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An Introduction to the Interpretation of Liturgical Music

by Archpriest Sergei Glagolev

Music as worship is a triune discipline requiring the combination of three skills artfully blended. But the blending itself of these skills is a most delicate matter of taste, talent and experience.

The blending skills of musical art as worship—like all skills—are acquired: they are necessarily learned. People serious about church music must admit that this is the most difficult emotional block to overcome: to convince those who are otherwise quite competent that music in church is not emotion but art, not feeling but skill—not that art is unemotional, not that skill has no feeling, but that taste, talent and experience must be learned like every other art form.

First we must consider the three skills artfully blended in church to be musical, lingual and liturgical, without which no decent interpretation is likely. There is no way to be able to interpret music, understanding what music is, without having learned the necessary musical skills, without being grounded in the study of musical theory. Here again, it is difficult to convince people that the loss of responsive simplicity is precisely the lack of learned skills. The most complex Bach fugue is less complicated than a theory exercise handed in by a student freshman. The one follows predictable rules delightfully hewn from years of talented practice and grace, the other is putting pieces together the best he can. Needless to say, it should be obvious why the simplest piece of music in church sounds so cumbersome when rendered by the unpracticed without skill. The practice of no practice, the singing without studied skill is a spiritual disaster long before any discussion of learned liturgics.

Second, we must understand that music in church is always a lingual-linguistic art form. People who say church music sounds terrible in English are usually right (mostly because they don't realize it's just as bad in other languages but nobody expects to comprehend the meaning of the utterances being sung.) What we are doing

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Fundamental Concepts in Vocal Technique and How They Apply to Orthodox Sacred Singing

by Mark Bailey

Singing is the most natural form of musical expression. For most people, casually singing through favorite melodies, folk songs, popular songs, and the like may be done with ease, requiring no greater effort than adding simple patterns of pitch variation and rhythm to text. To sing well however, and to sustain singing for long stretches without harm, a person must study those technical elements which shape the voice into an instrument capable of expressing music meaningfully and captivatingly on any given text.

In Orthodox sacred singing, a firm grasp of vocal technique, especially those aspects which directly relate to singing liturgy, is essential. Vocal technique is the foundation upon which a singer or group of singers may recreate beautifully written unison or harmonized chants and choral settings. More importantly, technique is the foundation upon which the vocal sound effectively communicates the Word and Essence of God through music.

Many years, indeed a lifetime, may be spent polishing one's own vocal technique. Yet, initially, there is little complexity involved in understanding the foundation upon which proper singing is built. Unfortunately, singers are too often instructed to beautify and enhance their vocal qualities in terms of similes and metaphoric images e.g. "try to sing like angels," or "raise your voices like a blast of thunder," or even "color your voice with a vibrant red" is the kind of advice singers often hear. Bordering on the ridiculous, these instructions intellectually and practically fail to activate for the vocalist the necessary mechanics of proper singing. A beautiful vocal sound, rather, is one that is always supported by a fully expanded breath; one that is produced with a forward resonating and focused sound; one that produces sharp vocal articulation and clearly understood diction. In other words, the beauty of the human voice within the nature of the sound it produces is supported by specific areas of vocal technique, rather than by aesthetic imagery.

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***Interpretation**, continued from page 1*

to English as worship vernacular is incredible. "Explaining" what is being sung theologically is not the solution. The singing itself is meant to explain, edify, enlist, and enable all to knowingly participate in worship.

Language is an art. In church music this becomes crucial, because this art form must be most perfectly blended with music which gives it utterance. Having the musical skills is basic only in as much as it is the voice by which the art of language is expressed in all its poetic power and beauty. But the words themselves have their own music in motion and pause, as they pulse like life itself, forming intricate connections through flowing nuance and inflection, rhythm and phrase, carrying within them the vision and revelation of life being given to be celebrated as worship.

The absence of language skills is fast becoming the second disaster area in our church music. English simply doesn't sound like English. And in the hands of an unskilled musician, the music by which it is sung makes the muddled, halting cacophony even worse. A church musician must be a poet with reverence for language as an art. The crudest translation can be made to meaningfully sing in the hands of a musical poet. But we have all heard what happens to the most beautifully God-inspired psalms, hymns, and canticles in the thrashing hands of the uninspiring unskilled.

Finally, in church neither music nor language are artistic ends in themselves. The function of music and language is liturgical, and liturgics is a theological discipline. Ultimately it is theology that reveals what the music and the language means. But the ultimate synthesis of the church musician's skills is to celebrate precisely what the theology is saying in the music with language as the given means. More: the very order of worship, what is being said, what is done, what is celebrated, is shaped by how, when and what is being sung. Without an acute liturgical sensitivity to the slightest ripple of the movement of worship and a studied docility to its moving theological content, music and language are dangerously idolatrous graven images leading the worshippers astray.

But this preface began as its premise the interpretation of liturgical music as the blending of musical, lingual and liturgical skills. Blend is a matter of balance and proportion, hopefully achieved by a developing sense of good taste. Such interpretative skills are akin to transforming water into wine. What we experience too often is the good wine of our musical tradition turned either into vinegar or grape juice, and occasionally we behold with amazement how some church musicians have actually managed to turn wine into water.

I The purpose of this introductory paper is to outline twelve basic principles for the interpretation of liturgical music, based on the first principle as the primary premise, that *music in church is worship*. Obviously, we have to deal in depth with each principle distinctly in subsequent papers, particularly because so little has been specifically written to which the reader can be referred.

In church, music is worship. In church, music prays and prayers sing. In church, "singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming, and saying" are all sacred utterances of song. Nothing is simply spoken. Singing is characteristic of the Church's very expression of herself. Scriptures—both Old Testament and New—consistently characterize the body of Christ, the redeemed people of God, as the "gathered singing assembly", both on earth and in heaven.

Music is not a conjunct to worship. It is the way the Church worships. Music is neither supplementary to, nor an enrichment of, worship. It is the expression of worship itself. It is not an accompaniment, a background, a preparation, a mood setter, a filler, or any such thing, and it is certainly not a divertimento. Unless this is understood by those who sing in church, we will advance no further in our interpretation. Church music as an art can only be interpreted according to its own true liturgical function.

The reaffirmation of the resurrection of Christ, the celebration and recommitment, the proclamation of this life-saving Gospel, the Good News of the resurrection, is the living heartbeat of all Orthodox Worship. Everything leads to and deploys to witness the Paschal event—that Paschal night greeting the never-ending day of Christ's kingdom in which "nothing is read, but everything is sung." This is a key to an understanding of what music in church is all about.

This Paschal ideal already has its roots in the Old Testament—no one simply "said" Scriptures or "read" prayers in the presence of God. A future paper must discuss these insights at length. Sacred music and the idea of the holy are akin to the theological foundations of iconography; sacred music is a holy icon, not a religious pretty picture in verse, rhythm and tone.

Since the function of music as worship is liturgical, it will be necessary for us in our study to clearly unfold this function as:

- Synactic—to assemble the sacred gathering for celebration
- Rubrical—to order time, place, space, dimension and relation by giving substance to the movement and material of worship
- Ritual—to take the rubrical substance of what is being "said" in the dialogue, didache, kerygma and the prophecy of sacred worship and give it voice in sacred melody
- Ceremonial—to give what is being "done" the eternal pulse of worship in movement and sound
- Synoptic—to bring together the whole matter and form of worship into the general plan and the complete view in all aspects making up the whole of worship, the participation, the commentary, the exhortations and expressions, the revela-

tion, the doxological responses to God's Presence—musically holding all elements together contextually as worship

Music, then, is seen as the means by which we function liturgically. Music is the way we do what we are doing in church and the way we say what we are saying. Truly, it is sacramental and a symbol in the ultimate sense of these words. In church, music has no other purpose, and must be interpreted accordingly.

II Having established our basic premise that music in church is worship, we can go on from this principle to outline the other principles that would follow as rules of interpretation. Here we will give outlines. In the future we will attempt to develop each section into areas of study.

Church music well interpreted does not call attention to itself. Badly sung music calls attention to itself. Badly sung music is predictable: when music and voices are misused; when poorly written and adapted hymns are used; when hymns are poorly chosen (the wrong time and place for the wrong choir in the wrong church with the wrong focus); when the tempo is inappropriate either for text or musical setting; when there is unrealistic striving (the choirmaster must understand his limits and that of his choir); when the music is either unfamiliar or altogether too familiar (a problem of interpretation of both music and situation).

There are occasions when music is sung ostensibly "too well," for the sake of calling attention to itself. Such is the problem of over-interpretation—improving on what is honestly given in the music and text, or the choirmaster putting his "signature" on what is being sung (his little "trademarks"). Sometimes the overdoing comes from lack of sensitivity and taste—too much being as bad as not enough or too little.

Examples abound. There is a little of the Maxwell Smart in all of us, and one simply has to come to appreciate through practice and experience that every exaggeration—every understatement or overstatement—creates caricatures unbefitting music as worship.

III Church music does not imitate anything at all—neither angels nor bells, nor any such thing, but is true to its own calling. Here the interpretive problem is the choirmaster's reading into the music all kinds of "impressions" suggested by the music, time, and text. Even if the composer himself has been stricken by a romantic notion, the temptation towards impressionistic expression for the sake of "authentic" interpretation should be sensibly cooled. Once is once too often to have heard from even the best among us about how the composer at this point wants the women "to sound like angels" (what does an angel sound like?) or the men "to sound like bells." We are better disposed making the choir sound like a choir. This is difficult enough to do, so we shall see, as we develop our musical art.

IV In Church music, text and melody are inseparable without subordination: a perfect marriage begetting music as "the heightened speech of worship." We all know the historical precedents of melodic and textual subordinations. If we are to develop a liturgical theology of music, however, we must have courage enough to question subordinations, particularly in singing English as English rather than Slavonic or Greek as English (and understanding the difference). There is no justification for imposing a text upon melodic line or forcing a melody upon a text. Preserving the integrity of both is the highest skill of interpretation, keeping the clarity of the thought units both the word groupings and the melodic kernels in *stichoi*, lines, verses, strophes, etc., attending to the parallels and their melodic formulae as unsubordinated melody and text complementing one another.

Thought units are both melodic and textual. Legati, emphases, breathing and voice-control in the "matching" of melody and text as unity of balance and line is the interpretive goal. Particularly difficult is the understanding and unjamming of "English" intonation, mediants, and cadences, e.g., anacruses up front, connecting phrases across middle measures, and singing to the end of the line with the notoriously mixed soft and hard endings of properly voiced English. Good musicians spend hours working at these, thinking them through, constantly and consistently looking for ways to blend melodic and textual thoughts without mixture or confusion.

V **Rhythm and Motion.** Rhythm and motion, rather than elements of feeling, are the foundation of both liturgy and music. Thus rhythm and motion are the connecting links in worship between liturgy and the musical arts.

The principle above is no argument against honest emotion, certainly not against the dynamics of natural expression. But the choirmaster must come to grips with motion as the heartbeat of worship and music as its rhythmic pulse, without which melody and words—no matter how sincerely expressed and expertly interpreted—remain lifeless. Compensating with feeling sounds artificial at best. (It's like Charlie Brown asking why his team keeps losing when they're so sincere.) It's the mastery of movement and grace in moments well put-together, in the things "done decently and in order," as St. Paul says, that brings worship to life.

There is, on the other hand, a temptation to impose a false sterility on liturgical music to make it sound "spiritual." Somehow, I find this more difficult to bear and end up gasping for breath. Somehow one can bear a mercilessly long Vigil in languages half-understood when they pulse and move, in contrast to carefully sterilized English Services. It's like the poor grape some Welch has taken the yeast out of to prevent it from becoming the zesty wine God intended it to be.

The breathing of prayer is rhythmic reiteration and contrast, rather than static contemplation of feeling or

unfeeling. Nothing is more crucial to the choirmaster's interpretive task in moving music to worship. The crisis of music as worship today is the rhythmic organization in the English language, without which music exists neither as true worship nor true art. We must study serious questions of: metrical rhythm, free rhythm, the speech rhythms of poetry, prose, free verse; metrical chant patterns; the formulae of Scriptural cantillation as music; blank verse versifications; syllabic rhythms and principles of pointing; tonic accents of verse members; and/or the tone units (deriving critical insights from the Hebrew tonic accents of the Jewish scriptural antecedents to Christian hymnody), etc. To this point these questions have been almost universally ignored. We have been pasting English words under Byzantine and Slavic melodies without any thought to the breath they must give by their rhythm and motion. Our music is skeletal at best, unfortunate bones without flesh and blood.

VI **Melody.** If liturgy is to step into the eternal movement of "prayer without ceasing," then we must break from the tyranny of the barline and interpret Church Music (at least in its chant forms) in the restorative style of endless melody.

To begin with, we must understand the melodic idea before waving our hands: free, type, or centonized melody in syllabic, neumatic or melismatic forms, for example. We must understand the melodic kernels and formulae in relation to the versification, phrasing, bars, measures, beats, and cadences. We must rediscover the contextual melodic legato nuance sustaining verses "to the end of the line," in contrast to the hatchet job and shovel singing to which musical texts are being subjected. We've already mentioned the crucial melodic—textual—textural musical interpretation of the final note(s) of the cadence of the melodies. We must develop concepts of tonality in solving concepts of melody and text. (Tonality, we shall discover, is more than pitch; tonality is a creative challenge of the developing character of a melodic line.)

VII **Texture.** Settings of music and text, be they monophonic, homophonic, or polyphonic, must always be the interweaving of colored lines moving forward. Whether one line or many, one voice or many, there must be an understanding of the horizontal and vertical configurations of musical textures (and the distortions of same). We can say that tone, pitch and balance have a sense of "taste" in the art of blending. Textural color has a sense of "touch" of the fabric of the voice parts sounded together. Part of the "touch" of this texture is the timbre of each voice part; for example, tenors and altos both can sing a middle "C," but one should be able to distinguish the distinct "color texture" of each. The *tessitura* of each of the assembled voice parts also contributes to the texture of the sound.

VIII **Sonority**. The sonoric images and patterns that appear are not so much the result of the instrumentation of the voices as the weaving skill of the choirmaster who knows what to do with the voice fabrics and how to orchestrate the sonant textures.

The human voice is a delicately crafted musical instrument with infinite possibilities for making beautiful sounds. "Not having the voices" is the usual excuse we hear for the questionable sounds coming out of choirs. Not so. It would be more accurate to say the choirmaster doesn't know what to do with the voices in his choir, or still more accurately, what to do with the sound of these voices. But the question is larger than voice culture. Even the finest voices must be orchestrated for choral singing. What we might call a "liturgical sonority" is dealing with voices as instruments of prayer, the voicing of worship, the orchestrating of the sound of music as worship.

Granted, in most parish situations, the choirmaster's expertise is used up dealing with the strange combinations of sounds he inherits as his "choir." But he can learn to do reasonable things with these sonant textures. He must have sonoric images in mind. He must critically hear what his choir really sounds like. We must work to improve voice quality, voicing combinations, orchestrate our voice-lines more skillfully, and choose what we attempt to sing more wisely.

IX **Periods, Forms and Styles of Church Music.** It is simplistic to suggest that only a particular "type" of Church Music is "spiritual." Here there is material enough for an interpretive essay all by itself. Here is where our experiential taste, prejudices and bias really show through. Often it is a simple lack of familiarity with the broad thesaurus of Orthodox liturgical music in every age that makes our judgments a little too simple. Some, of course, call this being "principled," to rule out "Western influences," for example (Byzantine culture supplies no roots to Western civilization?—What a self-defeating myth). More alarming is the bias built on an unwitting "cover-up" for superficial acquaintance and learning of large segments of church music, as is the case of many plain chant and regional folk chant forms.

Since I myself have been guilty of knocking periods of music, from Bortniansky to Bachmetev, I feel my penance might be to write a chapter "In Defense of Bortniansky and Bachmetev" someday. Really, we interpret the Bortniansky to sound like *The Marriage of Figaro* and the Bachmetev to sound like a barbershop quartet, and then blame them for being "non-liturgical."

There is the fashionable infatuation with Znamenny Chant—if "it's Znamenny, it's got to be good." But every period of church music has both good moments and bad. Even some of the Znamenny melodies based on the purest forms of "angelic chant" have been embellished literally without any sense of rhyme, rhythm or reason and imposed upon totally unprepared worshippers by equally unprepared singers. To sing—let alone to hear—monophonic chant forms requires the culturing of a choir within the parish community. Trust me. Chant is not easier to sing than homophony. In America, it is certainly not easier to listen to—unless it is done

extremely well. To impose "purity" poorly done is a poor approach to interpretation.

X **Dynamics**. If icons are not black-and-white neither is church music. But the coloring isn't an added or special effect. Dynamics are the bright movement of colors or the natural nuances of the lines of rhythm and sound in motion.

Church Music is not unemotional. But it does not seek to manipulate feelings to produce effects by affectations. Since I prefer to treat dynamics as part of the study of motion (rather than simply as loudness and softness, entrances, contrasts, and cadences, etc.), I also would consider tempo a dynamic (particularly since the classical mistakes are made dynamically with accelerandi and ritardandi). When a typical mistake is made—slowing down for "softer", speeding up for "louder"—there is usually some hidden connection with the tempo.

XI **Authenticity.** Restoration of authenticity at this point should not be so much a concern over manuscript, text, notation, etc., as the restoring of the proper function of each liturgical piece, e.g. antiphons, verses, refrains, anthems, psalms, hymns, canticles, etc., should do what they are called. This is not simply an exercise in liturgical theology.

Authenticity in the sense of liturgical music is a call for the choirmaster's interpretation to allow the music to define itself in terms of what it's supposed to be doing. Now, in terms of composed, arranged and adapted pieces, often we have to consider whether the composer, arranger, or adapter himself may not have been mistaken, balance these values, and decide where the priorities lie. An example that comes to mind is Chesnokov's 1st Antiphon ("Bless the Lord, O My Soul..."), written beautifully as an anthem in the style of the Western corruption of the word antiphon into anthem—a usage reflected liturgically. It may be, sometimes, that an "authentic" rendering of a composer's intentions should not be sung in church because it is, in the end, authentically extra-liturgical. This is certainly the case of many hymns called "concert," authentically rendering in a concert, but not necessarily as a "Communion Hymn," which is a psalm-verse-refrain having an entirely different liturgical function. Obviously, this is where the choirmaster is going to have to know something about liturgics if he is going to function.

What has happened in some parishes, on the other hand, is that a well-intentioned "liturgically-minded" choirmaster will drop all "concerts" at Communion time and have "something read." Clearly, this is a complete misunderstanding. There is in fact a specific Communion Hymn to be rendered, a specific psalm to be sung with refrain, and in many cases, some fairly decent musical settings of the same already existing within our liturgical tradition. These short paragraphs on authenticity only scratch the surface of needed study.

XII **Interpretation.** It is in the hands, literally, of the choirmaster. The bottom line is the conducting skill of the choirmaster. How does the choir interpret the choirmaster? What you see is what you get.

When choirs sound bad, it may be so not because the singers are not paying attention to the choirmaster but because they are reading him all too well. The choirmaster's movements, expressions, postures, attitudes, etc., are an open book. His conducting skill is no less than teaching his body to pray. The lack of the choirmaster's eurhythmic dexterity and docility to the music as prayer is not just an interpretive problem. It is also a real liturgical disaster.

Rather than learn these conducting skills, one is tempted to ignore this discipline and say the music will speak for itself. And indeed, the music will speak, loudly telling all that it lacks interpretation, and this distraction to prayer is without question the fault of the choirmaster.

SUMMARY THOUGHTS Here, then, is an introduction to a study of the interpretation of liturgical music. I would propose that each of the twelve sections be presented separately for in-depth review before we can come to a synoptic and draw working conclusions. ✣

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RESOURCES

The Role of Congregational Singing in Orthodox Worship

by Walter Obleschuk

In the not-too-distant past, the choral art was taken very seriously in many Orthodox parishes. Singers were highly trained and sang magnificently. The congregation's role, either intentionally or unintentionally, was relegated to that of spectator, and this passive role became deeply rooted in many parishes. Should anyone in one of these congregations attempt to sing along with the choir, the guilty party would at minimum be stared into silence or outright told not to sing lest the beautiful performance of the choir be spoiled. Singing became the sole responsibility of the choir. In reaction to this situation full congregational singing was instituted in some parishes. The choir was disbanded and the congregation sang everything. One friend who attended a Vespers service at which an untrained congregation sang everything (including all the stichera) described it as the single most painful liturgical experience of his life. Neither situation is compatible with the Orthodox view of liturgy; the Church instead asks us to balance these two extremes. The services are the work and responsibility of the entire community and everyone is invited to participate, not only the clergy and the choir.

How do we balance the seemingly conflicting needs of order *and* full participation? We must understand the structure of the Church's services in the light of her theology, since these services express this theology. As affirmed in the teachings of the Fathers, particularly St. Gregory Palamas, we do not need an earthly intermediary in order to have a relationship with God. We each are responsible for our own relationship with Him, although this personal relationship with God has a corporate context. St. Paul instructs us to "bear one another's burdens" and to "address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart."[1] Christ Himself sets the example for liturgical worship at the Mystical Supper,[2] when He gathered with His disciples for the first Eucharist, singing a hymn with them before departing to the Mount of Olives.[3] Following these examples and teachings, the Orthodox Church has a very structured liturgical life, rich in singing.

Although we do not need an intermediary between us and God, we do need leaders. Through apostolic succession, our hierarchs and priests descend from the twelve Apostles. In addition to our spiritual guidance, they are responsible to lead the liturgical worship of the Church. The leader of the singers (precentor, choir director, head chanter, etc.) is responsible for the preparation of the singers and the liturgical music. The singers, in turn, lead the congregation in the singing of the services when the community gathers for corporate prayer.

All Orthodox services are sung, but not all services are sung in the same manner. There is a direct correlation between the level of complexity of a given service and the complexity of the singing. For example, weekday Lenten services are sung in a simpler and more subdued fashion than a Paschal service. Generally, the tiers are as follows:

a.) daily services (Lenten and non-Lenten) contain fewer stichera and more chanting of Psalms relative to one another and are sung in a simpler manner.

b.) feasts with Polyelon and Great Doxology are more festive in nature and contain more singing (stichera, etc.) which is done in a more festive and ornate fashion.

c.) Great Feasts and Resurrectional (Sunday) services contain more sung portions which are done with a greater degree of complexity.

d.) Paschal services are sung in the most festive manner of all services throughout the entire liturgical year, being sung in their entirety.

As the complexity curve of the settings increases, the need for preparation also increases. For example, a reasonable person could hardly expect an untrained group to sing the solemn services of Holy Week in a prayerful manner without preparation. These more specialized and non-repetitive portions of the services are best sung by those who are trained and prepared to sing them properly.[4]

Repetition, which plays a major role in Orthodox worship, is an invitation to general participation. Repetition occurs on both a short term and long term basis. Litanies are a prime example–the responses are repeated between the petitions, as well as later in the service and in other services. Even the most festive and complex services of the liturgical year contain repetitive portions. Using the example of Paschal Matins, we can see many varied examples of repetition with one service. Matins begins with the manifold singing of the troparion "Christ is risen…" first by the clergy, then by the faithful. The Great Litany follows with the singing of "Lord have mercy" following each petition. On each Ode of the Kanon, the Irmos is sung followed by the troparia which is preceeded by the short refrain "Christ is risen from the

1. Galatians 6:2 and Ephesians 5:19.
2. It must be noted that this gathering was consistent with the contemporary order of Jewish worship.
3. Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:22
4. Although congregational singing is a long-standing tradition in some Ukrainian and Carpathian parishes and the faithful are familiar with many of the hymns, the less familiar portions are sung by the chanters.

dead." The Irmos is again sung after the troparia and the Ode is concluded with the singing of "Christ is risen…" three times. This pattern continues for the entire Kanon with a slight variation on the 9th Ode. Many of the hymns from this service are sung throughout the entire Paschal season: the Troparion, Kontakion, Exapostilarion, and stichera on the Paschal verses "Let God arise…" and the Irmoi of the Kanon. "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ…" is sung at Sunday Matins throughout the entire year. The repetitions in this service are only one example of those that occur throughout the liturgical year. If "repetition is the mother of learning" then during the services the members of the congregation have ample opportunity to become familiar with the hymns and to participate in the singing if they choose.

We have determined that the congregation has plenty of opportunity to participate in the singing during worship. How do we encourage them to sing? Since worship is the work of the entire community, everyone is responsible, albeit in different ways, to insure full participation. The spiritual leader of the community (bishop or priest) should be well versed in the services and should encourage people to attend them. He should take every opportunity available to bring his community to a fuller understanding of what they are doing during the services and why they are doing it. The deacon or priest who intones the litanies should intone them in a manner conducive to response by the faithful, i.e. keeping the pitch in a singable range for the singers and not constantly shifting the tonal center, and be able to adapt to a more suitable pitch for the singers. The leader of the singers should not only be a good musician, but should also be well versed in the services. He/she should prepare his/her singers for the services through rehearsal, explaining to them the meaning of the hymnography and what is being celebrated and why. The choice of music must be conducive to participation, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. It is unnecessary to sing different settings each week; this makes it practically impossible for the congregation to become familiar enough with a particular setting to participate. The singers must attend the rehearsals to prepare themselves and should follow the direction of their leader. If they are not properly prepared, they must be able to admit this and not sing, in order not to disrupt the singing of those who are prepared. The members of the congregation must sing together with the other singers and not sing in a disruptive manner, i.e. out of tune or out of time with the others. All the participants, from celebrant to youngest congregant, must work together to sing and praise God as if with one voice and one mind, making the worship of the Church symphonic[5] in its truest sense. ✣

5. From the Greek: *syn*–together and *phone*–sound.

Ask the Choirmaster

Q *Do you have any suggestions about what can be sung while the clergy receive Communion?*

A Too many of our contemporary service books contain little or no information on what is to be sung while the clergy receive Communion and prepare the Gifts for distribution to the faithful. Consequently, after we finish singing the single verse of the prescribed Communion Hymn, we are left on our own to determine what is appropriate to be sung during the time that remains.

First and foremost, we must remember that although the clergy are communing at this time, the faithful have not done so yet and should be continuing their preparation to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. In the past, this portion of the Liturgy, which became known as the "concerto," (*kontsert*) was transformed into an intermission. It was popular practice to sing spiritual concerti and other extra-liturgical hymns at this time, often in elaborate settings. This shift of focus is not surprising considering the fact that at that time few, if any, of the laity approached the Chalice to receive Communion on a regular basis. Today with the resurgence of frequent Communion by the laity, we must again focus our attention on preparing to receive Communion while the clergy commune.

The Communion Hymn of the day can be sung as a refrain alternately with verses from the psalm from which it is taken. For example, the source of the Sunday Communion Hymn "Praise the Lord from the heavens…" is Psalm 148. The refrain (the Communion Hymn) would be sung first, and the psalm verses would be chanted alternately with the refrains by the canonarch or reader. In this case there is no need to repeat the first psalm verse since it is the refrain, but when it is not, as in the case of the Communion Hymn from the Pre-sanctified Liturgy "Taste and see that the Lord is good…" the reader would begin with the first verse of Psalm 34. This psalm concludes with the singing of the refrain and the three-fold Alleluia. This can be done with other Communion Hymns as well.

Musical settings of the prayers of preparation for Communion are very appropriate to be sung at this time as well. Some of the prayers are very long while others are extremely short. It is prudent to sing the longer settings before the shorter ones to allow greater flexibility in coordinating the conclusion of the singing with the conclusion of the Communion of the clergy. The most commonly sung of these prayers, "Of Your Mystical Supper…," is often sung just prior to the time when the Chalice is brought out.

Hymns from the season of the liturgical year can also be sung at this time. During the Paschal season the Paschal Stichera "Let God Arise…" can be sung. During Great Lent the Post–Gospel Stichera "Open the doors of repentance…" or other Lenten hymns are appropriate to

***Choirmaster**, continued on page 19*

CONFERENCES

St. Vladimir's Institute of Music and Pastoral Practice

Crestwood, New York

The Summer Institute format includes both music and pastoral tracks following a chosen theme for the year. After daily combined sessions, the tracks separate for practical application and study. Speakers include members of St. Vladimir's faculty as well as guest lecturers. Dr. Jessica Suchy-Pilalis, a Byzantine music scholar, is the guest lecturer for the music track. This year's theme is, "Baptism and Chrismation in the Orthodox Church". Human beings enter the Church of Christ by dying and rising with Jesus Christ through baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and through chrismation with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Attention will be given to the celebration of baptism and chrismation in the Orthodox Church.

Music sessions include conducting, vocal and chanting technique, liturgical composition and arrangement, liturgics, musical analysis for liturgical use, and more. Music participants prepare the services and lead the singing at the liturgical offices conducted each day during the Institute. For more information write or call, St. Vladimir's Seminary, 575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, NY, 10707, (914) 961-8313. ✣

Summer School of Liturgical Music

Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York
Matushka Nancy Mirolovich, graduate of 1996

With the blessing of Archbishop Laurus of Syracuse and Holy Trinity Monastery, the Synodal Liturgical Music Advisory Board sponsored the 5th session of the Holy Trinity Seminary Summer School of Liturgical Music from July 14 to 27, 1996. First year students, as well as returning second and third year students, seeking certification in choir conducting and chanting, attended the school at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York.

This high caliber program is the result of excellent faculty. This group of dedicated professionals includes Dr. Olga Dolskaya-Ackerly, University of Missouri, Kansas City, whose specialty is Russian Liturgical Music; Matushka Joanna Grigorief, University of Toronto; Dr. Joseph McLellan, graduate of Brown University and Holy Trinity Seminary, specialist in Slavic Linguistics; Nikolai Myshkin, Moscow Conservatory, formerly a director of professionally trained church choirs in Moscow; Anatolii Panchoshnyy, Gnesin Music Academy, formerly a featured soloist with the Moscow Philharmonic Choir; and Protodeacon Andre Papkov, M.A. from the New England Conservatory of Music, professional vocalist and music teacher.

Students ranged from experienced choir directors and readers to uninitiated enthusiasts from several European countries, Australia, South America, Canada and the United States. Throughout the intense two week program students attended daily classes in "The History of Russian Church Music," "Choral Methods," "The Eight Tone Chant System," "Fundamentals of Voice Production," "Church Slavonic," "Music Theory," and "Sight-Singing." In addition, Mr. Myshkin conducted a daily practicum in choir directing. In this class, even the most timid students were encouraged to try their hand at conducting, implementing the methods of Pavel Chesnokov. At the end of the two weeks, the graduating students performed the pieces they had learned with the student choir, marking their successful certification as choir directors.

Mr. Anatolii Panchoshnyy supplemented his group instruction in voice production with individual lessons for all students. Again, even the least confident students found they could produce better vocal sounds and the more proficient singers quickly caught on to the proper breathing techniques so that the improvement in their voices was immediately apparent. Both Fr. Andre and Mr. Panchoshnyy displayed a personal commitment to excellence which inspired the students to set high achievement goals for themselves.

While the students found the "hands on" components of practical use, they similarly discovered, thanks to Joseph McLellan, that a little knowledge of church Slavonic grammar considerably aids better understanding of liturgical texts. Those students who came to the school with no knowledge of Russian nor a parish need for church Slavonic nevertheless profited from an introduction to grammar, vocabulary, numbers, and common abbreviations. Dr. McLellan's instant recall of nearly every aspect of the Typikon, helped to answer many questions on how to prepare for services.

For many, the most enthralling course was History of Russian Church Music. Dr. Ackerly's love for and mastery of her subject easily inspired in students a desire to learn the history, to train their ears to recognize the different styles of chant and to identify the centuries in which various compositions originated.

The two courses likely to appeal not only to would-be choir directors but to every singer, were Sight-Singing, taught by Matushka Joanna Grigorief and the Eight Tone System, taught by Fr. Andre. The opportunity to practice in a supportive setting, and to receive instructional correction of habitual errors proved extremely profitable. Matushka's ability to put everyone at ease, combined with her professional expertise, contributed to the establishment of a foundation in sight-reading which, if built upon, will enable the students to more fully explore the variety of chants found in the *Sputnik Psalomshchika* (Church Singer's Companion), and to expand on the basic eight tones taught by Fr. Andre.

Despite the heavy class load, the students enthusiastically applied themselves to their studies, with the sec-

ond and third year students encouraging the freshman class, and setting examples by their own dedication. Living together at the monastery guest house and taking meals at the school's excellent dining room gave everyone a chance to form friendships and experience camaraderie with like-minded Orthodox Christians. Fully aware of the high level of expectation and prepared to meet the challenges of their mentors, not a single student left the school this year in any condition but that of enthusiasm and determination to achieve all the more in the coming year.

To encourage more parishes to send candidates, the school now offers a double track program: (1) the full course for choir directors and chanters and (2) an elective-based option for people not interested in certification, but in expanding their own knowledge of Orthodox church music and liturgics. Parishes lacking a well-prepared substitute choir director may want to finance a trainee's tuition and room and board. Persons who accept the Archbishop's call to uplift the spiritual life of their parish by improving the quality of singing at the services, will find the intense schedule of classes well balanced by the two week stay in a monastic environment in the company of Orthodox Christians from around the globe. ✣

12th Annual Antiochian Sacred Music Institute

Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania

The Music Institute sponsored by the Sacred Music Department of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese will be August 21-24, 1997 at the Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Guest speaker will be Fr. David Barr, pastor of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Tuscon, Arizona and Director of the St. Romanos Chanters Program for the Western Region. Tentatively scheduled lectures and workshops include: "The Essence of Liturgical Singing", "Learning Byzantine Scales and Introductions", "Voice Techniques", "Constantinople and Antioch Chants—Differences in Style", "Choral Techniques", and "Finding Liturgical Texts". In addition participants may request on their application to study "Conducting" (Beginning or Advanced) or "Specialty Chanting" on a one-on-one basis.

Persons interested in the 1997 Music Institute should contact Fr. George Geha at the Antiochian Village (412-238-3677). ✣

11th Annual Russian Orthodox Church Musicians' Conference

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

This conference will be held in Ottawa—Canada's Capital—and will be hosted at the newly-built St. Xenia Church in nearby Kanata, Ontario. The dates are October 9 to October 12, 1997 (Canadian Thanksgiving and American Columbus Day weekends). Registration will begin on Wednesday evening, October 8th.The program will consist of lectures, workshops and rehearsals, of interest to church musicians, including singers and choir directors of all levels. The weekend will culminate at the All-Night Vigil on Saturday and Pontifical Divine Liturgy on Sunday. The theme this year will be to explore questions of asymmetrical rhythm and recitative in relation to the church tones, conducting technique and performance of liturgical chant. For information please contact George Skok, (613) 729-4407 or e-mail, gskok@istar.ca or 308-45 Holland Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4S3, CANADA. ✣

We welcome all information about upcoming conferences and events, both local and national. Please send us your announcements of upcoming events or reviews of events you've attended! Submission deadline for the next issue is September 15, 1997.

CHOIRS IN THE COMMUNITY

Holy Trinity Chorale

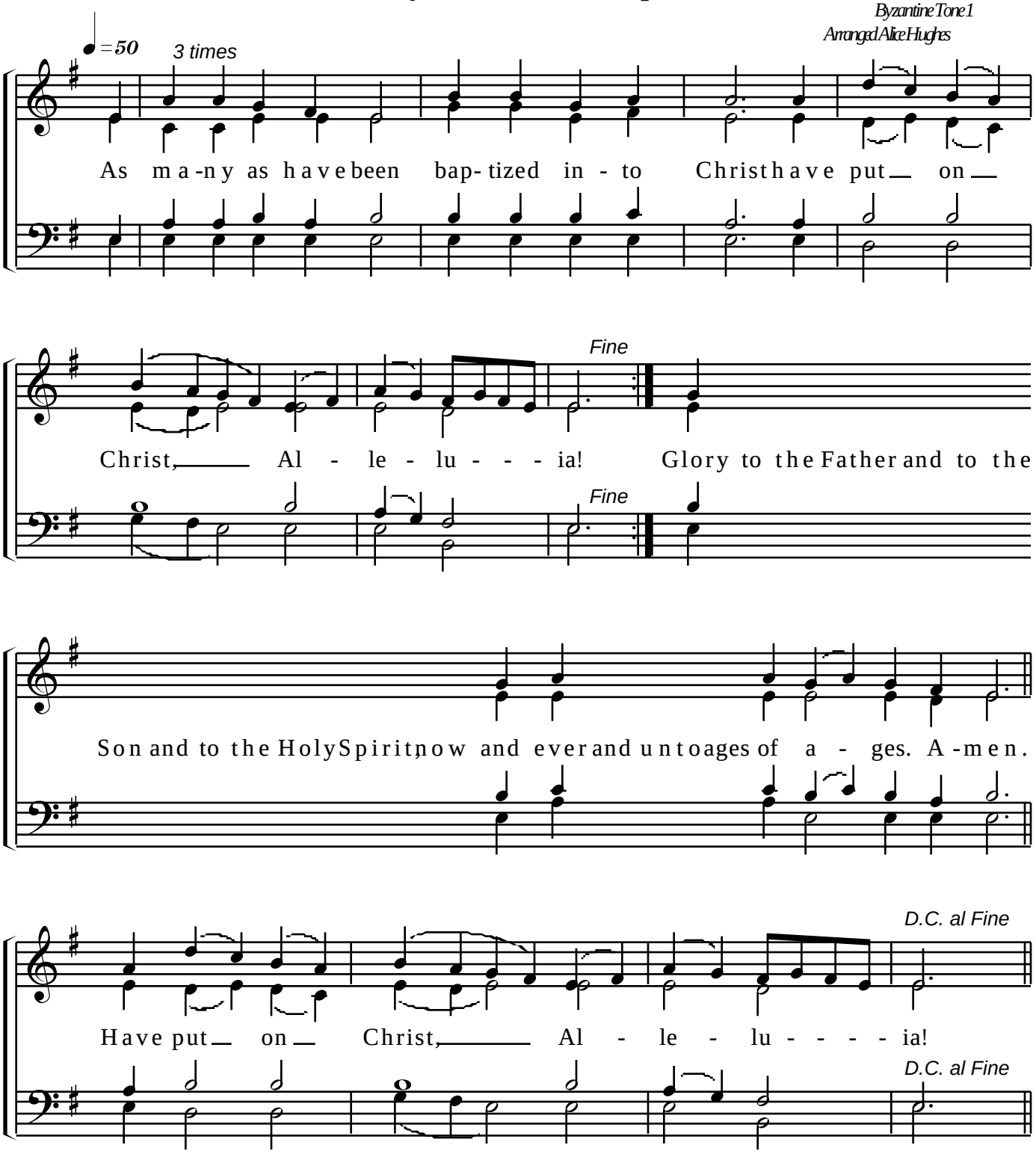
Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral
165 Park Drive
Boston, Massachusetts 02215

The Holy Trinity Chorale, comprised of singers from Boston's Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, specializes in the church singing of orthodoxy in America. Established in 1989, the ensemble is directed by its founder, Walter G. Obleschuk. Its repertoire, as diverse as the Cathedral community itself, consists of works in various styles, featuring compositions by Bishops BASIL and JOB, Fathers Bassoline, Glagolev, Heckman and Platko, and Boris Ledkovsky and Walter Obleschuk. The Chorale has sung at Education Day at St. Vladimir's Seminary as well as at sites in and around Boston. A participant in the annual Boston Festival of Orthodox Music since its inception, the Chorale has been invited to appear again this year. Two recordings by the Chorale are currently available: Orthodox Liturgical Music of the 20th Century and Anthology of Russian and American Church Singing.

Walter G. Obleschuk, director of the Holy Trinity Chorale and the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral Choir, is a third generation church musician. A first generation American of Ukrainian ancestry, Mr. Obleschuk holds a degree in Music Theory and Music History from West Chester University. Director of Music since 1986 at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Mr. Obleschuk researches and sets much of the music sung by both groups. Prior to Holy Trinity, he served at St. Herman of Alaska Church in Wallingford (now Edgemont), Pennsylvania from 1980-86. Mr. Obleschuk is a member of the Department of Liturgical Music of the Orthodox Church in America and Resource Editor of ***PSALM Notes***. ✣

As Many As Have Been Baptized

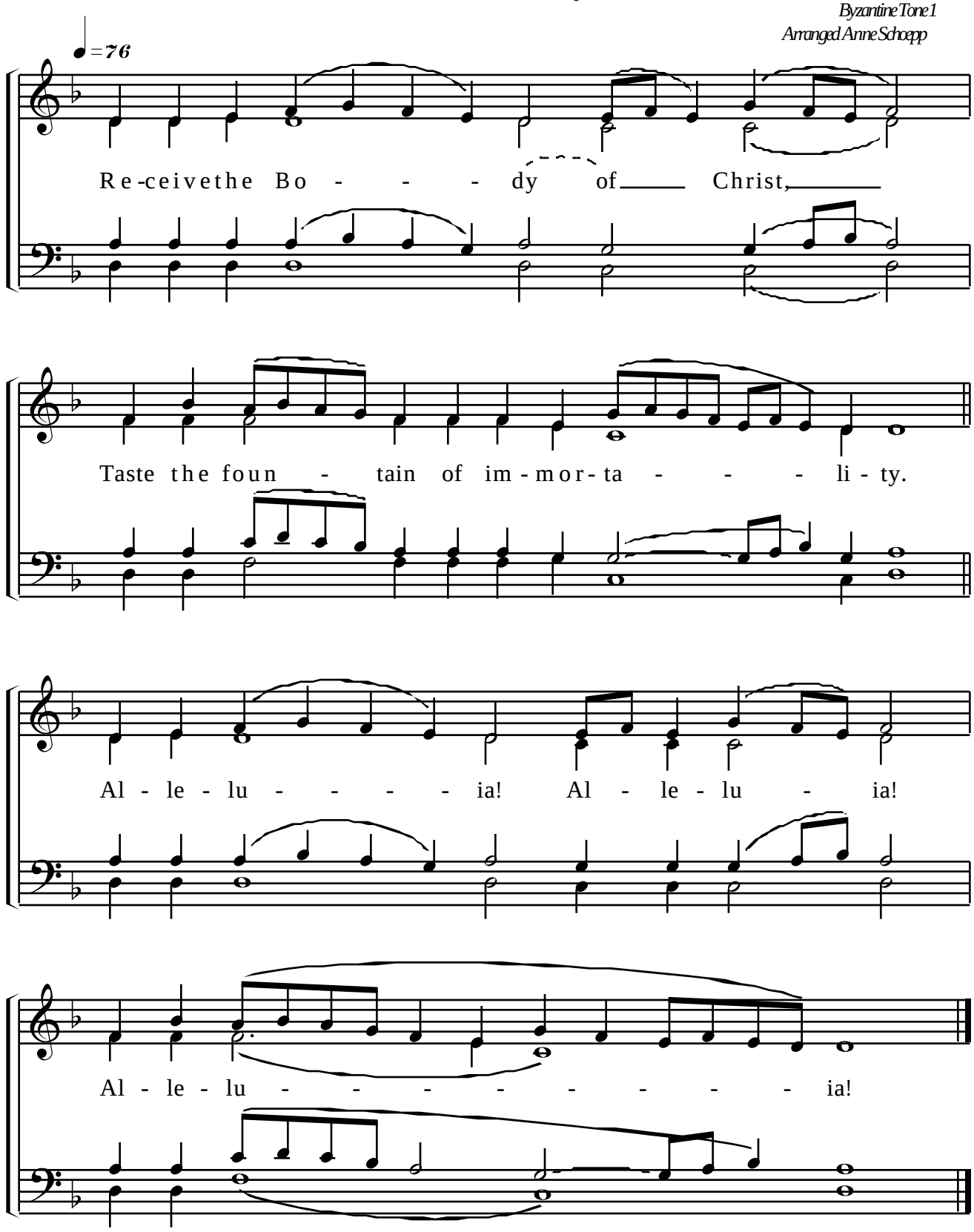
Byzantine Tone 1
Arranged Alice Hughes



Performance Notes: May be sung unison, with ison(bass part) or in four parts. Each repetition may build on the last: begin unison, then add ison, then add the tenor and alto on the third repetition.

Receive the Body

Byzantine Tone 1
Arranged Anne Schoepp



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The Fifth Annual

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Music Faculty and Instructor of Composition, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary
M.M. ConductingYale Institute of Sacred Music/Yale School of Music
B.A. Voice, Eastman School of Music

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An Orthodox liturgical approach to composition • Music composition and arranging technique
Setting traditional chant • Music adaptation for textual change
Copyright issues • Computer score production • Score preparation for ease of singing
Score analysis for conductors

"And when we began to learn from one another, then the singing began to spread..."
Anonymous treatise, 17th-century Russia

hosted by

Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Ben Lomond, CA

February 6, 7, & 8, 1998

Registration Fee $60

For more information, write, call or fax:
Anne Schoepp (408) 336-3019 • Alice Hughes (408) 335-5414 • Fax (408) 336-1748
c/o Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, P.O. Box 458, Ben Lomond, CA 95005

REVIEWS

Successful Warm-ups

Nancy Telfer, Neil A. Kjos Music Company, 1995
Teacher edition, $29.95 Student edition, $6.95

Reviewed by Alice Hughes

As a singer and voice teacher I have longed for a way to systematically teach vocal technique to my choirs. Of course, we have worked on vocal technique as the literature requires, but it has always been more like a "band-aid" than a logical approach. No more! *Successful Warm-ups*, the second part of a choir curriculum developed by Nancy Telfer, is one excellent solution. What she has developed is a series of vocal exercises that you can use at the beginning of each choir rehearsal that are specifically designed to train your choir with the necessary skills to sing better.

Over the course of the first volume (there is also a second volume available) your choir will learn all of the basics of choral singing. The exercises cover, for example, breathing and support, articulation, posture, rhythm, phrasing, listening skills, diction, dynamics, tone quality etc. The Teacher's Edition is invaluable; giving detailed "lesson plans", as well as useful conducting gestures for reinforcing the exercises. The lesson plans build logically from previous weeks. She also delineates the long- and short-term goals of each exercise. There is a detailed introduction that describes why warm-ups are essential to your choir, how to use the materials provided, and the basic goals of the program. However, one of the most important features is Appendix F. This contains an extensive—fifty page—diagnostic chart with symptoms, possible causes, and remedies, including which exercises to use to help correct each problem area.

The student books are an easy to hold size and contain the exercises, tips for better singing and good illustrations for posture, breathing etc.

Although I believe this book will be useful to any choir director, it may be especially helpful to the untrained singer who happens to be a choir director and doesn't know how to train the choir to sing better. (For someone in this situation I would also recommend finding a private teacher for yourself, so you can learn to use your voice more effectively, and not risk training your choir incorrectly.) For those of us who are trained singers, it provides a systematic approach to teaching singing in a choral situation.

We are using this curriculum, as well as its companion curriculum *Successful Sight-Singing*, with both the adult and youth choirs. Although we've only been using it for 2 months, so far I am happy with the results. The choir enjoys the exercises and it gives real focus to the first few minutes of rehearsal. I'm confident that over the next twelve months it will pay off in better tone, less vocal exhaustion during the busy liturgical times, and improved choral sound and precision. Do I sound excited? I am. I highly recommend *Successful Warm-ups* and its companion, *Successful Sight-Singing*. ✣

Available through your local choral music supplier or Byron Hoyt Sheet Music Service (415) 431-8055

***Vocal Technique**, continued from page 1*

A church choir singer or solo chanter need not develop his or her vocal skills to quite the same extent as would a professional opera singer or song recitalist. Nevertheless, a firm command over the fundamentals of technique is unavoidably necessary for all singers at all levels. If this is not the case, singers not only deny themselves the resources that make singing a pleasurable and rewarding experience, but as well the ability beautifully and effectively to manifest the Word of God through song. If proper singing is indeed a serious vocation as centuries of liturgical musicians have deemed it to be, then it demands concentrated effort and sustained dedication.

Vocal Instruction The most effective approach to developing vocal technique is through private instruction. Books and articles are helpful and may convey important theoretical material, as well as diction guidance, but an instructor is needed to monitor vocal development, encouraging positive musical progress while addressing and fixing bad habits that develop along the way. The voice teacher possesses an objective pair of ears the singer does not. The teacher, therefore, is entrusted to hear and judge the initial vocal delivery and to instruct the vocalist on further preparing and predicting the sound that he or she produces.

Like many other professions, reputation is the best guide for choosing qualified teachers. Professional or retired professional singers seem like a natural choice. If they lack pedagogic integrity and intuition, however, they may not be able to communicate effectively and guide someone else through technical development. Rather, a singer who has studied vocal pedagogy and has dedicated at least one quarter of his or her career to teaching is a safer bet. These instructors are usually found on college campuses, in music schools, and at home in private studios.

[Ed note: Junior colleges are also a good place to find a private teacher or group vocal lessons which are another less expensive alternative. Also, check your telephone directory for NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) or for other music teacher associations, for example MTAC in California. Members of these organizations must have certain credentials to belong.]

The Voice The human voice is a complex and intriguing instrument. It is able to create a variety of vocal colors and sounds on many different pitches. The most notable quality of the voice, however, is its ability to communicate text. This, too, especially makes sacred

singing essential to the witness of the Church, separating it from mere religious entertainment or liturgical decoration.

The voice may be categorized into a lower range, middle range and upper range. These divisions are determined, in part, by the physics of resonance, as well as by the intensity of abdominal support the singer uses to produce the notes within a certain range. The singer's objective is to approach each of these three ranges in a way that keeps vocal color and vocal placement consistent throughout the voice. The listener must not be able to detect drastic changes in tone quality when the singer moves from one range to the next.

A singer with good technique should have an overall range of nearly two octaves, although the entire span is not always required for various styles of vocal or choral music. The middle range is usually the most comfortable part of the voice and it characterizes a singer's overall tone quality. The upper and lower ranges, on the other hand, require special effort and consideration regarding abdominal support and vocal production. In between each range are a few notes which are hard to place and sustain evenly; in other words, they do not fit into either of the two ranges between which they lie. These difficult notes belong to the *passaggio* or "break," although the latter term is inaccurate and misleading, implying that a change of vocal color is inevitable. Intonation in the *passaggio* also can be especially difficult, until the vocalist discovers and consistently applies proper motion of breath and vocal placement.

Other terms that are often misused and misunderstood are "head voice" and "chest voice." Simply, when the majority of resonating sound is focused in the head, the "head voice" is produced. When the resonance is focused in the chest, the "chest voice" is produced. Initially, it is easier to the hear the difference, rather than to feel it. The "chest voice" is often harsher and louder, with a kind of shouting quality, emphasizing the lower range. Female Broadway and rock and roll singers tend to over develop their chest voices in the middle ranges as well, sacrificing the upper range completely (in these cases, the upper range becomes too airy and often out of tune). Some female Slavic folk choirs also, by tradition, sing in their chest voices. In Orthodox sacred music, however, the chest voice should never be used, with one exception: when women are assigned the tenor part—and even then they must exercise caution

On the same issue, the "chest voice" is not the same as the lower range. It is possible to sing all notes within a particular range in "head voice." Therefore, "head" and "chest" are not synonymous with "high" and "low" and the two sets of vocal terminology should be treated as separate vocal concepts.

Breathing Breathing which allows for full lung expansion and invites abdominal support is at the foundation of good singing. It is the most important vocal technique to master quickly and efficiently. Over three quarters of all major vocal problems, in fact, stem from poor breathing. Bad habits in breathing may account for poor tone quality, lack of vocal range, poor vocal agility, unfocused or airy sound, bad intonation, throat tension and soreness, lack of endurance and even bad diction.

Breathing for singing dramatizes two obvious types of physical initiation: the inhale and the exhale. These two steps when done properly become one.

The Inhale: The purpose of the inhale is to allow the base of the lungs to expand fully, thus taking in much more air than is normally done in everyday breathing or casual speech. For this to occur, the rib cage must move forward, and the abdominal musculature must push somewhat down and outward, allowing room for the lungs to expand to capacity. In fact, think of the lungs as similar to a balloon. If the bottom half of a balloon is clasped or otherwise restricted, only the unclasped section will fill with air. Similarly, if the abdominal musculature remains firm against the base of the lungs, only the upper parts will be able to expand. If you release the fist on the balloon, the whole balloon will fill with air; release the pressure on the abdominal musculature, the diaphragm etc., and both lungs will fully fill with air. This is sometimes referred to as abdominal breathing, since the abdominal muscles are quite active in the process. Abdominal breathing is not a contrived method used only for singing, but is a natural form of breathing often neglected, since it is not required for everyday speech. Watching an infant or a dog or cat breathe during sleep shows abdominal breathing in a natural form. What we endeavor to do as singers is similar.

The inhale must begin simultaneously with lung expansion. Concentrate on filling the base of the lungs with air by allowing the rib cage to expand, and the abdominal area to lower slightly and move outward. Proper expansion feels like an inner tube being inflated around the waist, i.e. it inflates in front, on the sides, and in the mid to lower back. If the shoulders move upward while the breath is being taken in, then the ribs press against the lungs and the abdominal area remains contracted; full expansion becomes impossible and tension is created in the chest.

The Exhale: As soon as the lungs are full of air the breath may move outward, initiating sound through the vibration of the vocal chords. It is important to initiate this sound by singing "on the breath" i.e. placing the vocal tone within the flow of air at the exact time it begins to move outward. If the breath begins without the voice, a "puff" of air is heard, thus creating an airy quality throughout the line, and often poor intonation. If the voice begins without joining a properly moving flow of air, the sound will quiver, often having started with a harsh "glottal stop," and, again, the intonation likely will be compromised. The sound always must be started properly for the sake of perfectly articulated beautiful tone. Below are select exercises which can be done everyday to improve breathing:

1. Lie flat on the floor or on a firm mattress and place a medium size book on your abdominal area (at the belt line and slightly above). Your arms should be at

your sides. Breathe in slowly and comfortably through the nose. Concentrate on expanding the abdominal area fully and evenly. Exhale through the nose, again, in a relaxed manner. The book should rise as air is taken in and lower as the air is released. Repeat this exercise five or ten times, each time trying to feel fuller and fuller expansion. For some, this exercise will feel very natural; for others it may take a while to feel and to master abdominal control. After you begin to feel the expansion, try the same exercise, without the book, lying on your side, and then on your stomach. The sensation of abdominal movement should be apparent with every breath.

2. Once again, lie flat on the floor. This time place one hand over the abdominal area (again, right at the belt line and slightly above), and the other at your side just above the hip (relax this hand's shoulder). This positioning of the hands allows the singer to feel expansion more closely. Breathe in through the nose and expand over four counts, and release the air over six counts, blowing through the lips as if trying gently to blow out a candle. Repeat many times, eventually releasing the air over eight, ten, or more counts. Do the same exercise breathing in through the mouth, rather than the nose. To breathe in through the mouth, open the mouth on the inhale as if you were about to yawn and take in a fully expanded breath. Be sure to replicate the same evenness of air flow during the inhale you were able to achieve and feel breathing in through the nose. If this is difficult, breathe in again through the nose, but with the mouth open. This helps introduce the sensation of dropping the jaw for air intake while emphasizing smooth breathing through the nose. After a number of repetitions, try again through the mouth. When actually singing, always take in air through the mouth.

3. Again on the floor, take in a fully expanded breath (through the mouth) over two counts and release the air in four counts. Repeat the same counting for five to ten repetitions, so that a pendulum-like rhythm is established. Now perform the same kind of breathing more quickly. You should fully expand and contract in the style of a slow pant. Do no more than ten to fifteen repetitions without a brief pause.

4. Repeat all of the above exercises in order sitting upright in a chair and then standing with good posture, one foot slightly in front of the other. You should breathe just as fully and efficiently standing up as you did lying down. You may also try these exercises bending over with your hands on your waist so that your upper body is parallel to the ground. It is important to make sure your sides and back are expanding as well as your front.

Abdominal Support The key to proper vocal initiation, as well as the ability to sing through any line in any part of the vocal range, lies in good abdominal support. By initiating firmness, a downward contraction-like feeling, the abdominal muscles react by pressing against the base of the lungs, thus creating a stronger or more supported flow of air upon which the vocal chords are to vibrate. It is the same idea as when a person coughs. To discover the sensation, prepare a cough to the point of coughing without actually going through with it. Notice the sensation of firmness in the abdominal area. Make sure the neck and shoulder muscles are relaxed; talk a bit while maintaining the firmness. Another way to test support: take in a fully expanded breath and let it out while applying abdominal support. Now, without letting up on the support, try to take in another full breath. If your support is correctly applied, only a minimal amount of air will come into the lungs.

Abdominal support is essential for acquiring and maintaining good vocal technique. It is also synonymous with good breathing; the singer should approach the two concepts as one. Proper support will allow the vocalist to sing in tune and sustain long lines with consistent vocal color.

Tone Quality It is essential that the vocalist learn to sing not by sound, but by sensation. There are many reasons for this. The sound one hears in terms of tone quality within is not the sound that others hear. In fact, the vocalist should only rely on his or her ears to guide intonation, tempo, rhythm, and articulation. The singer must learn to feel support, feel vocal placement, feel vowel formation, feel head resonance, etc. In addition, if the singer judges the voice by sound, he or she can only fix a mistake after the fact, since it has already been initiated. Sensation begins, on the other hand, before vocal initiation and allows greater flexibility in fixing mistakes before they actually occur. This is where concentration on vocal technique, rather than on similes or metaphoric imagery, plays a major role. Technique allows for tangible sensation; imagery, however beneficial in other ways, only relates to mental formulation.

Vocal Placement The presence and resonance of the voice should be felt mainly in the front of the head. Some voice teachers refer to this as placing the tone in the "mask," meaning the singer should feel the vibrancy and amplification of the voice in the part of the head that would be outlined by a typical costume mask. With the jaw and tongue relaxed, the tip of the tongue resting against the lower part of the lower teeth where the gums meet, and the soft palate at the rear of the mouth lifted for open sounds (think of yawning without pulling the tongue back), place the tone—no matter the vowel formation—in the mask, allowing for better projection and fullness. This guarantees that the voice stay out of the throat, lessening the chance for soreness and tension, and increasing vocal focus and vitality of tone. Again, this must be done by sensation rather than sound.

To feel this type of vocal placement, hum a five note scale up and down on "mmmm" and concentrate on the sensation of vocal vibration within the mask. Do the same gently on "vvvv". Now, dropping the jaw, sing the same scale on [vɑ] (making sure the soft palate is high) and place the tone in the same part of the mask that was vibrating previously. Maintain an open and legato

sound, never pinched or spread (with a properly placed tongue that relaxes in place for the duration of the tone, think of singing the same [ɑ] as in the first syllable of the word "father"). If the singer also thinks of singing through the roof of the mouth and out the front of the head, this will enhance the same sense of vocal focus within the tone. In the end, not only will singing into the mask help to amplify and vitalize the sound, but the vocalist will feel as if the entire front of the head is alive with tone, whether singing softly or loudly.

The Soft Palate The round hollow in the roof of the mouth is the hard palate; it is immovable. Behind it, where there is softer tissue, is the soft palate; it is capable of raising and lowering. The soft palate lowers to produce nasal sounds such as "m," "n," or "ng" as in "sing." In other words, the breath travels through the nose rather than the mouth to produce these sounds. For non-nasal sounds, especially all vowels and many voiced consonants, the soft palate must be lifted, so as to concentrate the complete flow of air out the mouth. This avoids nasal or twangy tone and vocal strain.

It is important for the vocalist to develop command over the movement of the soft palate, which eventually should lift and lower simply as a result of the brain's command. Every time a person yawns, for instance, the soft palate raises automatically, so as to usher in the air as quickly and fully as possible. This is a good way to discover the sensation of a raised palate. When singing any vowel, test the raised soft palate by suddenly plugging the nose. If the sound remains unharmed, the soft palate is raised. If it partially shuts off, then the singer has disrupted sound which was illegitimately traveling through the nose. Vocalists must be especially vigilant about raising the soft palate after singing any nasal consonant. As well, never vocalize on vowels which start with nasal consonants, unless specifically to practice and test lifting the soft palate; otherwise one is only encouraging nasal tone placement.

Diction The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) originated in Europe as a means of guiding speakers and singers to the proper pronunciation of various languages. The IPA is used in English as well, and has been expanded even for use in Slavic languages. Each sound encountered in language is assigned an IPA symbol to avoid confusion over the several ways in which certain letters or letter combinations may be pronounced. Consider the following list of English words: *tag*, *label*, *auspicious*, *said*. Each "a" is assigned a different IPA symbol to distinguish and clarify the difference in sound. Several fine dictionaries now use IPA symbols and act as good companions to singers unfamiliar with a certain language's rules of pronunciation. Throughout this article, IPA symbols are shown in brackets.

Vowels Vowels appear in many forms: open, closed, dark, bright, long, short, single-sound, diphthong, and triphthong. Whatever the category, the singer must remain true to the proper vowel shape and color for diction to be understood. The sustained vowel must be recognizable within the context of the word being sung, and it must remain the same for the duration. An unrelaxed tongue which moves about the mouth—even slightly—during the course of the vowel will alter the sound significantly. Poor breath control and insufficient support may also obscure vowels, as well as placement which leaves the mask and falls back into the head and throat (due to the tip of the tongue not resting against the back of the lower teeth as aforementioned, as well as other possible reasons).

Exercise caution especially with diphthongs and triphthongs, since they encompass more than one vowel sound. Consider the word "night"; it includes the vowels [ɑ] as in "father" and [ɪ] as in "pit". Both sounds must be pronounced, but [ɑ] is held and emphasized, and [ɪ] is added at the very last moment before sounding the [t]. The same is true for the triphthong "our" when it appears in a phrase such as "our God." In this case, "our" is pronounced [ɑuə] (the [ə] takes the place of the [r], which is not pronounced, since it precedes a consonant and would otherwise obscure the preceding vowel sounds); the [ɑ] is held, and the [u] and [ə] come at the last moment.

Each vowel sound, or combination of sounds, must be examined individually within the context of vocal placement so as to grasp proper pronunciation. At the same time, every vowel should evolve from the same fundamental mechanism of breathing, support, and tone production, so that all vowels are unified in tone. The vocalist must present distinct vowel sounds, in other words, without having them sound as if they are coming from different voices.

Consonants Consonants may be divided into two categories: voiced and unvoiced. To create a voiced consonant, simply add vocal tone to the unvoiced counterpart. For example, add voiced sound to [f] and [v] results, add voiced sound to [t] and [d] results. Some consonants, or consonant pairs, may be both voiced or unvoiced; the [th] sound in "thought" is unvoiced, the [th] sound in "there" is voiced. Remember to apply enough voice to a voiced consonant, that it does not sound like its unvoiced counterpart. Otherwise, "bird" becomes "bert", "God" becomes "got," "seize" becomes "cease" and so on. In English, unvoiced consonants are aspirated i.e. they are created with an audible puff of air. Russian, French, and Italian, on the other hand, use unaspirated consonants.

Special attention should be given to initial and final consonants so that they project clearly through the vocal line. In speech, for instance, the [kt] in the word "fact" is treated casually—sometimes both consonants are swallowed in a glottal stop, the abruptness of which substitutes for the actual consonant pair. In singing, the vocalist should ensure that both consonants are heard at least at the same level as the tone of the preceding vowel, perhaps louder depending on the acoustical circumstances. Though it may feel initially awkward to

give these consonant so much distinction and attention, it is necessary for the word and its meaning to reach all who are gathered and listening.

The [r] consonant can be especially problematic in English and requires special explanation. When [r] is preceded by a consonant, and followed by a vowel, such as in "bright", use the "American [r]". Caution should be taken not to scoop upwards, nor to sing "b[ə]right." If [r] appears between two vowels, as in "foreign" or "very", it is flipped. (To practice getting the tongue to flip quickly and articulately, sing many repetitions on "vedy". A slight change in vocal placement will thus create the proper flipped [r] sound). If the [r] is preceded by a vowel and followed by a consonant, as in "Lord" and "mercy", it is not pronounced. This rule is especially important to follow, since pronouncing the [r] American style will alter and obscure the preceding vowel sound. "Lord" will become "Lo-erd," for instance. The same rules apply when [r] appears between two words. For example, in the phrase "her youth", the [r] is not pronounced, because the [r] is preceded by a vowel and followed by a consonant, regardless of the fact that the consonant begins a new word. Similarly, in "pair of" the [r] is flipped, because it is followed by a vowel.

The best and most highly recommended publication on this issue of vowels and consonants is Madeleine Marshall's *The Singer's Manual of English Diction.* (MCMLLIII, G. Schirmer; New York).

Intonation The most common intonation flaw for vocalists is singing flat. This can become especially critical in unaccompanied singing, since, without instruments, singers may lose their sense of tonal reference and drop numerous keys before the setting is finished. Singing flat, in and of itself, is not the problem, but a symptom of several other vocal technique problems. In other words, one should not try to correct flat singing per se, but the technical flaws that cause it.

To avoid singing flat, always produce tone with lift (high soft palate, tongue forward) and momentum. The supported breath should carry the tone forward and the singer should always be aware of moving to the next note and musical gesture. This is especially critical on sustained notes. Never let the voice sit or settle into a note that is held; rather, move through the note with the next note, as well as the end of the phrase, in mind. Cadences often go flat as well when vocalists drop support and placement in anticipation of the end of the phrase. Always sing with lift and momentum to the very last sound, and then begin the following phrase with renewed energy in the breath and support.

Intonation difficulties also result from unprepared notes. Singers too often try to place and execute a note as they encounter it. Instead, one should prepare the note ahead of time, at least on the note before, if not several notes before. For instance, if the singer is to negotiate the upwards interval of a perfect fifth from G to D, the necessary support, movement of breath, and lift to sing the D should already be activated on the G. Thus, the D will fall into place with ease. This requires that vocalists always know what is ahead in the music. Consider, hypothetically, the first four phrases of a setting in which the range is relatively conservative throughout the first three phrases, but raises in the fourth. The vocalist, knowing what lies ahead, should sing the first three phrases in anticipation of the demands of the fourth, so that the higher notes flow from the voice with sufficient energy and ease. This not only helps to ensure intonation, but unity of sound as well.

Vocalizing When starting out, it is best to vocalize on simple phrases with the open vowel [ɑ], pronounced "ah." This creates a basic concept of line, demanding evenness of tone and color throughout the phrase. Using the vowel [ɑ] also helps the voice to open its sound, allowing a greater chance for proper placement and focus. In general, the singer should begin vocalizing in the upper lower range, working upward and downward in one setting. Avoid starting at the very bottom of the range, otherwise the singer will have to work extra hard not to pull the weight of the lower voice into the middle or upper ranges. Never, vocalize to the upper range to stop and start over again at the bottom; always bring the voice back down to it's starting point. It is best to progress chromatically (by half steps), thus covering all tonal notes in the vocal range.

Vocal exercises can be created to fit a variety of technical needs. They may concentrate on vocal line, vowel formation, vocal agility, or range shift etc. Experienced singers may even compose their own exercises to fit the nature of the voice. Vocalizing eventually becomes a personal approach to maintaining one's vocal health and growth.

Therefore, the singer should approach vocalizing with a great deal of patience. Results are not automatic, but improvement under proper guidance will manifest itself soon enough. Also, remember that the human voice is very fragile and needs time for rest. Never push too hard or sing for an extended period without taking a break. Proper support and technique, of course, will ensure good vocal execution, as well as add to the longevity of the voice.

Conclusion Vocal technique actually simplifies singing by giving it discipline and structure. These elements, when applied to music, allow the kind of enhanced and heightened expression that is impossible in speech. For the church singer, command over vocal technique is at the heart of liturgical ministry. It is the means by which text and music join into heightened expression, carrying forth to the assembly the tenets and essence of faith. Done clearly and intelligently, nothing is more engaging or inviting in worship than the sung word, sustained and beautified by elevated sound. ✣

[Ed. note: this article, with the editor's assistance and suggestions, combines and expands on two previously written pieces by Mark Bailey on vocal technique.]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on your first issue of ***PSALM Notes***. I read it cover to cover! I'm so grateful to all those who are taking the time to share their talents, gifts knowledge and time to make this publication possible.

I would really like to get a copy of this first issue for all of our choir members and interested parishioners. Will you please call or write and let me know what the cost would be. I want to encourage as many as I can to subscribe. Thank you!

Nancy McGee—Memphis TN

Dear Editors,

I just wanted to let you know, the first issue of ***PSALM Notes*** was great! It was spoken of *very* highly at the Sacred Music Institute at Antiochian Village this summer. Fr. Sergei Glagolev, the keynote speaker, read excerpts from Bishop BASIL's wonderful exhortation and encouraged all who attended to subscribe to the journal. I look forward to the next issue. May God bless your efforts.

Melanie West—Portland, OR

My Dear Fellow Singers,

Praises to our God! I heard with enthusiasm that you have begun *PSALM* to forward the growth of Orthodox worship through song. Please accept this donation to the work, and enroll me as a subscriber to your ***PSALM Notes*** newsletter, and send me any other information you may release.

May your work prosper according to the will of God.

Scott C. Mitchell—Skowhegan, ME

Dear Anne and Alice,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Greetings form Kansas! I *just* received in the mail a copy of ***PSALM Notes*** Vol 1 #2 and I'm sending my subscription. Of course, I wanted to attend this year's Seminar... I have been reflecting on the incredible spiritual benefit from the one in Garden Grove with Bp. BASIL. So, I was thrilled to see his lecture printed. I did not receive Vol. 1, #1 and would very much appreciate it if you would send it to me.

Thank you, thank you for all your hard work and for using your gifts to strengthen the Church!

Khouria Karen Joanna Mack—Topeka, KS

Dear Alice,

It is wonderful to see the 2nd issue of your outstanding endeavor, ***PSALM Notes***. I am enclosing our $40 check to cover a personal subscription for us, plus one for Holy Trinity, plus a donation. I am taking our current issue to church tomorrow and would like to glue it somewhere in the choir loft! I am restraining myself a little; I am not going through the issue with a highlighter as I'd like to do!

WE look forward to the upcoming issues of ***PSALM Notes***, but more to the possibility of seeing you again sometime soon.

In His name, Betsy Tumbas—Walnut Creek, CA

Dear Editor,

Would you please send information regarding your organization and newsletter to me as soon as possible? I am Council Secretary for St. Innocent Orthodox Church, a mission parish located in Eureka, California, and also "acting" co-director of our choir (which is made up of almost everyone in the parish). We are a fledgling choir (only one of us is NOT a convert—me!) and could use all the help we can find!

Any information you could provide for us would be very much appreciated! Thank you for your help.

Sincerely, Linda Koshell—Eureka, CA

Dear Editor,

We read about your organization in the Fall 1996 issue of *The Handmaiden*. Our pan-Orthodox Chorale, the Orthodox Christian Chorale of Metropolitan Detroit, would like to join your organization. Our mission since 1991 has been to sing Orthodox hymnography in the English language. We have made a positive impact on both Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities alike.

I have enclosed a copy of each of our recordings, "Let Us Sing to the Lord" and "Let Us Sing to the Lord, II." Our ministry is not only in the recorded music realm. We have done a number of concerts, charitable projects (hospitals, etc.), mission works, benefit concerts (for the monastery in Michigan and the Orthodox radio program), and sung responses at pan-Orthodox worship services.

Actually, our group has also been founded and sustained by women. Our founders are: Matushka Michelle Jannakos, Valerie Yova, and Janet Damian. We have since added another woman, Pauline Costianes, as one of our assistant conductors. Our choir consists of approximately 30 singers, although some people have moved away, and others have joined since our inception. We now stand at about 20 voices.

I am looking forward to hearing from you about your organization.

In His love, Janet Damian—Dearborn, MI

Dear Readers,

Thank you for your letters and subscriptions. Your support helps keep ***PSALM Notes*** in production. Expect your next issue to arrive in late Fall. Please send your calendar information, conference reviews, "Choirs in the Community" submissions by September 15, 1997. We encourage each of you to attend at least one music conference a year to make contacts with other church musicians and to grow in your ministry.

The Editors

***Choirmaster**, continued from page 7*

be sung at this time. An exception is Psalm 136 [137], "By the waters of Babylon…" This hymn is inappropriate for several of reasons. It is not a Lenten hymn, but a pre-Lenten hymn which is prescribed to be sung at Sunday Matins on the three Sundays just prior to Lent; more importantly, it is a hymn of exile. While we are all exiles, we should be emphasizing our voluntary return to God, not our separation from Him. Discuss this issue with the rector of your parish to decide on what is appropriate for your parish.

The length of time available should also be a consideration. During Lent the clergy require more time since additional Lambs are prepared for any Pre-sanctified Liturgies which will take place in the following week. You may need to combine the various options which I listed above. For example, begin with the Communion Hymn of the day, then follow with "Gates of repentance…" and conclude with pre-Communion prayers. If necessary, the pre-Communion prayers can also be chanted by a single reader.

If you are thinking, "Great ideas, but I don't have musical settings of pre-Communion prayers, and since I don't feel qualified to do any, where I am to get them?" The Department of Liturgical Music of the OCA is in the process of preparing a collection of hymns which could be sung during the Communion of the clergy. If you cannot wait, contact me c/o Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, 165 Park Drive, Boston, MA 02215 and I will send you some settings of pre-Communion hymnody. Please include a self-addressed stamped #10 (long) envelope with 2 first class stamps.

Q *I've been recently asked to direct my parish's choir. I'm a trained musician, but I'm insecure about the rest of my responsibilities. What can I do?*

A Orthodox church singing encompasses many elements: musical, liturgical, poetic, and linguistic. While it is not necessary to be a scholar in all these fields, a working familiarity with them would be beneficial. Read as much as you can beginning with general works such as Gardner's *Russian Church Singing, Vol.1* and the prefaces of the *Lenten Triodion* and the *Festal Menaion* as translated by Bishop Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary. Become familiar with the repertoire of Orthodox liturgical music through scores and recordings. Go to services at other parishes whenever possible in order to expand your liturgical experience. Attend the various conferences held throughout the country to meet other liturgical musicians. (This issue of ***PSALM Notes*** contains a list of various conferences to be held this summer.) Try to find a mentor, either locally or through one of the conferences, someone to whom you can turn when you have questions or need help or music. Talk to your parish priest—many priests were choir directors before their ordination. Subscribe to ***PSALM Notes*** and read it, especially Fr. Sergei Glagolev's articles in this issue, and encourage your singers to read it. As you accumulate information, collate it and begin to look for patterns.

Do not ignore enriching your musical knowledge and talent. If possible, sing with another group–this will allow you to observe another director and to see things "from the other side of the music stand" so-to-speak. Explore the wealth of information about vocal and rehearsal techniques available–see Alice Hughes' review in this issue of ***PSALM Notes*** for a recommendation. Familiarize yourself with the aesthetics of church singing. Just as the Church is *in* this world, but is not *of* this world, the same is true of Orthodox church singing. Orthodox church singing was at its most decadent during those periods when traditional aesthetics were subordinated to those of secular music (as occurred correspondingly in iconography, architecture, and other areas of church life). As an Orthodox choir director, it is your responsibility to bring to church singing the best the world (God's creation) has to offer, to perfect it and to return it again as an offering to God.

Even the most experienced choir directors were once inexperienced. By following the above advice you will increase your comfort level and speed the learning process. Try not to repeat your errors; if you repeat them, try to figure out why. Over time as you gain experience you will learn to anticipate and avoid certain traps. Remember always to offer your prayer (both personal and corporate) to the Lord to the best of your abilities. ✣

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*Please send us names and addresses of anyone you think would be interested in receiving **PSALM Notes**!*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 30 - June 1, 1997

The **Greek Choir Federation—New England Federation—50th Anniversary Conference,** Boston, Massachusetts, Limberakis music, George Rapis, guest director. Information: Dean Limberakis, (617) 246-3797.

June 19 - 22, 1997

The **Greek Choir Federation—Denver Diocese Conference,** Houston, Texas. Cardiasmenos music, Pam Cramer, guest director. Information: George Stefanidakis, (713) 469-0986.

The **Greek Choir Federation—San Francisco Diocese Conference,** Northridge, California, Kathy Trapp, guest director. Information: Michael Captain, (310) 378-7913.

The **Greek Choir Federation—Southeastern Federation Conference,** Daytona Beach, Florida, Dardiasmenos music, Steve Cardiamenos, guest director. Information: Katherine Kandilakis, (423) 696-9007.

June 22 - 27, 1997

St. Vladimir's Seminary Summer Institute, Crestwood, New York. "Baptism & Chrismation in the Orthodox Church," Jessica Suchy-Pilalis, guest speaker. Information: (914) 961-8313. *(See page 8 for more details.)*

July 6 - 19, 1997

Summer School of Liturgical Music, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York. Intensive training for choir director/readers. Full course requires three summers with academic credit available. Information: Rev. Dn. Andre Papkov, (315) 894-6274. *(See page 8 for a review of last year's Summer School of Liturgical Music.)*

July 17 - 20, 1997

The **Greek Choir Federation—Mideastern Federation—50th Anniversary Conference,** Detroit, Michigan. Information: George Raptis, (313) 862-1914.

July 20 - 26, 1997

Choral Techniques Workshop, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York. Rehearsal skills and knowledge of sacred choral literature. Information: Rev. Dn. Andre Papkov, (315) 894-6274.

August 21 - 24

Sacred Music Institute at Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Fr. David Barr, guest speaker. Information: Fr. George Geha, (412) 238-3677. *(See page 9 for more details.)*

October 1997

The **Greek Choir Federation—Eastern Federation Conference,** Gallos II music, Catherine Zarbis, guest director. Information: Dennie Spyros, (201) 762-5755.

October 9 - 12, 1997

The **11th Annual Russian Orthodox Church Musicians' Conference,** St. Xenia Church, Kanata, Ontario (near Ottawa). Information: George Skok, (613) 729-4407, email: gskok@istar.ca or 308-45 Holland Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4S3, CANADA. *(See page 9 for more details.)*

October 10 - 12, 1997

The **Greek Choir Federation—Chicago Diocese—40th Anniversary Conference,** Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Desby music, Ann Marie Koukios, guest director. Information: Christ Kutrubis, (603) 527-1137.

October 18, 1997

Pan-Orthodox Choir Workshop, Holy Assumption Orthodox Church, Canton, Ohio. Very Rev. Sergei Glagolev, guest speaker, 9 am to 4 pm, preregistration required. Information: Sr. Mary Ann, (330) 455-9146.

February 6 - 8, 1998

The **5th Annual Liturgical Singing Seminar**, Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, Ben Lomond, California. "Liturgical Composition Workshop," Mark Bailey, featured speaker. *(See flyer on page 12 for more details.)*

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