

Nikolai Gerstner



Mirjana Gerstner



Lucia Gerstner



Marie-Elisée Gerstner



Harpa Dei

Ego sum Alpha et Omega

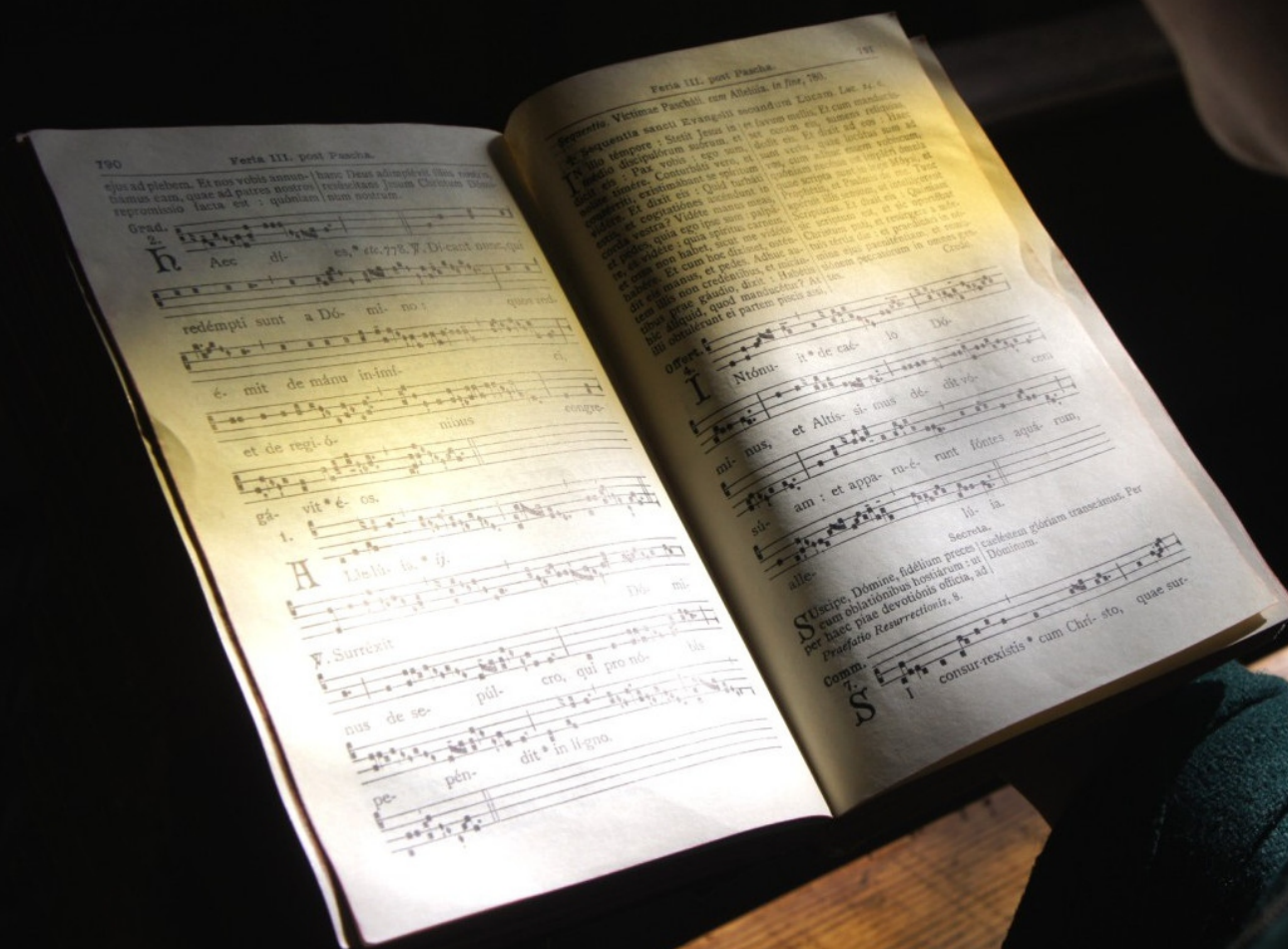
Gregorian Chants



ΑΩ

The Album of Harpa Dei - “Ego sum Alpha et Omega” represents musically the design of God, who wanted to take human flesh in order to redeem man. With exclusively Gregorian songs - starting with the clamor “Rorate Caeli”; that is to say: / “Drop down you Heavens the Just”/ -, the liturgical music leads us through the salvific events of the Incarnation of the Son of God, his Birth, Public Life, Passion and Glorification, closing with an antiphon that refers to the Return of Jesus at the End of Time: / “Behold, the Lord will come, and all the saints with him...”/. The number of songs is in honour of the 33 years of the earthly life of Jesus.

We invite the listener to accompany us on this musical path, and to open himself to the holiness of the songs. Indeed, the unique beauty of the Gregorian chants, this great treasure of the Church, is the presence of the Holy Spirit in them: it is He who wants to touch the depths of our being, so that we may perceive how God's love comes to meet us in the Sacred Music. We hope that these recordings may help to rediscover the almost lost treasure of Gregorian music!



In the first song we give our voices to the humanity that longs for the advent of its Redeemer:

1. *Korate Caeli* (Hymn of Advent)

Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One! (cf. Is 45,8)

Be not angry, O Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity.

Behold the city of the Holy One is become a desert,

Sion is become a desert.

Jerusalem is desolate, the house of thy sanctification and of thy glory, where our fathers praised thee.

Behold, O Lord, the affliction of thy people,
and send forth Him Who is to come: send forth the Lamb,
the ruler of the earth, from the Rock of the desert,
to the mount of daughter Sion: that he may take away the yoke of our captivity.

Be comforted, be comforted, my people:
thy salvation cometh quickly: why art thou consumed with grief:
for sorrow hath estranged thee: I will save thee:
fear not, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

Again we hear the pleading voice of man, who invokes God's forgiveness:

2. *Kyrie Eleison* (Missa IX: "Cum iubilo")

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy

Through the mouth of the prophet, God announces his promise to the people who cried out to Him:

3. *Ecce Virgo concipiet* (Communion Verse)

"Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Is 7,14)

And this Virgin, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, receives the divine messenger and asks astonished:

4. *Quomodo fiet istud* (Antiphon and Canticle of Zechariah)

"How will this be, O angel of God, since I do not know a man?" [And the Archangel replies]: "Listen, Virgin Mary: the Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."
(cf. Lk 1,34-35)

Together with the angelic crowd, the "people of good will" gladly welcome the long-awaited birth of their Saviour:

5. *Gloria* (Missa IX: "Cum iubilo")

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will... (Lk 2,14)

6. Dies sanctificatus illuxit (Alleluia Verse of Christmas)

A day made holy dawns upon us; O come, all nations, and adore the Lord; for today a great light has descended upon earth.

During the Christmas season, the Church greets at the dawn the Saviour who was born, with this hymn:

7. A solis ortus (Christmas hymn - 5th. Century)

From the rising of the sun
to the ends of the earth,
let us sing of Christ the Prince,
born of the Virgin Mary.

The blessed creator of the world
put on a servant's body,
so that, liberating the flesh through taking flesh,
he would not lose what he had made. (...)

He consented to lie in the hay;
he did not shrink from the manger;
and with little milk he was fed,
who does not allow even the birds to hunger.

The heavenly chorus rejoices,
and the angels sing God's praise,
and to the shepherds is now made known
the Shepherd who is the creator of all.

Christus natus est



Jesus, to you be glory,
who are born of a virgin,
with the Father and the loving Spirit,
for eternal ages. Amen.

This antiphon for the Feast of Epiphany leads us to the beginning of the public life of the Lord:

8. Tribus Miraculis (Antiphon of the Magnificat)

We observe this holy day, ornamented with three miracles:
Today a star led the Magi to the manger;
Today wine was made from water at the wedding;
Today in the Jordan Christ desired to be baptised by John,
so that He might save us, Alleluia.

9. Ductus est Jesus (Antiphon of the Magnificat)

After his baptism, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." (Mt 4, 1-2)

The songs that follow narrate some events from the public ministry of our Lord:

10. Dominus secus mare (Entrance Verse)

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, the Lord saw two brothers: Peter and Andrew. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Mt 4, 18-19)

11. Multitudo Languentium (Communion Verse)

A great multitude of sick people and those who were troubled with unclean spirits came to him, for power came out from him and healed them all. (Lk 6, 17-19)

Before his Passion, the Lord manifested His glory to Peter, James and John upon Mount Thabor. We acclaim him with the hymn of the Transfiguration:

12. Quicumque Christum quaeritis (Hymn of the Transfiguration)

Lift up your eyes, whoe'er ye be
That fare the glorious Christ to see:
For yonder is the shining sign
Of grace perennial and divine.

Sure 'tis the sign most reverend
Of Being that doth know no end:
Of One in state sublime arrayed
Ere sky and chaos yet were made. (...)

The prophets witnessed to the bond
Which sealed to Him the realm profound:
The Father's Kingdom He received
And the vast legacy perceived.

All glory be to you O Lord,
Son of the Virgin, blessed Word,
With Father and Blest Spirit One
Until the ages' course is done.

At his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus is received by the people among jubilations and acclamations. The Palm Sunday procession makes that moment visible with the following hymn:

13. Gloria laus et honor tibi sit (Hymn - 9th century)

***Glory, honour, and laud be to Thee, King Christ the Redeemer!
Children before whose steps raised their Hosannas of praise.***

Israel's king art Thou, and the glorious Offspring of David, thou that approachest a King blessed in the Name of the Lord.(...)

Met Thee with Palms in their hands that day the folk of the Hebrews:
We with our prayers and our hymns now to Thy presence approach.

They to Thee proffered their praise for to herald Thy dolorous Passion;
We to the King on His Throne utter the jubilant hymn.

They were then pleasing to Thee, unto Thee our devotion be pleasing;
Merciful King, kind King, Who in all goodness art pleased.

At the Last Supper, the Lord instituted the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, in which he Himself is given to each faithful soul who receives him:

Transfiguratus est



14. Panis quem ego dederō (Communion Verse)

"The bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world"
(Jn 6,51).

Now, Jesus retires to the garden of Gethsemane, where, in agony, he utters this prayer:

15. Pater si non potest (Communion Verse)

"Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done"
(Mt 26,42).

Having been comforted by an angel from heaven and having reaffirmed his decision to accept the will of the Father, he is approached by the traitor:

16. Judas mercator (Responsory of the Office of Holy Thursday)

Judas, the vile merchant, required a kiss from the Lord, who, like an innocent lamb, did not deny the kiss to Judas. For a large amount of dinarii, he betrayed Christ to the Jews. It would have been better for him, had he not been born. (cf. Lk 22,48)

With the three songs that follow, we will accompany Jesus in his holy Passion:

17. Nos autem gloriari (Entrance Verse)

It is right for us to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom

Sumus fidelis



is our salvation, life and resurrection; by whom we are saved and delivered. (cf. Gal 6,14)

18. Crux fidelis inter omnes (Hymn of adoration of the Holy Cross - 6th century)

Faithful cross, above all other, one and only noble tree:
None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit thy peer may be.
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron, sweetest weight is hung on thee!

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle; sing the ending of the fray. Now
above the cross, the trophy, sound the loud triumphant lay: Tell how
Christ, the world's redeemer, as a victim won the day. (...)

Unto God be praise and glory: to the Father and the Son, to the
eternal Spirit honour now and evermore be done; Praise and glory in
the highest, while the timeless ages run.

19. Christus factus est (Graduale)

Christ became obedient for us to the point of death, even death on a
cross. Therefore God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the
name that is above every name. (Phil 2,8-9)

*The morning office of Holy Saturday grieves for the Lord, who lies
in the sepulchre:*

20. Sepulto Domino (Responsory)

Being the Lord buried, the tomb was sealed by rolling a stone across

the door, and soldiers were placed to guard it. The chief priests went
to Pilate and petitioned him. And soldiers were placed to guard it.

(cf. Mt 27,62-66)

*But the Lord does not remain in the Kingdom of death!
Therefore, having commemorated his Passion and Death, let us
now join the jubilation of His Resurrection, with the songs that
follow:*

21. Resurrexi (Entrance Verse)

I arose, and am still with Thee, alleluia. Thou hast laid Thine hand
upon me, alleluia.

Thy knowledge is become wonderful, alleluia, alleluia!

(cf. Ps 139,18.5-6)

22. Victimae paschali laudes (Easter Sequence)

Let Christians offer sacrificial praises to the Passover victim.

The lamb has redeemed the sheep:

The Innocent Christ has reconciled the sinners to the Father.

Death and life contended in a spectacular battle:

the Prince of life, who died, reigns alive.

Tell us, Mary, what did you see on the way?

"I saw the tomb of the living Christ and the glory of his rising,
The angelic witnesses, the clothes and the shroud."

"Christ my hope is arisen; into Galilee, he will go before his own."

We know Christ is truly risen from the dead!
To us, victorious King, have mercy! Amen, Alleluia.

23. Surrexit Dominus de Sepulchro (Alleluia Verse)

Alleluia! The Lord is risen from the tomb, who hung on the tree for us. Alleluia!

24. Christus resurgens (Communion Verse)

Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. (Rom 6,9)

25. Aurora lucis rutilat (Easter Hymn for Lauds)

The day draws on with golden light,
glad songs go echoing through the height,
the broad earth lifts an answering cheer,
the deep makes moan with wailing fear. (...)

Enclosed he lay in rocky cell,
with guard of armed sentinel;
but thence returning, strong and free,
he comes with pomp of jubilee.

For now the grief is passed away,
the pains of hell are loosed today;
for by the grave, with flashing eyes,
"Your Lord is risen," the Angel cries. (...)

Resurrexi



To thee, who, dead, again dost live,
all glory, Lord, thy people give;
all glory, as is ever meet,
to Father and to Paraclete.

26. Pascha nostrum (Communion Verse)

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor 5,7-8)

*The desired time to return to the Father has arrived for the Lord.
The disciples, who remain looking into heaven, listen to two
angels who say to them:*

27. Viri Galilaei (Entrance Verse)

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? In the same way as you saw him go into heaven, so he will come again."
(Acts 1,11)

*The Church, in communion with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the
disciples gathered in the Cenacle, invokes the Holy Spirit, the gift
promised by the Lord:*

28. Veni Creator Spiritus (Hymn of Pentecost - 9th century)

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come
from thy bright heav'nly throne;
come, take possession of our souls,

and make them all thine own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete,
best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
sweet unction and true love. (...)

O guide our minds with thy blest light,
with love our hearts inflame;
and with thy strength, which ne'er decays,
confirm our mortal frame. (...)

Through thee may we the Father know,
through thee th'eternal Son,
and thee the Spirit of them both,
thrice-blessed three in One.

*And indeed, Jesus does not leave His own orphans, but sends them
the Paraclete:*

29. Factus est repente (Communion Verse)

Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind,
where they were sitting. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and
began to speak the mighty works of God. (Acts 2,2.4.11)

*While the Lord is glorified in heaven, the Church, inspired by the
Holy Spirit, endlessly joins in his praise:*

30. Sanctus (Missa IX: "Cum iubilo")

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; Heaven and earth are full of your glory: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

... and in each Holy Mass She exclaims:

31. Agnus Dei (Missa IX: "Cum iubilo")

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Before Him - before the Lamb who was slain - the multitude of angels, along with the creatures of heaven and earth, falls prostrate, singing in His honour a new song:

32. Dignus est Agnus (Entrance Verse)

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever." (Rev 5,12; 1,6)

At the end of time, at the consummation of all things, the Lord - who is ALPHA and OMEGA, the Beginning and the End - will return in his glory, to complete the history of salvation:

33. Ecce Dominus veniet (Communion Verse)

Behold, the Lord will come, and all the saints with him, and on that day a great light will shine. (cf. Zech 14,5-6)

Dignus est Agnus



Harpa Dei is a sacred music ensemble composed of four siblings - siblings both in blood and in spirit. In addition to collecting liturgical songs from various traditions, they have increasingly discovered the richness of Gregorian chant, typical of the Latin-Roman rite. To accompany “a capella” these monophonic pieces, Harpa Dei sings background tones that give the desired harmony to the melody.



 YouTube Harpa Dei

 musica-sacra@jemael.net