

## **“I shall open my mouth...” Quantitative prosody, hirmological genus, psaltic chorus leader’s gesture: a common systemic overview**

**D e m e t r i o s L e k k a s \***

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Classical ancient Greek stichurgy is structured along the basis of the quantitative / durative prosody of “syllabemes”, not along a pattern of syllables proper or of accents. Quantities, a rhythmic element of the signifier speech born out of language, form a dual pair: i. brevis, ii. de natura – de positione longa. For centuries, the understanding, description and vocal utterance of prosodic speech has been handled by scholars of Western and local theory of literature silently incorporating an underlying utterance of standardized speech which is structurally a single-quantity one, whether because their own mother tongue is such by nature, or because they are accustomed to a stichurgical practice utilizing some other irrelevant structural feature of their own spoken language.. By casting aside erratic definitions, groundless assumptions and other hystera-protera and non-sequiturs, this presentation restores the matter on epistemologically rigorous systemic foundations and, following a brief historical linguistic retrospection, shows that the living syllabic isorrhythmics of the hirmological genus, in conjunction to the physical corporal aspect of the chorus leader’s psaltic gesture, bears the first and foremost irrefutable witness of the true and continual lived rhythmic consistency of Greek chant. It argues that time and duration are presently no longer carried by single syllables, but by syllabic groups of indicated specific accentual-rhythmic patterns, it confirms its findings by further associating to the literal feet of folk-dancing tradition and it draws the standardized quantitative of classical Greek sung verse as a special ritual utterance, different in recitation and in song as regards actual lengths and vocal renditions and variabilities, with ample linguistic coverage. As an eloquent enlightening example, a chanting and gestural rendition of ode A of the Akathistos Hymn “I shall open my mouth” will be given, followed by a direct isosyllabic application of the identical rhythmic vessel as it figures in chant VII from the modern poetic composition Axion Esti by Odysseus Elytis, and finally a choral excerpt from Aeschylus’s Eumenides will be recited quantitatively.

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