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Liturgical Singing as Icon

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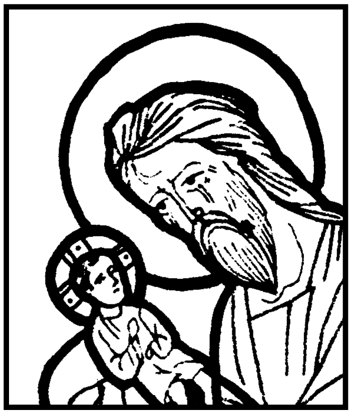

A liturgical colleague and friend recently delivered a simple, yet profoundly insightful, sermon to a group of Orthodox Christian composers.[1] As it was the week during which the Church celebrates Christ's Presentation in the Temple, my friend recalled the iconographic image of Simeon receiving in his arms the Holy Infant. He then instructed that composers, as well as all liturgical musicians, are like Simeon. They receive in their arms the Word, and their ministry is to carry forth that Word to the faithful, indeed to all the world.[2]

Use of the icon as a comparative image for sacred music has many liturgical applications. As the iconographic representation of Simeon illustrates, the Church is enabled to visualize and carry out its music ministry with a clear biblical model in mind. In other words certain liturgical and musical concepts which may seem initially obtuse to musicians can find further focus and clarification through the mental presence of an icon and the power of visualization.

Imagine, for example, someone entering an Orthodox church and being greeted, indeed confronted, by a screen of icons painted in bright fluorescent colors: the loudest yellows, oranges, reds, greens, and pinks imaginable. Likely the person would be shocked, or, at the very least, put off. He or she would notice how these neon-like icons detract from worship and disrupt the continuity of the worship space by causing such a bold distraction. Even worse, perhaps, the person would notice how the loud colors obscure the iconographic image, making it hard, if not impossible, to see, interpret, and understand the icons' meaning. Obviously, the painter in this hypothesis had no concept of a sensitive and clear presentation of an iconographic message or theme, whether endeavoring to communicate the significance of a holy person or a sacred event.

The same problems result from liturgical music which is sung in an unreasonably loud, heavy, and altogether insensitive manner. Or, if the singing is out of tune, unprepared, and full of affectation. The extreme sounds coming from the singers, whether in a group of cantors, a choir, or from the assembly on responses, would also put off the listener. That is to say, loud and insensitively presented liturgical music also distracts from worship and critically disrupts liturgical flow by calling attention to itself and away from the sacred event it accompanies or prepares. Worse still, such singing would muddy and obscure the text—the sacred Word of faith—and deprive worshippers of the meaning and essential message of the Christian gathering received through liturgy.

Now, imagine the scenario in the opposite extreme. This time the icons are in black and white, or in shades of gray with no clearly distinguishable lines, contours, or contrasts. They are bland, dull, uninteresting, and unengaging. The viewer would encounter the same problems: the images would fail to balance and fulfill worship and the worship space. As well, the iconographer's technique would be unable to distinguish and define the image or images of the icon, therefore obscuring their meaning through lifelessness.

In sacred music, if the manner of singing lacks vitality, pulse, nuance, and flow—if it lacks color—then it too becomes liturgically unengaging and will cloud the meaning of its text through dullness and muddiness.[3] As one finds in the delivery of speech, especially in poetry, there is natural motion and emphasis. So should there be in the textual delivery through music, therefore helping to bring to life the sacred event taking place or about to take place.

Orthodox Christians presumably would never tolerate either extreme example of the iconography described in this article. Nor should they tolerate the musical abuses also described alongside. Indeed, the goal of liturgical music in the Orthodox tradition is, by analogy, to create icons of sound which are beautiful, engaging, and meaningful.

To guide the interpretation and execution of liturgical singing, cantors, conductors, and choir members should constantly pose the following question as part of their sacred ministry: what kind of icon

***Icon**, continued on page 2*

in each liturgical instance are we painting for the worshipping community through the sound and manner of our singing? Furthermore, is our singing clear, comprehensible, and does it point to the liturgical event either taking place or about to take place?

Icons do not ultimately define the shape, structure, and execution of liturgical music, but, through a judicious and insightful use of analogy, they may help to clarify and guide the musical interpretive approach. For instance, consider the text "Lord, have mercy," which is sung at several litanies placed throughout the liturgy. This common refrain allows the assembly to punctuate each prayer of petition offered by the priest or deacon— i.e. it is the assembly's role, led by the singers, to respond.

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Several "Lord, have mercy" settings[4] from various Orthodox traditions will change the melody for as many as half to all of the responses within the same litany. In essence, this means a different melody for each response, even though the text and liturgical function of the assembly remains the same. Apparently, composers have done this for the sake of variety, not wanting the musical component to become repetitive (even though repetition is part of the essence of verse/refrain structure, to which litanies adhere). Now, as fatuous as it may seem, imagine standing in church before the icon of Christ to offer several personal petitions; each time you look up to engage in the icon, its image is changed, repeating a set of rotating Christ icons every six to eleven times. The cohesion and flow of your prayer likely would be disrupted. In reality, the icon is the constant factor in your changing prayer, as the "Lord, have mercy" response is the constant factor within the changing petitions of the litany.

If most Orthodox Christians take for granted that multiple musical "Lord, have mercy" responses within a single litany is an unchallenged practice, then they should pause over the silliness of icons that would do the same. Perhaps a single, tuneful, and well-crafted response addresses the role of the assembly more logically. Or, if there are several musical responses, what criteria can be used to ensure liturgical cohesion and ease of memorable singing from one response to the next, for the sake of accurate, sensible, and meaningful petitionary worship? If multiple musical responses on "Lord, have mercy" can do this, then they may stay; if not, they should be gradually and diplomatically replaced. And, if iconography encouraged a new level of insight on this matter, all the better.

The point, of course, is not simply to initiate liturgical renovation efforts, but first to encourage church musicians[5] to think more critically and objectively about sacred music, holding it to the same standards as many already do for icons. When objectivity is neglected and singing occurs as if liturgy were not the primary consideration, then gross imbalances occur throughout worship, jeopardizing the integrity of the entire rite. Prominent liturgists, in fact, have specifically noted that poor singing (like poor iconography) will overshadow and cover the liturgical component it is meant to enhance. Orthodox liturgical theologian Father Alexander Schmemann, commenting on this very issue, once wrote:

> It is just here that the obvious crisis in Church singing can be traced with special accuracy. Once a most important element of the liturgical structure. . . [singing] is being torn away more and more from the overall scheme of worship, from its structure, and in ceasing to be the expression of this structure[,] it very often becomes the expression only of "what is human. . . all too human."[6]

To understand Fr. Schmemann's quote within the context of this article, consider that icons are often called "windows into heaven." And they are sacred windows through the visual arts. Careful use of color and form through inverse perspective[7] should draw the worshipper into the saint or event being portrayed; in fact it should make the worshipper part of the saint or event. As the image transcends earthly dimensions, one achieves a glimpse into the Heavenly Kingdom.

Once again, the same can be said about sacred singing through the combined poetic and musical arts. The voices, whether cantorial or choral, enliven the textual theme of Christian life imbedded in the musical line and spotlight the liturgical event at hand, whether it be a procession, consecration, reading, or the like. Thus, singing, as a means of enlivening worship and guiding the community on a sacred journey to Christ where He awaits, also provides a necessary glimpse into heaven.

The Great Entrance at the Divine Liturgy provides a critical example. The Holy Gifts, i.e., bread and wine offered by the community, are presented to the bishop and then placed on the altar for sanctification. To accompany the transfer of the Gifts and to enable the procession, the Church conveys the Cherubikon refrain, which articulates that we who sing the thrice-holy song along with heavenly hosts (and we actually do sing "Holy, Holy, Holy..." at the Anaphora) must put aside all concerns to receive Christ [in Communion], the King of all.[8] This is the message and liturgical transformation on which the assembly must focus as they behold the Gifts moving in procession to the altar. And the manner of singing must be executed in such a way as to achieve these liturgical objectives, allowing all gathered in worship not merely to watch but to participate. If, on the other hand, the musical interpretation of the Cherubikon is overly commanding, inadequate, or full of affectation as aforementioned, it will actually draw attention to itself and away from the gifts. The result is that the Church will think of this moment not as the Great Entrance, but merely as the time when we sing the "Cherubic Hymn," ergo the essence of Fr. Schmemann's quote: that music divorced from liturgy takes on a narcissistic character and becomes ". . . all too human," forgoing the glimpse into heaven.

All in all, if liturgical music interpreters create a visual or iconographic image of the Great Entrance in their minds as they rehearse this setting, and if they are attentive to the actual event as it takes place, endeavoring to accompany it—not cover it, then balance and liturgical accuracy are more likely to occur, where meaning is elevated to new levels of relevance.

There are, of course, obvious differences between iconography and liturgical music. In purely technical terms, icons present a stable image that can be studied all at once. Music (and its poetry), on the other hand, moves from beginning to end and must be taken in as it unfolds and progresses. Therefore, iconographic contrast—i.e. color, perspective, and the like—is constant, whereas musical contrast—i.e. dynamics, tempo, and style of articulation—may change to accommodate any given worship situation. And in this sense, perhaps liturgical music has the advantage, since these variables make it impossible to regulate the spontaneous pulse of sung prayer.[9] That means, as well, that church musicians are metaphorically painting a new icon every time they sing at each liturgical celebration.

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How does one achieve icons of sacred sound? The painter, for instance, must study and thoroughly comprehend the saint or event being depicted, so that the image may come to life again through the icon. The musician must likewise study and thoroughly comprehend the liturgy and the text of the music, so that it too may come to life through singing. Consider the hypothetical situation in which a holy object, perhaps a relic or icon of a saint, is carried in procession through the church to a repeating troparion refrain. As the object reaches the altar and is raised before the throne of God, the music should somehow reflect this point of arrival and emphasis, either by a tempo shift, a change in dynamics, or a variation in voicing. Furthermore, the interpretation and delivery of the musical changes through singing should direct attention to the elevation, not away from it to the music itself. And the only way for music and liturgy to coordinate in this manner is for church musicians and their leaders to be absolutely attentive to, and aware of, worship and its poetry.

The use of the icon in helping to understand the appropriate manner of singing for liturgy encourages a conscious and subconscious awareness of the role sacred music plays in awakening the assembly to worship. Although this point is not specifically addressed within this article, it also correctly implies that the liturgical arts are cohesive and serve each other as well as themselves. Awareness beyond the immediate task of singing through visual reminders is fair iconographic use, as it were, for the sake of being drawn into Christ Himself, Who awaits on the other side of the icon and on the other side of our holy song. ✢

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1. The event was the Divine Liturgy celebrated at Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Ben Lomond, California, on February 7 during the 1998 Liturgical Singing Seminar on Orthodox Composition. The chief celebrant was the priest David Anderson.
2. "Word" in at least two senses: as Christ [John 1:14] and as the texts, both biblical and ecclesiastical, which illuminate Christianity.
3. Orthodox composer and priest Sergei Glagolev has articulated in numerous talks and articles that, just as icons are not painted in black and white, neither should sacred music be without "color" or expression.
4. Settings which contain "Lord, have mercy" sung once or three times as the primary response, such as in the Great Litany.
5. "Church musicians" throughout this article refers to all choir members and cantors, as well as their conductors and composers.
6. Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 3rd ed. (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 38.
7. Inverse perspective is a painting technique whereby the center of the image, say the face, is thin and elongated and the outer dimensions, i.e. the cheek bones, forehead, etc., are broadened to pull the viewer into the image.
8. The antiphon then closes with an Alleluia refrain. For a summary account of the ancient structural shape and evolution of the Cherubikon, see Robert Taft, SJ, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1984) 181-182. Also see the editor's introduction to: St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Divine Liturgy*, ed., comp., and trans., Paul Meyendorff (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 20-21.
9. Orthodox liturgical musician, pedagogue, and colleague David Drillock was the first in my recollection acutely to stress that regulated sung prayer, in terms of strictly enforced pre-assigned dynamic and tempo markings, can go against the very essence and spontaneous pulse of worship.

Building Community in the Parish Choir

Alice Hughes

> *“A psalm forms friendships, unites those separated, conciliates those at enmity. . . Who indeed, can still consider as an enemy him with whom he has uttered the same prayer to God? So that psalmody, bringing about choral singing, a bond, as it were, toward unity, and joining the people into a harmonious union of one choir, produces also the greatest of blessings, charity.”*
>
> St. Basil the Great[1]

Singing together binds and unifies the body of Christ. As Christians we must be united as we approach the throne of God, joining in the heavenly worship with the angels.[2] As leaders of the worship, the parish choir should be a reflection of this unity. This article offers some ideas and suggestions to help the choir director, working together with the parish priest, to begin to develop not just a group of people who gather on Sunday mornings to sing the Liturgy, but a choir community that leads the larger parish community in meaningful and uplifting worship.

Leadership

A community thrives when its leadership fosters unity. For the choir community, leadership begins with the choir director in unison with the parish priest (this may also include any assistant directors or the head chanter). The development and growth of a strong choral community begins when the choir director and the pastor are unified in their goals and vision for the music, choir, and overall worship of the community. The choir director/head chanter must actively work with the priest to determine the focus and direction of the singing for the parish. This is not always an easy task. It requires commitment and compromise. When the choir director and the pastor have the same goals and vision, it becomes much easier to initiate some of the practical applications mentioned below. As you begin to develop a common vision, many things that seemed impossible become possible.

An example of how this working together can benefit the parish and choir regards regular rehearsals. The transition into a regular rehearsal schedule from either no rehearsals or minimal rehearsals can be very difficult. If the priest understands and appreciates the need and is willing to support the plan wholeheartedly, the transition can be easier. The priest can help explain to the choir or potential choir members why, from a pastoral point of view, regular rehearsals are important. Perhaps a joint article in the parish newsletter could help communicate this. If the choir is aware that the priest and director are in agreement on this, and other issues, it becomes easier for them to accept major changes. Approaching major changes in this way eliminates the appearance that the choir director is just arbitrarily asking for a greater commitment.

It is important to develop mechanisms for communication between the priest and choir director. The easiest way to do this is to have regularly scheduled meetings. How often to meet will be determined by the parish’s needs, but certainly it should be no less than once a month. A good way to begin is by trying to meet weekly or at least biweekly. Regular meetings will provide an environment for mutual support and brainstorming of various ideas, and will encourage the process of working together. In this way problems can be solved before they come up. You can learn to rely on each other’s personal strengths. Head chanters, assistant directors or others who are involved in the planning or execution of liturgical services should also be involved in these meetings, if at all possible. Although there are many areas that can be discussed in these meetings, one place to begin is by defining the goals for the choir and congregation. For example, at what points in the service to encourage congregational singing? What size choir would be the ideal for the parish? Which music selections work well liturgically and which do not? Besides Sunday Liturgy, which services will the choir sing? Also, invite the priest to come to choir rehearsals occasionally to encourage the choir and to give them pastoral insight into their ministry. If this process of working together is difficult at first, hang in there. It will pay off over time.

Imagine the scenario of a choir director (or a priest) who wants to encourage congregational singing and is basically working alone to make it happen. The director alone determines which places to have the congregation sing, selects appropriate repertoire, teaches the music to the choir, and perhaps even prints up booklets for the congregation. This approach would probably yield minimal results. A different approach would be for the director to sit down with the priest and together make many of these crucial decisions and plan how to implement them.[3] They might then make announcements to the parish and choir. The priest might attend a choir rehearsal in which he explains the different roles of the assembly, choir and chanters, assuring the choir that they will still fill a crucial ministry. Perhaps a teaching night for the congregation might be scheduled as well. Such a teaching could be shared by the priest and choir director. The priest might teach about the critical roles of the congregation in corporate worship. The choir director might teach some of the musical responses, with the choir leading them as they would during Liturgy. A meeting such as this reinforces the importance of the role of congregation, choir, chanter and priest in the worship. This second solution, although not guaranteeing success, does provide an environment for potential success and works towards building the community.

Leadership is an unavoidable and essential aspect of the role of choir director. Unfortunately, a good musician does not automatically make a good leader.

Choir directors need always to strive to grow, not only musically, liturgically and spiritually, but in their leadership and communication skills as well. Leadership is an unavoidable and essential aspect of the role of choir director. Unfortunately, a good musician does not automatically make a good leader. Therefore, self-analysis is critical in order to determine strengths and weaknesses in this area. Input from others can be helpful. If a skill needs to be developed, seek out others to help fill the gap and continually strive towards growth in that particular area.

Good communication skills are essential to a good leader. Learn to talk to and with people, and not at them. Learn to use “we” instead of “I.” For example, “We need a more gradual crescendo,” or, “We need to work this section,” or, “Basses, let’s fix the articulation.” This allows the choir to know, in a subtle way, that you are all in this together. Some directors prefer to use the imperative, for example, “Basses, articulate with more emphasis on each note,” or, “Crescendo more gradually.” In either case use a tone of voice that is positive, energetic and encouraging. Because of the vulnerability and personal exposure required to be a good singer, the choir director must avoid the use of sarcasm; it can easily damage the morale of a group. Respect the choir’s time by using rehearsals wisely and by starting and stopping on time. Respect and appreciate their choral skills, gently encouraging them to grow and learn more. Listen to and consider their input. Often a choir member will perceive a need before you do. Discuss group concerns with the group and individual concerns with individuals. Encourage the choir to bring up personal or controversial concerns outside of rehearsal time. Try to solve the inevitable problems that come up as quickly as possible. And strive never to let a choir member go home feeling angry or humiliated. By showing this respect for the choir a director begins to earn respect.

Rehearsal

Planning effective rehearsals is an essential tool for building the choral community; however, it is a vast topic that will require other, more in-depth articles in the future. I will only mention here several general considerations.

Commitment to regular rehearsals is essential. As mentioned before, singing together binds and unifies the body of Christ. Becoming a choral community requires regular rehearsals. Without them the choir will not be able to properly accomplish its ministry of leading the entire parish in meaningful and acceptable worship. A small rehearsed choir is much more effective than a large unrehearsed one. It may be necessary to lose a great singer in order to have regular rehearsals. The most effective choir members are not always those with the best voices, but the ones who are able to make this essential commitment.

Plan for success with realistic goals about how much can be accomplished. Each rehearsal must contain at least one beautiful moment—plan for it. It may be the sheer pleasure of singing one chord perfectly in tune as loud as possible, or it may be as subtle as a beautifully executed decrescendo. When everyone in the choir is aware that something they just sang together was beautiful, the director knows they are on the way toward having a community. Enthusiastic, short, simple phrases such as: “That’s it,” “You did it,” “Beautiful,” “Well done,” provide the choir with essential feedback without slowing the overall pace of the rehearsal. Spotlight each individual section, allowing the other sections to cheer for them after they have learned a particularly difficult passage or sung something especially beautifully. This is a particularly important and effective tool when a section is discouraged or feeling frustrated because of ongoing vocal and choral struggles.

It is the director’s responsibility to create an environment that is focused, respectful, joyful and productive.

It is the director’s responsibility to create an environment that is focused, respectful, joyful and productive. Rehearsals should be productive and enjoyable, even when they are intense and focused. Choir members will want to participate in rehearsals if after each session they feel that they have accomplished something, i.e., learned a new skill or a new piece of music, or sounded better than when they arrived. They will want to commit to and will enjoy coming to weekly rehearsals if the environment is pleasant and produces results. Since the choir will be a reflection of the choir director’s leadership, a choir director must set the example by always

Sample Choir Policy

The ministry and function of our parish choir is to lead effectively the congregation in worship at specified liturgies. Singing and leading in this manner require unity, skill, understanding and preparedness among the singers. Adherence to the following choir policies facilitates our proper functioning and the fulfillment of our ministry to the church.

I. Rehearsals

A. Rehearsals are on Wednesday nights, beginning with Vespers at 7:00 p.m. Vespers functions as both a spiritual and a vocal warm-up, so please make every attempt to attend.

B. An additional rehearsal is usually scheduled before Nativity and before Pascha.

C. Attendance is required at all rehearsals.

1. If you frequently miss more than one rehearsal in six, your absence is hindering the progress of the entire choir and your schedule may need adjustment to allow your continued participation.
2. High school students & parents: Choir is a huge time commitment. Keep in mind that homework, being grounded, studying for exams, etc. are not acceptable excuses to skip choir rehearsal.

D. Please bring all current liturgy books and a pencil to every rehearsal.

1. Please do not mark music with a pen.

E. We will generally have two scheduled breaks during the year.

1. One immediately following Theophany for two weeks.
2. One shortly after Pentecost for two weeks.
3. Occasional weeks off at the conductor’s discretion.

II. Liturgical Responsibilities

A. The choir is expected to sing Great Vespers and Liturgy for each Sunday and Great Feast throughout the year and many additional services during Lent and Holy Week. Please see the current schedule for specifics.

B. Be ready at your stand in the kliros 5 minutes before you are expected to sing.

C. All liturgy books should be prepared in advance.

1. This can usually be done on Wednesday night after rehearsal.
2. If not, arrive 10 minutes before Liturgy and prepare your book then.

D. Please arrange yourselves at the music stand so that you can see the music and the conductor.

III. Communication

A. Good communication is essential and enables us to function as a unit.

B. Please notify the conductor, in advance, of any liturgy or rehearsal that you will be unable to attend.

1. Let the conductor know as soon as you know regarding vacation plans, illness or any other event.
2. Many times we must plan accordingly to accommodate your absence.

C. Keep the conductor informed of any upcoming schedule changes that may affect your participation in rehearsal and the liturgical cycle.

D. Please discuss individual concerns outside of general rehearsal time.

being "on" and energetic even when it is difficult. When the director is grumpy, the choir will be grumpy. If you are having a particularly rough day, ask for the choir's understanding and patience. If the director works diligently, it will help the choir to work diligently at their ministry because they have a model to follow. The choir leaving rehearsals animated and excited about what they have accomplished will be another sign that a community is becoming a reality.

The pace and focus of each rehearsal are unique. Rehearsals can be more effective if the choir has some idea of what the pace for a particular rehearsal will be. Will the focus be to work on a few challenging pieces, or to run through an entire service hitting the high points? Each of those scenarios has a different pace. One possibility is to display the rehearsal plan for the choir on a white board. This shows the choir up front what the pace of the rehearsal will be for that evening. By writing out the plan and sticking to it you can also begin to build their trust in your leadership. It shows you care about their time and have thought through carefully what the goals are for the evening. It is critical to start and end each rehearsal on time. It takes time and practice to plan effective rehearsals, so keep trying!

Create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

Create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. It is possible, with practice, to be an authoritative leader rather than a dictator. Train the choir to give you their attention. One final very important note about rehearsals—be willing to acknowledge your own mistakes and failings.

"Esprit de corps"

Esprit de corps is a "sense of union and of common interests and responsibilities, as developed among a group of persons associated together."[4] This is important to cultivate in the choir, and there are many ways to approach it. One way to begin is to identify the musical personality of the parish. For example, which hymns or songs do your parish community and choir community love to sing—both within and outside of the liturgical services? Each community, if it is a singing community, will probably grow to love different songs than another community. These "community songs" nurture and express that particular community's musical personality. These songs may include a particular setting of "The Lord's Prayer," "God Grant You Many Years," "The Angel Cried," or various Festal Troparia. There may also be folk songs and carols that are sung for special days. Recognizing and singing these favorites, at the appropriate times, encourages people to participate and feel a part of the community.[5]

Another important element in cultivating this community is for the director to work on delegating and giving members of the choir ownership and responsibility. Find and assign people to help with tasks: section leaders, music duplicator (legally), librarian, rehearsal setup, phone tree or social coordinators. In taking ownership and responsibility for these tasks choir members begin to feel more like members of the group—it becomes everyone's choir. Three things are accomplished when you make use of their talents, skills, time and desire to serve: building up the community spirit; developing their leadership skills; and easing your own heavy load by delegating the tasks that do not require your skill and training or delegating in areas where you aren't gifted.

Develop and adhere to a written choir policy. This is a great project to work on with the priest and also with the choir itself. The policy can include a variety of sections: attendance, communication, schedule, responsibilities regarding choir books, etc. You might be surprised at the items the choir would like to see included—sometimes choir members have stronger expectations than the director. (A sample choir policy can be found on the facing page.)

Build relationships through social functions outside of rehearsal. These can and should be varied. Plan a Lenten supper together or a "Choir's Choice Night" where they get to sing all of their favorites. Schedule one-day workshops that mix singing with fellowship. Before Great Lent or Nativity Fast, have an extra Saturday rehearsal, that includes a pizza lunch, to jump start the music for the upcoming season. Borrow a video or audio tape from a conference and listen to and discuss it together. Include some silly things; for example, have "Slipper Night" when everyone shows up for rehearsal in his or her bedroom slippers.

Build relationships through social functions outside of rehearsal.

Sing together, laugh together, and cry together. The choir members need to care for one another and, as I mentioned before, you are the leader; they will follow your example. Share each other's prayer concerns, make meals for sick choir members and their families, plan baby and wedding showers. Another benchmark in your task of building community will be when the care for one another begins to happen naturally, without prompting.

Final thoughts

Success in building a choral community is difficult to measure. I hope the ideas and examples that I have given will help you know you are on the right path and will prove helpful to you and your parish. I have offered just a few that have worked for me. Perhaps they will be a springboard for developing your own ideas. I have not dealt with the myriad of musical challenges that we face as choir directors. These will be addressed in subsequent articles. One final thought: as church choir directors, we

***Community,** continued on page 15*

LITURGICAL HISTORY

The Trisagion: An Historical Perspective

Michael Breck

It is often held that Orthodoxy has stood firm in its worship and doctrine throughout the centuries and has come down essentially unchanged to those of us who now claim it as our faith. This "fact" is generally intended to express the continuity of contemporary Orthodoxy with earliest Christianity, thereby bolstering the Orthodox position when faced with the contentions of various Christian denominations. Sadly, it depicts Orthodox Christianity as an immutable religious monolith, a story that can only be retold and not one that can be relived in every generation and in every individual in a unique manner. No period whatsoever in the Church's history has been free of theological controversy however, and at no time has the Church's worship ceased to evolve. It is the purpose of this essay to demonstrate by one example the extent to which this is true.

> ***The sense of awe the Church sought to inspire is to be carefully noted; it is a prime motive in the evolution of Orthodox practice.***

The First Apology of Justin Martyr[1] (ca. AD 150) contains the oldest extant account (outside the New Testament) of the form of the ancient Liturgy. A modern observer would be hard pressed to recognize in it the service we now refer to as the Divine Liturgy. In examining just one element of today's Liturgy, the Trisagion, it will become clear not only that major changes have taken place, but also that their origin is what we might call "organic." They can often be attributed to their social and cultural contexts, but more often than not are the result of popular piety: ceremonies evolved without the influence of calculated theology, incorporating elements that were not decreed by Church leadership but arose instead out of practical necessity or simply by local preference.

In the fourth century the Roman Emperor, Constantine, legalized Christianity, then recognized it as the official religion of the empire. The Church had to make itself known, formally presenting itself to a predominantly pagan population. Certain practices, such as processions, began to develop in order to draw attention to Christian worship, since, at least in Constantinople, the worship of the pagans had been banned: "As the Peace of Constantine became more and more an established fact, it [Christian worship] grew into a more sumptuous affair and took on partly the character of propaganda. It became more and more a display, a Procession of witness, a coming out of the Church into the open to awe the spectators into reverence, to make people aware of the character and existence of the Church."[2]

The sense of awe the Church sought to inspire is to be carefully noted; it is a prime motive in the evolution of Orthodox practice. The early, unadorned gathering of the faithful soon turned into a major ceremony full of pomp: "At Jerusalem. . . the Bishop's entrance into the church of the Resurrection for the Eucharist was specially delayed until the people had taken their places."[3] Not much later, "the fifty-sixth canon of the council of Laodicea in Asia Minor (circa A.D. 363) lays it down that 'Presbyters ought not to enter and sit down on the bema [in their stalls around the apse] before the entrance of the Bishop,' an indication that old informality was giving way to the more dignified arrangement of a fully public worship."[4]

"In the fifth century chant was introduced to accompany the entry of the clergy, and in Constantinople of the people after them. It consisted of a psalm, accompanied by a refrain, or troparion."[5] This eventually became standard practice for all processions. As these grew longer (particularly in the context of the stational liturgy),[6] composed hymns began to be added along with the original psalm verses. It is precisely in this context that the Trisagion became incorporated into the worship of the Church.

The exact origin of the Trisagion is not altogether clear, but "Church historians report that while the people of Constantinople were praying against a divinely threatened calamity in the time of Patriarch Proclus, a boy in the crowd fell into an ecstasy and while in this state was taught the Thrice Holy by angels. . . When the child regained his senses, the whole assembly sang the song and the threat ceased."[7] Proclus was Patriarch from 434 to 446; the legend is obviously Constantinopolitan. There is further evidence to support this claim, in that the event is said to have taken place during a litya, part of a penitential procession: the litya is a specific characteristic of Constantinople's stational liturgy.[8] Given the circumstances in which it came about it is probable that, at first, "the Trisagion was used only when the liturgy was preceded by a procession of a penitential, intercessory character."[9]

The ever-growing use of psalms and composed hymns was one of the more prominent aspects of the flourishing liturgical worship between the fourth and sixth centuries. These were especially suited for processional singing, as any number of verses could be added depending on the duration of the procession. Oddly enough, as the practice of extensive processions waned, the elements that were removed to reduce the accompaniment were not the ones that had been composed and added in, but rather the verses of the psalms. Evidence of this is the fact that in the present-day hierarchical liturgy, the bishop still recites verses of Psalm 79 (80)[10] as a remnant of its original form in combination with the Trisagion (note that this psalm has a penitential theme). During the second half of the fifth century, the Trisagion was integrated as the refrain for Psalm 94 (95)—which was the introit for non-penitential dates—and was sung while the entire congregation followed the bishop into the church. By the sixth century, it was being sung in every liturgy. Psalms that had once been sung *en route* were kept as part of the service so that, instead of having Psalm 94 and the Trisagion as introit, both were being sung after the initial gathering and several antiphons.[11]

As it stands today,
the Trisagion has been
separated again from its psalm,
of which only a fragment remains,
"Come let us worship . . ."
but has retained part
of its function

A brief look at responsorial and antiphonal psalmody will help us to understand the evolution that took place. "In the earlier responsorial psalmody, a psalm verse chosen as *responsorium* is repeated by the people after each verse of the psalm intoned by the soloist.. . in today's prokeimenon we see the remains of this type of chant."[12] The antiphonal psalmody is a later form and was more elaborate: "The antiphon opened with the repetition of the refrain(s) by the two choirs. . . .The verses of the accompanying psalm were then chanted by a soloist. . . .To these the people, divided into two choirs, responded alternately with the refrain(s), which were usually an ecclesiastical composition, more rarely a verse of scripture."[13] "The whole troparion, or its final part, was then sung after every few verses of the psalm and after the 'Glory be to the Father' at the end. The whole refrain was repeated once more by the chanters, and finally by the people."[14] The current form of the Trisagion (i.e., with no interpolated psalm verses) is according to this same pattern. In the usual presbyterial liturgy, what was once the role of the soloist has been completely omitted during the Trisagion, while for hierarchical liturgies it has been taken over by the bishop (see note 11).

As it stands today, the Trisagion has been separated from its psalm, of which only a fragment remains ("Come let us worship. . ."), but has retained part of its function as introit hymn. In ancient practice, the bishop would lead the procession into the church, give a blessing (or greeting) and be seated at the high place for the readings. Today, the bishop stands at the center of the church throughout the antiphons (originally a time for procession to the church). At the singing of Psalm 94 he proceeds to the altar (the movement we now refer to as the "little entrance") and at the Trisagion, he proceeds

From the New Music Editor. . .

"Holy God", or the Trisagion, is the featured setting both in this issue's new Liturgical History column and in our New Music section. "Holy God" is particularly important to liturgical musicians, because it indicates many of the complexities involved in discerning and singing Orthodox liturgical music. For instance, "Holy God" is an ancient text, popularized during the first Christian millennium, and was chanted with psalm verses during elaborate church processions. While the text remains popular among the Orthodox today, its structure and manner of sung execution has changed. Michael Breck's insightful article clarifies many of these complexities and helps bridge the gap between historical and current practice.

In this spirit, both new musical settings presented in this issue, one by Kevin Lawrence and another by me, attempt to reconcile certain important early or traditional features with the way in which "Holy God" is currently sung. Additionally, both settings in their own ways endeavor to emphasize the liturgical event at hand. As a result, the singers and congregation should realize that, while they are singing this ancient text which recalls the song of the angelic hosts singing "Holy, Holy, Holy. . . ," the celebrant moves to the high place, or Bishop's throne, to attend the forthcoming Epistle and Gospel readings. In other words, "Holy God" encompasses an act of movement and anticipation.

Re-activating a broader sense and awareness of a setting's liturgical function within current practice characterizes the creative endeavors of many of today's Orthodox musicians. The purpose and function of the setting must be first and foremost in the musician's mind, so that music and liturgy agree and continually pull the worshipper into worship. Knowing as much as possible about the setting, history, poetic form, etc., beforehand and singing compositions by liturgical musicians who understand the principles of worship is a good start, certainly, and is exactly what we wish to emphasize in this issue. In future issues we plan to juxtapose similarly this type of information about history and liturgical function with new settings that consider and follow these principles.

Mark Bailey

Ideally, it would have been the conscious task of every composer throughout the centuries to determine the emphases and inflections inherent in a given text so that the resulting composition might reflect that structure rather than subvert it.

further to the high place for the reading of the Epistle and gives the peace: this was the original beginning of the Liturgy!

Now that we have addressed the origin and context of the Trisagion we must turn to its form and meaning. Its ambiguity is made evident by the fact that it was used by opposing sides of the fifth-century Monophysite controversy to uphold their respective claims. The very first official record of the singing of the Trisagion is dated to 451, at Chalcedon, where a council of bishops of the Orient (from around Antioch) used the hymn in its original form, along with a statement about its anti-Monophysite interpretation. Peter Knapheus (Peter the Fuller), a Monophysite, became Patriarch of Antioch in 468, at which time he introduced a new element, rendering the hymn as “Holy God, Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal One, who was crucified for us, have mercy on us.”[15] This “theopaschite” formula (literally “suffering God”) turned the hymn into a prayer addressed to Christ, clearly intended to assert His divinity. “Byzantine interpretation of the Trisagion referred it to the Trinity: ‘Holy God’ to the Father, ‘Holy and Strong’ to the Son, ‘Holy and Immortal’ to the Spirit.”[16] The controversy was escalated when “in 513 the Emperor Anastasius ordered the addition to be sung in the church of St. Theodore of Sphorakis close to the Great Church.”[17] If nothing else, this is evidence of the tremendous popularity and influence of the Trisagion.

Further consideration of the original text may show that neither of these interpretations is quite suitable. “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us” is related to the “Holy, Holy, Holy” of Isaiah 6:3, the thrice-holy hymn referred to in the Cherubic Hymn, ο χερουβικοσ υμνοσ (*o cherubikos umnos*).[18] The text itself may well have evolved somewhat into the form currently in practice. According to the monk Job, of the seventh century: “the hymn is made up of the Cherubikon[19] and of Psalm 41 of the Psalter. In the psalm, in fact, one sings: ‘God, the Strong, the Living’ (Psalm 41:3). The word ‘Living’ was changed to its equivalent ‘Immortal,’ while ‘Strong’ was kept as is.”[20] According to J. Mateos, this interpretation is rather plausible since in the change from ‘αγιοσ ζων’ (*agios zon*) to ‘αγιοσ αθανατοσ (*agios athanatos*) a difficult alliteration would be eliminated.’[21] Although strictly practical, for the sake of the chant the change is a logical one.

Nonetheless, given the original Greek (which happens to be a language of exceptional precision), it appears that both Peter Knapheus and the bishops of Chalcedon were twisting the meaning of the Trisagion to suit a specific argument. The hymn itself is divided into two parts: an exclamation and a prayer, with the first part (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”) in the third person, and the next (“have mercy on us”) in the second person. If the entire clause were in the second person, in the form of an imperative, as Peter Knapheus made it out to be, then all three adjectives would be in the vocative case (form of address: “O God. . .”). The Greek would have to read ‘Αγιε ο Θεε (*agie o thee*),’ whereas in its actual form it is a nominative clause. The adjectives that follow are in the nominative as well and, having no article before them, are necessarily predicates. Therefore, a translation that would more accurately convey the original meaning would be “Holy is God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal; have mercy on us!” The “Holy, Holy, Holy” of the Anaphora presents a similar form where the translation was not lost over difficulties of theology: “The subject of the phrase: Κνριοσ (*kyrios*), is in the nominative; the exclamation is made, naturally, in the third person: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy (is the) Lord of Sabaoth!’ But the passing from the third to the second person follows immediately: ‘Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.’”[22]

To get from the original Greek to the English translations currently used for Orthodox worship in America, most texts had to pass through the Church Slavonic of Orthodox Russia. The grammatical problem that existed in the Greek is only made worse by its new linguistic setting. Slavonic also has a vocative case, but unlike Greek it does not apply to adjectives. The translator, having rendered “Holy God” in the vocative case, made it impossible to interpret the whole expression as two separate parts as it had originally been; instead it became a single phrase altogether in the second person. Naturally this carried over into English.

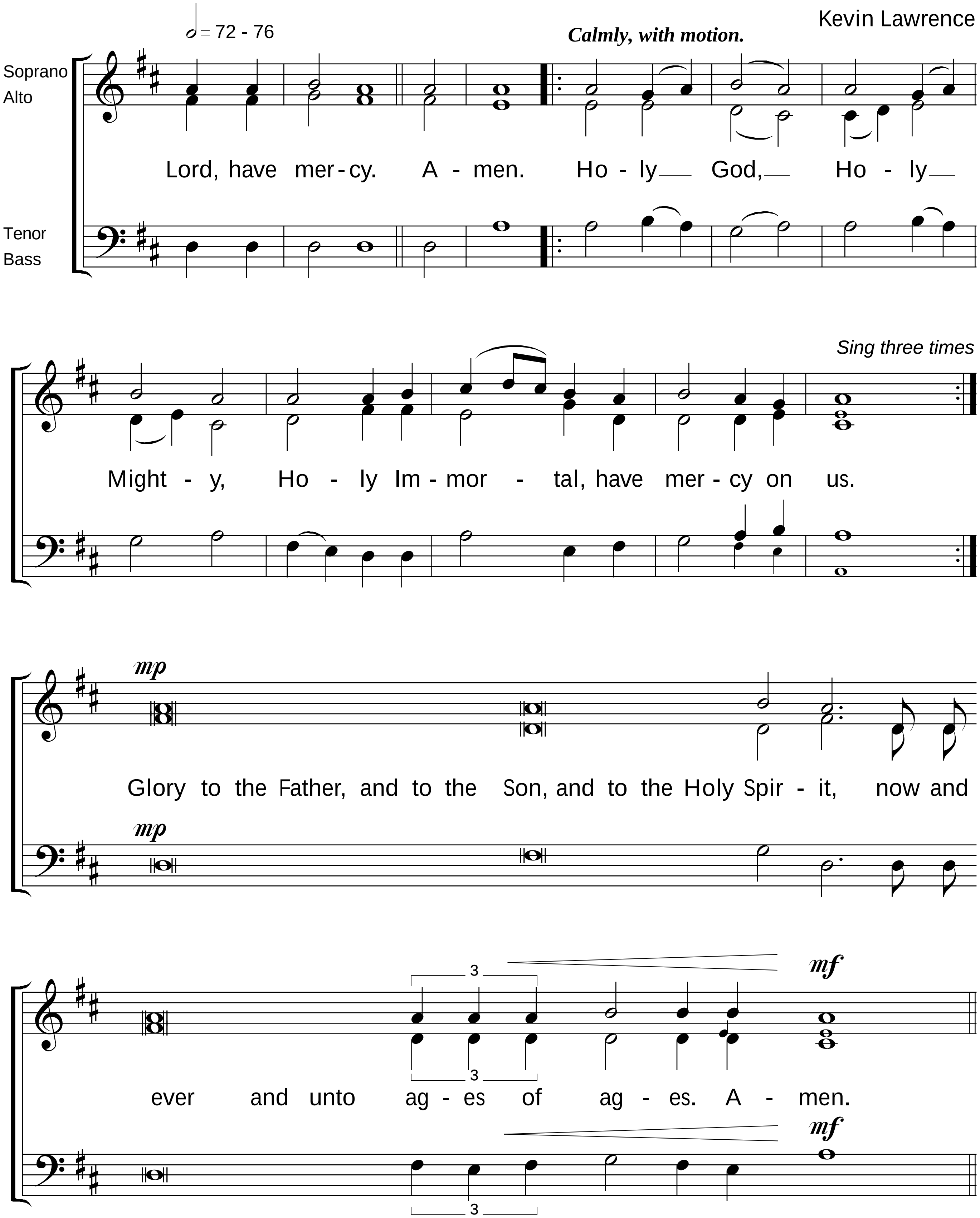
The confusion as to the exact meaning of the Trisagion, therefore, is due in large part to poor translation. The challenge then is to provide some other means whereby the original meaning of the text is emphasized. Fortunately for Orthodox worship and theology, nearly everything used as a liturgical text is sung. Unlike a text that is simply read, one set to music can be rendered in such a way as to emphasize individual words, group others, divide them, or relate one phrase to another by means of the setting itself. Ideally, it would have been the conscious task of every composer throughout the centuries to determine the emphases and inflections inherent in a given text so that the resulting composition might reflect that structure rather than subvert it.

From a functional standpoint, regardless of its aesthetic quality, there is no sacred music as such. Only

Trisagion, *continued on page 15*

The Trisagion

Kevin Lawrence


𝅗𝅥 = 72 - 76
Calmly, with motion.
Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Lord, have mer - cy. A - men. Ho - ly God, Ho - ly
Sing three times
Might - y, Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.
mp
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir - it, now and
mp
3
mf
ever and unto ag - es of ag - es. A - men.
3
mf
3

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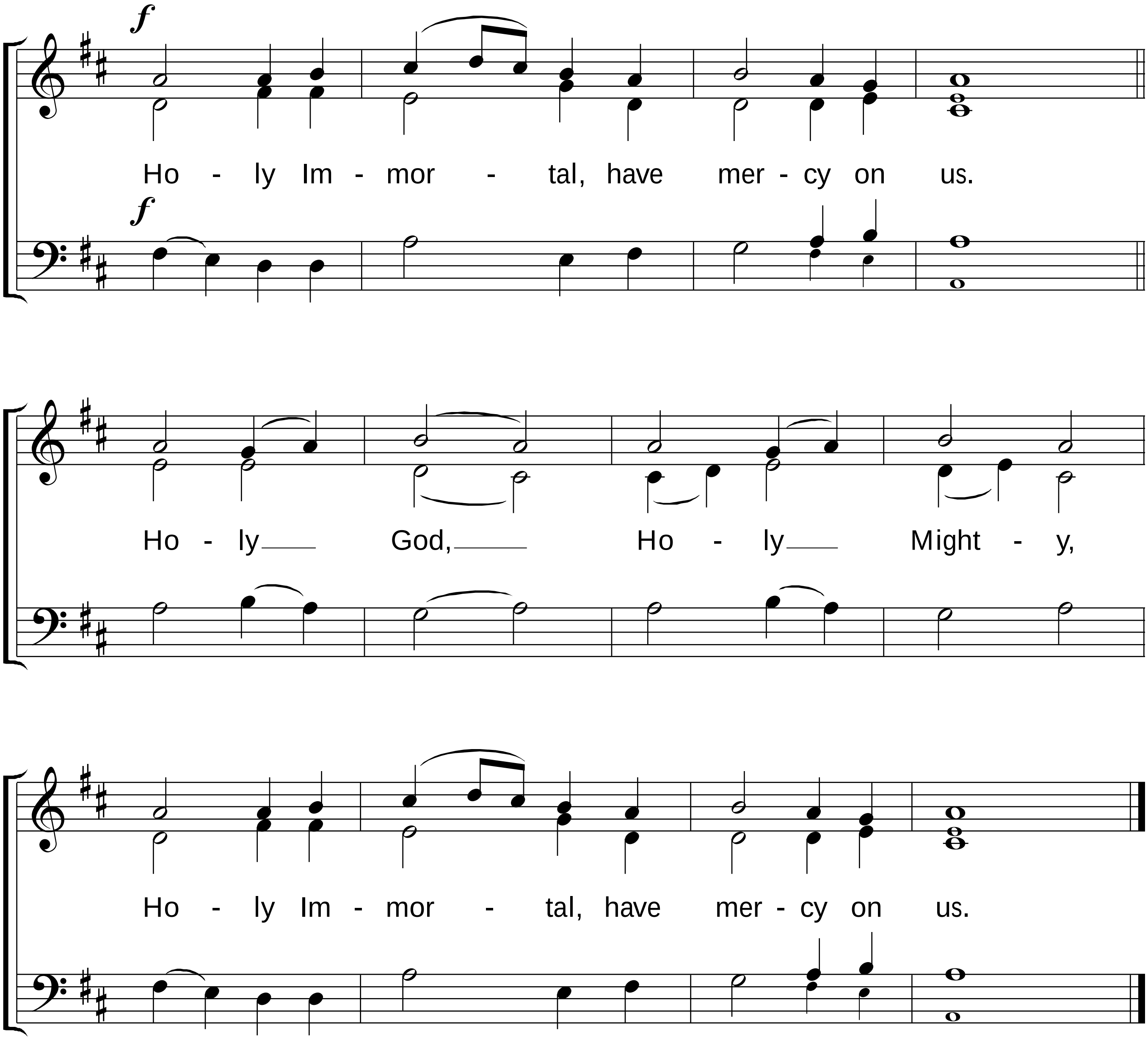

f
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.
f
Ho - ly God, Ho - ly Might - y,
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.

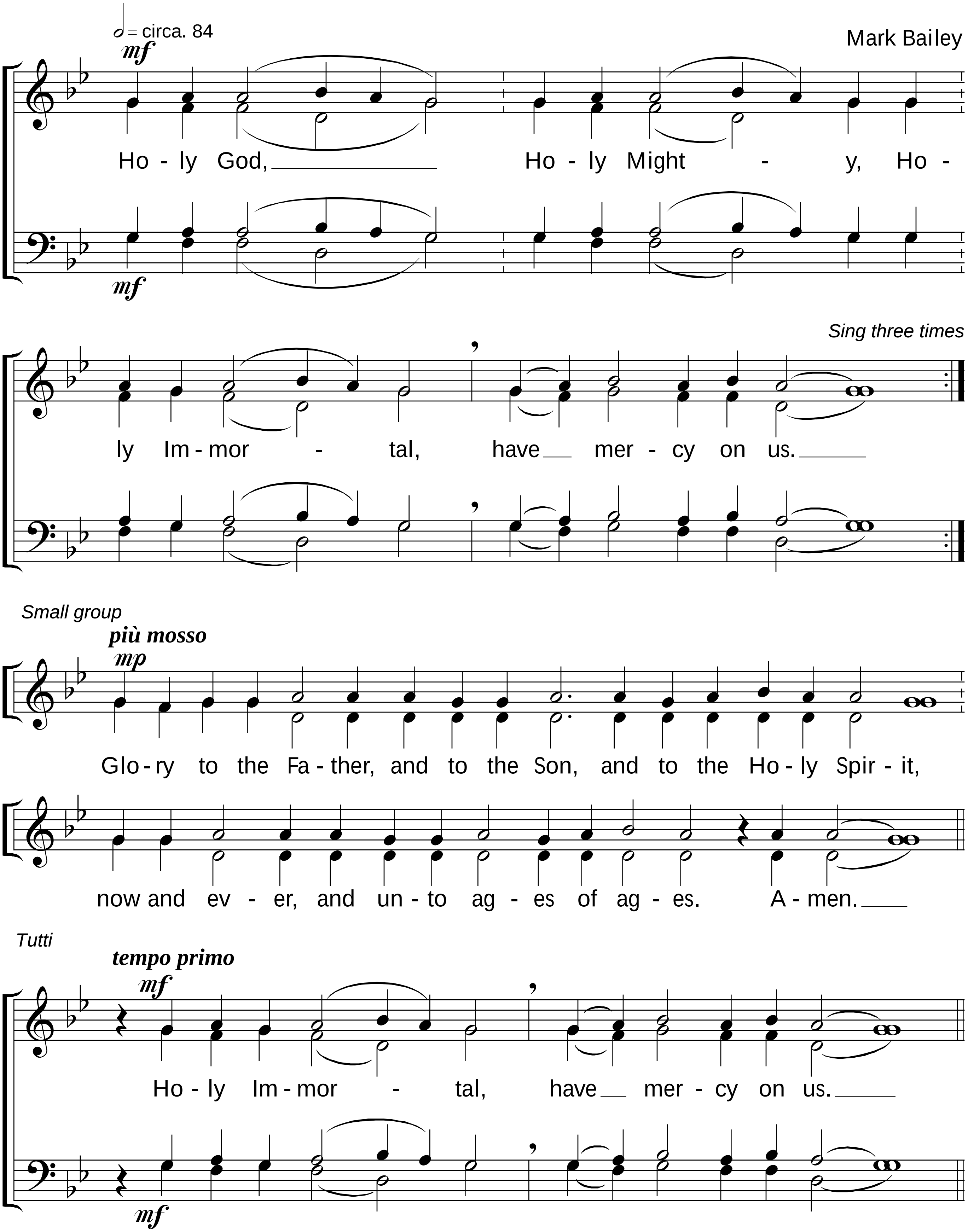
Performance notes:

1) The Trisagion should begin softly and grow successively louder with each repetition.
2) If desired, the initial "Holy God" may be sung by the sopranos alone, the second by the full choir without adding the optional bass and alto notes at the end. The dynamic variation is then achieved organically by the addition of parts and voices. The final repetition may be sung a little slower.

About the composer:
Kevin Lawrence is the choir director of Dormition Greek Orthodox Church in Greensboro, North Carolina, and has more than 14 years experience directing singing in churches of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. His English-language setting of the Divine Liturgy was selected for use at the 1996 Clergy-Laity Congress in New York by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians, and he was awarded the Patriarch Athenagoras Award in 1998. A graduate of the Juilliard School in New York, he is currently string chair and violin professor at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, as well as Artistic Director of the Killington Music Festival in Vermont.

The Trisagion

Mark Bailey


𝅗𝅥 = circa. 84
mf
Ho - ly God, Ho - ly Might - y, Ho -
mf
Sing three times
ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.
Small group
più mosso
mp
Glo - ry to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Spir - it,
now and ev - er, and un - to ag - es of ag - es. A - men.
Tutti
tempo primo
mf
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal, have mer - cy on us.
mf

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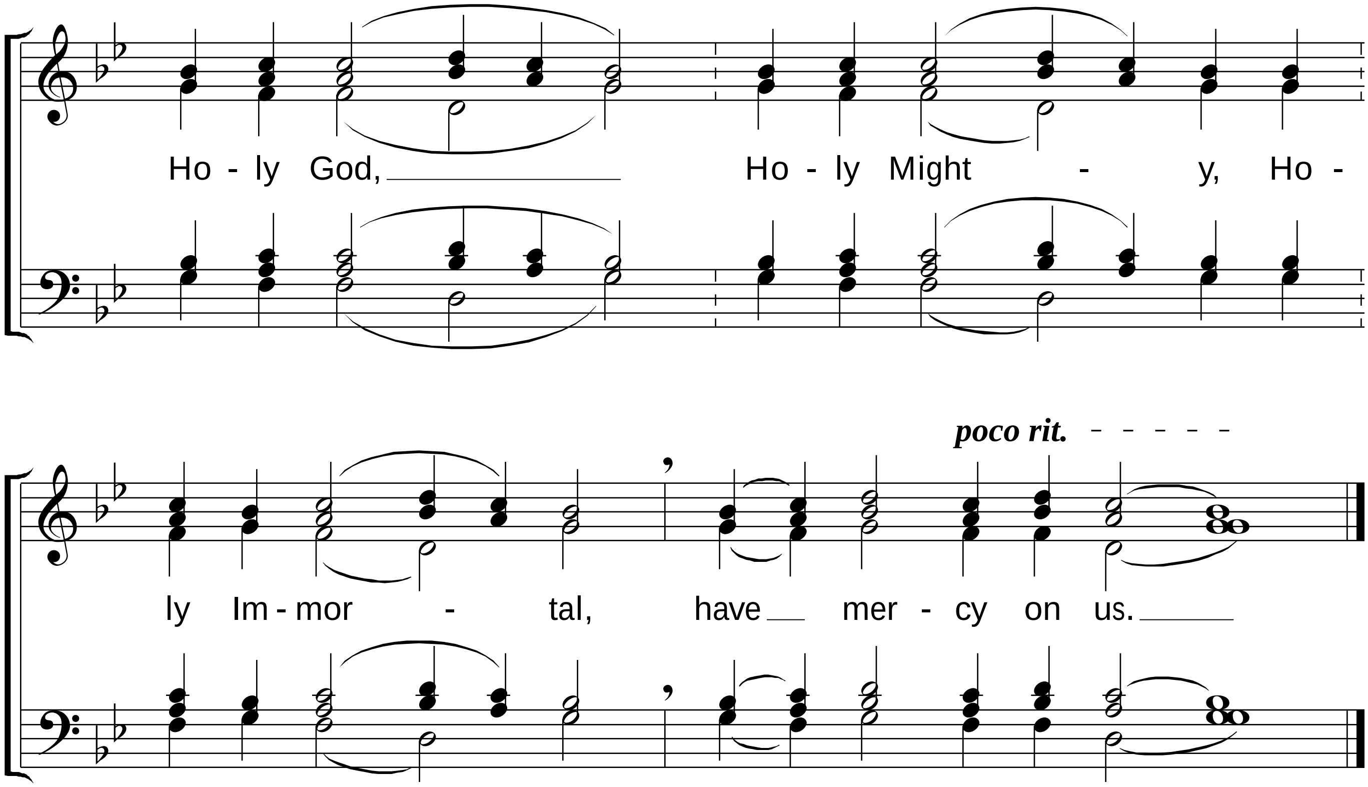

Composer's Notes:

1. A small group may sing through "Holy God..." the first time, after which the entire assembly should join in for the second and third repetitions. This is drawn from an ancient Byzantine practice. The small group may consist of treble clef voices only, bass clef voices only, or both, with as few as one per part.

2. The small group alone sings the "Glory...now and ever" after which the assembly responds with "Holy Immortal, have mercy..." It is best if the small group, on this verse only, is limited either to treble clef voices or bass clef voices (an octave below the printed score).

3. The final "Holy God...," with added thirds and sixths, represents the celebrant's arrival at the bishop's throne to attend the scripture readings. It may be sung at the same tempo and with a slight broadening of dynamics.

CONFERENCES

✢ News ✢

Music and Christian Folk Traditions
Music and Tradition as Learning Tools

October 15 - 18, 1998
Heritage and Learning Center, Ligonier, Pennsylvania

The Department of Christian Education of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, after years of encouragement from teachers, combined two popular and powerful themes for learning in an Orthodox Christian setting. The first theme—the use of music and song—is foundational to all Orthodox worship. Mareena Boosamra-Ball, an expert in teaching teachers to teach music, offered two workshops suitable for the most sophisticated musician as well as the musically "challenged." These workshops were designed to enable teachers or parents to integrate music into their regular lessons or home interaction with their children. Anyone who has taught elementary school knows the value of music for 1) teaching content, 2) creating a sense of fellowship, and 3) building a sense of well-being in the learner.

The second sequence of workshops was conducted by Jeanette Gallaway of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Jeanette, like many parents and teachers, has realized the importance of the numerous customs that are part of Orthodox traditions, with a small "t." These customs are being lost in America at a time when Americans need to discover the sense of wonder, excitement, and shared experiences of different aspects of the faith. Jeanette created two brilliant workshops in which the traditions and customs of various ethnic groups were demonstrated and practiced by the participants. All of these will be useful tools for teaching children in Church school and in the home. Both of these topics, music and tradition, had been requested by various people for years—both themes can be applied in the church school and in the home.

Editor's note: Although this workshop was offered before this issue went to the printer, we felt it was an interesting topic for a workshop and wanted our readers to be aware that such a workshop had taken place. If any of you attended this workshop, please send us a review for the nest issue. ✢

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✢ Reviews ✢

Words and Worship in the Christian Tradition

St. Vladimir's Summer Institute 1998

Reviewed by Alice Prewett and Carolyn Silva
St. Stephen Antiochian Orthodox Church,
Cupertino, California

Wonderful fellowship and unity were prevalent throughout the week long Summer Institute. The "J word" [jurisdiction] was notably absent from all our gatherings. Participation in daily Matins and Vespers with antiphonal choirs was a joyful experience, and the practical sessions, for those who were either choir directors or choir members, were both helpful and inspirational. A plethora of glorious subjects were offered us—we truly feasted for five days on rich spiritual food from Holy Spirit-inspired teachers.

Many faculty members participated, facilitated by Fr. Thomas Hopko, the Dean of the Seminary, including: Fr. Paul Tarazi, Prof. Paul Meyendorff, Prof. David Drillock and Mark Bailey. There were also two distinguished guests from England, His Grace Bishop KALLISTOS (Ware), author and teacher at Oxford University and Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash), who is working on a new translation of the Divine Liturgy. We learned the importance of having not only clarity in translations, but also of being "idiomatic," e.g., including phrases, not just one word, in order to retain the original meaning. Also discussed were the problems of whether or not Elizabethan English is relevant to the average person, as well as concerns that God might seem more "remote" if 17th-century English were used. During a panel discussion held towards the end of the conference, we were all invited to give our thoughts.

His Grace Bishop KALLISTOS spoke on the significance of words and silence in the life and worship of the Orthodox Church. "When a Bishop is silent you should respect him even more that when he speaks." (In light of this, he humorously told us that perhaps he would edify us more if he simply sat down!) He posed some intriguing questions: "Have we not lost the art of created silence? Is not our contemporary world in dire need of such?" He spoke on the two kinds of prayer. The first, iconic prayer, which is prayer with words, music, symbols—water, bread, wine, oil, candles, vestments and icons—and ritual movements such as, processions and censing. The second, non-iconic prayer, which requires a shedding of thoughts—not only sinful thoughts—but of *all* thoughts. "The true nature of silence," St. Ambrose of Milan said, "is not colorless and vacant, but full of matter, substance and purpose." How can one learn to be silent? St. Mark the Monk says, "The rational mind cannot rest idle." One way is to practice the invocation of the Jesus Prayer. This can be done in several ways and at various times: for example, in odd and idle moments—committee meetings or traffic jams, or in times of physical pain or when nervous and anxious, or inwardly, such as when doing counseling. St. Theophan the Recluse said, "The hands at work; the mind and heart with God."

The Vigil and hierarchical Liturgy for the Feast of the Birth of St. John the Forerunner were the high point of the week. His Beatitude Metropolitan THEODOSIUS presided and His Grace Bishop KALLISTOS concelebrated, joined by the priests and deacons in attendance at the conference from all over the country. The worship was further enhanced by the beautiful wood-paneled and frescoed chapel.

If you are interested in the impact of worship and language, whether or not you actively sing in the choir, call St. Vladimir's Seminary Bookstore and order the tapes from this conference for $5.95 each. This conference was apparently one of the largest they have had and well worth the time and money to attend. We encourage you to consider attending next year's conference. ✢

Asymmetry in Practice:
Unraveling the Rhythmic Profile of Russian Orthodox Chant

Reviewed by Professor Nadieszda Kizenko,
Department of History, SUNY (University at Albany)

The 11th Annual Russian Orthodox Church Musicians' (ROCM) Conference, which took place in Ottawa, Ontario (October 8-12, 1997), launched a new initiative to examine the rhythmic and metrical issues of text-based liturgical chant in the Russian tradition. In line with past practice at these conferences, a multifaceted approach addressed the topic from the historical, theoretical, and practical perspectives, giving listeners a good sense of the issues at hand and arming them with practical solutions. At the core was a concern with related experience in the English language missionary usage.

Alexei Lvov's pioneering treatise, "On Free or Asymmetrical Rhythm" (St. Petersburg:1858; reprinted in German as "Uber den freien Rhythmus des altrussischen Kirchengesanges":1859), provided the point of departure. With translated excerpts in hand, participants were offered a series of lectures and workshops demonstrating the author's thesis: asymmetrical rhythm is at the core of the chant aesthetic in the Russian practice; its vital role has *"the same right of citizenship as so-called regular, i.e. symmetrical [that is, contemporary Western European] rhythm."* Noted chant expert and author of leading research on Byzantine and early Slavic traditions, Nicolas Schidlovsky, gave a sweeping introduction with color slides and other examples. Lvov's assertion was a real discovery for its time. "However," Schidlovsky said, "despite its importance for our church practice, we are less inclined to be impressed by this bold thought today. We live in an era when Stravinsky's pounding free rhythms in *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), for example, are already firmly part of our cultural consciousness. . . this was not the case in Lvov's time. And it was up to such individuals to rediscover these truths, many of which retained vestiges only in secular folk practice or in the singing of the Old Believers." In the course of the three-day program, we learned that Lvov's thinking has special relevance to our contemporary practice—on all levels, in all languages, both with large and small choirs, and with different caliber singers.

The so-called simple, common (*obikhod*) asymmetrical chants are the basis of much church singing today, and they have may advantages in illustrating a proper aesthetic. The young and talented conductor, Peter Fekula (New York City), demonstrated the inherent rhythmic flexibility in such standard selections as the Resurrectional Troparia and the Great Doxology at Matins. Others, including Marina Dorogova (former director of the Russian Male Cappella, New York) expanded the discussion to show the chant's unique expressive potential in the most unexpected and forgotten places. Elizabeth Langeron (church musician and Ph.D. candidate in historical musicology at Princeton University) explained how subtle rhythmic variation in the course of routine eight-tone (*glas*) melody carries a world of meaning, capable of clarifying otherwise lost nuances of the liturgical hymnography. Examples from Carpatho-Russian and Serbian usage served to broaden the historical and aesthetic understanding of indigenous usage in traditional Slavic cultures. In North America, the "new" liturgical language is most often English. In a dedicated workshop by well-known translator and reader, Isaac Lambertsen, and Maria Naumenko, careful attention was given to the fact that Orthodox musical tradition on this continent is in transition. There are many very challenging hurdles to clear. Satisfactory translations are still lacking for many parts of service, especially the enormously important corpus for the liturgical Proper at Vespers and Matins, usually combined in the festal "All-Night Vigil." Nevertheless, the consensus is that a translation—even with some shortcomings—is most certainly better than none. Like a fine thread running throughout the entire program, time and again, the relationship of melody to verbal text—no matter what language one uses—seemed to emerge in direct response to the overriding conference thematic. Invaluable contributions were made from numerous practical and theoretical vantage points (V. Morosan, A. Ledkovsky, A. Roudenko, V. Krassovsky, A. Papkov, and others), raising contentious opinions usually resolved in a congenial agreement—that much work remains to be accomplished in directing the practice onto the rails of new life. In view of this, a meeting of the Liturgical Music Advisory Board and the ROCM Fund has stipulated that the next conference in October of 1998 must convey a general message: *the cumulative experience of* *dedicated individuals (composers, translators, singers, arrangers, etc.) in different quarters and in various jurisdictions must be made increasingly articulate. There are fundamental principles that must support infusion of traditional chant melody—such as that of the Russian Orthodox Church—into the new linguistic context that is ours in America today.*

The richly endowed concept behind the 1997 ROCM conference naturally spurred a number of satellite initiatives. Professor Denis Brearley (University of Ottawa) organized an attractive exhibit of manuscripts and publications related to the history of Russian Orthodox church music. A detailed catalogue discussed the individual items, some going back to the 18th century. Handsomely illuminated *neumatic* sources of the Old Believer tradition served to offset the more austere appearance of the printed material. Professor Marina Ledkovsky (Barnard College) delivered a masterful survey of the accomplishments of renowned musicologist, Maxim Brazhnikov (1904-1974), showing him to be a dedicated "pillar of the tradition," even under the most unfavorable, and often hostile, conditions. Although absent from the meeting, Dr. Olga Ackerly (University of Kansas) submitted the typescript of a passionately argued historical essay on the educational needs of today's singers and church conductors interpreting "Russian" practice within the American milieu. Among other spontaneous and lively occurrences, an enthusiastic audience gathered one evening to view a video of "Byzantium and Russia: Windows on the Legacy of Music," a public lecture by Dr. Schidlovsky at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (in conjunction with the Spring 1997 exhibition, *The Glory of Byzantium*).

The question of rhythmic asymmetry and its application in contemporary church music promises to remain with us well into the future. Upon learning about the excitement generated at the 1997 conference, Orthodox church musicians everywhere will undoubtedly take a similar interest, and much like one of Dostoevsky's "accursed eternal questions" the topic will eventually resurface in different contexts, among different groups, and at meetings sponsored by other organizations. As a long-standing admirer of the ROCM initiative, I can only hope that these "Columbus Day weekend" conferences in October each year will continue for the benefit of what appears to be a rapidly growing and increasingly attentive and inspired audience—this year with close to 130 registrants. There is a spirit of openness, vitality, intellectual curiosity, and genuine cultural discovery in our midst. One might not otherwise expect this from such "traditionalist" gatherings. Just the musical experience itself is something to remember! The conference is a real thrill for anyone who admires the traditional sound of the Russian choir—and likes to take part in its performance. In keeping with a decade-long practice, the 11th Annual ROCM Conference concluded with an antiphonally sung All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy presided over by Archbishop Laurus of Syracuse and Holy Trinity Monastery (Jordanville).

The inspired and prayerful mood of the participants could not have come about without the leadership of a superlative organizational committee, headed locally by G. Skok and G. Svetlovsky, along with a host of volunteers. Attentiveness to all details, no matter how seemingly small, made it possible for all participants to truly "set aside all earthly cares" and to rekindle within their own spiritual lives "the one thing needful" for every Orthodox church musician. Finally, I would note that the acoustics in the splendid, new Russian Orthodox Church of St. Xenia of St. Petersburg, Ottawa, Ontario, are among the best I know for such musical purposes. ✢

> ***"So he who sings well puts his soul in tune, correcting by degrees its faulty rhythm, so that at last, being truly natural and integrated, it has fear of nothing, but in peaceful freedom from all vain imaginings may apply itself with greater longing to the good things to come. For a soul rightly ordered by chanting the sacred word forgets its own afflictions and contemplates with joy the things of Christ alone."***
>
> St. Athanasius, *The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of Psalms.*

Liturgical Singing Seminar 1998

Liturgical Composition Workshop

Reviewed by Kevin Lawrence,
Dormition Greek Orthodox Church,
Greensboro, North Carolina

The 1998 Liturgical Singing Seminar in Ben Lomond, California, featured Mark Bailey of St. Vladimir's Seminary, and a wonderful group of composers and church musicians from around the United States. Friday and Saturday, February 6 and 7, were filled with fascinating and inspiring presentations, the renewal of old friendships and the initiation of new ones. Perhaps most significantly, the presentations were framed by the rich liturgical life of Ss. Peter and Paul Church of Ben Lomond. Participants were given a chance to experience what was being discussed as actually lived out in the parish, and to hear some of the participants' compositions in a liturgical context at the parish's services.

In his lectures, Mark Bailey stressed that liturgical prayer itself is the authority for how the services should be executed, a principle expounded in Aidan Kavanagh's fine book, *On Liturgical Theology.* The most appropriate style for musical settings becomes clear when one grasps the function of various elements of the services' structure and understands their historical development. Mark's talks placed an emphasis on the hymns whose original responsorial structure is often obscured by current practice—the Antiphons, the Koinonikon, the Megalynarion and the Cherubic Hymn.

Jessica Suchy-Pilalis discussed the principles of Byzantine composition—the priority of text, the need to become intimately familiar with the melodic formulas belonging to a given tone, and the importance of seeing the work of a church composer as a spiritual discipline requiring fasting and prayer.

Kevin Lawrence discussed the recent history of neo-Byzantine chant in the United States, Romania and the Arabic-speaking churches, and the implications of this history for contemporary American musicians working with neo-Byzantine chant.

Walter Obleschuk analyzed numerous examples of traditional Slavic chant settings and offered a look at his extensive collection of *podoben* (pattern) melodies set to English texts.

Anne Schoepp and Alice Hughes demonstrated some of their solutions to ineffective English language settings of music originally composed for other languages. Looking at original versions of the music under consideration helped suggest more successful possibilities. In a few cases, this look at original sources revealed that these original versions were notated in a somewhat misleading way. The necessity for musical structure to correspond with structure of the text was also noted.

Vladimir Morosan joined Alice Hughes in an exhaustive discussion of copyright issues and principles of preparing a score for publication. An interesting discussion ensued about the suitability of compensating church composers for their work.

There was a session for singing through new compositions, with provision made for all participants to offer comments. None of these compositions were based on pre-existing traditional melodies. There was a freshness and vitality to the music which demonstrated the high musical level of the composers at the Seminar.

Saturday afternoon the group was divided up for smaller elective sessions—compositional analysis with Mark Bailey, a class on producing musical scores using the computer by Vladimir Morosan, and a demonstration led by Jessica Suchy-Pilalis of her approach to composition in the neo-Byzantine style.

A wrap-up discussion gave a chance for nine panelists to inform all participants about the progress of their work and the personal motivations for engaging in it. The reviving of a music publishing venture in tandem with the *PSALM Notes* newsletter are foremost in the cooperative efforts of Vladimir Morosan, Alice Hughes and Anne Schoepp. Mark Bailey told of his latest commissions, Michael Farrow presented is recently completed volume of psalm verses for the Divine Liturgy, Kevin Lawrence talked about his English editions of the neo-Byzantine repertoire, Jessica Suchy-Pilalis told of her love for traditional Greek chant which impels her to continue her scholarly work on neo-Byzantine musical theory, Walter Obleschuk described his publications of the *podoben* melodies, and Nicolas Schidlovsky invited all to the 1998 Church Music Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

If I may add a personal note of reflection: perhaps the most beneficial aspect of this seminar was the chance to see the how successfully the community prayer of Ss. Peter and Paul brought together Seminar participants of very different backgrounds, with varied experiences of and expectations for Orthodox worship. For me, this was a confirmation of the value of authentic liturgical renewal, which leads people to prayer by doing what is true to the services themselves.

One of the issues only mentioned but not really covered at the conference was the inherent tension between the authority of the liturgy—the concept stressed by Mark in his lectures—and the authority of the Church leadership to monitor the execution of the services. Finding what is objectively better liturgical practice will not necessarily eliminate the need for reaching consensus in the larger Church about how much received liturgical practices may be modified. While the degree of leadership demonstrated by Ss. Peter and Paul will not be exercised without the risk of some suffering, given the current state of the Orthodox Church in the United States, there seems to be no other way than this kind of local initiative to provide the Church with an example of the spiritual fruits of liturgical renewal.

I wish to express my gratitude to Anne Schoepp, Alice Hughes and the parish of Ss. Peter and Paul, for their vision of bringing together such a wide spectrum of church musicians, for their warm hospitality, and for allowing us to experience their parish's life of prayer. ✣

> ***"Psalmody has been given us that we may rise from the sensory, to the intelligible and true."*** St. Gregory of Sinai

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Trisagion, *continued from page 10*

insofar as words of divine worship are being musically interpreted can the music itself be considered sacred. When the tremendous legacy of Russian church singing came to America, there was such a desire to preserve its beautiful settings that these came to be valued and held as sacred in themselves. The problem with this viewpoint is illustrated in the conversion of the Trisagion from Slavonic to English, where the Slavonic text was simply removed from its setting and replaced with English, with no change whatsoever to the music. “Holy,” in Slavonic, is a two-syllable word accentuated on the second syllable: *svia-tïy*. The settings currently in use (Slavonic music with English words) tend to emphasize that second syllable at the expense of the natural English inflection on the first. This is just one example of a difficulty that pervades current liturgical text settings in the English language.

It is a fact that up until they came to be used in America, liturgical texts that were adopted by a new culture were set to melodies consistent with the traditions of that culture. Russia, Romania, Greece, as well as parts of Africa and Asia express a common Orthodox worship, yet each has a distinctively native flavor. This is not to say that we ought to attempt settings to bluegrass, barbershop, jazz, or any other typically American form of music, but that we must seek musical expressions that enable us more freely to pray and worship in our native language. Throughout the Church’s history, new elements have appeared that have run their course, some fading from usage and others (such as the Trisagion) attaining such universal recognition that they have come to form a bond of prayer among the faithful. This is a process we must allow to take place if we intend, in our time and according to our abilities, to further the development of American Orthodoxy and continue to experience a living liturgy. ✢

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1. *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson, ed. (Macmillan, 1970), 286.
2. *Processions*, Colin Dunlop (Oxford University Press, 1932), 13.
3. *The Shape of the Liturgy,* Dom Gregory Dix (Dacre Press, 1945), 448.
4. Ibid., 449.
5. *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite,* Hugh Wybrew (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 77.
6. A small service of psalm antiphons and scripture readings celebrated at churches and holy sites as part of the Constantinopolitan liturgical procession. See Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History,* “American Essays in Liturgy” series (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 30-34.
7. As quoted in *The Byzantine Liturgy,* Hans-Joachim Schulz (Pueblo), 23.
8. From the lectures of Dr. Paul Meyendorff.
9. Wybrew, *Orthodox Liturgy,* 78.
10. The bishop now recites verses 14 and 15 of the psalm while the choir sings the Trisagion.
11. From the lectures of Dr. Paul Meyendorff, circa 1993.
12. *The Great Entrance,* Robert Taft (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 200), 86.
13. Ibid.
14. Wybrew, *Orthodox Liturgy,* 77.
15. *The Byzantine Liturgy,* 23.
16. Wybrew, *Orthodox Liturgy,* 79.
17. Ibid. See also *The Byzantine Liturgy,* 191.
18. *The Great Entrance,* 53.
19. *Cherubikon* meaning the actual song of the angelic hosts or “Holy, Holy, Holy” and not be confused with the troparion “Let us who mystically...” sung at the Divine Liturgy's Great Entrance.
20. As quoted in *La Celebration de la Parole,* Juan Mateos (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 191), 100. The translation herein is my own. Hugh Wybrew has also reached the same conclusion in his analysis of Monk Job's description. See Wybrew, *Orthodox Liturgy,* 77.
21. Ibid.
22. This and the complete textual interpretation, from Mateos, 98.

Community, *continued from page 6*

must always strive towards creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, unity, humility, repentance, forgiveness and joy. If this becomes the foundation of our ministry the choir will grow, the singing will improve, the worship will become more meaningful, and we will all be a reflection of the love of Christ. ✢

My thanks to Anne Schoepp and Mark Bailey for their encouragement to write this article. Without Anne, my partner in ministry, I would not have learned many of the tough lessons of working together to build a choral community. She always keeps me on my toes and clarifies my thinking. Mark helped me to turn my draft into a more cohesive and readable article, showing me the areas that needed expansion and clarification. A.H.

1. *Grace for Grace: the Psalter and the Holy Fathers,* Johanna Manley (Monastery Books, Menlo Park, California), 2.
   (*Exegetic Homilies of St. Basil the Great,* Homily 10 (1,2). B# Vol. 46,151-154.)
2. See *PSALM Notes*, vol 1, #1, “The Ministry of Church Singers, part I,” Bishop BASIL(Essey).
3. For more information on congregational singing, see Mark Bailey’s article entitled “The Ministry and Song of the Liturgical Assembly,” *Jacob’s Well,* Spring/Summer 1998, 26-30.
4. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language,* (Random House, Inc., New York), 1979.
5. This idea of “community songs” I first heard expressed by Vladimir Morosan in a lecture at the St. Vladimir’s Summer Institute of Liturgical and Pastoral Practice in 1993.

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August 19 - 22, 1999
1999 Sacred Music Institute, Heritage and Learning Center, Ligonier, Pennsylvania. For more information call: (412) 238-3677.

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Please see below for details about how to submit items to be included.

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