

## *O stelliferi conditor orbis* (I:5)

Boethius recounts in the prose passage preceding this *metrum* how as a free man he stood up for justice and the Senate. The fifth *metrum* opens with 24 lines praising God's harmonious ordering of the universe before turning to a complaint against Fortune's rule over human affairs. The whole ends with a supplication of 7 lines, imploring God to establish the same law on earth by which He rules the heavens. The verse lines are commonly 10 syllables in length but range from 9-11 syllables. They are composed of anapaestic dimeters in which each pair of short syllables can be replaced by a long and vice versa:

≈ - ≈ - || ≈ - ≈ -

Clues to the mode may be found at the opening, at the end and at medial cadences, where features common to modes 7 and 8 can all be found; notably, the decoration of what is most likely to be the final at the opening, and what appears to be a distinctive *subfinalis-finalis-superfinalis* (note below the final, final, and note above the final) rising figure on the penultimate syllable (as found, for example, in the Communion antiphon *Domine memorabor*). A search among contemporaneous hymn melodies in lyric metres with a G final reveals one whose overall melodic design shares similarities with the melodic profile recorded for the Boethian *metrum* in the Cambridge leaf. *Almi prophetae* is composed in Alcaic metre and organized into four-line strophes, resulting in eleven-syllable lines divided into 5 syllables before and 6 syllables following a fixed caesura. The melody for *Almi prophetae* not only observes the Alcaic metre with higher notes regularly placed on long syllables (nos. 2 and 4 in the line), but also has an overall profile that matches with some proximity that recorded for *O stelliferi* in the Cambridge leaf. From the opening of the Cambridge notation for *O stelliferi conditor orbis* as far as the caesura in the second line, rising melodic movements are found only on long syllables (1.2, 1.6, 1.9 and 2.1), while relatively high pitches are found on all long syllables in the first half of the second line (2.1, 2.2 and 2.5); the second half of the third line similarly appears to respect metrical lengths with higher pitches placed on the first syllables of *turbine versas*. The result of taking all melodic versions of *Almi prophetae* into account as a basis for reconstructing *O stelliferi conditor orbis* is as follows:

Versions of *Almi prophetae*:

- a. Einsiedeln hymnal (s. xi) – ST 549<sub>1</sub>
- b. Verona hymnal (s. xii) – ST 549<sub>2</sub>
- c. Gaeta hymnal (s. xii) – ST 549<sub>3</sub>

(ST=Bruno Stäblein (ed.), *Hymnen: Die mittelalterlichen Hymnenmelodien des Abendlandes*, Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi 1, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1956)

Boethius

a. 

b. 

c.   
Al - mi pro - phe - tae pro - ge - ni - es pi - a

1.   
O stel - li - fe - ri con - di - tor or - bis

a. 

b. 

c.   
cla - rus pa - ren - te no - bi - li - or pa - tre

2.   
qui per - pe - tu - o ni - xus so - li - o

a. 

b. 

c.   
quem ma - tris al - vus clau - de - re ne - sci - a

3.   
ra - pi - do cae - lum tur - bi - ne ver - sas

a. 

b. 

c.   
or - tus e - ri - lis pro - di - dit in - di - cem

4.   
le - gem - que pa - ti si - de - ra co - gis

The version of the reconstructed melody given here was prepared in conjunction with Benjamin Bagby, who also collaborated in a series of creative practical experiments leading to the principles of reconstruction outlined above. Extending the melody over the remaining lines of the poem represented a considerable task. The main factor taken into consideration was the division of the text into three discrete sections, namely the opening hymn of praise (lines 1-24), the following complaint (lines 25-41), and the closing supplication (lines 42-48). Within these main divisions, an attempt was made to match melodic closure with main points of textual articulation through flexible patterns of melodic repetition within the indicated opening four-line melodic unit of return. In so doing, particular advantage was taken of the flexibility in the melodic tradition of *Almi prophetae* between a closed *g* and open *a* cadence at the end of the third line of the strophe.

For the wider notated tradition of *O stelliferi conditor orbis*, see Barrett, *The Melodic Tradition*, vol. I, pp. 174-8, and vol. II, pp. 201-2.