

The Mnemonic Verses

A Quick and Easy Guide to the Byzantine Tones

Text and Byzantine chant:
J. Suchy-Pilalis

These songs (they certainly are not hymns!) were written to help beginning chanters remember the structural and cadential notes for the "syntoma" or "quick" hymns of each mode (hymns that are chanted syllabically, i.e., for the most part, one note per syllable).** In essence, the tunes were meant to serve as pedagogical apichimata (introductions) to help the students become more adept at getting into a given tone when (as is so often the case in this country) a neophyte is forced by "economia" to chant "on the fly". Of course, unlike a true apichima, these ditties are not to be sung aloud in a liturgical setting. The melodies have been composed so that each note name (PA, VOU, GA...) is sung on its corresponding pitch using the transcription of C=NI.



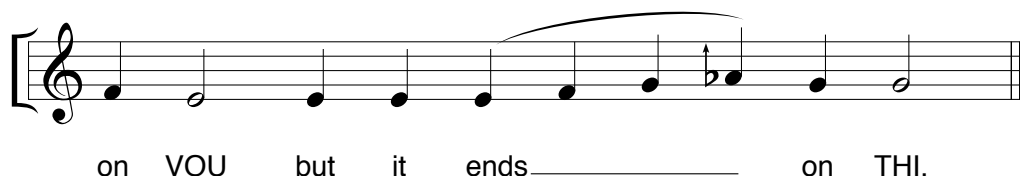
My class at the Antiochian Archdiocese Sacred Music Institute 2007 inspired me to write this. It is solely for this reason that I have used the word "tone" instead of "mode" in the lyrics and the Russian numbering instead of the Byzantine, since this is the practice of that jurisdiction (there is also a mode version).

Tone 1/Mode 1 (diatonic) - all "quick" hymns



Tone 2/Mode 2 (soft chromatic)- apolytikia and kathismata hymns. "Slow" kekragara (Lord, I Call) and pasapnoaria (Let Everything That Breathes) are also chanted in the soft chromatic tuning.

The half flat on KE (A) reflects the microtonal tuning of the soft chromatic system. In the Kazan settings it is written/sung mostly as a full flat but sometimes as a full natural and in the majority of Greek harmonized hymns the trend is the reverse. These comments apply to all hymns that are chanted in the soft chromatic tuning (see Tone 4 and Tone 6).



*ZO is the highest structural and, albeit rarely, cadential point but NI is the often the highest melodic note.

**The "slow" (averaging 2-4 notes per syllable) and "quick" (syllabic) hymns often share the same scale and have some (or all) structural pitches in common. The melodic formulae usage differs. This guide does not illustrate the difference, and the formulae and structural pitches used to compose these tunes represent only the "quick" style.

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Tone 2/Mode 2 (hard chromatic) - antiphona*, and "quick" kanons*, sticheraric hymns and doxologies*.
Tone 6/Mode 2 Plagal -"slow" kekragaria (Lord, I Call) and pasapnoaria (Let Everything That Breathes)
also use this tuning (with different formulae), as is the case for Tone 2 "slow" kanons*.



Ne. PA and THI are ca - dence notes in hard chro - ma - tic.



This is true for both Tone Two and Tone Six.

Tone 3/Mode 3 (enharmonic) - all "quick" hymns



Ne. Tone Three a - voids its home note. It likes to pause on KE

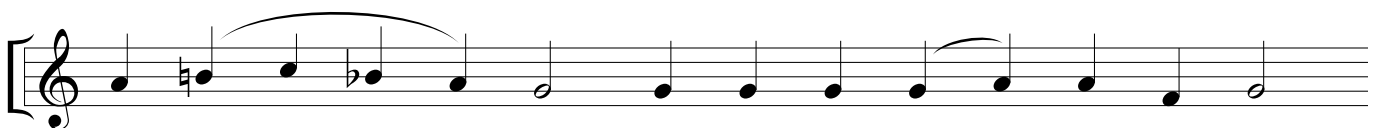


til the fi - nal ca - dence on GA.

Tone 4/Mode 4 (diatonic) - This tuning is used for all hymns *except* apolytikia and kathismata.



Ne. Most Tone Four hymns are di - a - ton - ic so ob - serve just

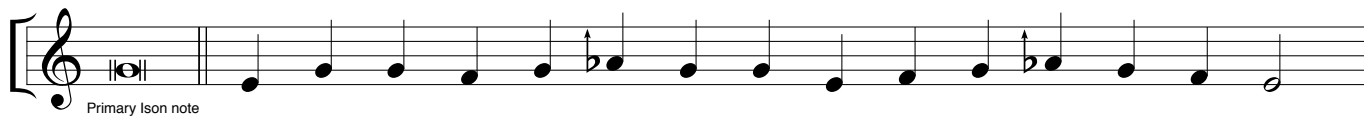


how ZO shifts. This tone can ca - dence on THI



and more of - ten on PA but it al - ways ends on VOY.

Tone 4/Mode 4 (soft chromatic) - apolytikia and some kathismata (the other kathismata are special melodies in hard chromatic). See Tone 2 regarding use of the microtonal a-flats.



Ne. Tone Four A - pol - y - ti - ki - a are al - ways sung like Tone Two.



This is soft chro - mat - ic so ZO is nev - er flat. The



bas - is is THI but the fi - nal ca - dence is on VOU.**

Tone 5/Mode 1 Plagal (diatonic) - all "quick" heirmologic and sticheraric hymns

The note A is actually PA transposed to the level of KE which accounts for the stable ZO (=B-natural), since this note is VOU in "disguise", and the raised GA/F#, since this is actually a low ZO. (The "slow" heirmologic hymns are also based on KE. The "slow" sticheraric and papadika hymns are based on PA.)



Ne. Tone Five can rest in - ter - nal - ly on NI and the fi - nal



note is KE.

Tone 6/Mode 2 Plagal (soft chromatic) - apolytikia, kathismata, anavathmoi, kanons and the following "quick" versions of hymns: kekragara (Lord I Call), aposticha and pasapnoaria (Let Everything that Breathes). The "slow" versions are use the hard chromatic tuning from PA--see the scale of Tone 2.



Ne. Tone Six soft chro - ma - tic ca - dence notes are sim - i - lar



to Tone Two; but be a - ware the fi - nal ca - dence note is VOU.**

**However, the ornamental terminal cadence for a hymn group ends on THI.

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Tone 7/Varys Mode (enharmonic)*- all "quick" hymns

There is also Varys diatonic from ZO but that is in less common use for "quick" hymns.



Ne. Var - ys is the Sev - enth Tone. Some - times it des - cends to PA.



Its stop - ping point on THI is a step a - way from GA.

Tone 8/Mode 4 Plagal from GA (diatonic, but as if NI were transposed to GA, thus the ZO is always flat) - apolytikia, some kathismata, kanons



Ne. Some Tone Eight hymns are based on GA.

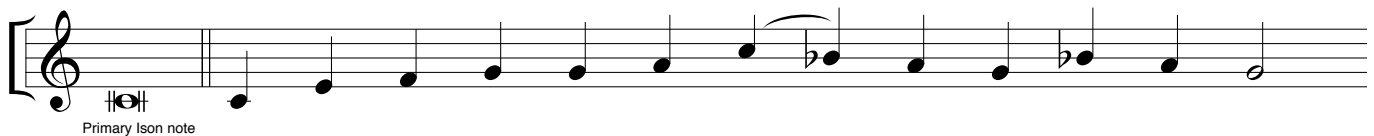


The ZO is al - ways flat; in - ter - nal ca - denc - es can al - so

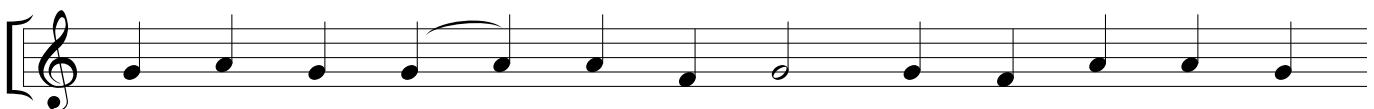


be on THI and the hymn will end on GA.

Tone 8/Mode 4 Plagal from NI (diatonic) - some kathismata, anavathmoi and the "quick" and "slow" versions of hymns: kekragaria (Lord I Call), aposticha and pasapnoaria (Let Everything that Breathes).



Ne. NI is the ba - sis of most Tone Eight mel - o - dies.



These al - so ca - dence on THI and less fre - quent - ly



on VOU, but they al - ways end on NI.