

# MUSCI 115 Response 2

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Apologies, but I have been extremely busy lately, due to some ridiculous workload coming from lab interviews... There were multiple rounds, and in each round I was given a project that would cost dozens of hours. One of them can be found here (clickable, hyperlinked), and another here. Also, now that we have had lectures on these topics, it almost feels like cheating to write the responses...

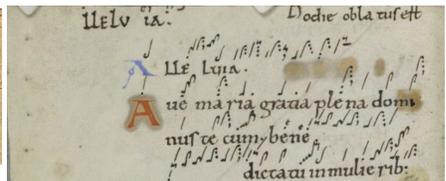
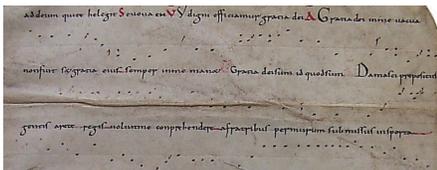
**Q:** Discuss the ways in which Medieval music is notated and preserved. What are some of the techniques that they came up with to write music down and preserve it? Can you compare these to methods of documenting and memorizing music in other cultures?



**A:** During the Middle Ages, music in Europe was recorded using neumes, symbols placed above the lyrics of a chant, indicating the overall contour of the melody. However, these symbols were not precise enough to specify rhythm or pitch, making the performance of the music largely based on oral tradition and performer interpretation. Or me. As someone who is only used to reading five-line staves, I would not have a great time reading these neumes! The system of neumes varied across different regions in Europe. Some examples:

- *Aquitanian* notation: simple, angular shapes, widely used at around 10th century.
- *Beneventan* notation: southern Italy; tall, angular shapes, from 9th to 13th century.
- *Winchester* notation: England (as the name suggests!); simple, angular shapes, 10-12th century.

Below, from left to right, are three images of the three neumes listed above. Sources: the Schøyen Collection (Aquitanian and Beneventan), and Wikipedia (Winchester).



Some medieval manuscripts also included additional informations such as tempo indications, dynamic markings, and ornamentation. However, just like the neumes themselves, these instructions were non-quantitative, and are still subject to performer's own interpretations.

To preserve the music, medieval scribes copied the manuscripts by hand, a process that was both time-consuming and prone to errors. Nevertheless, this was the main way that music was transmitted from one generation to the next. Thanks to the efforts of these scribes, we still have access to valuable historical musical resources today.