

PSALM

Pan-Orthodox Society for the Advancement of Liturgical Music

Volume 8 No. 2

N * O * T * E * S

Fall 2005

Authentic Church Music

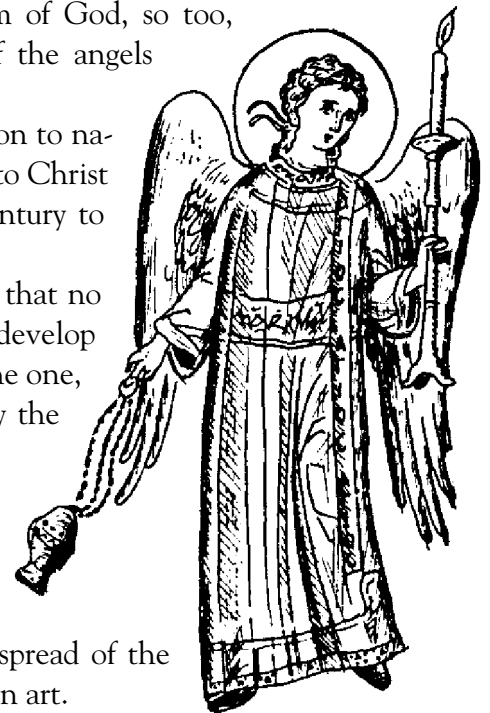
by the Very Rev. John Finley, B.M., M.A., M.S.T.

Just as an authentic icon makes visible for us the invisible Kingdom of God, so too, authentic church music makes audible for us the inaudible song of the angels around the throne of God.

And just as an icon of Christ or the Theotokos differs in style from nation to nation and from one century to the next, so too, a musical setting of a hymn to Christ or to His Mother differs in style from nation to nation and from one century to the next.

Because we respect the Tradition of the Church, and because we know that no culture or era stands in isolation from another in church history, we seek to develop church art in a living continuity with the past. We realize, however, that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church to which we are united is not simply the Church of the past, but also of the present and of the future.

In keeping with this, our music and iconography need to be made new from generation to generation, not in the sense of radical innovation or novelty, but renewed by the Holy Spirit in the Church. We must trust that the Holy Spirit will reveal the mind of the Church in every generation and in every nation as the faithful apply the Great Commission to the spread of the Orthodox Faith—not only in thought, word, and deed, but also in Christian art.



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The Church has always accepted certain cultural adaptations of its music in order to minister to the faithful, to further the spread of the Gospel, and to continue to baptize the culture in which it finds itself.

Each nation and every generation must be taught and baptized. Every culture must be sanctified, and the effective missionary will find things already existing in the culture to illustrate the universality of the Gospel. Thus did St. Paul at the altar of the unknown god (Acts 17:23), and thus did the Russian missionaries with the native culture of Alaska.

The Musical Melting Pot

In our day and age, music abounds in so many forms, and church music is no exception. Authentic Orthodox church music abounds in expressions from other cultures, other nations, and previous generations. We know our roots, and in America we have to say “roots” in the plural because we live in the melting pot of the world. Concerning the Church, the situation is no different. We live in the musical and iconographic melting pot of the Church.

There are forces at work, however, that would prevent us from baptizing our nation with the whole Tradition that has been handed down to us. We have the Bible, the Liturgy, the Councils, the Fathers, the canons, and the lives of the saints. All these things have been translated into English, so that we can read, study, and worship in our own tongue. But to a certain degree, our architecture, music, and iconography remain in what might be called “cultural captivity.”

Perhaps it is because art, more than any of these other aspects of our Holy Tradition, expresses our ethnic and nationalistic roots and our love for the fatherland. But what is the true fatherland? Is it not the Kingdom of God not of this world, the age to come, the eschaton? It is this Kingdom that demands our ultimate loyalty, and the culture of this Kingdom that we are called to preserve and protect.

Authentic church music is music that helps us to pray, to worship God, to enter the heavenly Holy of Holies. Authentic church music is Orthodox church music. But when we say the word “Orthodox,” what do we mean? Do we mean church music that finds its root and expression in certain geographical areas of the world? Is Orthodox church music limited to that music which has been developed through the centuries in the great patriarchal sees of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome? Should we add Moscow and Kiev, and throw out Rome because of the Great Schism? Is Orthodox church music limited to Byzantine, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Carpathian, and Bulgarian expressions?

How did the music of the Church in Russia be-

come Russian? Since the faith was received from Ss. Cyril and Methodios, its roots are Byzantine—or are they? In fact, the music of today’s Church in Russia was heavily influenced under the reign of Peter the Great by the Polish-Ukrainian composers of the seventeenth century, followed by the Italian-style choral polyphony of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹

Is the Byzantine music that we sing today really Byzantine, i.e. from the Byzantine era of the fourth through the fifteenth centuries?² In fact, the church music of the See of Constantinople was heavily influenced by the demands of the Turks after the fall of the empire in 1453. The authentic music of the Byzantine Church lost its diatonic character and accepted enharmonic and chromatic intervals during this period of the Turkish yoke.³ The music in the Byzantine tradition used by today’s churches throughout the entire Mediterranean region is the result of the codification of these Oriental elements by Chrysanthus in the nineteenth century and is scarcely 200 years old.⁴

Why is it necessary to point out all these things? Is it to shock or to scandalize? Absolutely not. Rather, it is important to note that the Church has always accepted certain cultural adaptations of its music in order to minister to the faithful, to further the spread of the Gospel, and to continue to baptize the culture in which it finds itself, and in order to continue living in the renewal of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

What is Orthodox Music?

Again, it is important to ask, what is “Orthodox” church music? Is it simply music that is contrasted in its sound and use in worship to Roman Catholic music, Episcopalian music, Baptist music, or megachurch music? Are we just another denomination, with our own brand of church music to be used as a kind of badge or nametag so people know who we are, so that we can distinguish (or denominate) ourselves from others who call themselves Christian?

In the fourth century, St. Ambrose of Milan, whom we commemorate on December 7, wrote countless hymns in Latin, rhymed and metered in long meter. Are these hymns Orthodox? If we are referring to their theological content and use in true prayer and spiritual ascent in worship, the answer is a resounding YES. If, however, we say that they are not Orthodox because Ambrose lived in Italy and was a bishop in the See of Rome, we are sadly mistaken.

Rome was Orthodox in the fourth century, St. Ambrose is our saint, and his writings and hymns belong to the body of patristic literature handed down to us through the ages. Obviously his hymns are not prescribed for us to sing in our services, since they are not found in our Typikon or in our hymnals; nevertheless, this example is used to challenge our perspective in terms of how we use the word “Orthodox.”

Orthodox music is not defined by its nationalistic culture or geographical origin. Neither is it defined simply in denominational terms. The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is not a denomination.

Orthodox church music is that music which raises the eyes of our hearts to see the True Light. Orthodox church music lifts up our hearts to receive the Heavenly Spirit and discover the true faith as we worship the undivided Trinity in the Kingdom of God not of this world. Orthodox church music, authentic church music as such, transcends all cultural and denominational expressions and labels.

Some may negatively assume that such a proposition must necessarily lead to the development of an American Orthodox music that will sound like Protestant music, or like the ’seventies rock-and-roll Christian music of the Baby Boomer generation’s surfer churches. On the contrary, we are hinting at the development of authentic sacred music for the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church in North America, a music founded on “that which has been delivered to us,” but which is also the result of our interaction as Orthodox Christians with the surrounding American culture.

Others may say that Western music lacks that “mystical” quality of the Eastern musical tradition that is so important to our worship. We should be reminded once again, however, that Orthodoxy cannot be defined in geographical terms. Orthodox worship is not trapped in its architecture, music, or iconography in the Eastern hemisphere. If it is trapped, then we need to free it from its bonds.

Toward Authentic American Orthodox Music

It is therefore incumbent upon us to struggle with these issues, to humble ourselves before God, to lay down the sword used to attack our own and to raise it up instead, against the devil. The devil is the one who would foil our mission to bring America to its true spiritual home in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We need to band together as a family, as brothers and sisters in Christ, for the great challenge ahead of us. We need to encourage those among us whom God has gifted with musical talent to exercise and multiply their talents for the spread of the Gospel in this nation. In order to do this, we need to look at the progress that has already been made, follow in those footsteps, and then forge ahead where the need is felt and the Spirit of God leads.

A path has already been cut by Orthodox American musical pioneers such as the Priest Michael G. H. Gelsinger, Professor Michael Hilko, the Archpriest James Meena, Frederick Karam, Basil Kazan, Raymond George, the priest Anthony Bassoline, the priest Sergei Glagolev, the priests Vladimir and Igor Soroka. These and many others have taken English translations of our hymns and set them to traditional old-country melodies, transposed the Byzantine notation into Western musical notation, and harmonized Byzantine melodies. Some composers have even produced new melodies that do not belong to any eight-tone system, but are somehow reminiscent of the long-standing “Church sound,” the sound of heaven.

So, where do we go from here? This question is being posed fundamentally to the composers and arrangers of music for the Church. What is the next step? The answer that came to me from Fr. John Namie of blessed memory may surprise you. He said to me, “Fast and pray. If you fast and pray, just as the iconographer fasts and prays before he or she produces an icon, you will produce music that we can use to pray.”

So, we must become spiritual musicians, a holy people, and a people after God’s own heart. The king of rock and the king of pop will not likely produce the music for our prayer, but musicians who pray will produce music for prayer.

Our objective is not to save our kids with musical cultural relevancy, although we want our kids to be saved. But children respond to spiritual authenticity and reject hypocrisy. If we as musicians don’t pray, if our only experience of church is Sunday Divine Liturgy, if we don’t understand the liturgical cycles and structure of the services of Vespers, Matins, Holy Week, major feasts and the rest—we may produce American music for the Church, but will it be Orthodox sacred music for prayer in America?

In addition, we need to continue working on the translations of our texts into English, and improve on existing ones. We should continue the work of transcribing Byzantine notation into modern

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Western linear notation and adopt modern Western scale intervals. We need to simplify the melodies in connection with the texts and encourage congregational participation. We should encourage the harmonization of the melodies. I have heard it said that the great musical contribution of the East is its melodies, and the great contribution of the West is its development of harmony. What better place than America to bring these two great traditions together to form something uniquely American in terms of Orthodox music? This, of course, has already been done in Russia, and Russian music will undoubtedly be a powerful influence on what is done in America in this area of musical development.

Finally, we need to work on a blend of musical renderings by clergy, cantors, choir, and congregation, but not exclusively any one of these. The congregation should sing the responses, acclamations, and dialogues, but the fixed and variable sung hymnody and psalmody should include this blend of participants.

My prayer is that Orthodox Americans will rediscover that artistic path which has already been cut for us, and construct together a musical, architectural, and iconographic superhighway that will allow all Americans seeking the true faith to make their journey home to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Amen. †

This article is adapted from a talk given at the 2002 Conference on Missions and Evangelism. John David Finley is an archpriest in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, where he serves as a field staff member of the Department of Missions and Evangelism. Fr. John has composed and arranged music for the Orthodox Church for many years and serves as a member of the Department of Sacred Music for the Antiochian Archdiocese. He has recently authored a cookbook entitled Sacred Meals (July 2005) which emphasizes the importance of eating together as a family. The book is available online at www.sacredmeals.com or by calling (800) 573-9337.

Notes

- 1 Johann von Gardner, *Russian Church Singing*, vol. 1, translated by Vladimir Morosan, p. 145.
- 2 The modern system is radically different from the medieval system. Medieval Byzantine chant is wholly diatonic. Oliver Strunk, *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World*, p. 16. It can be played with sufficient accuracy on a modern keyboard instrument. H.J.W. Tillyard, *Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, p. 44.
- 3 The modern system includes chromatic and enharmonic scales in addition to the diatonic (Savas J. Savas, pp. 41–42).
- 4 The modern Chrysanthine system developed or was introduced in 1821. The whole fabric is not Greek at all, but Oriental, i.e. Arabo-Turkish. H.J.W. Tillyard, *Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, p. 63.



PSALM Notes

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The articles and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors. While the editors assume responsibility for the selection of the articles included, the authors assume responsibility for facts and interpretations that appear in their articles.

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Printed in the USA.

**Submission Deadline for
PSALM Notes Vol. 9 No. 1:
November 1, 2005**

P.O. Box 441
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-0441
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Victor Pokrovsky: His Life and Music

Kazan, Manchuria, Tokyo, America

by Maria Junko Matsushima

Victor Pokrovsky, a choir director of Tokyo Resurrection Cathedral (Nikolai-do), is still remembered by many by his nickname “Poku-san.” He held the post from 1924 to 1961, before and after World War II. Metropolitan Sergey (Tikhomirov), successor of St. Nikolai (Kasatkin), selected young Pokrovsky as choir director at the cathedral in order to improve the choir and to introduce new Russian masterpieces from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Japanese. Since St. Nikolai’s time, it had been the goal of the Japanese mission to use Japanese in all the divine services. Pokrovsky set more than a hundred beautiful pieces of Russian sacred music into Japanese, of which 75 were published and are still heard in various churches in Japan. In a speech in 1929, the Metropolitan praised Pokrovsky as “a great choir director who accomplished enormous work.”

From Russia to Japan

Victor Alexandrovich Pokrovsky was born in 1897, the first son of Priest Alexander and his wife Nadezhda, at a church by the Suhaya River, in the Kazan district of Russia. The Pokrovskys were a priestly family whose former family name had been Gremyachkin. In the time of Tsar Paul I, they received the new name Pokrovsky on the day of Pokrov, the Protection of the Veil of the Theotokos.

Victor studied for four years at the Kazan Ecclesiastical Seminary before entering Kazan University in 1914. As a university student, he sang with the Morreff Choir. He also attended a conducting class at Kazan Hummert Music School. While in his fourth and final year of university, he was called into the White Army.

After the Bolshevik coup in 1918, Pokrovsky was forced to leave Kazan and flee with the White Army to Siberia and at last to Manchuria. At that time, Kharbin was a center of Russian settlement in

China, connected by railroad (Kitaisky Vostok) with Vladivostok. After the Revolution, a great number of Russians moved to live in Kharbin, as many as 300 to 500 thousand.

Having been discharged from the army in 1923, Pokrovsky turned to his love of music, forming a chorus with other soldiers to make a living giving concerts. He was then asked to become the choir director at Holy Theotokos Church in Kharbin.

As the Moscow Patriarchate was restrained under the Bolshevik government, the Kharbin Archdiocese helped the Japanese Church to a great extent. Met. Sergey often visited Kharbin to request support for the restoration of the Holy Resurrection Cathedral, destroyed by the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. In addition, he was looking for a capable person to lead the cathedral choir.

Among several candidates, Met. Sergey especially liked Pokrovsky’s music. Pokrovsky accepted the offer and moved to Japan in 1924, at 27 years of age. His main tasks were to establish a full-scale choir at the cathedral and to set the new Russian masterpieces of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Japanese. He often visited Kharbin to collect resources for composition. These handwritten copies are still kept in six bound books by his wife, Irina, who is now 96 years old.

The Heritage of St. Nikolai

Before discussing Pokrovsky’s work, it is necessary to understand the state of church music in Japan at that time. When St. Nikolai (Kasatkin) embarked on his mission to Japan in the 1860s, he met St. Innocent of Alaska in Siberia, who advised him of the necessity of using the native Japanese language for the mission. Following this advice, St. Nikolai undertook to translate prayer books into Japanese, beginning with the daily prayers, an abridged Sunday Vigil and Liturgy, some prayers from the



Pokrovsky set more than a hundred beautiful pieces of Russian sacred music into Japanese.

Book of Needs, the baptism and funeral services, and others. By the time of his repose, St. Nikolai had translated almost all the necessary prayer books except the full-scale Menaion and Pentecostarion.

After gaining a few Japanese disciples in the 1860s, St. Nikolai encouraged them to sing in Japanese using the Russian melodies he remembered. He started simply by translating “Lord have mercy” into “Shu awaremeyo.” He then added other translations one by one. Since the Japanese musical background was completely different, it was extremely difficult to teach Russian melodies. Western musical scales were a totally foreign sound to the Japanese musical ear. The first Japanese priest, Fr. Pavel Sawabe, a former samurai, recalled that when he first sang the Cherubic Hymn at the chapel of the Russian Consulate in Hakodate, the Russians rushed out of the chapel, trying to stifle their laughter at hearing such a strange melody.

Soon, St. Nikolai assigned Jacob Tikhai, brother of the assistant priest, as music director. He then published music books for the Sunday Vigil and Liturgy, major feasts, the Panikhida, and other services in two styles—one in unison for the local parish, the other for four-part mixed choir for the cathedral in Tokyo. The cathedral choir was started in 1875 and consisted mainly of seminary and girl’s school students. Their music was based on the Lvov-Bakhtmetev Common Chant. At that time, since four-voice choir was quite new to Japan, many people in the Tokyo area visited to hear the modern

music from the developed Western world. For Japanese, Russian culture was recognized as a part of European culture.

However, St. Nikolai reposed in 1912, and financial support from Russia was interrupted by the Revolution. Finally, the Great Kanto Earthquake destroyed the cathedral. As Met. Sergey looked back on those days, he felt that he had lost everything St. Nikolai had accomplished for the Church—not only the cathedral, but also the seminary building, the library, and the dormitories were ruined by the earthquake and the resulting massive fire. Met. Sergey decided to reconstruct the cathedral. To collect donations and promote the rebuilding project, he traveled throughout Japan and often visited the Kharbin Archdiocese.

Pokrovsky’s Choir

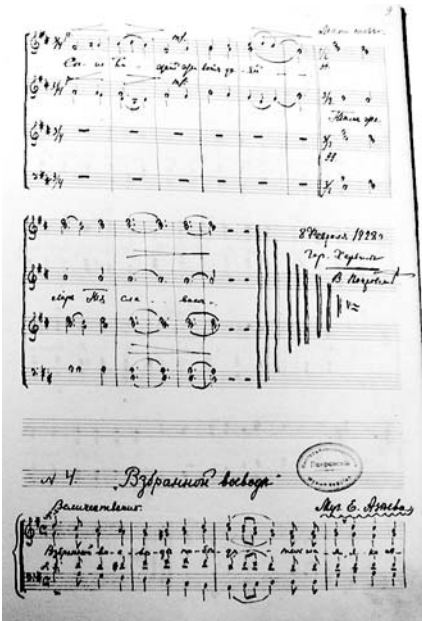
To educate the choir, Pokrovsky received the full support of Met. Sergey. Rehearsals were held twice a week. Pokrovsky taught with his violin. Tito Kato (now 96 years old), a choir member from 1927 to 1931, recalled his teaching: “He was very strict. He never missed hearing a wrong pitch. Sometimes young ladies sang in tears.” Whenever he had time, Met. Sergey sat in the back listening to the practices. And the bishop often gave warnings to lazy members who missed the rehearsals. Vasilissa Yoshimura (now 85 years old) said, “Pokrovsky’s lesson was strict, but we loved it.”

Tito continued, “He was very careful not to interrupt the flow of the service. He asked Japanese clergy to intone in the correct pitch to harmonize with the choir. He never gave up training their ears. But as soon as a service started, he adjusted the choir’s pitch to fit the clergy’s intonation. It was amazing. He always considered the service as a whole. Met. Sergey had the same opinion. I often heard him ask which Cherubic Hymn would be sung, and then he decided his pitch.”

Pokrovsky’s efforts raised the quality of the choir. Met. Sergey praised him in his speech at the ceremony for the reconstruction of the cathedral in 1929. “Victor Alexandrovich Pokrovsky, a great choir director, has worked hard since 1924. His name will be written in the history of music in Japan. Our choir does not merely sing well, it is more than that. It is artistic and full of Spirit.”

A guest from Kharbin, Fr. Aristarkh Panamaryov, admired the cathedral choir: “Russian sacred songs, dear melodies of my home. This heartfelt sound went up to the dome with love. Sound of integrity





A Pokrovsky composition in Slavonic from 1928.

these books, there are sixteen hymns of Arkhangelsky, three of Chesnokov, and three of Kastalsky. Everything seemed to be going well.

The World Changes

However, World War II changed everything. The situation of non-Japanese habitants became worse day by day. In 1941, the Military Government demanded that Met. Sergey retire. All the Russians who lived at the site of the cathedral were forced to leave the premises. The Pokrovskys moved to Yokohama. Met. Sergey died alone in Itabashi, north of Tokyo, just five days before the war ended.

After the war, under the American Bishop Irinei, Pokrovsky was reinstated in his former position. In 1962, he moved to the United States, following his daughter Lydia, who married William Kosar, an American naval officer, at Nikolai-do Cathedral.

Following his move to the US, Pokrovsky held choir director posts at three churches on the East

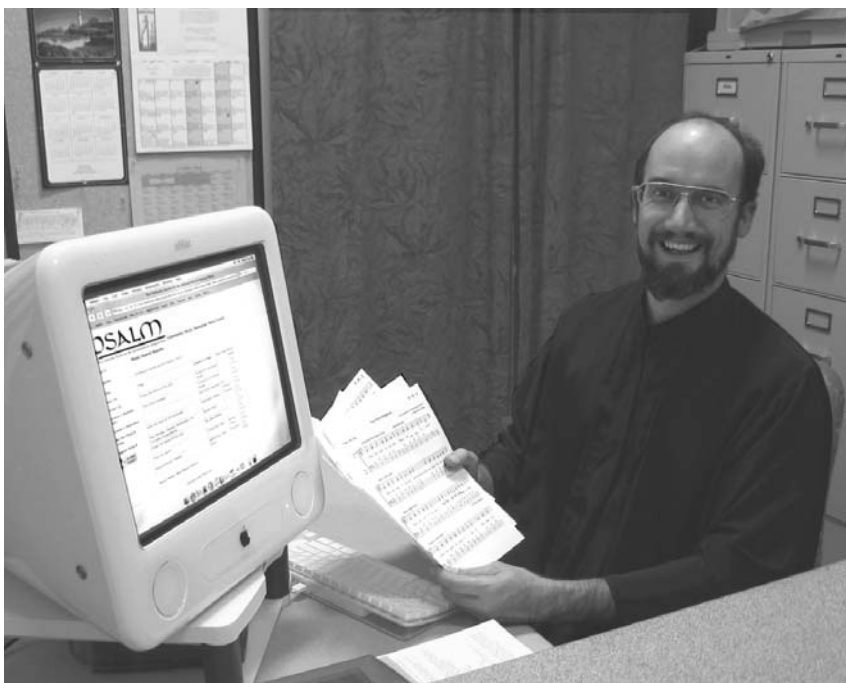
Coast. In the States, he started to interpret music in English. Walter Shymansky, a former choir member at St. Michael Russian Orthodox Church in Newark, New Jersey, said, "He helped me whenever I had questions and always was willing to take time out from his life to help me and others."

After retiring to the Washington DC area, Pokrovsky attended St. Mark Church in Maryland, joining the movement to establish services in English. Anne Strelka remembered that he praised her mezzo soprano voice in her teenage years and encouraged her to join the choir.

According to his daughter Lydia, Pokrovsky always emphasized the importance of singing in a country's understandable native language. He knew that Christians belong first to the Kingdom of God. During the war, when little Lydia was singled out by other children for being a foreigner, she came home crying to ask whether she was Russian or Japanese. Smiling gently, her father answered her, "You are neither Russian nor Japanese, but Orthodox Christian." †

Matushka Maria is the wife of Fr. George Matsushima, rector of Annunciation Orthodox Church in Nagoya, Japan. Maria serves as choir director at her parish and has translated several articles on liturgical music into Japanese for her church website.

The LMR Wants You!



Now that PSALM's online Liturgical Music Resource is up and running, the database stands ready to receive submissions from composers, arrangers, and editors. We are hoping to receive submissions of hymns in all categories, for all services and festal cycles, from various chant traditions, and in various voicings.

Also, we are looking for volunteers who are willing to index materials that have been previously published so that the LMR can serve as a comprehensive database of all available Orthodox liturgical music. If you can devote even an hour or two a month, it will greatly aid in this effort.

Detailed instructions for indexing and submitting materials are available on the website: <http://www.orthodoxpsalm.org/music>. If you have any questions, please contact Vlad Morosan, the LMR Project Director: LMRAdministrator@orthodoxpsalm.org.

A Message from the President

by Valerie Yova

Greetings in Christ as we begin another liturgical year! What a wonderful opportunity to recommit ourselves to the music ministry of the Church, and to the vision we share for an inter-Orthodox music organization. We can share information, resources, expertise, advice, and encouragement. We can work together on projects that benefit the entire Church in North America. PSALM is a forum that can facilitate this good work.

Since our last issue of *PSALM Notes* (well over a year ago), the Board of Directors has been involved in a strategic planning effort that has resulted in a new mission statement and a list of clear, realistic goals for the next five years. We felt that it was necessary to take a step back and reevaluate PSALM's role within the larger context of Orthodox music. We agreed that we must not try to duplicate the efforts of diocesan music departments, but rather support and augment them. Our projects and goals must address the musical needs that ALL Orthodox clergy and musicians have in common and that, perhaps, cannot be addressed by individual dioceses. But most of all, we want to provide a place where Orthodox people in the music ministry can begin to learn about and appreciate each other's traditions and perspectives, which is an important first step to true unity in North America.

To that end, we are sponsoring our first national conference in 2006. This is our number-one priority for the coming year. We hope to entice as many of you as possible into attending this groundbreaking event, which will gather together in one place Orthodox clergy and musicians from all traditions and jurisdictions for teaching, inspiration, discussion, fellowship, and worship. Please prayerfully consider joining us for the first PSALM National Orthodox Music Conference, August 2–5, 2006.

In the coming year, we will also put a great deal of energy and effort into building up the online Liturgical Music Resource, which was launched in

June of this year. We invite and encourage you to submit music to the Editorial Committee for consideration as we continue to stock this database with music from all Orthodox traditions, including the ever-evolving American expression of Orthodox liturgical music.

Building up our volunteer forces is also a high priority this year. We have no paid staff at this time, and so we need individuals who are committed to the mission of PSALM, who have some time to contribute to specific projects and tasks, and who have expertise in the areas of database management, marketing, graphic design, accounting, fundraising, curriculum development, and many other areas. If you have a heart for this ministry and a bit of time to give, please contact me directly via e-mail at VYSheets@aol.com. I would love to talk to you about how we might work together!

As we begin this new church year, I wish you God's strength and blessings in your music ministry. May God renew our commitment to acquiring the knowledge, skill, and zeal to help our parishes develop music in worship that is engaging, prayerful, and beautiful!

In Christ's service,

Valerie Yova, PSALM National President

Valerie Yova is choir director of St. Anthony's Orthodox Church (Antiochian Archdiocese) in La Jolla, CA, a founder and former artistic director of the Orthodox Christian Chorale of Detroit, and holds a Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance from New England Conservatory of Music.

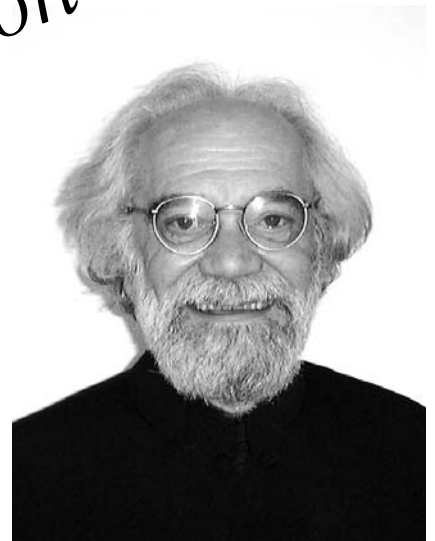


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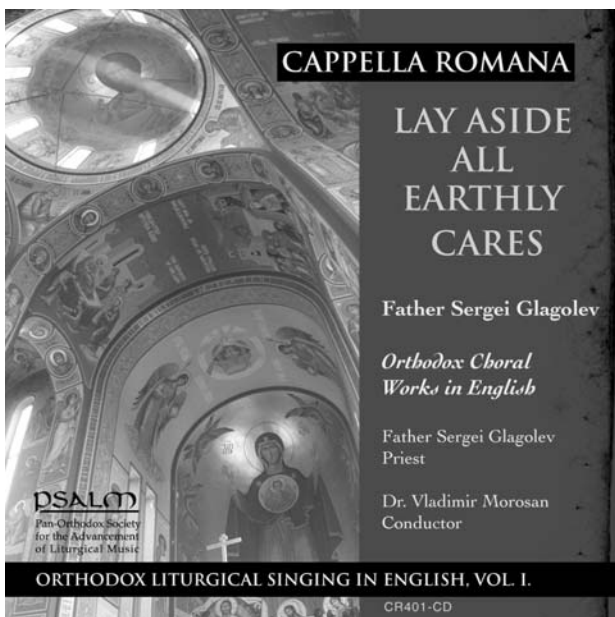
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