

Music in the Margins: Women Singing Mass in Tenth Century Essen Evidence of the Manuscript Düsseldorf D 1

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Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, D 1 is one of a few manuscripts from the house of canonesses (*Frauenstift*) in Essen, now kept at the Düsseldorf University Library. In its original form, D 1 is a sacramentary copied around 870 in northeastern France or northwestern Germany; its exact origin remains unknown.¹ Numerous additions show that at least from the beginning of the tenth century the book was used in Essen.² Some of these additions make the manuscript Düsseldorf D 1 of particular interest to musicologists, as they are entries containing musical repertory and notation in so-called Palaeofrankish neumes.

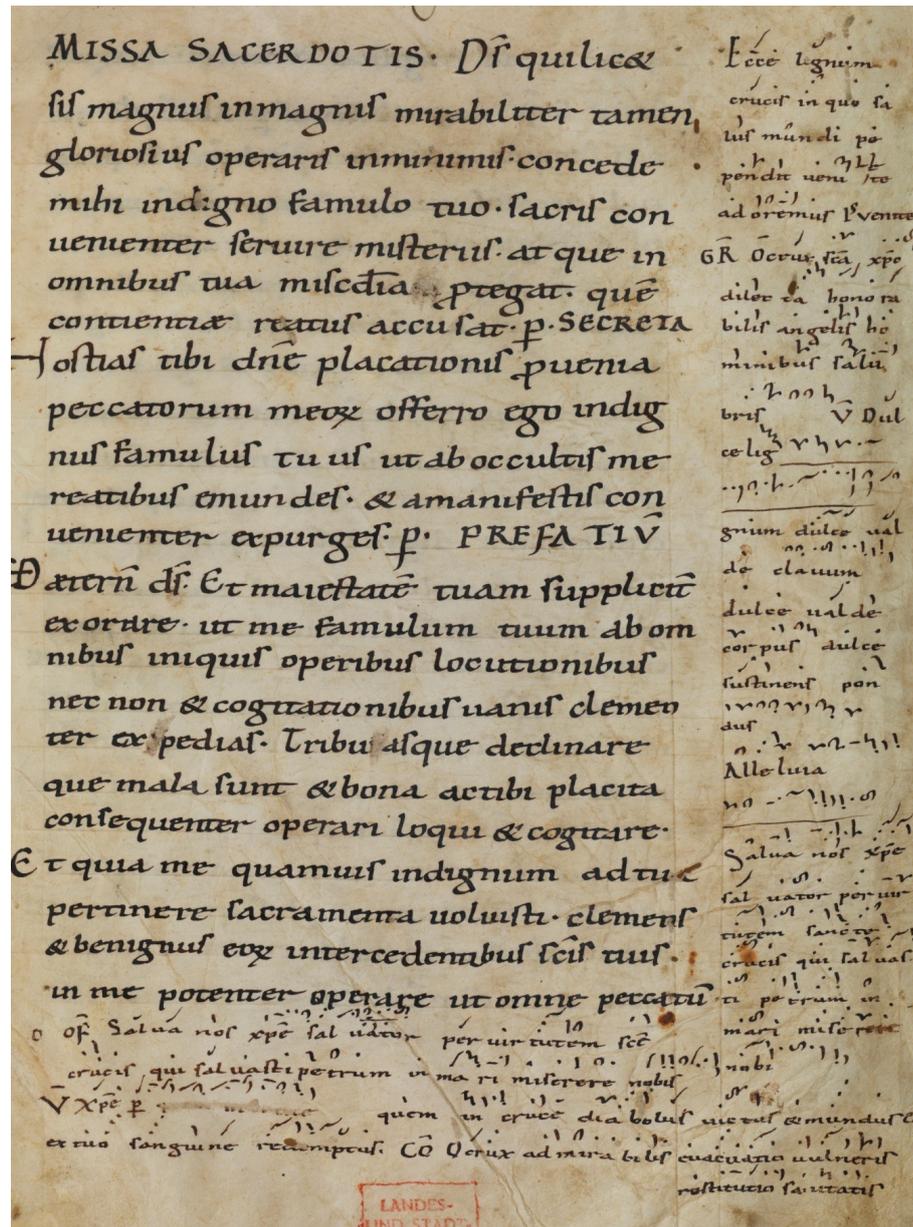
There are two more surviving Mass books from tenth-century Essen both of which also contain notated entries of Mass chants – the sacramentary Düsseldorf D 2 and the missal Düsseldorf D 3 (which contains a few Office chants as well). In total, there are over 30 notating hands in the three manuscripts, most of them dating from the tenth-century and using Palaeofrankish neumatic script. The vast majority of those hands are identified by Hartmut Hoffmann as belonging to the Essen scriptorium, which means that a lot of the

¹ BISCHOFF proposes Northeastern France or Belgium as the book's place of origin (BERNHARD BISCHOFF, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts: mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998, 2004), 1, 230-1). Northeastern France is suggested by WULF ARLT in his entry for the catalogue 799: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit: Karl der Grosse und Papst Leo III. in Paderborn* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999), 839. The most probable 'French' locations seem to be Corbie and Reims (see EWALD JAMMERS, *Die Essener Neumenhandschriften der Landes- und Stadtbibliothek Düsseldorf* (Ratingen: Aloys Henn Verlag, 1952); JACQUES HOURLIER and MICHEL HUGLO, 'Notation paléofranque', *Etudes grégoriennes* 2 (1957), 212-9). Other versions include the Corbie foundation Corvey, Hildesheim and Werden in Germany: see HUGO DAUSEND, *Das älteste Sakramentar der Münsterkirche zu Essen, literarhistorisch untersucht* (Missionskolleg St. Ludwig, 1920); JAMMERS, *Die Essener Neumenhandschriften*; VOLKHARD HUTH, 'Die Düsseldorfer Sakramentarhandschrift D 1 als Memorialzeugnis', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 20 (1986), 213-98; KLAUS GAMBER, *Codices liturgici latini antiquiores* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1963, 1968), Nr. 915; KATRINETTE BODARWÉ, *Sanctimoniales litteratae: Schriftlichkeit und Bildung in den ottonischen Frauenkommunitäten Gandersheim, Essen und Quedlinburg* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004).

² See Hartmuth HOFFMANN, *Schreibstilen und Buchmalerei: Handschriften und Texte des 9.-11. Jahrhunderts* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung: 2012); Hartmuth HOFFMANN, 'Das Skriptorium von Essen in ottonischen und frühsalischer Zeit', *Kunst im Zeitalter der Kaiserin Theophanu. Akten des Internationalen Colloquiums veranstaltet vom Schnütgen-Museum Köln 13.-15. Juni 1991*, ed. Anton von EUW and Peter SCHREINER (Cologne: Verlag Locher, 1993): 113-53; HUTH, 'Die Düsseldorfer Sakramentarhandschrift D 1', DAUSEND, *Das älteste Sakramentar*, JAMMERS, *Die Essener Neumenhandschriften*, Arlt, 'IX.36' in 799: *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit*, Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*.

notated entries (where the music hand and the text hand are one and the same hand) were made by the ladies of the Essen *Frauenstift*.³ This paper will focus on the work of one of them – a repertory of Mass chants entered in the margins of the sacramentary D 1, which is the largest body of musical notation by one scribe in all the three books. Since this scribe’s hand is also the first music hand that one encounters as one opens the manuscript (see Ex. 1), I will hereafter call her the notator D 1-1.

Ex. 1



Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, D 1, fol. 1r

³ See HOFFMANN, *Schreibstilen und Buchmalerei*: 40-1 and 47-54. Hoffmann’s work is the most substantial paleographical work on Essen manuscripts. His main argument for identifying those hands as the hands of the Essen canonesses is that there are just too many contemporary hands with similar characteristics for all of them to be those of male monks providing priestly duties and pastoral care for the *Frauenstift*. See also BODARWÉ, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 95-96.

The main purpose of this paper is to try and demonstrate what a thing like musical notation can tell us about liturgical practices of a particular religious community and how it can provide some (unexpected) evidence to what is otherwise very scarcely documented. Most medieval evidence concerning women's participation in the liturgical life of their communities, and particularly its musical aspect, concerns primarily the singing of the Office. The Mass is mentioned very little and when it is, it is mainly to do with restrictions of female participation in the celebration, which should be carried out by male celebrants while women of the community observe from a safe distance. Of course, as is well known, sometimes a documented banning or restriction of certain practices speaks to the fact that the practices did indeed take place. However, the fact remains: there is no information in early medieval sources on the liturgical life of female religious communities as concerns the performance of the repertory that is the richest and the most diverse in terms of its musical characteristics – the Mass.

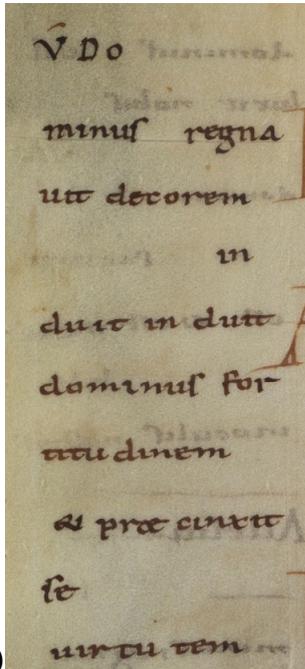
Yet in the margins of the surviving Mass books from the Essen *Frauenstift* we encounter a number of hands, some of them contemporary, of women familiar with musical notation and the Mass repertory. The notation of the body of Mass chants in the margins of the sacramentary D 1 in particular is, as I will try and demonstrate, a work of someone who is not only familiar with the musical notation itself and knows how it works, but who is also very familiar with the repertory that is being notated and knows how it should be sung.

The marginal entries by the scribe D 1-1 contain chants for 59 complete masses. The fully notated Mass of the Cross on fol. 1r (Ex. 1) stands apart from the rest of the chant material, not only in terms of the large number of folios that separate it from the next chant entry by the same scribe, but also in that it is not connected with the main text of the original sacramentary: it is copied out in the margins of the first of the seven folios that were a later insertion into the manuscript and contain a number of votive masses copied by the same scribe D 1-1. The rest of the Mass chant entries in the margins of the book fall into two large 'blocks', fols. 51v–84r and fols. 126v–140v, that *are* in accord with the masses in the sacramentary main text – or, at least, were intended to be: since full chant texts, especially with notation or intended to receive notation, placed in the narrow space of a margin, occupied much more vertical space than the prayers for the corresponding feast in the main text, the chants soon began to 'lag behind'. The block starting on fol. 126 includes chants for masses from the First Sunday of Advent (situated in the margin beside the prayers for the First Sunday of Advent in the sacramentary) up to the feast of St. Sylvester (31 December). The block on fols. 51v–84r includes chants for the Sundays after Christmas, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost followed by the chants for Epiphany through to Purification of Mary.

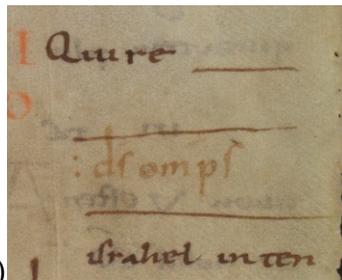
It is easy to notice that fol. 126r is where a chant book – if this were a chant book – would normally begin: at the first Sunday of Advent. The opening 126v–127r receives complete musical notation, which is a rare case in D 1: besides the fully notated Mass of the Cross on fol. 1r shown above, there is only one other fully notated opening, fols. 130v–131r. Most of the other marginal entries by D 1-1 are just chant texts, without any musical notation. It is clear, however, that the original plan was to provide all of the chant texts in the margins with notation: additional space was left between syllables of text in places where there are long melismas in the chants in order to accommodate the neumes (Ex. 2). A lot of the time those are just blank spaces (Ex. 2a), but sometimes a melisma is signalled by a

straight horizontal line (which can be seen in Ex. 2b) and at other times by a more decorative, meandering line (as one seen in Ex. 2c).

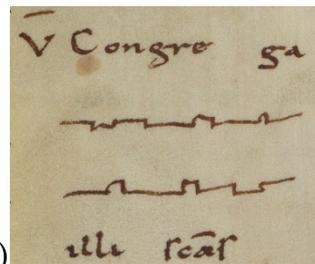
Ex. 2



a) fol. 135v



b) fol. 129r



c) fol. 127v

Of all the Mass chants entered in the margins by D 1-1 only 15 are fully notated. 12 more chants receive partial notation of different kinds, and these latter are of particular importance to this discussion, as the choice of chants and of concrete parts of those chants to notate shows intimate knowledge of the repertory. The notation of the opening 130v-131r starts with a Gradual verse *Laudem domini loquetur os meum* (of the Gradual *Prope est dominus*) and ends with the melisma on *Benedixisti domine* within another Gradual verse (the Gradual *Ostende nobis*). Those are the two most 'complete' cases of partial notation in this manuscript – a full gradual verse and an almost complete gradual *cum* verse interrupted by the turn of the page. Other cases of partial notation are much more fragmentary. Those include:

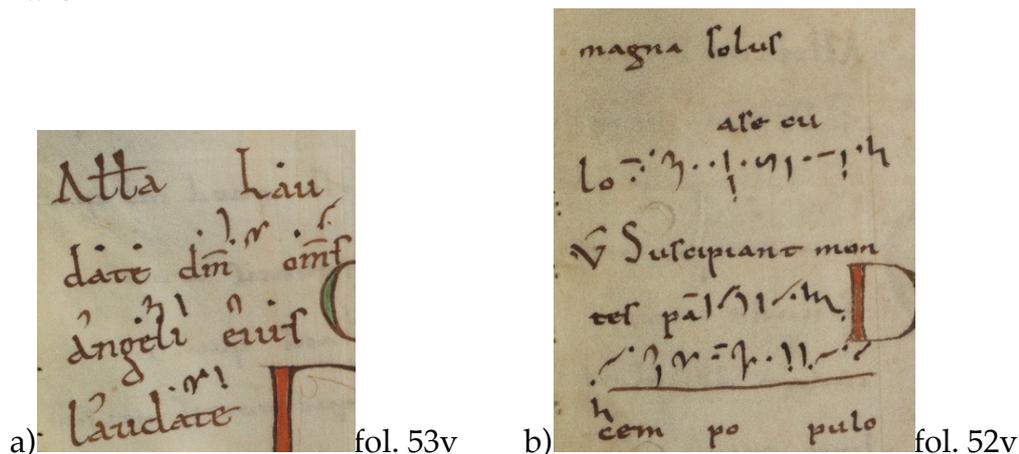
- Gradual *Benedictus dominus* on fol. 52v: melismas on *seculo* (end of the refrain) and *pacem* (in the verse);
- Alleluia *Laudate deum omnes* on fol. 53v: first half of the verse;
- Offertory *Iubilate deo universa* on fol. 54r: melismas on *mea* and *labia mea* in the first verse;
- Alleluia *Confitemini domino et invocate* on fol. 62r: part of the melisma on *eius*;
- Alleluia *Beatus vir qui timet* on fol. 82v: neumes over *Alleluia* and *Beatus*;

- Tract *Adducentur regi virgines*, Offertory *Diffusa est gratia* and Communion *Simile est regnum* on fol. 83r: incipits;
- Offertory *Exulta satis filia* on fol. 133r: beginning of the verse *Loquetur pacem gentibus* (including two long melismas on *-que-* and *gen-*).
- (?) Offertory *Iustus ut palma* on fol. 138v: a single neume on *quae*.

It is easy to notice that most of the partially notated material is solo and often melismatic – i.e. bits of chants that would have been particularly difficult to learn and memorise and where one could use a written reference. It is clear that at least some of those neumations were made directly after the writing down of the text.

On fol. 53v (Ex. 3a), for reasons unknown, D 1-1 uses a thinner and probably not particularly well cut pen on a page with a particularly uncomfortable angle and one can see, both in the text script and the notation, how uncomfortable it is for her: the text letters come out huge, in comparison to this scribe's 'normal' text-script size (see Ex. 3b⁴), and rather awkward and there is the same kind of awkwardness in the neumes, with quite a few 'extra' strokes, as if a familiar pen movement would not produce an expected result. It is obvious that the pen used for the neumes is the same as was used for the text and different from that used for both the text and the neumes in the previous opening which are shown in Ex. 3b.

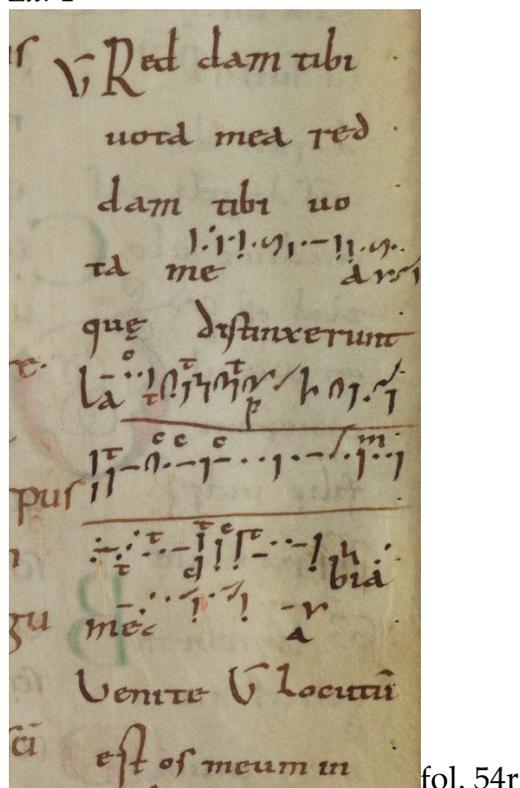
Ex. 3



It is also obvious that the neumes on fol. 53v were entered before the scribe went on to the next folio, 54r, because there the pen changes again (Ex. 4). The longest melisma in Ex. 4, the one on *labia* looks like it was notated immediately after the syllable *la-* was written down: first of all, the notation fits perfectly into the space between that syllable and the next – something which does not happen often in D 1-1's work (as is demonstrated by the notation of *mea* above and a few other melismas on fols. 126v-127r, 130v-131r and 1r); in addition to that, the neumes are situated *in* the text line rather than *above* it (cf. the notation of the two *mea*, above and below this melisma) and the horizontal line that separates the first line of the melisma from the next one seems to be drawn in such a way as to fit the descender of the significant letter 'p' above it – which means the line was drawn after the neumes were entered.

⁴ The level of magnification is the same as in Ex. 3a.

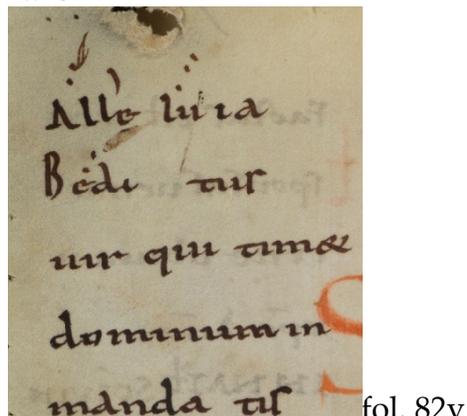
Ex. 4



The situation may have been similar with the melismas on *seculo* and *pacem* in Ex. 3b: the neumes there are also situated in the text line rather than above it and fit perfectly into the allocated space. That kind of notating strategy points to a close familiarity with the chants, if not to a lot of experience in the making of notated books. It is possible that at that point the scribe was not sure anymore that she was going to come back to this project to complete the notation, so she entered the neumes as she went along at particular places where she considered a written aid to be most needed. That also suggests that the scribe was, likely, the soloist actually singing those chants – something which is further confirmed by the details of the musical notation, as the discussion below will demonstrate.

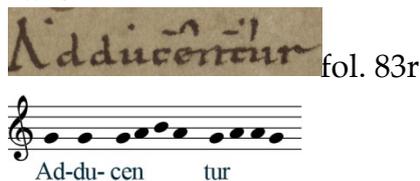
Another category of partial neumations is represented by cases where only the beginnings of chants were notated. One of such chants is the Alleluia *Beatus vir* on fol. 82v, which has neumes above the syllables *Allelu-* and *Be-*, i.e. the very beginning of the Alleluia and the verse (see Ex. 5). That makes perfect sense, since this Alleluia is not to be confused with another Alleluia whose verse also starts with the words *Beatus vir*.

Ex. 5



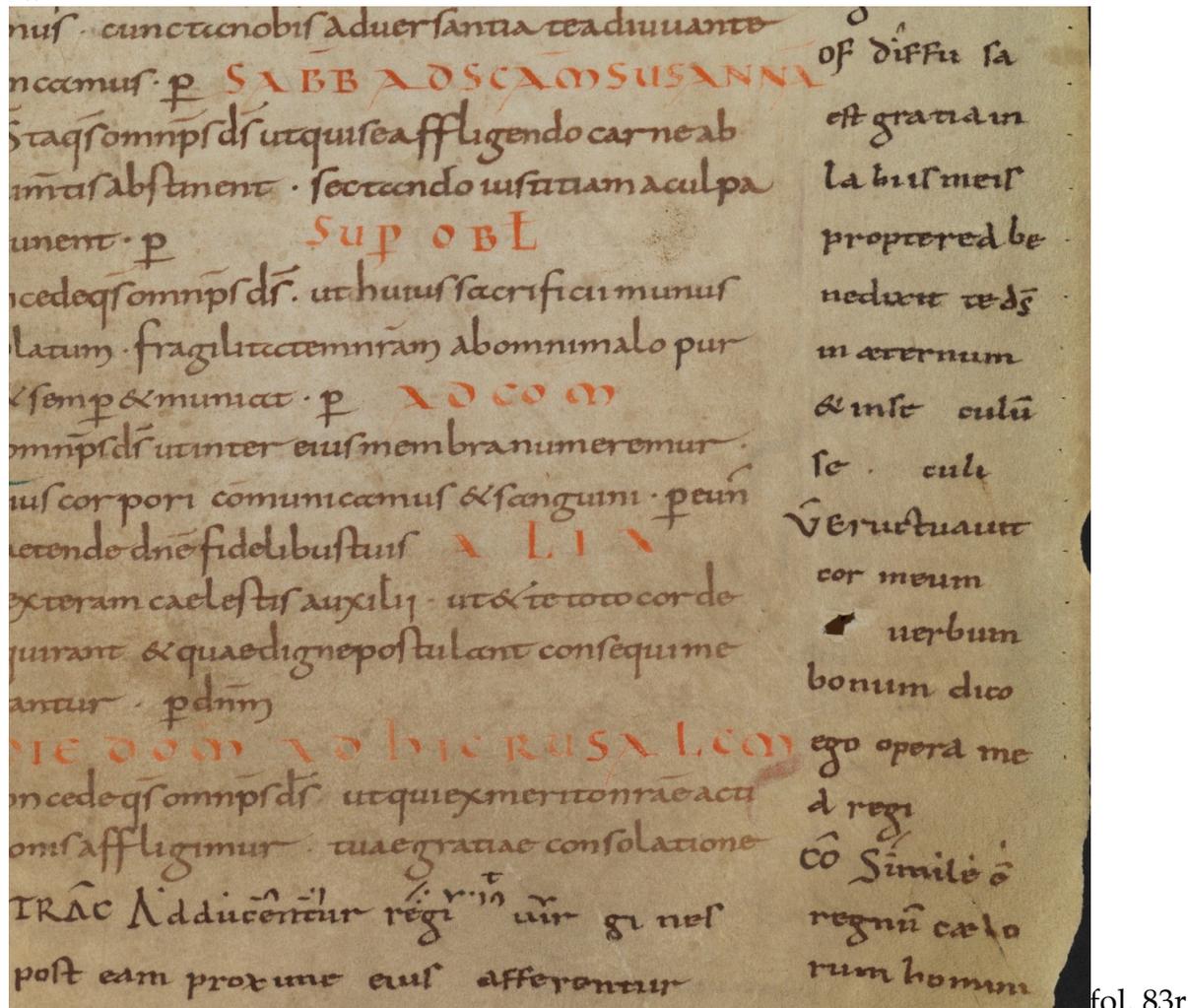
Another chant with a notated incipit worthy of particular attention is the Tract *Adducentur regi virgines* on fol. 83r for the Octave of St. Agnes: not only is it a solo chant, but it is also not a particularly common chant, especially not with the melody that is notated here; this Tract seems to be a local feature of the Essen liturgical repertory. That also would be a perfectly good reason for adding musical notation, which indicates it as an eighth-mode tract with a melody more typical of the Easter Vigil canticles (Ex. 6):

Ex. 6



Just like the solo and melismatic material discussed and shown above, the notation of the Alleluia *Beatus vir* and the Tract *Adducentur* demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the repertory: the notation was entered where it would have been particularly helpful. The notation of the other incipits on the same fol. 83r (Ex. 7) – the first syllable of the Offertory *Diffusa est gratia* and the first few syllables of the Communion *Simile est regnum* may be a result of some kind of ‘momentum’ following the notation of the beginning of the Tract *Adducentur*. It is possible that the notation of the opening 130v-131r was initially motivated by the same idea of notating a solo and melismatic part of a chant (a gradual verse), and the notation of the rest of the opening followed.

Ex. 7

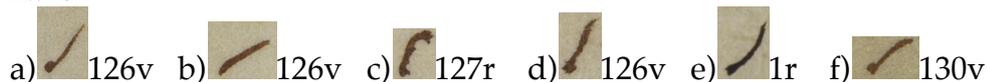


These choices of chants or parts thereof to be notated on a priority basis – solo, melismatic, local, not to be confused with another chant of the same text – are the first part of the evidence that we are dealing with a person who was most likely the singer responsible for the performance of the solo melismatic bits, as well as possibly also responsible for the ‘correct’ choice and performance of the musical repertory – i.e. a female cantor.⁵

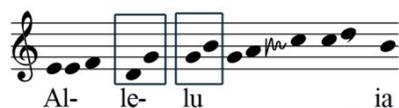
The second part of the evidence is constituted by the musical notation itself. Below I will use a few individual neumes to demonstrate that the notator D 1-1 knows very well the musical script that she is using and how it works. The first group of signs I would like to discuss is the neumes used to designate an ascending movement of two notes (••). The notator D 1-1 uses three graphic forms to notate this movement: a ‘basic’ form consisting of a continuous pen movement directed diagonally upwards (Ex. 8) and two ‘disjunct’ forms, one consisting of two dots and the other of a dot at the bottom and a short horizontal stroke at the top. Both disjunct forms can be seen on the second and third syllables of the *Alleluia* in Ex. 9 respectively.

⁵ Indeed, the fully notated Mass of the Cross on fol. 1r also falls into the category of ‘local’ Essen repertory.

Ex. 8



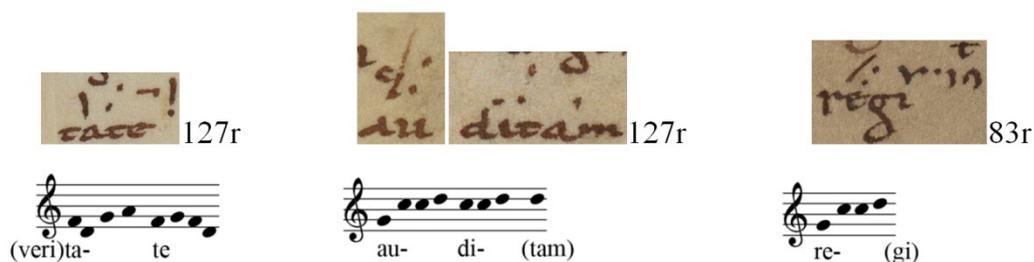
Ex. 9



Ex. 8 gives only a slight impression of the degree of graphic variation that one encounters in D 1-1's treatment of the basic form of this neume: the number of variants is far larger, but those shown in Ex. 8 are more or less representative of the main 'groups' into which they can be classified. This also shows that the notator does not care much about the 'calligraphic' qualities of the script: as long as the general idea of an oblique stroke directed from left to right and upwards is there, it works.

When it comes to the usage of the two disjunct forms, however, one discovers that, despite a certain graphic sloppiness, the notator is being very strict and systematic as to which form is used in which melodic situation. The function of both disjunct forms is essentially the same: by notating a melodic gesture of two ascending notes as two separate elements rather than as one continuous movement they demonstrate that each one of the two notes should be rhythmically emphasised, i.e. sung slowly. It seems that, for D 1-1, the choice of one or the other disjunct form depends on the context: if it is an isolated neume (as it is on the syllable *-le-* of the *Alleluia* in Ex. 9), it will always be two dots. The form with the horizontal stroke on top is always used within, or at the beginning of, a group of notes sung on the same syllable, never isolated; in Ex. 9, even though it is not very well-coordinated with the chant text, this neume indeed opens a melisma on the third syllable *lu-*. If a disjunct form of the neume is used at the *end* of a group, as opposed to at the beginning or in the middle, it will be the two-dots form (Ex. 10).

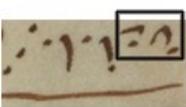
Ex. 10



It thus seems that the horizontal stroke is used as a way to isolate a neume indicating two ascending notes sung slowly within a melisma, to create a clear divide between this neume and the following. That allows the neume to stand out visually within a larger group of neumes and not be mixed up with situations where two ascending notes within a melisma (in this case notated by two dots) and a neume which follows them form one melodic gesture – the two ascending notes sung lightly, ‘leading up’ to a higher third note, which is the first note of the next neume. An example of such melodic situation is given below in the melisma on *nolite* in the Offertory *Confortamini* (Ex. 11a); Ex. 11b is a fragment of a melisma on *domine* in the Gradual *Universi*, where, in a very similar combination of neumes, the use of the form with a horizontal stroke on top allows for it to be distinguished as a ‘separate’ neume indicating two rising notes articulated slowly. Since there is no need for such a distinction when a disjunct form of the neume is used as a stand-alone neume or at the end of a group of neumes, the notator uses a more economical graphic gesture of two dots in those situations.

Ex. 11

a)  fol. 130v

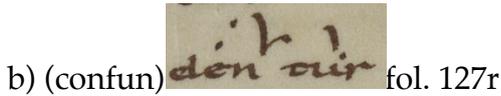
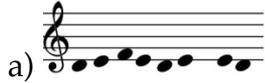
b)  fol. 126v




An important thing to note with regard to the abovementioned neumes is that their usage appears to be based on certain self-imposed ‘rules’, which, in turn, implies a thorough knowledge of the basic ‘rules’ on which a neumatic script operates.

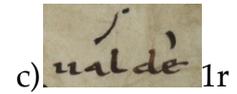
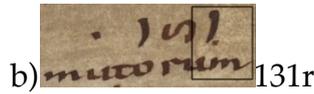
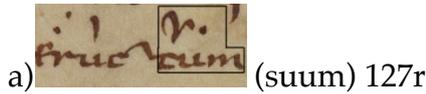
Another aspect of D 1-1’s notation which is of extreme importance to this discussion is her creative approach to the neumatic script, of which I will only give a few examples below. One of them is a very particular habit adopted by D 1-1 of sometimes notating sonorants *l*, *m*, *n* and *r*, thus showing that they need to be vocalised. This peculiarity is discovered when one notices a number of ‘extra’ dots in the notations of D 1-1 – notes that, from comparison to notated versions of the same chants in other sources, should not be there; and all of them are at the end of closed syllables that end with a sonorant. The ending of the Offertory *Ad te domine* (Ex. 12) is the most obvious example: the Offertory closes with a typical second-mode cadential figure, which has only two notes on the last syllable (Ex. 12a) – and this melodic formula is so widespread that the possibility of adding an extra note by mistake seems extremely unlikely if the person notating it has even a minimal familiarity with the chant repertory. Yet, according to the notation of D 1-1, there are three notes on the last syllable of this Offertory, *confundentur* – see Ex. 12b. The only explanation I can propose for this is that the notator shows that one should *sing* the sonorant *r* at the end of *confundentur* – something which I tried to express by means of modern notation in Ex. 12c.

Ex. 12



The fact that there are several more examples of this kind seems to indicate that the notation in Ex. 12b is neither a mistake nor an accident. Some of those examples are given below (Ex. 13) with the same kind of transcription as in Ex. 12c (except Ex. 13c, for which there is no pitched version available).

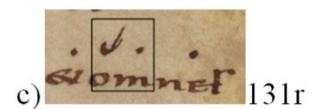
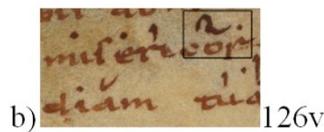
Ex. 13



This notational device cannot be called 'liquescence' in the strict sense, since liquescence is to do with transition from one syllable to the next, whereas the dots showing vocalisation of the sonorants can be found at the end of a chant or a section of a chant (*confundentur* in Ex. 12b and *mutorum* in Ex. 13b, which is the end of an offertory verse). However, it is definitely a related phenomenon, as it is also a way of showing the correct pronunciation of the text in a particular musical context. The dot on *fructum* (Ex. 13a) actually corresponds to a descending liquescence in parallel versions from other neumed sources.

Sometimes the 'extra' dot follows a liquescent sign, as is shown below in Ex. 14, with pitched versions from the *Graduale triplex*, which also allows to compare the neumes of D 1 to those of St. Gall and Laon.

Ex. 14



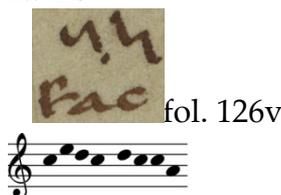
The sign on *miserordiam* (Ex. 14b), the arch-shaped sign with a wavy line attached to its right-hand end, seems to be another one of this notator's numerous 'inventions': this, actually, is a way of showing liquescence at the end of a melodic movement of a step up followed by a step down (●↗↘●). An identically shaped neume is found on fol. 130v (Ex. 15) where it is used to show liquescence at the end of the same melodic movement on the first syllable of *salvos*. However, this graphic shape is not encountered in any other surviving source of Palaeofrankish neumatic script, so this may well be this particular notator's know-how.⁶

Ex. 15



There are more signs in the work of D 1-1 that do not appear to be conventional Palaeofrankish signs, but are a result of the notator's creative attitude towards notation and its possibilities. Some of them are one-offs, brought about by specific needs of a specific melodic situation. One of these is shown in Ex. 16:

Ex. 16

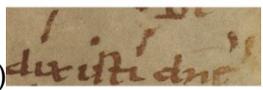
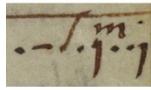


Melodically, the first neume on *fac* is a melodic movement of a step up followed by two steps down (●↗↘↘●). The standard way of notating this melodic gesture is $\overset{\frown}{\cdot}$ as the 'basic' form or $\cdot \backslash$ or $- \backslash$ as 'disjunct' forms (the one with the horizontal stroke probably indicating that a rhythmic emphasis is placed on just the first note). The sign in Ex. 16 is something in between the conjunct and the disjunct versions: it has an angular top and the descending element like a disjunct neume, but also a rounded first element that is graphically connected to it. It seems likely that this shape is supposed to reflect some particularities of vocal performance, perhaps some sort of glissando towards the upper note; this (both the shape of the neume and the particularities of the performance) may also be to do with the tessitura: the top note of this melodic gesture is the high *e*, which is the highest note in the melody of this chant. Moreover, there are some other neume shapes in the work of D 1-1 that seem to suggest some sort of a 'special relationship' with the upper *e*. I pointed out earlier that the notator D 1-1 uses an enormous number of graphic variants of the 'basic' neume for two ascending notes (see above Ex. 8) which don't seem to have any difference

⁶ One of the functions of the wavy line in Palaeofrankish notation is as the *oriscus*, i.e. a sign that in certain graphic and melodic contexts indicates a repetition of the previous pitch. Using an 'oriscus-element' to show liquescence would, thus, make perfect sense if the notator was trying to show vocalisation of the 'liquid' consonant on the same pitch as the last note of the up-then-down movement.

with regard to their meaning or usage – it is the general graphic ‘idea’ of an upward movement that matters. However, among the multitude of these signs in the work of D 1-1, there are two (shown in Ex. 17) that share the same graphic peculiarity – *two* changes of direction at the top of the neume, first a pronounced movement to the right, then a slight movement upwards – and both correspond to the melodic movement *de*, in different chants in completely different parts of the manuscript.

Ex. 17

a) (*bene-*)  fol. 131r b)  fol. 54r (fragment of melisma)

Be-ne-di-xi-sti do____(mine) (la)____(bia)

The kind of musical notation that we are dealing with here is what I would like to call a ‘performer’s notation’. In this kind of notation, the melody is being transcribed into a music script that is all about how a chant is supposed to be sung, as opposed to a script that represents a certain standardised vocabulary of signs that can potentially be ‘read’ by anyone. Particularly, it involves a lot of what seems to be a graphic response to the melody in one’s head, as opposed to, say, copying from an exemplar – the unique neume shapes shown in Ex. 16 and Ex. 17 are part of this phenomenon. Other unique features, such as shown in Ex. 12, Ex. 13, Ex. 14 and Ex. 15, result from an extreme attention to the pronunciation of the text. Hence also the use of ‘rules’ that would allow to discern situations that are melodically similar, but need to be distinguished from the point of view of articulation – *˙* and *˘* within melismas, as well as many other ‘inventions’ that are based on the general rules and conventions of the script, but are custom-made to suit a particular performative situation. I would like to emphasise once again that a lot of the ‘special’ or unique neume shapes and notational devices are found in solo sections of chants – gradual and offertory verses. Thus, both the choice of the material to notate and the character of the musical notation itself point to the fact that this particular lady of the Essen *Frauenstift* was actively involved in the singing of the Mass – most likely as the cantor.

A predominance of female religious communities is a distinctive feature of ecclesiastical and monastic life of Carolingian and, later, Ottonian Saxony and some of the source evidence suggests that the ecclesiastical roles of women were more flexible and far less restricted there than one might be used to imagining.⁷ The notation of Mass chants in the margins of the manuscript Düsseldorf D 1 surely contributes to that evidence.

⁷ See particularly INGRID KRISTEN REMBOLD, *The Politics of Christianization in Carolingian Saxony* (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2014), 236-8.