

Interpreting Square-Note Notation

This form is not yet comprehensive; other examples of notation still need to be added and will when time allows. Perhaps this will be enough to get some eager hearts on their way.

Below is an example of square-note notation from the 1909 Synod Obikhod, noting the Kievan chant music for the Great Litany at Vespers.

the key signature square-note is usually set in the alto clef, although the notation for that is different than in round-note notation, too.

whole notes: square-note whole notes straddle the note they mark; for example, this one is on the middle line, as marked on the alto clef interpretation of this piece

quarter notes

two eighth notes

half note

ГО СПОДИ ПОМИЛЫИ. ГО СПОДИ ПОМИЛЫИ. ГО СПОДИ ПОМИЛЫИ. ТЕБЯ ГО СПОДИ АМИНЬ.

the last note of most Russian chant pieces is a whole note; as with other whole notes in square-note notation, they surround, rather than sit on, the note they designate; compare with the note marked below in the alto clef, round-note notation

The same piece set in round-note notation and using the alto clef. The alto clef has middle-C sitting on the center line. With the range of most Russian chant music going from G below middle-C to B-flat above middle-C, use of the alto-clef is perfect for keeping most music almost entirely on the clef.

Go-spo-di po-mi-liu. Go-spo-di-po-mi-liu. Go-spo-di-po-mi-liu. Teb-ya Gos-po-di. A-men.

With most modern musicians not familiar with the alto clef, it is easy with most computer software to convert the music to the treble clef.

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