

WORDS WITH WINGS

Gregorian Chant for Children in Twenty Lessons

Wilko Brouwers

Translated and adapted
from the Dutch
by Arlene Oost-Zinner

Instructor Edition

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FOREWORD

Introduction for the conductor/instructor

Is it a good idea to sing Gregorian chant with children? Isn't the Latin language too removed from a child's world of experience? Aren't the complexities of word and note symbiosis, free rhythm, and modality just a few levels too high for a child's comprehension? When you start singing chant with children, you will have your answer: they love it!

It is true that some of the Gregorian repertoire is too complicated for children. Some is even too difficult for a schola of adult singers, and ought to be reserved for well-trained soloists. But if you introduce Gregorian chant to children in a carefully considered and methodical way, you will experience how naturally this music speaks to their musical imagination.

Of course we have an excellent example of this carefully considered and methodical way in the Ward method, developed by the American music pedagogue Justine Bayard Ward (1879–1975). Based on Gregorian chant, its rhythm and its modal structures, it is a music method truly unique in the history of mankind. The Ward method, however, is an elaborate and closed system that only works when it is practiced in a daily classroom situation.

I wrote this book especially for children's choirs who only rehearse once or twice a week. The twenty lessons described in this book will provide them with their first introduction to the world of Gregorian chant. If after these twenty lessons the children want more, my main goal will have been achieved: their love for Gregorian chant will have been awakened.

I would like to comment, too, on the importance of letting children experience Gregorian chant as the oldest and most authentic music of the Roman Catholic Church and as the basis on which the whole of Western music history developed. Children deserve the best food, not only for their bodies to grow, but also for their souls to flourish!

"Words with wings" is an image that is already found in the poetry of Homer. How can words bridge time and space? They can only do so when they have wings! If there is one kind of music that really gives wings to words, then it is Gregorian chant. Its timeless and spatial character is closely related to its very specific melodic and rhythmic idiom.

Gregorian chant is grammar for singers. This book will show children the close relationship between words and notes. It gives them a taste of medieval modality, which is so much richer than the world of major and minor. It provides them with an experience of the lightness of Gregorian rhythm, which is free and not measured. Finally, it takes them on a singing journey through the centuries-old yet vibrant tradition of the liturgical year.

This book will be successful only if the children are already able to sing on pitch and have some experience with solmization. Each of the twenty lessons included here will take about fifteen to twenty minutes, allowing plenty of time for the “normal” rehearsal. This book is written in the form of a script: as if the conductor were speaking to the children. This provides the conductor with an example of an easy, direct, and stimulating tone to use when communicating the ideas to the children.

Don't read the sentences out loud during rehearsal! Don't learn them by heart! Read them at home, imagine your rehearsal, forget them, and proceed with the lesson. In addition to this *Instructor Edition* there is a separate *Workbook* for the children. Recordings of many of the musical examples included here are also available online at musicasacra.com/wings and are indicated in the text and workbook with the symbol ●.

Conductors who are not familiar with the Ward method, the rhythmical system of Dom Mocquereau, and the arsis-thesis gestures (chironomy) would benefit from live instruction to learn them. This alone should provide impetus for attending one of the many chant courses or the yearly Sacred Music Colloquium organized by the Church Music Association of America.

If you start working with this book in early autumn, your children's choir will be able to sing their first piece of Gregorian chant at Mass on Christmas. In this way the lessons have a direct connection with the great services of the liturgical year.

My main goal, again, is to evoke the love for Gregorian chant in the hearts of children. If after working with this book the children want more, you will find a list of Gregorian repertoire on pages 68 and 69 that can be sung without facing any considerable difficulty.

I would like to thank Scott Turkington for inspiring me to write this book; Jeffrey Tucker, for presenting me with the possibility of an English translation; and Arlene Oost-Zinner, for translating and adapting it in a wonderful way. I would also like to thank my many CMAA colleagues and friends with whom I share the love for Gregorian chant.

Wilko Brouwers

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

Introduction for children

In the lessons to come I will tell you about Gregorian chant. Gregorian chant is very old music. How old? Over one thousand years. It is music from the Middle Ages. And do you want to know something extraordinary? This ancient music is still sung in many monasteries and churches all over the world.

Were you ever in a monastery? Perhaps you heard monks singing in an unfamiliar language. Was it Latin? Did their singing sound a little unusual? Did it sound like a bird gliding through the air? There is a good chance that what you heard was Gregorian chant. [*Let the children listen to a recording of a short piece of Gregorian chant*] ● 1

I'll tell you why this music is called Gregorian chant. Around the year 600 there was a pope who decided what was to be sung in church. His name was Pope Gregory. For centuries after his death, people thought that Gregory himself had composed all of the songs. This was not the case, but it did come to be called "Gregorian" chant. You see Gregory often shown in pictures with a dove near his ear. People said: "Look, that dove is the Holy Spirit whispering melodies into his ear!" [*Share workbooks and show the image on the cover*]

We will learn to sing Gregorian chant in the coming lessons. We will still not sing as well as the monks in the monastery. After all, they sing it every day and have been practicing for many years.

You will notice that a Gregorian staff has four lines and not five, as is usual. And the notes are not round, but square. [*The children browse through their books and see the Gregorian notation*]

And we will sing the note names: *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti,¹* and *do*. Did you know that those names were invented in the Middle Ages?

¹ Some prefer to use *si*. But this creates a problem in Lesson 14 where letter symbols are used.

LESSON 2

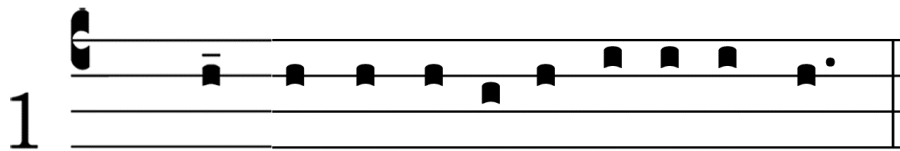
COME, LET US RING OUT OUR JOY TO THE LORD

Sing a sentence; decide on the important words

In the previous lesson we saw how you can make your voice go up on a word you find important. Now we will do something different. On page 2 of your workbook you will find three melodies, always with the same words: “Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD.”

Now, can you figure out which word is most important: “our,” “joy,” or “LORD”?
[Sing]

Workbook, page 2, melody 1 [la=a] ● 2

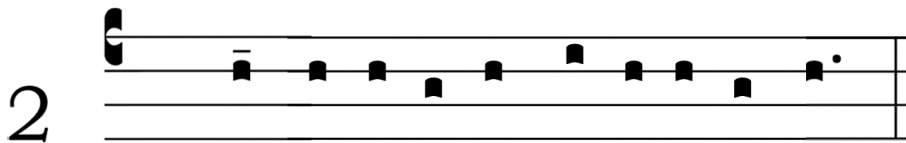


Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

Indeed, “joy.” But . . . how did you know that “joy” was the most important word here? Exactly: the note goes up—a word made more important.

Now let’s see what happens with melody number 2. [Sing]

Workbook, page 2, melody 2 [la=a] ● 3

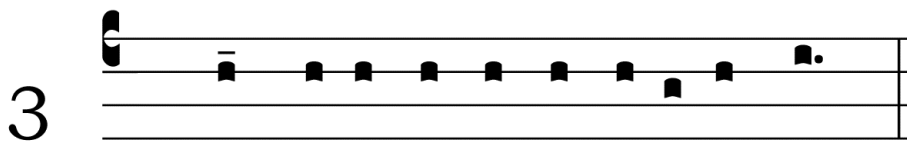


Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

Which word did you choose? Indeed, “our.”

Here comes the last one. [*Sing*]

Workbook, page 2, melody 3 [la=a] ● 4



Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

Which word sounded most important here? Indeed, “LORD.”

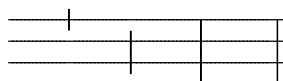
In each of the three melodies, put a slash (or accent mark) above the most important word (or syllable).

Did you see that there are different ways to make a note longer? A horizontal line appears over the note above the word “come.” In “Lord” you will see a dot behind the note. In both cases the note is sung a little longer.

If there were no dash or no dot above or after a note, how would you know that these notes should be sung a little longer?¹ Your ears actually give you the answer. Listen to how strange it sounds when I speak the phrase and make “come” short. That comma is there for a reason!

Now listen to how it sounds if I do not lengthen the last note. You will hear that the last note wants to be sung longer than the others.

¹ The notation without horizontal lines (horizontal episemas) above notes or dots behind notes can be found in the *Graduale Simplex*, the *Graduale Cisterciense*, and other editions. In those editions more attention needs to be given to the structure of the text, its division into phrases, subsentences and complete sentences, as shown by commas, semicolons, colons, and periods. In melodies this structure is shown by the following characters: The first character (*divisio minima*) functions much like a comma in the text: sometimes (not always!) you elongate the word before the comma, sometimes you do not. Sometimes you breathe at a comma, sometimes you do not. It depends on the flow of the whole sentence. In case of the second character (*divisio minor*), whose function is similar to that of a semicolon, you *always* extend the last note (or last two notes when together they form a group) before the *divisio*, and you almost always take a break and breathe. The third character (*divisio maior*) is like a period or full stop in a text. As with the second character, the last note (or notes) is extended and there is a breath, but now you take more time before continuing. The double line indicates the end of the piece or verse, or indicates the change of the cantor or choir (e.g., from solo to all, or from one group to another).



Let's sing the three melodies again. The notation is different now, but it still shows that some notes are longer than others. Do you see that the comma after "come" can also be found in the staff?¹ [*Sing and have the children sing back*]

Workbook, page 3, melody 1 [la=a] ● 2



Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

Workbook, page 3, melody 2 [la=a] ● 3



Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

Workbook, page 3, melody 3 [la=a] ● 4



Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD!

¹ In this instance, extend the note before the *divisio minima*, but do not take a breath.

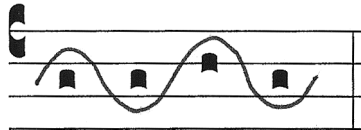
LESSON 8

A CHILD IS BORN

Puer natus in Bethlehem

We will begin this lesson with singing and movement. [*The children stand*]

[sol=g/g-sharp/a] ● 12



Nu nu nu nu
Sol sol la sol
Al- le lú- ia

I wonder what your homework from last time looks like. Did it go well?

We have practiced many things in the last few lessons. Now we are ready to learn some chant that we can sing in church. This song is called *Puer natus in Bethlehem*.¹ That means, “A child is born in Bethlehem.” You guessed correctly: it is a Christmas song.

Before we begin, I will read the text once aloud. Read along on page 15 of your workbook. ● 19

*Puer natus in Béthlehem, allelúia,
Unde gaudet Jerúsalem, allelúia, allelúia.
In cordis júbilo
Christum natum adorémus,
Cum novo cántico.*

A child is born in Bethlehem, alleluia;
wherefore Jerusalem rejoices, alleluia, alleluia.
In jubilation of heart
let us adore the newborn Christ
with a new song.

Do you have any idea what the marks that sometimes appear over the Latin words mean? Exactly: that syllable will have emphasis (the word accent). What does your voice do at the accented syllable? And does your voice do it at all accented syllables?

Here is another question: in words with two syllables, such as “puer” and “natus,” you do not see an accent mark above the word. That’s because in words with only two syllables the accent is always in the same place. Have you been able to hear where that is? Is it at the first or second syllable?

Now let’s talk it through. [*Speak one line at a time; the children repeat: “Puer natus in Bethlehem, Alleluia,” etc.*]

¹ *The Parish Book of Chant*, pp. 137-138. These are seven of its fourteen verses.

And now shall we sing? Let's sing on only one note. [*Sing line by line and the children repeat*]

How does our singing sound? [*Undoubtedly the word "boring" will come up. Keep asking questions and maybe someone will use the word "solemn"*]

In Gregorian chant it happens a lot that shorter or longer parts of a phrase are sung on one note. There is no upward direction in which your voice can go. It almost seems as if the singer is saying: all words about God are of equal importance.

Now I will teach you the song's actual melody. [*Sing line by line, and the children repeat*]

Workbook, page 15 [re=d] ● 20



Pu- er na- tus in Bét- le- hem, al- le- lú- ia,



Un-de gau-det Je- rú- sa- lem, al- le- lú- ia, al- le- lú- ia.



In cor-dis jú- bi- lo



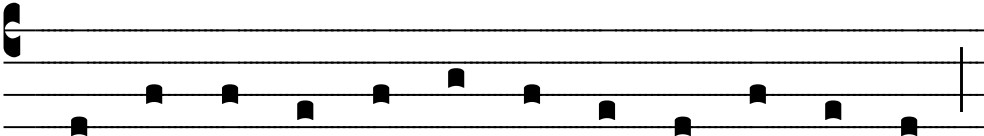
Chri- stum na- tum a- do- ré- mus, Cum no- vo cán-ti- co.

As you can see, there are certain markings used here that tell you when to sing something a little longer. Can you remember what they are? Can you point them out in some of the lines, above?

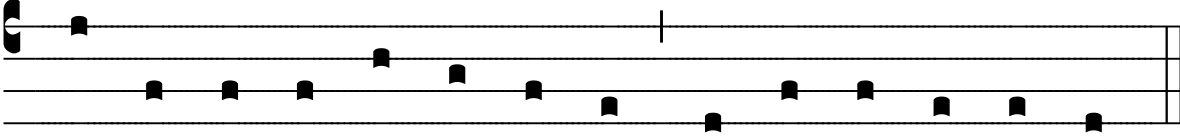
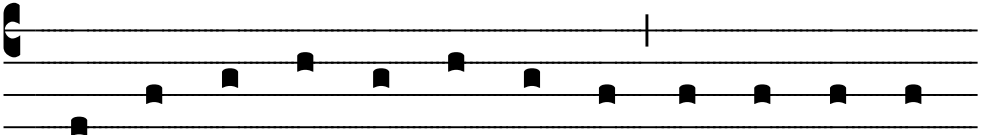
You have homework for next time. On page 16 of your workbook you will see the melody of *Puer natus in Bethlehem* written out without any words underneath. At home, write the note's name under each of the notes. On which

note do we start? Indeed: *re*. You will come across a character that is new to you. Can you already see it? It looks a bit like a *b*. We call that character a “flat” sign. Instead of *ti*,¹ the note becomes *te*² when you put a flat sign in front of it. *Te*’s sound is a little lower than that of *ti*.

Workbook, page 16



re ...

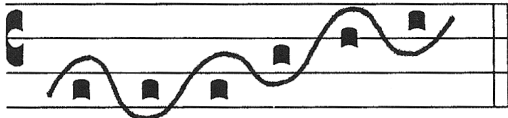


¹ See footnote 1 on page 3.

² Or: *ta*.

We will end as we began, singing and moving. [*The children stand*]

[sol=e/f/f-sharp] ● 13



Nu nu nu nu nu nu
Sol sol sol ti do re
Jo- seph fi- li Da- vid

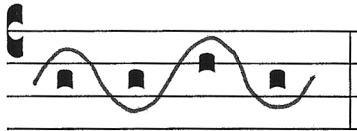
LESSON 9

IT CAME TO PASS

Puer natus in Bethlehem (continued)

Let's begin with singing and movement. [*The children stand*]

[sol=g/g-sharp/a] ● 12



Nu nu nu nu
Sol sol la sol
Al- le lú- ia

Do you remember the homework from last time? Let's see if anyone found the correct note names (workbook, page 16). Who would like to read out the note names from the first line? How about the second line? [*And so on . . .*]

I will sing the song for you one more time.

Workbook, page 15 [re=d] ● 20

[*If necessary, sing the song again, line for line, with the children repeating each line*]

Shall we try to sing the melody with the names of the notes?

Now we need to learn the words of the second verse. Just read along on page 17 in your workbook. ● 21

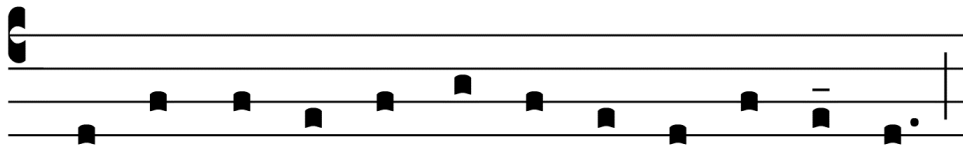
*Assumpsit carnem Fílius, allelúia,
Dei Patris altíssimus, allelúia, allelúia.
In cordis júbilo
Christum natum adorémus,
cum novo cántico.*

The Son hath assumed flesh, alleluia;
The Most High of God the Father, alleluia, alleluia.
In jubilation of heart
let us adore the newborn Christ
with a new song.

Did you notice anything? Indeed: the last part of the verse is the same as the last part of the first verse. From which point on, precisely?

Now we will sing the second verse.

Workbook, page 17 [re=d] ● 22



As- sumpsit car- nem Fi- li- us, al- le- lú- ia,



De- i Pa- tris al- tís- si- mus, al- le- lú- ia, al- le- lú- ia.



In cor- dis jú- bi- lo



Chri- stum na- tum a- do- ré- mus cum no- vo cán- ti- co.

And now here is the third verse. Just follow along on page 18 in your workbook. ● 23

*Per Gabriélem nuntium, allelúia,
Virgo concépit Fílium, allelúia, allelúia.
In cordis júbilo
Christum natum adorémus,
Cum novo cántico.*

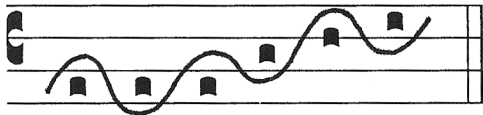
Through the messenger Gabriel, alleluia;
The Virgin conceived a son, alleluia, alleluia.
In jubilation of heart
let us adore the newborn Christ
with a new song.

Now you will hear a recording with all seven verses. Just follow along on page 19 in your workbook. ● 25

You can listen to this when you are on your computer at home. Go to the website musicasacra.com/wings and scroll down the page to the sound examples. Click on *Puer natus in Bethlehem*.

Next time we will all sing it. Is it a deal? Let's end today's lesson with some singing and movement.

[sol=e/f/f-sharp] ● 13



Nu nu nu nu nu nu
Sol sol sol ti do re
Jo- seph fi- li Da- vid

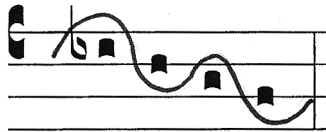
LESSON 17

FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST

Regina caeli

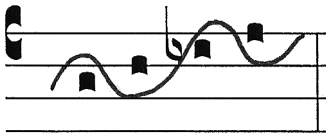
Let's sing and move. Listen and watch me.

Workbook, page 41, melody 1 [te=c] ● 83



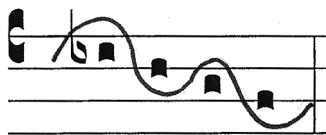
Al- le- lú- ia.

Workbook, page 41, melody 2 [sol=a] ● 84



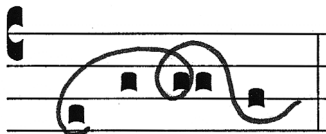
Al- le- lú- ia.

Workbook, page 41, melody 3 [te=c] ● 83



Al- le- lú- ia.

Workbook, page 41, melody 4 [mi=f-sharp] ● 85



Al-le- lú- ia.

Do you see that there are two notes on “lú”? Combine them to sing one long note. While you are holding them, you can count two notes with your voice, singing “lú-hú.”

I will now sing the song that you’ll find on page 42 of your workbook. It is a song about the “Queen of Heaven.”¹ Who is that? The text reads:

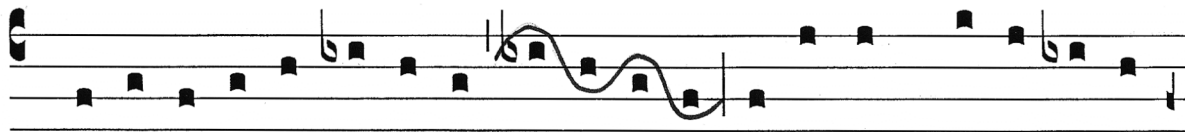
<i>Regína caeli laetáre, allelúia:</i>	Queen of heaven, rejoice; alleluia.
<i>Quia per quem meruísti portáre, allelúia.</i>	For he whom thou wast made worthy to bear, alleluia,
<i>Resurréxit, sicut dixit, allelúia.</i>	Has risen as he said; alleluia.
<i>Ora pro nobis Deum, allelúia.</i>	Pray for us to God; alleluia.

What do you think “wast made worthy to bear” means?

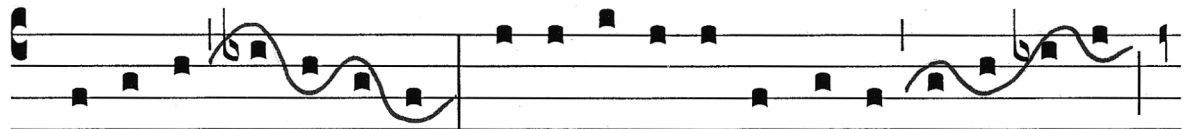
I will sing it now. You sing the Alleluia.

REGINA CAELI

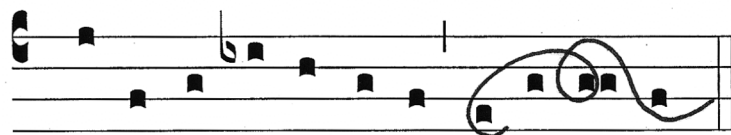
Workbook, page 42 [fa=g] ● 86



Re- gí- na cae-li lae-tá-re, al- le- lú- ia: Qui-a quem me-ru- í-sti



portá- re, al-le- lú- ia. Re-surré-xit, si- cut di- xit, al- le- lú- ia:



o- ra pro no-bis De- um, al- le- lú- ia.

¹ *Graduale Simplex*, p. 478; *The Parish Book of Chant*, p. 121; *Gregorian Chant for Church and School*, pp. 104-105. This can be sung on the Sundays between Easter and Pentecost.

Now I will sing it again. Can you now mark a horizontal line (episema) over every note that I sang as a long note?

Now we will sing together. You sing and move whenever you see “alleluia.” [*The children stand*]

Let’s see if you wrote the correct notes for the melody in your homework (workbook, page 40).

For next time learn the whole song. You can listen to it on the internet. Go to the website musicasacra.com/wings and look for *Regina caeli*.