysis, but for the purposes of this discussion I have taken the liberty of provid-

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[11]   The first hymn (Example 3) is also transmitted in Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 904, again of the fifteenth century, on fols. 241ᵛ–242ʳ, but without attribution. A rubric merely states that 'The red [neumes] are to be sung in the fourth plagal [mode] and the black [neumes] in the fourth authentic [mode].' (Τὰ κόκκινα λέγομεν εἰς ἦχον πλ. δ´· τὰ δεὲ μαυρα εἰς ἦχον δ´.) Adamis misread κόκκινον for κοινωνικὸν in Athens 2401 and consequently mistranslated the rubric; see Adamis, 'An Example of Polyphony', p. 783, and n. 3.

Example 4   Manuel Gazēs, Psalm 148.1; Athens, National Library of Greece, MS 2401, fol. 216ᵛ

Rubric: Τὸ κόκκινον εἰς τὸν πλάγιον τοῦ τετάρτου. ('The red neumes are in the fourth plagal mode.')

ing my own transcriptions of both chants by Gazēs, the first modifying the version of Adamis only in small details.

Very little is known about this fifteenth-century Byzantine composer. The manuscripts simply refer to him as a lampadarios (that is, leader of the left-hand choir),[12] but there is no mention of the city or church in which he sang. There are, however, two possible Western connections. First, in MS 244 of the Leimonos Monastery on Lesbos, a sixteenth-century musical anthology, there is preserved a doxology composed by Manuel Gazēs which was commissioned, it says, by Leonardo, the overlord of Santa Mavra.[13] Santa Mavra was the name given to the island of Lefkas in the mid-fifteenth century, and of the three overlords named Leonardo who ruled there, it must have

[12] See K. Rallis, Περὶ τοῦ ἀξιώματος τοῦ λαμπαδαρίου, Πρακτικὰ τῆς ᾿ακαδημίας ᾿αθηνῶν, 9 (1934), pp. 259–61.
[13] Δοξολογία ἐποιήθη διὰ ζητήσεως τοῦ Αὐθέντου τῆς ἁγίας Μαύρας κὺρ Λεονάρδου παρὰ κυροῦ Μανουὴλ Γαζῆ; see Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη, p. 117.

been Leonardo II of the family of Tocco who requested this work from Gazēs; he was a patron of the arts and a friend of the Byzantine emperor.[14] The second possible connection with the West is evident in Gazēs's two settings of the Credo of the Mass – one complete and one partial.[15] While it is known that Greeks occasionally sang the Creed before the ninth century, it is generally assumed that in medieval times, as today, it was simply recited by the whole congregation. Gazēs's settings in mode 4 authentic and mode 1 plagal are virtually without precedent in the East and it may be that they were composed under Western musical influence.[16] But neither the doxology nor the Creed was set polyphonically: Gazēs, like Plousiadenos, accorded this innovation solely to the psalmody of the communion antiphon. As in the first example by Plousiadenos, Gazēs here used two signatures and two inks – black for the upper voice and red for the lower – presumably to avoid confusion. Taken together the four communion pieces constitute remarkable and unique evidence of attempts by musicians of the Greek East to compose in Western traditions.

The first important question to be answered concerning the four pieces by Plousiadenos and Gazēs is what mode they are in. The rubrics suggest, and Adamis believes, that they are in both mode 4 authentic and mode 4 plagal. But this is surely not the case since all four pieces, though polyphonic, are not contrapuntal but homophonic and homorhythmic. Except for some very isolated instances of contrary motion, the two melodic lines in each piece travel along identical paths and are, for all practical purposes, the same. And from what is known of Byzantine modal theory it is clear that it is not pitch that determines the deployment of a particular and characteristic set of melodic formulae. Therefore, when the scribes indicated mode 4 authentic and mode 4 plagal, they were merely informing the two singers that their starting notes were a fifth apart.[17] My belief is

[14] For these details I have relied on the results of the splendid investigations carried out by Adamis: see, 'An Example of Polyphony', pp. 738–9.

[15] Mount Athos, Great Lavra, MS Θ 162 ('1788'), fol. 339ᵛ, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS sup. gr. 1171 (seventeenth century), fol. 51ᵛ, respectively. The second setting begins from the article, 'And in the Holy Spirit . . .'.

[16] For further details on the music of the Creed in the East, see K. Levy, 'The Byzantine Sanctus and its Modal Tradition in East and West', Annales Musicologiques, 6 (1958–63), pp. 40–2.

[17] In the case of Example 1, the first red neume directs a beginning from the fourth below the theoretical home-note of mode 4 plagal.

that all the compositions are essentially in the fourth authentic, and I base this on the following grounds. First, whenever variant musical readings are inserted by Byzantine scribes, they are almost exclusively written in red ink. In the transmissions of Gazēs's and Plousiadenos's communions, all except Example 2, with its separate voice-parts, have the authentic in black ink above the red plagal line. Second, medial signatures, when used, without exception apply to the upper (authentic) line of the musical notation, as in Example 1, line 3, and Example 2a, line 1. Third, the construction of the chants compares favourably with other melismatic communions of the fourth mode already examined by this author, and shares many features with their common profile.[18] Fourth, none of the chants resembles the psalmodic repertory of communions in the fourth plagal mode. And last, it is extremely unlikely that a Byzantine composer, writing virtually the same chant a fifth apart would expect two performers to execute it simultaneously in two different modes, and extremely unlikely that it could in fact be done.

It is, at the same time, erroneous to believe that the lower voice actually 'accompanies' the upper. Each is a fully self-contained melody, the two quite obviously written together, both operating within a rudimentary tonal logic. For example, the note g' is never placed above c', but in the upper octave the fifth $c''-g''$ and the fourth $d''-g''$ both occur. Certain 'root' intervals, such as $g'-d''$, are usually emphasised with long, repeated notes, and the only octave is on D. While the interval of the fifth is the most common, the fourth and unison are also well represented, and to a much lesser extent are thirds and seconds, which are used mostly as passing-notes to the perfect intervals. Sixths are rare, there is one seventh (in Example 1 on the fourth note on the syllable χύ- near the beginning of line 3), and the matter of the augmented fourth is still open to question. Steps away from the fifth are frequently effected by oblique motion, and part-crossing is very common. In addition, there are certain curiosities which deserve to be noted, such as the consecutive thirds in Example 1 (marked *), the consecutive seconds in Examples 3 and 4 (marked +), and the scribes' general indifference to the placing of dynamic markings in the red neumatic line.

The second and most provocative question to be raised is whether

[18] See D. Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle* (Washington, forthcoming).

these four compositions resemble the kind of polyphony sung in late-fifteenth-century Italy. One is often inclined to think that polyphony of a much more sophisticated and artistic style was the norm in Italy, but several scholars have provided evidence of the widespread application of *biscantare* treatment to the traditional monody, and have emphasised that 'old-fashioned', two-voice writing *(cantus planus binatim)* was maintained in Italy throughout the Quattrocento. 'As recent research has shown', writes Kurt von Fischer, 'certain peripheral areas, even in Italy, also maintained old-fashioned organal elements until late in the fifteenth century.'[19] More specifically, Nino Pirrotta states: 'The kind of polyphony often called "archaic" or "peripheral" (although found in relatively recent and central sources) belongs to the normal practice of polyphony in most churches, large and small, of the Western world. On the other hand, the kind of artistic polyphony we have become used to considering standard for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sacred music is but the valuable expression of a special elite.'[20] These remarks are not meant to deny the existence of artistic polyphony in Italian towns, nor do they contend against the possibility that it was even performed fairly frequently. Rather, they suggest that this more sophisticated style was one kind of music among many; for it is clearly evident from the well-known surveys of sacred music of the Italian Trecento and Quattrocento that the repertory was stylistically very complex, with archaic and modern pieces appearing side by side.[21] The more primitive style was rarely written down precisely because it was common, improvised and orally transmitted.

[19]   K. von Fischer, 'Organal and Chordal Style in Renaissance Sacred Music: New and Little-Known Sources', *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: a Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. J. La Rue (New York, 1966), pp. 173–82, esp. p. 179.

[20]   N. Pirrotta, 'Church Polyphony Apropos of a New Fragment at Foligno', *Studies in Music History: Essays for Oliver Strunk*, ed. H. S. Powers (Princeton, 1968), pp. 113–26, esp. p. 126.

[21]   See, for example, F. A. Gallo and G. Vecchi, eds., *I più antichi monumenti sacri italiani*, Monumenta Lyrica Medii Aevi Italica, ser. III, *Mensurabilia* 1 (Bologna, 1968); and K. von Fischer, and F. A. Gallo, eds., *Italian Sacred Music*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 12 (Monaco, 1976). The entire subject has been widely researched and the reader is referred to the bibliographical notes in K. Levy, 'Italian Duecento Polyphony: Observations on an Umbrian Fragment', *Rivista Italiana di Musicologica*, 10 (1975), p. 11, n. 10, and in A. Ziino, 'Polifonia "arcaica" e "retrospettiva" in Italia centrale: nuove testimonianze', *Acta Musicologica*, 50 (1978), p. 193, n. 1. See also, F. A. Gallo, 'Cantus planus binatim: polifonia primitiva in fonti tardive', *Quadrivium*, 7 (1966), pp. 79–90; G. Cattin, 'Church Patronage of Music in Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources and Texts*, ed. I. Fenlon (Cambridge, 1981). pp. 22–3; and M. L. Martinez, *Die Musik des frühen Trecento* (Munich, 1963), pp. 117–28.

But Plousiadenos and Gazēs, obviously delighted by a sound that was for them both new and engaging, were compelled, for one reason or another, to compose these pieces using the late Byzantine neumatic and modal systems. In so doing they were confronted with serious notational problems, for the Eastern neumes were never designed to render accurately two concurrent lines of music (see below). The preservation of their chants in Eastern manuscripts is certainly valuable for the history of Western music since they constitute independent evidence of a tradition of improvised practice about which little is known. Plousiadenos's settings may reflect the style of the sacred music that he heard during his twenty-year stay in Venice before 1492, during which time he was made spiritual director of a small Greek colony in that city.[22] Knowledge of fifteenth-century Venetian church music is very meagre, owing to the scantiness and vagueness of the relevant sources; for St Mark's none exists, even though it must have been the focal point of music-making in Venice. It seems certain, however, that elsewhere in the city church music had progressed very little beyond simple choral plainsong or primitive polyphony, occasionally with organ accompaniment.[23]

Given the fact of the prevalence of 'archaic' polyphony in Italy, is it possible to be certain that Gazēs and Plousiadenos preserved, even remotely, the musical style that they heard in Latin services? One could, of course, argue very persuasively along these lines if it could be established that the music by these Greeks was simply appropriated from Western prototypes. But so far there is no evidence that this is the case, and I am doubtful that any will come to light. For the sequence of intervals and the overall shape of the four examples do not belong to Western traditions, unless their original appearance has been excessively distorted. But a small number of comparisons can be made with the few 'non-art' pieces that have been discovered in Italian sources. Some (which were presented in facsimile by F. Albert Gallo and Giuseppe Vecchi in 1968)[24] are, admittedly, difficult to date, but they do demonstrate that music of this kind was

[22] Docheiariou 315, although of the late sixteenth century, refers to Plousiadenos as Ioannes not Joseph. This may mean that the works were written before 1492, at which time he was ordained to the See of Methone and given his new name.

[23] See D. Arnold, 'Music at a Venetian Confraternity in the Renaissance', *Acta Musicologica*, 37 (1965), p. 62; G. Cattin, 'Formazione e attività delle cappelle polifoniche nelle cattedrali: la musica nelle città', *Storia cultura Veneta*, III (forthcoming).

[24] See Gallo and Vecchi, eds., *I più antichi monumenti sacri italiani*.

often in only two parts – sometimes in score or with one part
coloured, sometimes with separate parts, invariably in a slightly
melismatic note-against-note style. Both voices are written in the
same range with frequent interchange of parts, and some parallel
motion in fifths, sixths and sevenths can be detected. In two striking
cases, both from the fifteenth century, noted by Kurt von Fischer,
the liturgical melody appears as the upper sounding voice.[25] All of
this tallies well with the Byzantine examples. Is this, then, the
tradition that influenced Plousiadenos to name the higher voice of
Example 2 'to tenōri'? Or was he merely confused by new musical
terminology?[26] At all events, despite the paucity of the documentary
evidence, I believe that the pieces by Plousiadenos and Gazēs are a
musical reflection, however imperfect, of fifteenth-century Italian,
possible Venetian, practice. At least the examples show what two
Eastern musicians understood as church music 'according to the . . .
Latins', and they clearly suggest that the austere musical reforms of
Pope Eugene IV were being put into practice in the second half of the
fifteenth century.[27]

In matters of notation, these polyphonic experiments assume
broader and more significant interest. It is important to recall that
normally communion psalmody is sung by a choir; but, quite excep-
tionally, the rubrics for these four Latin-style chants are absolutely
unambiguous: the melodies are exclusively designed for soloistic
performance.[28] The transcriptions reveal that neither Gazēs's nor

[25] K. von Fischer, 'The Sacred Polyphony of the Italian Trecento', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 100 (1973–4), pp. 149–50, esp. exx. 2, 3.
[26] Perhaps Plousiadenos was not as bewildered as at first sight he may appear to have been. His use of the term 'tenōri' may represent a Hellenisation of the title 'tenorista', which by the late fifteenth century was given to a highly skilled singer in the West who was able to perform not merely the lower lines of polyphony but also the top parts. It could even be given to an individual who functioned as the leader of the chant (domestikos). See D. Fallows, 'Tenor', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, XVIII, p. 688. As for the term 'keimenon': this may represent the expression 'res facta', which Johannes Tinctoris used in Chapters 20 and 22 of his *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (1477) to distinguish between written counterpoint and the improvised style, which he labelled 'super librum cantare'. See C. Wright, 'Performance Practices at the Cathedral of Cambrai', *Musical Quarterly*, 64 (1978), p. 314, and nn. 37, 40.
[27] These reforms contributed decisively to the sharp decline of fashionable and progressive polyphonic invention in Italy after the Council of Ferrara–Florence. A new emphasis given to plainchant or, at best, polyphony strictly dependent upon it was accompanied by a condemnation of the artificiality of polyphonic practice, and it may well be that the Byzantine composers were observers of this renewal of enthusiasm for simplicity in sacred music. See N. Pirrotta, 'Musical and Cultural Tendencies in Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 19 (1966), p. 135.
[28] The performance of polyphony by one or two soloists was not at all uncommon in the

Plousiadenos's compositions were recorded in an entirely satisfac-
tory manner. It seems clear that the soloists must have relied heavily
on free rhythm in order to perform the pieces intelligibly. It is
reasonable to assume that the two chanters, probably singing from
the same book and reading from score, would be sufficiently skilled
to follow the scribes' intentions simply by observing the proximity of
the neumes. And in this rather halting musical style, with its fre-
quent long notes and short motivic runs, keeping together would not
have constituted a difficulty. The extraordinary bravado finish of
Example 4 must have occasioned some comment. At the heart of the
matter is the problem of the unpitched, staffless, diastematic, Byzan-
tine neumatic system, totally unsuited for part-writing and never
intended for that purpose. Byzantine notation is quintessentially a
notation for monophonic performance, and to impose upon it an
additional musical dimension is to destroy its fundamental monodic
capability. Little wonder, then, that the pieces were given to soloists
rather than to the choirs; little wonder, too, that they did not enjoy
wide and lasting transmissions.

Both the Byzantine composers had to face the unprecedented
problem of rhythmic alignment; they had to come to terms with
rhythmic duration at two sonic levels, and the few departures from
homorhythm may be able to provide details of the notation hitherto
unknown. For example, under the bracket marked 'a' in Example 3,
the three descending black neumes with the *gorgon* (Γ; meaning
'accelerate') are placed against, and consequently made equal to, a
single red neume. In Western musical terms, presuming that the
scribe has transmitted accurately, this could mean that the three
upper notes be executed as a triplet of semiquavers. But the question
of scribal accuracy is a crucial one, and in several places it is obvious
that the composers or scribes were not absolutely thorough in their
rhythmic groupings. The four-note run, marked 'b' in Example 3, is
a case in point because it defies acceptable interpretation no matter
how the *gorgon* is understood. Note, also, the missing *klasma* (dot) in
the upper part under the bracketed 'c' in the same example. Rhyth-
mically, a valid explanation can be made for 'd', where the black

cathedral churches of Italian towns. According to Nino Pirrotta, 'three or four was a
maximum sometimes reached but seldom sustained' ('Musical and Cultural Tendencies',
p. 129). See also Pirrotta, 'Rome', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, xvi,
p. 155; and F. d'Accone, 'Florence', *ibid.*, vi, pp. 645–6.

group – *diplē* (*e″* crotchet) plus two *hyporroa* (*d″–c″–b′–a′* semiquavers) – is pitted against the red group – *klasma* (*a′* dotted quaver) plus *hyporroön* (*g′–f′* semiquavers) plus *diplē* (*a′* crotchet). But musically this makes little sense since such an interpretation would destroy the consistent intervallic parallelism of the two constituent melodies. The grouping marked 'f', however, seems more satisfactory, although the missing neumes at 'e' and 'g' (the latter in Example 4) create further problems. It would seem that the only reasonable explanations of these enigmas are the ones that have already been offered. A satisfactory performance could only be provided by well-rehearsed soloists who knew when and how to make modifications and allowances, given the limited capability of the notation for this style of music.

Apart from these isolated and independent examples, the experiment with Latin polyphony in the East had run its course, and inevitably so. It was not until several decades later that the choral *ison* or drone singing was introduced into Greek church music, marking a fundamental change from the centuries-old monophonic tradition. But there was both a loss and a gain. For if the experiment failed, it has nevertheless provided the modern scholar with more information about Byzantine musical notation than was ever available before. It has also allowed him the possibility of a glimpse into the obscure history of fifteenth-century Italian sacred polyphony.

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