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## *Celestino Eccher and the study of Gregorian chant: a critical reassessment*

It is not easy to encapsulate in a single word the work and activity of Celestino Eccher. Priest, composer, organist, musician, gregorianist, musicologist, teacher: these are the epithets that 'tradition' and literature are used to employ for the man who was popularly referred to as the 'apostle of music'.

A little more than fifty years after Eccher's death, this essay aims to analyze the contribution he made to Gregorian chant studies, focusing on this specific part of his activity. The purpose is to take a critical look at the scope of his works, especially the textbooks *Chironomia gregoriana*, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* and *Il primo gregoriano*, which are still recommended today, even in academic settings, as introductory texts to Latin liturgical monody.<sup>1</sup> Relying on a content analysis of these three treatises, we will attempt to grasp the author's thinking on Gregorian chant. First, however, it is essential to provide a brief profile of our author and of the context in which he was formed and worked.

Celestino Eccher was born in 1892 in Dermulo, a small town in the Trentino. After receiving holy orders in 1917, and a short spell of pastoral care, in 1922 he was sent by the diocese of Trent to study sacred music at the then Pontifical School of Sacred Music in Rome, where he graduated in just three years. Here he had the opportunity to study Gregorian chant with Paolo Maria Ferretti and to deepen the musical studies that he had already started in the city of Trent, in a climate of passionate pro-Cecilianism.

The work of some bishops, such as Monsignor Eugenio Carlo Valussi (in office from 1886 to 1903) and Monsignor Celestino Endrici (in office from 1904 to 1940), but above all of some exponents of the diocesan cler-

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<sup>1</sup> CELESTINO ECCHER, *Chironomia gregoriana. Dinamica, movimento, trasporto ossia come leggere ed eseguire il canto gregoriano: teoria e pratica*, Rome, Desclée & C., 1952; ID., *Gregorian Accompaniment: harmony, rhythm, mode, style*, Rome, Desclée & C., 1960; ID., *Il primo gregoriano. Piccolo metodo in note moderne ad uso delle Scholae e dei Pueri Cantores*, Bergamo, Edizioni Carrara, 1962.

gy, such as Don Giovanni Battista Inama, had made Trento an important center for the spread and promotion of the ideas of the sacred music reform movement.<sup>2</sup> In particular, it was thanks to Don Riccardo Felini, choirmaster of the Cathedral from 1893 to 1923, that the city experienced an intense period of musical fervor.<sup>3</sup> Don Riccardo Felini's stay in Regensburg had very important implications for the musical and liturgical life of Trent, because it led to a deep rooting of the Cecilian program in the city, and to the systematic adoption of the Pustet editions of Gregorian chant. Severino Vareschi points out that over time, while the Ratisbon editions continued to circulate in some areas of the diocese, the diocesan seminary of Trent adopted «the new Vatican editions of Gregorian chant [which] were published beginning in 1905 (with the decisive scientific contribution of the Benedictines of Solesmes)».<sup>4</sup> According to Antonio Carlini, this change, which involved a shift in the center of gravity of the Tridentine Cecilianism from Regensburg to Rome, had a crucial turning point starting from the 1910s; this occurred on the one hand thanks to the work of the musicologist and journalist Oscar Ulm from Gorizia, the editor-in-chief of «Il Trentino» (a Catholic newspaper directed by Alcide De Gasperi) and a strong supporter of the Solems doctrine, and on the other hand thanks to the political rapprochement between Rome and the Trentino, following the First World War.<sup>5</sup>

Eccher's work developed in the context of this profoundly Cecilian cultural-musical climate, which had already embraced the Roman-Solemsense methodology. On his return from Rome, he would confirm and support

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<sup>2</sup> For a more in-depth overview of the Cecilian movement in Trent see SEVERINO VARESCHI, *Riforma della musica sacra e movimento ceciliano nella diocesi di Trento*, in *Fra Ratisbona e Roma: il Cecilianesimo nelle valli alpine. Convegno di studi in occasione del ventesimo di fondazione del Coro Santa Lucia di Magras (September 18-19, 2010)*, edited by Antonio Carlini, Trento, Edizioni 31, 2012, pp. 53-84. The conference *Le ricerche degli Alumni Levicampus: la giovane musicologia a confronto*, promoted by the Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi and held online on July 6-8, 2020, featured a paper by Cecilia Delama titled *La riforma ceciliana tra Trento, Roma e Ratisbona*; the proceedings of the conference are forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> On the activity of don Riccardo Felini at the Cathedral Chapel, see ANTONIO CARLINI, *La cappella musicale del duomo di Trento: il repertorio sotto la direzione di don Riccardo Felini (1893-1923)*, in *Fra Ratisbona e Roma* cit., pp. 103-142.

<sup>4</sup> VARESCHI, *Riforma della musica sacra* cit., p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55 ff. On Oscar Ulm see MARCO PLESNICAR, *Ulm Oscar*, in *Dizionario biografico dei friulani* <<https://www.dizionariobiograficodeifriulani.it/ulm-oscar/>> [last accessed on: October 25, 2021]. For a brief (and colourful) account of Oscar Ulm's work in the Trentino, see RENATO LUNELLI, *Un "ceciliano" sostituto di Degasperi*, «Strenna trentina», XXXI, 1954, pp. 91-93.

once again Trent's alignment with Rome.<sup>6</sup> Eccher remained in Trent, serving in various capacities: he was director of the musical chapel of the Cathedral, and in 1927 he founded the Diocesan School of Sacred Music and promoted many courses for learning Gregorian chant, especially for women's institutes of religious life. His teaching activity, held all over Italy through lessons and conferences, in a sort of didactic 'pilgrimage', was untiring. Speaking of the didactic 'pilgrimages' of Ettore Ravagnani, another important teacher of Gregorian chant in the early 20th century, Mauro Casadei Turrone Monti suggests that this method provided «a less expensive and agile way of teaching sacred music whereby, instead of moving students to a musical school in another city, a charismatic master was invited».<sup>7</sup> From 1931 to 1962 Eccher held the chair of sacred music at the Conservatory of Bolzano. He died in Trento in 1970.<sup>8</sup>

Eccher had an intense compositional activity. Amelio Fiorini edited the catalog of his works, which total about 800 compositions.<sup>9</sup> Nearly all of them are compositions for the liturgical service, mostly inspired by the tenets of the Cecilian Movement, although since 1965, with the Second Vatican Council about to end, there was a definite change of pace and an interest in the new

<sup>6</sup> VARESCHI, *Riforma della musica sacra* cit., p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> MAURO CASADEI TURRONI MONTI, *Fonti della didattica gregoriana nel Cecilianesimo italiano. Il «Metodo» di Ettore Ravagnani (Solesmes-Graz, 1900-1902)*, in *Fonti della musica sacra: testi e incisioni discografiche*, edited by Alessandro Argentini and Lucia Ludovica de Nardo, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2011 («Quaderno del laboratorio Mirage», 2), pp. 141-166: 146.

<sup>8</sup> On Eccher see: ALDO BARTOCCI, *Eccher, Celestino*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, XLII, Rome, Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1993, pp. 271-273; CLOTILDE MORRICONE, *Eccher, Celestino*, in *Dizionario della musica e dei musicisti. Le biografie*, Torino, UTET, 1985, II, p. 620. On the pastoral activity of Eccher see in particular: *Monsignor Celestino Eccher musician (1892-1970). Atti del convegno di studi sulla figura e l'opera* (Taio, May 11, 1991), edited by Gian Luigi Dardo, Trento, Grafiche Artigianelli, 1992. The following Master's theses are also noteworthy: MARIA SGAGGERO, *Mons. Celestino Eccher*, (Pontificio Istituto Ambrosiano di Musica Sacra, Milan, 1976/77), and ELETTRA VASSALLO, *Il canto gregoriano nell'insegnamento e nella produzione musicale di Mons. Celestino Eccher*, (University of Padua, 1980/81; for a summary, see EAD., *Il canto gregoriano nell'insegnamento e nella produzione musicale di Mons. Celestino Eccher*, in *Mons. Celestino Eccher musicista (1892-1970)* cit., pp. 161-180).

<sup>9</sup> AMELIO FIORINI, *Mons. Celestino Eccher. Catalogo delle opere*, Master's thesis, Pontificio Istituto Ambrosiano di Musica Sacra, Milan, 1976/77. The thesis was later published in ID. *Monsignor Celestino Eccher*, Trent, Diocesan School of Sacred Music of Trent, 1982. Eccher's printed and manuscript works are now preserved in the Vigilium Diocesan Library of Trent. The library's music holdings have recently been inventoried by Cecilia Delama.

Council requirements. Hence, the compositions of his last period were set in Italian. This was not a repudiation of the past, but rather a prompt response to pastoral demands. Eccher was always animated by a certain zeal for the care of souls, which he practiced in what has often been described as ‘musical apostolate’, based on the idea that music could and should be a fundamental element in the life of every Christian.<sup>10</sup>

Eccher was not only a composer and ‘pastor of souls’, but also a scholar of Gregorian chant. This specific activity can be divided into two phases. The first one, covering the time span between his stay in Rome and the end of the 1940s, was driven by a paramount interest in scholarly publications intended for a specialized public. The contributions of this period are few and fairly succinct. From the beginning of the 50s onwards, however, Eccher authored some didactic manuals no longer aimed at specialists, but at anyone introduced to Gregorian chant for the first time. Thus, over time Eccher increasingly highlighted his role as a ‘Gregorianist-teacher’, rather than a ‘Gregorianist-musicologist’.

Conceived in Eccher’s first phase, and published in 1931 in the «Atti della società italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze», the *Documenti e frammenti paleografici gregoriani della regione tridentina* is perhaps the most scientific contribution in the scholar’s *corpus*, since it deals with questions of musical palaeography by collecting and listing the neumatic evidence in the Trentino region up to the 13th century.<sup>11</sup> This work was probably conceived in the wake of the master’s thesis defended by the author in 1926 at the then Pontifical School of Sacred Music in Rome, whose subject was an analysis of codex 60 of Castel Tirolo [I-TIR ms. 50218529 (*olim* n.60)].<sup>12</sup> This contribution, from 1931, is very concise and does not delve into in-depth paleographic descriptions of the sources, but is rather aimed at demonstrating that the Trentino also had a significant neumatic tradition. In his discussion, Eccher is animated

<sup>10</sup> Eccher himself states that «L’infiammare poi alla stessa [al canto gregoriano] i tiepidi cuori, e sostenere la fioca luce, è apostolato» [To inflame lukewarm hearts to Gregorian chant and to sustain its dim light is part of the apostolic mission]. ECCHER, *Il primo gregoriano* cit., p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> CELESTINO ECCHER, *Documenti e frammenti paleografici della regione tridentina*, «Atti della società italiana per il Progresso delle Scienze», XIX, 2, 1931, pp. 469-472. On the other hand, the very succinct ID., *Due nuovi frammenti di canto liturgico e la tradizione chorale dell’epoca*, «Cultura atesina», II, 1948, p. 80, is little more than a short communication.

<sup>12</sup> CELESTINO ECCHER, *Il codice 60 di Castel Tirolo. Illustrazione liturgico-musicale con accenni al luogo di origine ed all’opera di composizione dello stesso*, Master’s thesis (Pontificia Scuola Superiore di Musica Sacra, Rome, 1926). For more recent research on the same codex, see MARCO GOZZI, *I codici liturgici di Castel Tirolo*, with an essay by Roberto Sette, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2012 («Monumenta liturgiae et cantus», 1).

by a somewhat 'patriotic' feeling, which leads him to proudly state that «san Vigilio [la Cattedrale di Trento] aveva già verso il mille una liturgia con canto gregoriano proprio: ciò che è per noi di primissima importanza» [San Vigilio (the Cathedral of Trent) already had a liturgy with its own Gregorian chant tradition around the year 1000: this is of the utmost importance for us].<sup>13</sup> Eccher's working method involves comparing the melodies found in the manuscripts with those of the Vatican edition of Pius X; a 'positive' match, «depone per l'antichità ed importanza storica» [confirms the antiquity and historical importance]<sup>14</sup> of the manuscript or fragment in question.

Starting in the 1950s, Eccher began a new season of educational publications. This is the case, for example, of *Note quadrate (Square notes)*, an article published in 1953 in «Rivista musicale italiana». The title is deliberately provocative because it aims to highlight how the neumes, for most musicians, are nothing more than 'square notes' of obscure interpretation. Eccher laments a certain ignorance on the part of musicians with regard to Gregorian chant when he states that:

sembra a taluni che la musica sia di oggi, e che il mondo occidentale sia rimasto muto per quasi dieci secoli, che nessuno abbia indagato nella teoria musicale, e che il canto uscito dalla mente e dal cuore del musicista medioevale, sia un rozzo relitto chiesastico. Questa mentalità, formatasi nel curriculum di incerti e incompleti studi della musica, è ulteriormente favorita dall'affascinante continuo progresso della moderna teoria armonica e della produzione concertistica; cosicché un diplomando in composizione dopo gli esami, nel mentre discorrerà su quasi tutta la musica degli ultimi quattro secoli, rimane muto allorché si intavola il discorso sui dieci secoli che vanno dalla caduta dell'Impero Romano fino quasi all'ars nova fiorentina.<sup>15</sup>

It seems to some that music is a modern invention, that the Western world has remained silent for almost ten centuries, that no one has investigated musical theory, and that the singing that came out of the mind and heart of the medieval musician is a crude church relic. This mentality, which took shape in the curriculum of uncertain and incomplete music studies, is further reinforced by the fascinating and constant progress of modern harmonic theory and concert production, so that a graduating composition student, while capable of discussing almost all the music of the last four centuries, will remain silent when addressing the ten centuries that separate the fall of the Roman Empire from the period immediately before the Florentine ars nova.

<sup>13</sup> ECCHER, *Documenti e frammenti paleografici della regione tridentina* cit., p. 471.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> CELESTINO ECCHER, *Note quadrate (Considerazioni sul canto gregoriano)*, «Rivista musicale italiana», LV, 1953, pp. 341-361: 341.

Explaining the basics of the discipline, Eccher proposes to introduce students to Gregorian chant, addressing «soprattutto a chi per programma statale deve saper abbracciare [*sic*] qualche cosa anche sul canto gregoriano: come avviene per i compositori e per il diploma di organo» [above all those who, by state programs, must know how to come up with something also on Gregorian chant: as in the case of composers and for organ graduates].<sup>16</sup>

The didactic vein is even more evident in his three manuals of Gregorian chant: *Chironomia gregoriana*, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* and *Il primo gregoriano*. All three works, each with a different slant, aim to make learners literate about Gregorian chant. Eccher was operating within an already well-established tradition of Gregorian chant manuals in Italian, the importance and diffusion of which speaks for the relevance of this repertory in daily liturgical practice at least until the Second Vatican Council. Among these is the popular *Metodo compilato di canto gregoriano* (*Compiled Method of Gregorian Chant*) by the above-mentioned Ettore Ravagnani, who greatly esteemed the work of the Solesmes school.<sup>17</sup> A characteristic of these «manualetti compilativi [era] che sotto la veste modesta celavano una parafrasi corretta dei contenuti solesmensi ed intuizioni pedagogico-divulgative moderne nel criterio ‘dal facile al difficile’» [little compilation manuals (was) that under their modest appearance they concealed a correct understanding of Solesmes’ content, as well as modern pedagogical and popularizing ideas in the order ‘from easy to difficult’].<sup>18</sup> Eccher, too, adopted a method

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<sup>16</sup> *Ivi*, p. 343. Eccher refers here to the official curricula adopted in Italy until the recent reform of the Conservatories. Specifically, the students of the school of composition during the middle years were required to take a ‘Complementary organ and Gregorian chant’ course, whose license required passing five tests: 1) Performance of one of Bach’s eight little preludes and fugues 2) Improvised modulations, and improvisation over a few cadenzas with obbligato pedal 3) Sight-reading of an easy piece for organ 4) Answering questions on Gregorian chant theory 5) Written accompaniment of a Gregorian melody. On the other hand, organ students were expected to pass a number of tests on Gregorian chant as part of the main organ course.

<sup>17</sup> ETTORE RAVEGNANI, *Metodo compilato di canto gregoriano*, I-II, Solesmes-Graz (Styria), Stamperia di san Pietro-Tipografia dell’I. R. Università, 1900-1902. To this group also belongs the original method by Angelo De Santi analysed in PIER LUIGI GAIATTO, *La ricezione degli studi solesmensi in Italia alla fine dell’Ottocento: l’inedito metodo di canto gregoriano di Angelo De Santi*, in *Candotti, Tomadini, De Santi e la riforma della musica sacra*, ed. by Franco Colussi and Lucia Boscolo Folegana, Udine, Forum, 2011, pp. 389-459 (also included in *ID.*, *Divitiae salutis sapientia et scientia: scritti musicologici*, a cura di Franco Colussi, Venezia, Fondazione Levi, 2021, pp. 113-191).

<sup>18</sup> CASADEI TURRONI MONTI, *Fonti della didattica nel Cecilianesimo italiano* cit., p. 151.

that, starting from the basics of the discipline, was able to guide the learner towards more complex and technical subjects.

*Chironomia gregoriana* was the most successful and widespread work within Eccher's corpus, to the point that it appeared in a German edition, again published by Desclée.<sup>19</sup> The work introduces choir directors to chironomy, that is, to the technique that «esprime il movimento che il direttore di coro dovrebbe fare nel guidare i cantori all'interpretazione delle melodie gregoriane» [expresses the movement that the choir director should make in guiding the singers to the interpretation of Gregorian melodies].<sup>20</sup>

The subtitle *Dinamica, movimento, trasporto ossia come leggere ed eseguire il canto gregoriano: teoria e pratica* (*Dynamics, movement, transposition, or how to read and perform Gregorian chant: theory and practice*), which anticipates the subdivision of the work into a theoretical and a practical part, already points to the practical-didactic nature of the work. The confirmation comes from Celestino Eccher himself, who in his preface states that:

La presente pubblicazione, celebrativa del XXV° della Scuola Diocesana di Musica Sacra in Trento, che fu il campo sperimentale di quanto veniamo affermando e propugnando, esce alla luce con un fine del tutto pratico: formare il Direttore di coro gregoriano, che in ogni Parrocchia od Istituto lo possa artisticamente interpretare e farsene felice apostolo; onde questa sublime veste melodica della solenne Liturgia venga eseguita con intelletto d'amore. [...] Il libro che offriamo alla benevola accoglienza dei nostri amici è principalmente didattico, su cui essi possono imparare quelle indispensabili ed esatte nozioni teorico-esecutive, senza le quali è vano sperare una messa a fuoco del canto gregoriano.<sup>21</sup>

This publication celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Diocesan School of Sacred Music in Trent, the experimental lab that led to what we are affirm and advocate here. It comes to light with an entirely practical purpose: to train the conductor of the Gregorian choir, who in every parish or institute can artistically interpret it and make himself a committed apostle of it, so that this sublime melodic garment of the solemn Liturgy may be performed with love's intellect. [...] The book we offer to the benevolent reception of our friends is primarily didactic: in it they will learn those indispensable and exact notions of performance theory, without which it is vain to hope for accuracy in Gregorian chant.

<sup>19</sup> CELESTINO ECCHER, *Die Cheironomie im Gregorianischen Choral. Dynamik, Bewegung, Transposition oder wie Man den Choral liest und ausführt: theoretischer und praktischer Teil*, Roma, Desclée & C., 1956.

<sup>20</sup> ALBERTO TURCO, *Monsignor Eccher ed il canto gregoriano rinnovato*, in *Monsignor Celestino Eccher musicista (1892-1970)* cit., pp. 121-126: 124.

<sup>21</sup> ECCHER, *Chironomia gregoriana* cit., p. 6 ff.

The methodological horizon behind Eccher's work is thoroughly modeled on Solesmes'. Again, the author himself discloses his own intellectual affiliation when addressing the rhythmic theory of Solesmes, stating that «fu da noi seguita fedelmente nella stesura del testo teorico» [we faithfully followed it in setting forth the theoretical portion of this text].<sup>22</sup> Between the preface and the first part of the manual, the author lists the works he either cited or consulted during the writing of the volume, and it comes as no surprise that many of them are by Solesmes authors. In addition to the works of André Mocquereau, Eccher does not fail to mention several issues of the «Revue Grégorienne», which was, so to speak, the vehicle for the diffusion and amplification of the Solesmes school. On the other hand, there is no lack of names linked to the Roman circle of the time, such as Cardine, Ferretti and Suñol. Furthermore, Eccher does not hesitate to include in his reference list the liturgical and musical dispositions issued by Pius X and Pius XII, in order to reinforce his alignment with the official musical requirements coming from Rome.<sup>23</sup> Also in the preface, the author recalls how:

l'edizione unica ed obbligatoria [di canto gregoriano] è quella Vaticana; il ritmo più scientificamente provato e praticamente unico è il ritmo naturale esposto dalla Scuola Solesmense e da quel suo sempre più grande maestro che fu il P. Mocquereau; il modo unico poi di esecuzione deve essere quello che discenda logicamente dall'applicazione dei principi ritmico-dinamici del P. Mocquereau, e che soli mettono in luce tutta la bellezza, l'ordine, la potenza ed espressività del canto gregoriano e lo rendono vitale.<sup>24</sup>

the Vatican edition [of Gregorian chant] is the only mandatory one. The most scientifically verified and practically unique approach to rhythm is the notion of natural rhythm expounded by the Solesmes School and by its ever-greater master, Father Mocquereau. The sole mode of execution must then logically follow from the application of Father Mocquereau's rhythmic-dynamic principles, which alone bring out all the beauty, order, power and expressiveness of Gregorian chant and make it come alive.

In fact, the treatise that Eccher offers his readers is a condensed and simplified version of the theories set forth by André Mocquereau in his *Le nom-*

<sup>22</sup> *Ivi*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> For the relevant papal texts, see PIUS X, *Motu proprio "Tra le sollecitudini"*, «Acta Sanctae Sedis», XXXVI, 1903-1904, pp. 329-339, and PIUS XII, *Encyclical "Mediator Dei et hominum"*, «Acta Apostolicae Sedis», XXXIX, 1947, pp. 521-603.

<sup>24</sup> *Ivi*, p. 6.



*bre musical grégorien ou rythmique grégorienne*.<sup>25</sup> In particular, *Chironomia gregoriana*, intended for choir conductors, delves into issues of rhythm and chironomy. The idea is that the Gregorian melodic line can be subdivided into irregular groups of two or three sounds that join together to generate larger rhythmic structures. Hence the possibility of identifying progressively more complex structures (from the motif to the phrase). Moreover, through the use of graphic-chironomic signs (curved and wavy lines drawn between the notes), it is possible to visually appreciate these structures. Today such rhythmic theories have been abandoned, but as early as in the middle of the last century Willi Apel noted that:

di certo non vi è proprio alcun fondamento storico a sostegno del momento centrale della sua [di André Mocquereau] teoria, quello cioè riguardante i gruppi binari e ternari con i relativi ictus. [...] Il suo lavoro rappresenta in tal modo un misto di precisione storica e di fantasia inventiva.<sup>26</sup>

there is certainly no historical basis to support the central element of his [André Mocquereau's] theory, namely, the one concerning the binary and ternary groups with their ictus. [...] Thus his work turns out to be a mixture of historical accuracy and creative imagination.

Eccher, on the other hand, unreservedly accepts André Mocquereau's theories and believes them to be intrinsic to Gregorian chant, the flow of which, thus conceived, cannot but produce 'wonderful effects'. Indeed, chapter XXIX carefully analyzes the effects of a chant performed this way: sanctity and decorum, peace and power, abundance and protection, light against error.<sup>27</sup> It is clear that for Eccher, accepting these theories means not only adhering to a presumed correct performance practice, but also subscribing to a specific idea of 'cantare il gregoriano' that was very close to papal demands.

It is indeed the Magisterium of Pius X and Pius XII which constitutes the second pillar of the treatise, and to which Eccher refers not only with reverence, but also with the obedience he promised the day he received the Holy Orders.<sup>28</sup> It is to the papal teaching and its fruits that Eccher constantly

<sup>25</sup> ANDRÉ MOCQUEREAU, *Le nombre musical grégorien ou rythmique grégorienne: théorie et pratique*, Rome-Tournai, Desclée & C., 1908 and 1927.

<sup>26</sup> WILLI APEL, *Il canto gregoriano. Liturgia, storia, notazione, modalità e tecniche compositive*, translated edition, revised and updated by Marco Della Sciucca, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana Editrice, 1998, p. 172.

<sup>27</sup> ECCHER, *Chironomia gregoriana* cit., pp. 133-136.

<sup>28</sup> Gian Luigi Dardo strongly emphasizes this aspect, saying that in Celestino Eccher one

turns, as a 'shepherd of souls', to the point that in the preface he feels the need to point out that *Chironomia gregoriana* «non è un libro liturgico, destinato a sostituire altri libri di canto in note moderne, già in uso» [is not a liturgical book, meant to replace other chant books in modern notation that are already in use].<sup>29</sup>

The exposition of chironomic theories starts from the definition of 'simple beat', defined as «quella durata minima di tempo che occorre per pronunciare una sillaba, emettere un suono melodico ed accompagnarlo con gesto ritmico in modo conveniente all'arte» [that minimum duration of time that is necessary to pronounce a syllable, emit a melodic sound and accompany it with a rhythmic gesture in a way that is convenient to the art].<sup>30</sup> Following a didactic plan organized from simple to complex elements, the author then introduces the 'compound beat', «formato da due o tre tempi semplici: esso perciò è binario o ternario, ed ha anche neumi rappresentativi del numero delle sue note» [formed by two or three simple beats: it is therefore binary or ternary, and also has neumes representing the number of its notes].<sup>31</sup> After pointing out that all neumes can be traced back to binary or ternary groups (the basis, as we have seen, of André Mocquereau's rhythmic theory) and recalling that «il primo tempo del gruppo ha un'importanza speciale perché esso inizia il gruppo ed è portatore dell'*ictus* o tesi ritmica» [the first note of the group has a special importance because it begins the group and carries the *ictus* or rhythmic accent],<sup>32</sup> Eccher expounds «regole precise e sicure sì da togliere ogni esitazione» [precise and certain rules so as to remove all hesitation]<sup>33</sup> for the identification of binary or ternary groups on the basis of the rhythmic *ictus*.<sup>34</sup>

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cannot «separate the musician from the priest». GIAN LUIGI DARDO, *Celestino Eccher, uomo e didatta: espressioni argute e immagini poetiche nei discorsi e negli scritti*, in *Mons. Celestino Eccher musicista (1892-1970)* cit., pp. 93-102: 98. Clearly, this element can be read in a twofold perspective. On the one hand, it circumscribes the limits of Eccher's activity; on the other hand, it reveals itself as a key to reading and understanding.

<sup>29</sup> *Ivi*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> ECCHER, *Chironomia gregoriana* cit., p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> *Ivi*, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ivi*, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> The following passage gives a sense of the bluntness of these rules: «Hanno *ictus* ritmico, e perciò iniziano un gruppo: a) tutte le note che lo portano scritto (sotto e sopra); b) tutte lo [*sic*] note lunghe per natura o per posizione. Lunga per posizione è la mora vocis. Lunghe per natura sono: il *pressus*. Il *sálicus-pressus*, o di seconda forma. Lo *stróphicus: bístropha*,

This is followed by the definition of rhythm, understood as «il terzo e più alto grado per l'intelligenza e la direzione del canto gregoriano» [the third and highest degree for the comprehension and performance of Gregorian chant].<sup>35</sup> Consisting of two parts, *arsis* and *thesis* (or 'elevation' and 'deposition') «esso stabilisce delle relazioni nel succedersi immediato dei tempi semplici e di quelli composti; ne è l'ordine e la forza sintetica» [rhythm establishes relationships in the immediate succession of simple and compound beats; it is their order and cohesive force].<sup>36</sup> Like beat subdivisions, rhythm too is organized in gradually increasing degrees of complexity: from the 'elementary rhythm', «che ha all'arsi un tempo semplice, ed alla tesi uno o due tempi semplici» [which has a simple tempo in the arsis, and one or two simple tempos in the thesis],<sup>37</sup> to the 'simple rhythm', which is obtained «se all'arsi, invece di un tempo semplice, si pone un tempo composto binario o ternario ed altrettanto si fa alla tesi» [when in the arsis, instead of a simple tempo, a binary or ternary compound tempo is set, and the same is done at the thesis]<sup>38</sup>, up to the 'compound rhythm', «risultante dalla ripetizione di

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trístropha. L'oríscus. La nota precedente il quilísma. c) La prima nota d'ogni neuma: pes, clivis, tórculus, porréctus, clímacus, scándicus. L'ictus sulla prima nota di questi neumi cessa però se immediatamente preceda o segua un'altra nota con l'ictus ritmico scritto, perché due ictus su note semplici consecutive non sono possibili. [...] Nel corso della melodia, una nota sola fra due neumi si congiunge col neuma antecedente, col quale fra [*sic*] gruppo ternario, se il neuma era di due, e fa gruppo di quattro (divisibile in 2+2) se il neuma era ternario. [...] Nel canto sillabico l'ictus ritmico va di preferenza sull'ultima sillaba di parola (*dies*); se poi la parola è sdrucchiola, essa vuole un ictus anche sull'accento (*flio*)» [The notes carrying the ictus, which therefore start a group, are: a) all notes that bear it written (either below or above); b) all notes that are long by nature or by virtue of their position: the *Mora vocis* is long by position; the *pressus*, the *sálicus-pressus* (i.e., the *sálicus* of the second type), the *stróphicus* (*bístropha*, *trístropha*, *oríscus*), and the note preceding a *quilísma* are long by nature c) The first note of each neume: *pes*, *clivis*, *tórculus*, *porréctus*, *clímacus*, *scándicus*. There is no ictus on the first note of these neumes, however, if it immediately precedes or follows another note carrying a written ictus, because two consecutive ictus on simple notes are not possible. (...) In the course of the melody, a single note between two neumes is joined to the preceding neume, with which it forms a ternary group, if it was a binary one, and forms a group of four (divisible in 2+2) if the neume was ternary. (...) In syllabic chant, the ictus falls preferably on the last syllable of the word (*dies*); if the accent of the word falls on the ante-penultimate syllable, it requires an ictus also on the accent (*flio*) (...)]. The entire passage is interspersed with musical examples. *Ivi*, pp. 22-27.

<sup>35</sup> *Ivi*, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> *Ivi*, p. 42.

due o più ritmi semplici» [resulting from the repetition of two or more simple rhythms].<sup>39</sup> From the latter, then, through its ‘development’, we obtain the section (understood as ‘quarter of a phrase’), and from here the phrase member (understood as ‘half of a phrase’), and finally, the phrase, namely «l’espressione completa e finita di un pensiero» [the complete and finished expression of a thought].<sup>40</sup> The account of rhythm makes only relatively few concrete references to the repertory. Among these, Eccher’s explanation of «elementary rhythm» mentions the hymn *Creator alme siderum*, explaining that each jambic foot is made of two syllables corresponding to the *arsis* and *thesis* of an elementary rhythm. The hymn features a *tempo semplice* (i.e., a single sound), both in the *arsis* (the first syllable of the jambic foot) and in the *thesis* (its second syllables).<sup>41</sup>

Eccher expounds the rhythmic theory of André Mocquereau following the same procedure, that is, starting from the simplest elements to arrive at the most complex ones, and adopting a similar terminology, most of the time a simple Italian translation of the French expression. The page layout is also modeled after Mocquereau’s treatise: the exposition of the theory proceeds in short paragraphs, interspersed with examples in modern notation that include chironomic signs. Because he has to summarize, sometimes Eccher ends up being more systematic than Mocquereau himself, for example in the case of the definition of ‘elementary rhythm’ and ‘simple rhythm’, which in the earlier treatise are not precisely defined and distinguished from each other.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike André Mocquereau, Eccher does not include exercises for the learner in his exposition, though he adds a substantial appendix where he gives practical demonstrations of the chironomic theories presented in the main text. A large number of Gregorian compositions are transcribed in modern notation with the addition of chironomic signs.

Based on the same didactic approach, *Accompagnamento gregoriano (Gregorian Accompaniment)* is a treatise dedicated to organist Enrico Girardi, and published by Desclée in 1960, dealing with organ accompaniment. The work is divided into three parts devoted respectively to melody, accompaniment and style. It opens with a short preface and closes with an appendix on the main polyphonic forms of sacred music, and with a substantial number of essays on organ accompaniment.

<sup>39</sup> *Ivi*, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi*, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> *Ivi*, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> As Eccher himself observes in *ivi*, p. 34.

After a brief presentation of Gregorian grammar, Eccher summarizes the rhythmic theories already discussed in *Chironomia gregoriana*, then goes on to analyze in more detail the harmonic and modal rules that are essential for accompanying Gregorian chant on the organ. For Eccher, these rules are not only «naturali ed ovvie» [natural and obvious],<sup>43</sup> but are also «connaturali alla monodia da accompagnare» [connatural to the monody to be accompanied].<sup>44</sup>

For the organist to keep to these rules and, therefore, to preserve the nature of Gregorian chant, «è necessario attenersi all'accordo maggiore e minore e al loro primo rivolto. Resta escluso l'accordo diminuito sul VII grado, tranne che nel suo primo rivolto, purché risolva al VI grado e non al I. [...] Si evita l'accordo di quarta e sesta di tipo maggiore (gradi principali) che è assolutamente cadenzante». [it is necessary to keep to the major and minor chords and their first inversion. The diminished chord on the VI degree is excluded, except in its first inversion, provided that it resolves to the VI degree and not to the I. (...) The 6/4 chord of the major type (on the main degrees), which is absolutely cadential, is to be avoided].<sup>45</sup> In short, while trying to respect the natural 'harmony' of Gregorian chant, Eccher uses expressions and mechanisms that are typical of tonal harmony (major chord, vi degree, etc.). However, Eccher himself reiterates that the accompaniment must not be too 'tonal' (for example, by using the 6/4 chord), because this might undermine the natural 'harmony' of Gregorian chant.

The short-circuit is quite evident here. On the one hand, the author affirms the independence of the Gregorian *melos* from conceptual domains that are not its own (i.e., tonality); on the other hand, he uses the language proper of those domains when it comes to accompanying it on the organ. The very notion of 'Gregorian harmonics', as propounded by Eccher, turns out to be biased, as it presupposes that Gregorian chant has intrinsic features that make it suitable for harmonic accompaniment. Thus, for Eccher «lo stendere un accompagnamento gregoriano è paragonabile all'arte di restauro delle antiche pitture, che debbono essere ripristinate nel loro originario colore, fin nei minimi particolari» [the realization of a Gregorian accompaniment may be compared to the art of restoring ancient paintings, which must be returned to their original hues, down to the smallest detail].<sup>46</sup> At the same time, however:

<sup>43</sup> ECCHER, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* cit., p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ivi*, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> *Ivi*, p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

non si può né precederla, né caricarla di accordi, né deviarla o dirigerla dove essa non vuole andare. Per questo tutta la tecnica dell'accompagnamento sta: 1) nel semplificare 2) nel nascondersi 3) nel non contraddire o controindicare tanto dal lato armonico quanto e soprattutto da quelli ritmico e modale.<sup>47</sup>

one should not upstage it [the Gregorian melody], load it with chords, bend it or lead it where it does not want to go. For this reason, the entire technique of chant accompaniment lies in: 1) simplifying, 2) concealing, 3) avoiding tensions and contradictions at the harmonic level, and above all at the rhythmic and modal levels.

Throughout the text Eccher makes abundant use of harmonic vocabulary: consonance, appoggiatura, bass, rhythmic-harmonic syncopation, dissonance, chord, key signature, transposition. Once the bass part has been written down ('stesò'), Eccher goes as far as to suggest the adoption of a figured bass approach to its performance, always paying attention that «la melodia gregoriana, ben accompagnata, debba proiettare nell'accompagnamento il suo ritmo, il suo modo e la sua naturale armonia» [the Gregorian melody, properly accompanied, should project in the accompaniment its rhythm, its mode and its natural harmony].<sup>48</sup>

Thus, over and over again Eccher appears trapped in a double standard: on the one hand, he strives to remain 'faithful' to the nature of Gregorian chant; on the other, he resorts to terminologies and techniques that are not suited for Gregorian chant, but refer instead to other sound contexts.

This way of conceiving the accompaniment of Gregorian chant is not only peculiar to Eccher; on the contrary, it has a fairly long-standing tradition in manuals. A notable example is the popular *Metodo d'accompagnamento gregoriano e di composizione degli otto modi* by the Venetian Giulio Bas, published by Desclée in 1920, forty years before the analogous work of Eccher, who did not hesitate to cite it in his reference list.<sup>49</sup> As a matter of fact, the two works are very similar in character, further confirming that in this field also Eccher was part of a consolidated tradition of treatises.

The appendix of *Accompagnamento gregoriano*, dedicated to the relationship between Gregorian chant and polyphony, is eminently Cecilianist.<sup>50</sup> For vocal polyphony, the *exemplum* is the undisputed Palestrina, «sommo modello del genere [...] non mai abbastanza studiato» [supreme model of

<sup>47</sup> *Ivi*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> GIULIO BAS, *Metodo d'accompagnamento gregoriano e di composizione negli otto modi*, Rome, Desclée & C., 1920.

<sup>50</sup> ECCHER, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* cit., pp. 141-157.

the genre (...) never studied enough].<sup>51</sup> For instrumental polyphony, instead, the *exemplum* is Frescobaldi. Eccher sees in Ludovico Grossi da Viadana a turning point in the history of sacred music: he is credited with the introduction of basso continuo, and therefore the beginning of ‘modern sacred music’. According to the classic Cecilianist historiography, every kind of evil originated at that moment, since «i contatti gregoriani vanno man mano spegnendosi; e subentra la *lyrica* religiosa, d’un genere meno elevato, e vieppiù soggettiva e vieppiù sentimentale, talvolta formalistica, e poi da ultimo romantica, persino plateale; sit venia verbis!» [the Gregorian connections gradually began to wane; and religious *lyricism* of a less elevated kind took over, increasingly subjective and sentimental, sometimes formalistic, and then finally romantic, even spectacular; sit venia verbis!]<sup>52</sup>

Dedicated to André Mocquereau, *Il primo gregoriano* was published in 1962 by Carrara. The small volume is designed as a streamlined grammar of Gregorian chant for *pueri cantores*. Its purpose is:

mostrare l’alto ideale del loro ufficio [dei cantori], la dignità cui vengono elevati, la preghiera che promuovono e lo apostolato che esercitano, uniti al celebrante nelle sacre funzioni, quale voce delegata della Sacra Assemblea. Il Regno di Dio viene da loro attuato e promosso; e noi pare confidiamo con essi di non andar delusi e privi dell’evangelico ‘denaro’ che il Signore pattuì coi lavoratori della sua vigna, e distribuì poi incominciando dagli ultimi sino ai primi.

to show the high ideal of their service [of cantors], the status to which they are raised, the prayer they promote and the apostolate they exercise, as they are united to the celebrant in the sacred rituals, as the voice of the Sacred Assembly. The Kingdom of God is brought about and promoted by them; and we seem to trust with them that we shall not be disappointed and deprived of the evangelical ‘money’ which the Lord agreed upon with the workers of his vineyard, and then distributed, beginning with the last and ending with the first.<sup>53</sup>

According to these premises, the volume was born with the aim of instructing the ministers in charge of the musical service during the liturgical action. This is why evangelical references are very frequent in Eccher’s prose, to the point of evoking mystical-religious image – a distinctive feature of the scholarly production of his entire second phase. For example, Gregorian chant is described in *Accompagnamento gregoriano* as «la ‘regina’ che sta accanto al

<sup>51</sup> ECCHER, *Gregorian Accompaniment* cit., p. 154.

<sup>52</sup> *Ivi*, p. 155.

<sup>53</sup> ECCHER, *Il primo gregoriano* cit., p. 95.

divino Re nel culto solenne» [the ‘queen’ who stands beside the divine King in solemn worship].<sup>54</sup> Or, again, we read that «la regalità del gregoriano si manifesta già dalla sua morfologia: scrittura quadrata, sacrale; neumi semplici e via via composti di lunghi vocalizzi. Il suo ritmo è completo, esatto, nobile, espressivo; vario nelle forme che lo sintetizzano quale sostegno del testo di cui la melodia è ancella. Ancella-regina o regina-ancella, essa sta al suo posto nel modo voluto dalla Mistica Sposa, dallo Spirito Santo illuminata e ordinata» [the regal quality of Gregorian chant manifests itself in its very morphology: sacred square notation; simple neumes, gradually composed of long vocalizations. Its rhythm is complete, exact, noble, expressive; with varied forms that constitute it as a support of the text, of which the melody is the handmaiden. Handmaid-queen or queen-handmaid, it stays in its place in the manner wished for by the Mystical Bride, enlightened and ordered by the Holy Spirit].<sup>55</sup> Thus, the organist can be called «accompagnatore della Regina», the «accompanist of the Queen».<sup>56</sup> This is a language that is not fully scientific, yet Eccher uses it because he is interested in training not only Gregorianists, but ministers for divine worship.

It is no coincidence, then, that the most interesting pages in Eccher’s corpus are those that address the actual liturgical practice, the field at the top of Eccher’s concerns. Among the most up-to-date paragraphs, in terms of their language and ideas, are numbers 194-197 of *Accompagnamento gregoriano*:

194 – Il canto gregoriano accompagna la Liturgia in tutti i suoi momenti, e viene eseguito, in diverso modo e grado, dalle persone che nella Liturgia agiscono: celebrante, ministri, lettore, schola, e popolo.

195 – Esso ha perciò una ‘funzionalità’, che nel mentre gli permette ogni adattamento, non cessa però di essere soggetta all’arte del recitare in pubblico, in modo solista o corale; oppure di evolversi in melodie convenienti al momento liturgico ed alla schola; e in veste o sillabica, o neumatica, o melismatica.

196 – Non sempre può essere accompagnato; anzi l’accompagnamento è escluso per il canto del celebrante e ministri (diacono e suddiacono), del lettore e dei versicolari. È consentaneo che anche le risposte e acclamazioni del popolo non s’accompagnano. Vi allude l’Istruzione sulla musica sacra del 3-IX-1958, la cui conoscenza pratica è indispensabile all’accompagnatore; sia per le molte e precise disposizioni nella stessa contenute (n. 16b, 21c, 29, 60-67, 80-84); per il largo orizzonte che apre (n. 26, 27, 45); e per la cultura liturgica pratico-artistica che si esige con urgenza in chi tocca l’organo (n. 65, 16, 4), strumento liturgico per eccellenza (n. 98, 108, 115, 117 ecc.).

<sup>54</sup> ECCHER, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* cit., p. 203.

<sup>55</sup> *Ivi*, p. 137.

<sup>56</sup> *Ivi*, p. 138.



197 – L'accompagnamento invece può essere richiesto, lecito e possibile, per sostenere la Schola o il popolo. È perciò che esaminiamo a parte le diverse specie di canto da accompagnarsi, e il modo conveniente a ciascuna specie.

194 - Gregorian chant accompanies the Liturgy in all its moments, and is performed, in different ways and degrees, by the persons involved in the Liturgy: celebrant, ministers, lector, schola, and the assembly.

195 - It therefore has a 'functionality' which allows it to be flexible, while at the same time continuing to subject itself to the art of reciting in public, in solo and choral formats; and to shape itself into melodies appropriate to the liturgical moment and to the schola; and in a syllabic, neumatic or melismatic guise.

196 - It does not always allow for accompaniment; indeed, accompaniment is excluded for the singing of the celebrant and ministers (deacon and subdeacon), the lector and the versiculars. It is appropriate that the responses and acclamations of the congregation also not be accompanied. This is alluded to in the Instruction on Sacred Music of 3-IX-1958, a practical knowledge of which is indispensable for the accompanis, because of the many and precise provisions contained therein (nos. 16b, 21c, 29, 60-67, 80-84), of the wide horizon it discloses (nos. 26, 27, 45); and of the practical-artistic liturgical culture that it urgently requires of those who perform on the organ (nos. 65, 16, 4), the liturgical instrument par excellence (nos. 98, 108, 115, 117 etc.).

197 – On the other hand, the accompaniment may be requested as a legitimate option for supporting the Schola or the assembly. It is for this reason that in separate sections we examine the different kinds of chant be accompanied, and the manners appropriate to each.<sup>57</sup>

Citing the very recent *Instruction* of Pius XII, the author condenses many themes in these lines (among others: the participation of the people, the liturgical culture of the ministers/singers, the importance of the organ), which the Catholic world had been debating for some time and which, shortly thereafter, would be more extensively developed (and in some cases profoundly revised) in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy issued by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>58</sup> The years in which Eccher wrote *Chironomia gregoriana* and *Accompagnamento gregoriano* already saw a great fervor in liturgical matters, and had in Pius XII a mindful and scrupulous reformer. There were many interventions in favor of liturgy and sacred music, which had started from the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of 1947, and eventually found their crowning achie-

<sup>57</sup> *Ivi*, p. 92.

<sup>58</sup> PIUS XII, *Instructio de Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia*, «Acta Apostolicae Sedis», LV, 1958, pp. 630-663. SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM OECUMENICUM VATICANUM II, *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia*, «Acta Apostolicae Sedis», LVI, 1964, pp. 97-138.

vement in the above-mentioned *Instruction* of 1958.<sup>59</sup> Eccher absorbed these interventions, condensed them into his manuals, and used them to reflect on the centuries-old experience of Gregorian chant. In his own way, Eccher was a prominent figure and a witness to the favorable season that began with the second part of Pius XII's pontificate. In those years the initial signs of renewal quietly marked the beginning of a new era, although Pius X's *Motu Proprio* was still the object of zealous reverence.<sup>60</sup>

Viewed in this historical perspective, Eccher's production appears under a completely different light. If, on the one hand, it was reluctant to update the previous research on the subject, preferring instead to repurpose old theories that were already outdated in the 50s and 60s (particular on rhythm), on the other hand it proved more up-to-date on the current musical needs of the Church. For Eccher's primary interest in Gregorian chant was not historical, but rather practical and didactic. The question was not one of grasping it in its historical complexity, but as an essential element of liturgical action, according to the definition given in the *Instruction* of Pius XII:

Il canto gregoriano da usarsi nelle azioni liturgiche è il canto sacro della Chiesa romana, il quale per antica e veneranda tradizione, religiosamente e fedelmente coltivato e ordinato o modulato anche in tempi più recenti secondo esemplari dell'antica tradizione, viene proposto per l'uso liturgico nei rispettivi libri approvati dalla S. Sede.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> PIUS XII, *Encyclical "Mediator Dei et hominum"* cit.; ID., *Instructio de Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia* cit. The expression 'sacred music' is used here in the broader meaning commonly attributed to it, namely music linked to the ecclesiastical context. On the hermeneutical problems that this expression brings with it in light of the reflections of the Second Vatican Council, see DANIELE SABAINO, *La definizione di 'musica liturgica' nel dibattito post-conciliare*, in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Musica Sacra in occasione del centenario di fondazione del PIMS* (Rome, May 26 - June 1 2011), edited by Antonio Addamiano and Francesco Luisi, Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013, I, pp. 87-106.

<sup>60</sup> Enrico Cattaneo also emphasizes the vibrancy of Pius XII's pontificate. ENRICO CATTANEO, *Il culto cristiano in Occidente*, Rome, CLV Edizioni, 2016<sup>2</sup>, pp. 508-517. Much more lukewarm, on the other hand, is the judgment of Felice Rainoldi, who sees in the activity of Pius XII not so much a moment of transition as the end point of a season that had seen its start with his predecessor Pius X. FELICE RAINOLDI, *Traditio canendi. Appunti per una storia della musica dei riti cristiani cantati*, Rome, CLV Edizioni, 2000, p. 532. It is interesting to note that Annibale Bugnini, one of the protagonists of the liturgical reform of the last century, in the title of a monographic publication on this subject, considers as a single time span the years between 1948 and 1975. ANNIBALE BUGNINI, *La riforma liturgica (1948-1975)*, Rome, CLV Edizioni, 1997<sup>2</sup> («Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae-Subsidia», 30).

<sup>61</sup> «Cantus gregorianus in actionibus liturgicis adhibendus, est cantus sacer Ecclesiae

The plainchant for liturgical action is the sacred chant of the Roman Church, which, religiously and faithfully cultivated following an ancient and venerable tradition, and more recently organized and intoned according to the written exemplars of such an ancient tradition, is destined for liturgical use in the dedicated books approved by the Holy See.

Thus, I believe that the time has come for a new appreciation of Eccher's legacy built precisely on this fact – namely, that of the gradual transition from a historical and scholarly interest in Gregorian chant to a more didactic one, inscribed within divine worship. Eccher's three essays were, in effect, not addressed to the narrow audience of specialists in the field, but were rather intended for a public to be initiated to liturgical singing, and in this sense they were receptive to Church needs that Eccher perceived to be relevant at the time of writing. Consequently, their primary purpose is not scientific, but educational and pastoral. This assessment does not detract from the scope and merit of Eccher's work; on the contrary, it captures its complexity and relevance by placing it in its proper context of the indefatigable promotion and spread of Gregorian chant that so engaged the Catholic world during the early 20th century.

Reading these manuals today can seem almost like an archaeological excavation. Yet, at the same time they cast a revealing light on the understanding of Gregorian chant in the first half of the 20th century, especially in the peculiar decade preceding the Second Vatican Council, which, like Two-Faced Janus, looked in more than one direction. Eccher did not shy away from the challenges of his time. Rather, through his didactic writings he urged that «al canto gregoriano si ridia vita, e la sua vita; ed esso sarà, da solo, un sale che risana gusti corrotti e dissipa secolari pregiudizi» [Gregorian chant be given new life, its own life, so that it alone will be the salt that heals corrupt tastes and dispels age-old prejudices].<sup>62</sup> Words that aptly epitomize the significance of Eccher's thought.

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romanae, qui, ex antiqua et veneranda traditione, sancte et fideliter excultus et ordinatus, vel recentioribus quoque temporibus iuxta priscæ traditionis exemplaria modulatus, in respectivis libris, a Sancta Sede rite approbatus, ad usum liturgicum exhibetur». PIUS XII, *Instructio de Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia* cit., p. 633.

<sup>62</sup> ECCHER, *Chironomia gregoriana* cit., p. 69. These words, as Eccher himself admits, hark back to some images from the introduction to the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X. PIUS X, *Motu Proprio "Tra le sollecitudini"* cit., pp. 329-331.

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*Abstract*

The aim of this article is to critically re-read Celestino Eccher's contribution to Gregorian chant studies, examining in particular his didactic handbook production of the 1950s and 1960s (*Chironomia gregoriana*, *Accompagnamento gregoriano* and *Il primo gregoriano*). As of today, musicological literature has not looked into this specific aspect of Celestino Eccher's multifaceted activity, preferring instead to focus on his contribution to composition and performance. This article, however, seeks to fill a gap in this study field: by investigating this specific area of Eccher's activity, it aims at capturing Celestino Eccher's thinking on Gregorian chant and, consequently, critically evaluating his contribution. Rather than from specialized academic literature, Celestino Eccher's work, with its mainly practical-didactic slant, arose as part of the Catholic Church's tireless efforts to promote Gregorian chant, which was so characteristic of the early 20th century, and was revived in the 1950s under the pontificate of Pius XII. This perspective makes it possible, on the one hand, to grasp the limits of Eccher's activity and, on the other, to read his thought in the context in which it took shape.

*Keywords*

Celestino Eccher, Gregorian chant, chironomy, organ accompaniment, Pius XII

*English translation by Elisabetta Zoni*