

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:

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All text in this series is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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"The Orthodox Church.....has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from "Encountering the Mystery."

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain. Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

Ecumenical Patriarchate. Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Music of the Liturgies.



Ἦχος Ἀ̇ Ἀ̇ Νη̇

Κ̇
 υ υ υ ρι ι ι ι ε ε κε κρα α ξα
 πρ̇ ο ος σε ε ει σα του ου σο ο ον μου ου ει
 σα του σον μου Κυ υ υ υ ρι ι ι ι ε Κυ ρι ι
 ε ε κε κρα α ξα πρ̇ ο ος σε ε ει σα α α
 του ου σο ο ον μου πρ̇ ος χε ς τη φω νη η η τη ης δε
 η σε ε ε ω ω ω ως μου εν τω κε κρα γε
 ε ναι με πρ̇ ο ος σε ε ει σα του σο ο ο ον μου
 Κυ υ υ υ ρι ι ι ι ε

This illustration from a Greek illuminated manuscript shows the Byzantine notation as still used. However these chants are translated and written in the familiar western stave method where needed.

Noticable in Orthodox worship is the absence of any musical instruments, the human voice accepted as the principle instrument for the worship of God.

Broadly speaking, music, that is singing in Orthodox worship, can be identified as Byzantine (Greek) or Russian (Slavonic). The Russian style developed sometime after conversion to Christianity in the 10th century, the earliest chants known as *Znamenny*, a monophonic style after the manner of Byzantine chants. In later centuries, under the influence of western traditions, Russian chants became harmonized and just as in the west composers have written large choral settings for the Roman Mass, so particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries prominent Russian composers wrote for the Divine Liturgy and the All-night Vigil. The Greek tradition largely follows the ancient Byzantine style with more contemporary settings based upon and closely following the Byzantine tunes in the monophonic style with an **ison**, a continuous sustained note behind that of the main melody

Byzantine chant in written manuscript is not the same as western staff notation although is translated so as to make it possible for those unfamiliar with Byzantine style to be able to sing the service parts according to the traditional **eight tones** or modes. The **Typikon** provides the order for all services and is published at the start of each year by the centres of each patriarchate. The hymns and other parts have their tone indicated in the Typikon and whether parts are short or long, will use the set tone melody.

Large choirs are not always present and it is more common to find one leading **psaltis** (cantor) with one or more others joining under that lead. The traditional use of antiphonal singing, one group on each side of the church, is also uncommon. Monasteries, Cathedrals and large churches with experienced singers are more likely to have services taking place in the full manner.

There is a vast number of CD recordings of Orthodox music, simple and complex, from far and wide, and for those who use it the internet will provide many locations. Among Byzantine examples see Nikodimos Kabarnos (on youtube).

The services of Orthodoxy are ordered and within that order there are places assigned to specific people. Priests and deacons have a prominent role in leading worship and their parts are clearly defined. Sub-deacons and Readers (those admitted to the Office of Reader) also have sections allocated to them.



All who take a leading or particular part in Orthodox services receive a blessing to undertake their important work and contribution to the liturgies of the Church.

Members of the congregation may join in parts where indicated in the service books and this should be undertaken in an harmonious way and following those who are leading the singing. However, whilst some of the hymns and other parts may be simple some may be elongated or more complicated, so it is best to become familiar with the latter before attempting to join in, taking the lead from the principle psaltis (cantor). Simple chant well done is better than poor attempts at more complex ones.

Whilst there are set and familiar components in all services especially for Sundays, there are variables according to the day, including commemoration of saints or during special seasons (i.e., Lent) and a competent singer will make him/herself familiar with them from the appropriate liturgical books with rubrics, to which they will need to refer – see **TIMES AND SEASONS** in this leaflet series. The presiding priest and assisting deacon rely upon the cantor(s) to ensure a seamless progression through the services.

In many churches the psaltis will have learned from an early age by being at the **readers stand**, learning by listening and becoming familiar with the chants.

Concerning the Divine Liturgy, except for those times when the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is used the most frequents is:

**THE DIVINE LITURGY
OF OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS
JOHN CHRYSOTOM**

and among the various translations is that of the Holy Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, issued with the blessing of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew 1, This contains some parts not needed by members of the congregation but there are others that are useful, for instance the prayers in preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion, the Artoklasia, and Memorial Services for the Departed. Music for the Divine Liturgy was provided in a compendium – *Let Our Hearts Be On High* – with an introduction explaining in some detail the “technical” aspects of Orthodox singing. Unfortunately this work is no longer in print and difficult to obtain.

Words of guidance in the Compendium include: **“The chant is part of worship. If it can be well and beautifully sung, so much the better, but the singers are offering their voices to God, not performing for the benefit of an audience.”** Also: **“In both chanting and reading liturgical text care must be taken to avoid imposing one’s personal sense of the meaning and feeling on the words. Reading should be at a reasonable pace, clearly enunciated and devoid of affectation. All text sung or read should be easily intelligible to the hearer: mumbling, gabbling and the lugubrious drawl are all thoroughly un-orthodox.”**

**ΣΧΟΛΗ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ**
ΙΕΡΑΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗΣ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ
THE SCHOOL OF BYZANTINE MUSIC
1986 ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Gt. Britain this School has existed for 50 years over which time many have qualified as singers/choir members. Although classes take place in just a few other places, most are in London. For anyone interested - go to the School website: www.byzantinemusic.co.uk