Sacred Music Institute 2017

Directing a Choir

Paul Jabara

Zhanna Lehmann

Five parts of a conducting gesture:
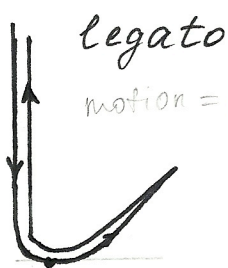
Preparatory

Motion

Ictus

Upbeat or rebound
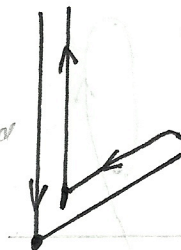
Cutoff or final release *see back*

Basic Patterns

The two pattern may be in 2/4, 2/2, as well as 6/16, 6/8, 6/4 if they are notated by two beats.

legato
motion = rebound

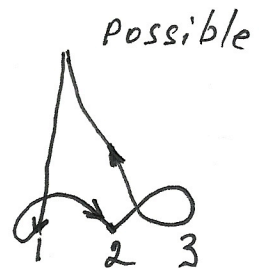*non-legato*
motion is faster
than o rebound

marcato – stops
(*staccato*) no
stops

The three pattern may be used in 2/3, 43/4, 3/8, as well as 9/4, 9/8 if they are notated by three beats.
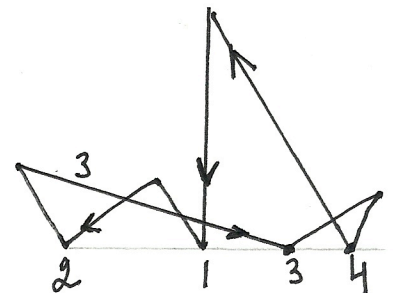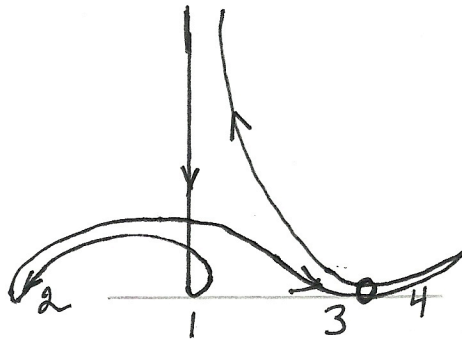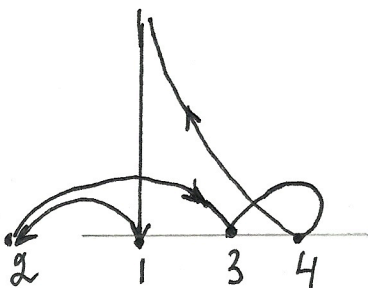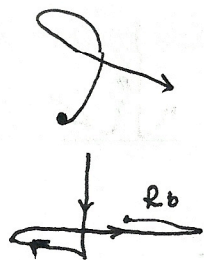
Legato

Possible

1 2 3

The four pattern may be used in 4/2, 4/4, 4/8, 12/8

2 1 3 4

2 1 3 4

3 2 1 3 4

Cutoff or release (internal or final)

$\frac{4}{4}$ 𝅗𝅥 𝅗𝅥 | 𝅗𝅥 ▬ ‖

Rb

Final

𝅗𝅥 or 𝅝
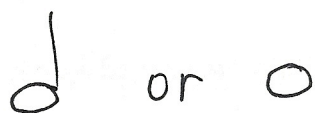
Theory Pedagogy Session: "Technology in the Classroom"

Monday, October 17, 2016, 3:00-4:30pm, Peabody Computing Center

Department of Music Theory
Peabody Conservatory of Music
Dr. Jenine Brown
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I recommend the bolded applications below

Part I: **Well-known ear-training software that can assist the entire undergraduate ear-training curriculum. In all of the programs below, instructors can both create their own additional exercises and also monitor student progress. (I don't use any of these programs for various reasons.)**

1. MacGamut (for dictation exercises). http://www.macgamut.com/
   a. Pros:
      i. This program contains both harmonic and melodic dictations that can support topics learned throughout the entire undergrad ear-training curriculum (from basic interval ID and melodic/harmonic dictations up through modulating examples, chromatic chords, etc.).
      ii. You can choose to hear the tonic chord prior to the dictations.
      iii. It seems that most melodic and rhythmic dictations are four measures, mimicking real music.
      iv. The program often forces students to notate the melody in a finite number of hearings (rather than allowing students to hear the melody an unlimited number of times).
      v. Extremely customizable by the instructor (although the interface for making the customization is pretty cumbersome)
      vi. Instructors can monitor student progress when students send you scores from the dictations they've completed.
      vii. The customer support is great.
      viii. You can pair ear-training activities with what students are learning in the music theory curriculum. For example, this website lists the MacGamut exercises that correspond with the topics in the Kostka/Payne theory textbook:
      https://www.macgamut.com/uploads/content/pdfs/MacGAMUT_Tonal_Harmony_Coordination.pdf
   b. Cons:
      i. Designed in the 1990s and feels old and clunky
      ii. Not cloud-based. To use the program, it must be downloaded and installed on the students' personal computers, and installation is not easy because you must also install the libraries of dictation exercises made by the instructor. And, if the instructor makes any changes to any dictations or creates new dictations, students must download this new file and upload it properly so that MacGamut can read it.
      iii. To check on student progress, students must email their data file to show what they've done (this means downloading, importing, and reading X number of data files each week to grade). My colleagues at other institutions have told me that these files can become corrupted.
      iv. Uses MIDI sounds (students claim that hearing the soprano/bass is hard to do in a 4-voice texture), and there is no indication that the dictations are from the literature.
      v. It does not seem that the instructor can upload real musical recordings for dictation activities.
      vi. On some of the harmonic dictation exercises, there are voice-leading errors and this might frustrate students.
   c. Cost: $40 per student to own

2. Practica Musica (for dictation exercises). http://www.ars-nova.com/
   a. Pros:
      i. Like MacGamut, there are a variety of exercises, including cadence ID, melodic dictations, harmonic dictations where one notates the RNs and soprano/bass voices, hearing secondary dominant chords, 4-part dictation, error dictation exercises, and even excerpts from the literature in which the student is asked questions about what they hear (what chord is outlined in the opening notes of the vibraphone, for example).

ii. Like MacGamut, instructors can also create their own exercises, although the developer I spoke with said that this is a lot of work and it's not recommended.
iii. Because most dictation exercises are randomly generated, there are an unlimited number of exercises for which students can attempt to notate.
iv. While most dictations are computer generated (randomly), there are some dictations from their "library" of works composed by actual composers (these are also MIDI sounds).
v. Most of the dictations are suitable to help freshmen, 1st semester. However, some melodic dictations and harmonic dictations can help sophomore-level as well, because they contain secondary dominants and other altered chords.
vi. Although it's not cloud-based, the software regularly uploads student progress to a server for the instructor to see.
vii. The instructor can specify which set of exercises to do, and then log in to monitor the students' scores for that particular group of exercises.

b. Cons:
i. This program does not cover sophomore-level skills as well as MacGamut. For example, there are no modulating exercises, although the instructor can create these.
ii. It's a lot of work to create your own dictation exercises.
iii. The computer-generated dictations are decidedly unmusical (for example, one harmonic dictation randomly ended on a V/V chord).
iv. Not cloud-based; students must download the program on their own computer.
v. In the student version, users cannot customize dictation activities (but instructors can).
vi. When presenting a dictation, the program does not tell you in advance how many measures the dictation will be.
vii. Students can listen to the dictation an unlimited number of times to complete the activity, which does not simulate in-class dictation exercises.
viii. While teachers can "customize" exercises by determining the length that the dictation should be and the nature of the melody, I'd like more choices as an instructor. For example, when the instructor is creating a set of random melodic dictations to present to the students, the choices for the types of motion heard are only "normal" (which presumably means stepwise), "disjunct," "highly disjunct," or "extremely disjunct." I'd like to see something along the lines of tonic leaps of a third only, tonic leaps only, tonic and dominant leaps only, etc.
ix. While a primary component of ear-training is teaching students how to notate melodies and chord progressions, part of this is also helping students understand what to *expect* to hear. So, the fact that Practica Musica has computer generated melodies and rhythms that could be an odd 3 measures just doesn't seem useful to me. I'm not in the business of asking students to be able to notate random melodies. We need to be careful about the kinds of music we ask students to notate. Exercises should be musical.
x. Uses MIDI sounds, and it is hard to hear the soprano/bass lines in the harmonic dictations.
xi. The chord progression exercises are randomly generated and are amusical, and while the harmonic dictation progressions are composed by Bach (in MIDI sounds), which this also means that there are only a limited number from which the students could practice.
xii. To my knowledge, you cannot upload real musical recordings to create any activities (dictation, active listening, or otherwise).
xiii. Unlike MacGamut, the program does not play any metronome ticks indicating the tempo before the melody begins.
xiv. The program is old and clunky. Needs updating.

c. Cost: $45 per student to own (or $300 per year for the institution to have 30 student users)

3. **Auralia (for dictation exercises). https://www.risingsoftware.com/auralia/**
a. **Pros:**
i. **This program is more modern that the apps above, and I <u>highly recommend</u> it over the programs above.**
ii. **Cloud-based (any exercises created by the instructor are automatically accessible by the students)**
iii. **Because it's cloud-based, students can install the program on any one of their computers (or iPad). When they open the program, they are asked to log in and continue their work, no matter which computer they use.**
iv. **Instructors can log in at any time to check on student progress and use their grade in the program as their dictation practice grade outside of class.**
v. **Instructors can write their own melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic dictations for students to complete. One plus is that you can import MusicXML files from your preferred notation program, or write the dictations in the notation program they have within Auralia.**
vi. **Instructors can create their own syllabus and weekly lessons, assignments, and quizzes.**

vii. **In addition to providing dictation exercises, the program contains excellent tools that test sight-singing. (Yet, there is no rhythm to the sight-singing exercises and the pitch recognition tool is a bit buggy.) It records you singing and plays it back after it shows which notes you sang (in)correctly.**

viii. **When doing a melodic dictation, the program plays you the starting note and taps one measure before each playing. It also tells you how many measures the melody will be. Initial exercises tell you the starting note, and more advanced exercises do not provide the starting note.**

ix. **Melodic dictation lengths are typical to what occurs in real music: 2m. in the beginning levels, 4m. in intermediate levels, and 8m. for advanced levels.**

x. **In diatonic chord progression exercises, I like how sevenths are only added to the ii and V chords (not the I, iii, etc., as it is uncommon to do so).**

xi. **You can decide which solfege system you want to have displayed on the screen for the sight-singing exercises.**

xii. **The developers have also created a whole host of basic freshmen-level $2 apps that target particular skills such as interval ID, chord ID, and tapping rhythms: https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/rising-software/id694552516**

xiii. **There are numerous instructor how-to videos here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbcWxmgjKPgSlusDXbIungw**

b. **Cons:**

i. **The chord progression exercises testing mode mixture are lacking, as they don't include the common mixture chord bIII.**

ii. **There are no modulating exercises other than to closely-related keys.**

iii. **The exercises with modulation to diatonic keys are lacking: they only ask students the goal key, and students are not asked to notate a modulating chord progression.**

iv. **The chord progressions can play a variety of chromatic chords (bII, Aug6th chords, modal mixture) but do NOT include any secondary dominants.**

v. **Dictations are all computer-generated sounds (a slight upgrade from MIDI sounds), however you can create your own exercises with real music recordings (and Auralia has lots of real music in their "library" that you can utilize).**

vi. **If a student even gets one note wrong on a melodic dictation, they receive a huge red X at the end, which is psychologically frustrating.**

c. **Cost: $29 per student, per year (and free for the instructor), and $99 for the app**

4. Smart Music (for sight-singing exercises). http://www.smartmusic.com/

   a. Pros:

   i. This is the only up-to-date app/software that can address the student's ability to sight-read music.

   ii. The program records the scores for each student assignment, and the instructor can simply log into the program and transfer these sight-reading scores into their own gradebook.

   iii. The program records an mp3 of each person's performance, and instructors can ask students to also submit this recording.

   iv. After sight-singing a melody, students receive immediate feedback on what percentage of notes was sung correctly and the pitch/rhythm that was sung incorrectly.

   v. You can also allow students to attempt the sight-singing exercise an unlimited number of times, thus encouraging intonation and rhythmic perfection.

   vi. Instructors can mandate a variety of options when creating the assignment through the Gradebook option in SmartMusic: the tempo, whether they sing with/out a metronome beat, and whether the students have the ability to have the program play their part for them during practice.

   vii. There are pre-existing sight-singing exercises that the instructor can use to create assignments, or you can upload your own melodies. These exercises are gradated and there are multiple exercises in each difficulty level.

   viii. Instructors can create any melody in Finale for students to sing (or even play on their instrument), so it's completely customizable (although you need Finale. Sibelius and MusicXML files will not upload!).

   b. Cons:

   i. At this point, students must download this software on their computer (although the Smart Music representative I've been in contact with says that Smart Music may be cloud-based in the next year).

   ii. When students are singing, the program does not grade their use of the correct solfege syllables or ability to conduct and sing at the same time; it only grades their intonation and rhythm. Also, if you assign a melody in treble clef, males singing perfectly an octave below would receive a zero. This

also means that anyone who bounces around the octave to reach one note that is too high/low would not receive credit for that note, even if it is sung correctly (albeit in the wrong octave).

- iii. The reason I do not use this program is that the note recognition is buggy. If there is even a small amount of background noise, the program interprets this as sung notes. Additionally, I sang numerous exercises perfectly but was penalized because the program told me I wasn't singing in a particular measure, which was not true. This problem eventually would result in students emailing me with complaints about the program, and I'd end up grading the assignments anyway.
- iv. Instructors need Finale to create sight-singing exercises.
- v. Students are not making videos of themselves performing the exercises, so academic honesty is a concern.
- c. Cost: $40 per student per year (and $140 for the teacher subscription), or $399 per year for the institution (one teacher and <50 students)
5. Other ear-training software in development, but with potential:
    - a. Picardy (http://picardylearning.com/) – Still in development
        - i. Cloud-based; student scores can be monitored by the instructor
        - ii. You can log in to complete the exercises from any computer or an iPad.
        - iii. The list of topics includes both basic dictation skills such as interval dictation. Also includes dictations of modulating melodies and harmonic dictations that include chromatic chords (list of topics covered: http://picardylearning.com/dashboard/).
        - iv. Exercises are not computer generated, but this also means that there are fewer dictation exercises (i.e., 7-10) per topic.
        - v. It's unclear how customizable it is, and whether instructors can create their own exercises.
        - vi. Cost: $39 for two years or $49 for life
    - b. uTheory (https://utheory.com) – Still in development
        - i. Cloud-based, but student scores cannot be monitored by an instructor
        - ii. To date, ear-training activities only encompass intervals, triads, seventh chords, melodic fragments, and beginning melodic dictations.
        - iii. However, the program is developed by a seasoned ear-training pedagogue (Greg Ristow) and one would think that more advanced topics for the entire four-semester ear-training curriculum will eventually be covered.
        - iv. Cost: Free

Part II: **Technology used on a day-to-day basis in my ear-training courses at Peabody:**
1. To create dictations for extra help: **https://www.noteflight.com/**
    - a. Can be used to create practice dictation exercises for extra dictation practice in Blackboard (although my students complained about the MIDI sounds. Now I record their practice dictations at a piano and upload the mp3 to Blackboard).
    - b. I also use Noteflight to create dictation exams and answer keys for GAs.
2. Instead of performing sight-singing exercises in class, students are required to use their phones to video their sight-singing assignments, upload the video on **https://www.youtube.com/**, and submit the link in Blackboard. Rationale:
    - a. Having students sing in class is not necessarily the best use of class time.
    - b. An unprepared student could try to sing last, thus learning from others who are singing before them.
    - c. Without a recording of the student's performance, it's hard to give precise feedback in class. If the exercise is recorded, the instructor can say something like "you sang a C instead of a D at 25 seconds into the recording," and the student can go back and listen to this moment.
3. **https://www.spotify.com/us/** is used to create playlists for in-class musical examples, and I share this playlist with GAs.
4. A document camera is used to project sight-singing exercises. Rationale:
    - a. Student noses are not buried down in their individual books.
    - b. The instructor can quickly point to where they should repeat to if a particular moment needs drilling.
    - c. You don't need another plan if a student forgets their book.

Part III: **Other software, websites, and apps that I use in my ear-training classes:**

1. Dictation help for weaker freshmen students:
    a. **Teoria (http://www.teoria.com/en/exercises/).**
        i. **Pros:**
            1. **Overall, this is an excellent resource for supplemental instruction at the freshmen ear-training level.**
            2. **Can be used for aural interval ID, chord ID, scale ID, melodic dictation, two-voice dictation, and rhythm dictation.**
        ii. **Cons:**
            1. **All MIDI sounds, and dictations are computer generated (also could be the atypical 3 or 5 measures).**
            2. **The instructor cannot custom-create dictation exercises.**
            3. **While there are chord progression exercises where you write down the RNs of the chords you hear, there are no harmonic dictation exercises where you write the soprano, bass, and RNs.**
        iii. **Cost: Free, or $20/yr/student if you want to be able to track how well each student is doing on the exercises you assign.**
    b. http://tonedear.com/
        i. Pros: trains a whole host of freshmen skills including triad quality ID, short basic Roman Numeral chord progressions, and short melodic dictation. Best used to provide weak students with more practice outside of class.
        ii. Cons: all MIDI, computer-generated dictations, can only be used for supplemental help
        iii. Cost: Free
    c. This free website and app plays a I-IV-V-I chord progression to establish a key, followed by a tone (you can specify if the chord progression is in major or minor and if the tone is diatonic or chromatic). You then have to identify what the tone is. You can do this using the website www.miles.be or use this app: https://itunes.apple.com/kg/app/functional-ear-trainer/id1088761926
2. Helping students sing in tune:
    a. **Have students sing with a tuner, such as this free app: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/free-chromatic-tuner-pano/id449780743?mt=8**
    b. Music cognition researchers Dr. Steve Demorest and Dr. Peter Pfordresher have developed an online test of our ability to sing in tune. The test ends with a measurement of our pitch discrimination threshold (https://ssap.music.northwestern.edu/)
3. Extra help on harmonic dictations for all four semesters of the ear-training curriculum:
    a. **Aural idiom tool (http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/johnito/aid/index.html)**
        i. **Pros: Excellent for quizzing students on short harmonic progressions including diatonic and chromatic chords. Can easily supplement extra help for harmonic dictation for all four semesters of a typical ear-training undergraduate curriculum, so does an excellent job on more advanced harmonic topics. The program also provides the part-writing solution for what was played, so you could have students notate the soprano/bass while also determining RNs. Students can also adjust the number of hearings allowed for each dictation.**
        ii. **Cons: All MIDI sounds, can only be used for supplemental help (no proof that students are using the website), and all exercises are in Cmaj/min.**
        iii. **Cost: Free**
4. General help, working with a tutor online:
    a. **Music theory and ear-training tutoring on Skype by the Society for Music Theory (http://musictheorytutor.weebly.com/)**
        i. Pros: Your students can learn from SMT-approved tutors who can help with all levels.
        ii. Cons: None!
        iii. Cost: Free
5. Post-tonal aural skills apps/websites:
    a. **Reich's "Clapping Music" app (http://clappingmusicapp.com/): Free, fun app that has you perform Reich's "Clapping Music."**

    b. **This free website plays random trichordal set-classes and asks you to identify which one you heard: https://jeremiahgoyette.com/setclass-eartrainer/. Slightly customizable, but all MIDI sounds.**

Part IV: **Other software, websites, and apps to possibly suggest to ear-training students:**

1. Apps/websites that aim to improve basic ear-training skills at the freshmen level (hearing and identifying scales, intervals, chord quality, and short pitch dictations)
   a. **Hear that music! (https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id968710931)**
      i. **Pros:**
         1. **Free**
         2. **Easily accessible on iPhone/iPad, and is one of the few tools that plays real music for students!**
         3. **Teaches skills like meter identification, figuring out the starting scale-degree of a melody, hearing intervals, and cadence identification.**
      ii. **Cons: It only addresses skills in 1st semester freshmen ear-training skills.**
   b. Musicopoulos (https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/music-theory-practice-by-musicopoulos/id319290362?mt=8)
      i. Cons: Mostly a theory fundamentals app, rather than helping with ear-training. Also, intervals are always presented ascending.
   c. http://www.musictheory.net/exercises: In addition to theory exercises, it plays notes, intervals, scales and chords for aural identification.
      i. Free at the website above and $3.99 if you want the app on your phone: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tenuto/id459313476?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4
   d. http://www.good-ear.com/
      i. This is a free website that gives random aural prompts for intervals, chords, and cadences, but seems a bit old-school and buggy.
   e. http://www.emusictheory.com/practice.html
      i. Website (some parts are free and some parts are offered for a fee) that gives aural prompts for intervals, scales, and chord identification. A bit old.
   f. https://trainer.thetamusic.com/en/content/music-training-games (free app here: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/theta-music-trainer/id791698217?mt=8)
      i. Tons of unique and fun games that liven learning intervals, chord quality, and even aural identification of RNs
      ii. The game called "speaker chords" is particularly good, as it plays real music and you're asked to indicate what RN you are hearing in real-time. It starts with I and IV chords only, but unfortunately you cannot move on to other levels with more RNs until you complete the basic levels first.
   g. https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ear-trainer/id358733250?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D6
      i. Helps you aurally identify chords, intervals, and scales, $7
   h. https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/right-note-lite-ear-trainer/id471372685?mt=8
      i. This app plays intervals, single pitches, and 4-note random pitch patterns in C-major (starts with just C, D, E, F) and has you notate what you hear by playing a keyboard on the screen. Very basic but good for remedial drilling. Free for the lite version and then $7 to upgrade.
   i. http://singtrue.co/
      i. Free, very basic app that first asks you to identify whether a note is higher or lower. Eventually progresses to having you sing a pitch and it tells you if you're singing in tune. It also plays individual notes and you indicate whether you hear "do, re, mi," etc. Unfortunately, advanced students can't skip past the basic levels.
   j. http://www.earmaster.com/
      i. for iPad or can be downloaded on PC/Mac. $7.50 per year. Basic app that teaches basic sight-singing, performing rhythms, short melodic dictations, chord ID, and interval ID.
2. Apps/websites that target one particular beginning ear-training skill:
   a. **Sing that note! https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sing-that-note!/id681899860?mt=8**
      i. **This free app plays musical excerpts from the literature and asks you to sing tonic**
   b. http://www.ossmann.com/bigears/
      i. Free, plays random intervals for students to identify
   c. The free app "Ear for Life" tries to teach students perfect pitch, but one could utilize relative pitch skills when completing the exercises: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ear-for-life-perfect-pitch/id335761210?mt=8
   d. https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ear-training-pro/id1064281689?mt=8 This $1 app plays two rhythms/melodies and you select the one that you hear. Basic.
   e. This basic $3 app asks you to perform rhythms at sight: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rhythm-sight-reading-trainer/id396302174?mt=8
   f. This website tests your sight-singing ability (http://www.earpower.com/ssing.php)
      i. Pros: The program randomly generates a short melody shown in notation, and you're asked to sight-sing it into your computer microphone. Thus, it's one of the few tools out there that tests our ability to sight-sing. You can create custom melodic lines as well.

ii.   Cons: Out-of-date (designed for Windows 95/98/2000 XP
            iii.   Cost: $19
         g.   Android apps:
               i.   Interval ID: https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=Box+Metaphor+Studios
              ii.   Chord quality aural identification: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.chordtrainerfree
   3.   Apps/software that help students notate musical recordings:
               i.   Transcribe it! (https://www.seventhstring.com/xscribe/overview.html)
                    1.   Software that slows down a musical recording without changing its pitch to help you notate it. Also tells you which notes are present at any given point in the recording and suggests what chord that could possibly be. A keyboard is also present on the screen for the student to compare pitches with what they hear in the recording.
                    2.   Cost: $39 to own
              ii.   The Amazing Slow-Downer (https://www.ronimusic.com/)
                    1.   Just like the software above, you can slow down a musical recording without changing its pitch to help you notate what you're hearing.
                    2.   Cost: $15 for iPhone/iPad and $50 to download on your computer
   4.   Other apps that can help with ear-training (I have not used these personally):
         a.   Hear it, Note it! The aural IQ game: (https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/hear-it-note-it!-aural-iq/id508812657?mt=8)
         b.   https://www.gnu.org/software/solfege/
         c.   https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ear-trainer/id1043553966?mt=12
               i.   Teaches you to aurally identify intervals, chords, and scales
              ii.   Cost: $25 for the iOS app
         d.   https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/solfege-singing-method/id1109007822?mt=12: This is a new app (2016) that aims to improve sight-singing, but the interface does not ask students to sing melodies and instead asks students to sing single notes, scales and intervals. Costs $35.

FYI: Helpful websites/apps that can improve <u>theory</u> skills (most of these helpful tools do not have an aural component, unfortunately):
   5.   One of the best-known software that contains many types of exercises to improve knowledge across the entire multi-semester theory curriculum:
         a.   Harmonia (http://illiacsoftware.com/harmonia)
         b.   Musition (https://www.risingsoftware.com/musition/)
   6.   iPhone/Android apps that target fundamental theory knowledge:
         a.   *Music Theory Pro* – Joel Clifft
         b.   *Musicnotes Decks: Music Flash Cards* – Musicnotes
         c.   *Music Theory, with AUDIO* – Brainscape
         d.   *Music Theory for Beginners* (*Musicroom Music Theory*) – Musicroom.com
         e.   *Note-a-lator* – Electric Peel Software (ability to report quiz scores)
         f.   *Music Drills* – www.rifftech.com and www.EyebrowMan.com
         g.   *Music Theory Basics* and *Music Theory Advanced* – Patrick Q. Kelly
         h.   *Music Drills* – Rifftech
         i.   Learning to read music fluently: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/note-trainer-lite-sight-read/id731587156?mt=8
   7.   Additional websites that target fundamental theory knowledge:
         a.   www.musicards.net
         b.   http://www.mymusictheory.com/learn-music-theory (designed to help K-12 students taking the Royal Schools of Music exam)

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NATIONAL FORUM
OF GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH MUSICIANS
The musical arm of the Archdiocese that strengthens and perpetuates
Greek Orthodox liturgical music in America

Position Statement Regarding

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHOIR MEMBERS

Participating in divine worship services as a choir member is a sacred responsibility, not to be taken lightly. Choir members, as other church musicians, offer their God-given talents to the faith for a variety of reasons. For most, it is a part of their stewardship – the giving of their "time and talents." For others, it is something that is enjoyed and for still others, it is a social outlet. In our services, however, choir members represent the laity, responding to the liturgical dialogue set by the priest. This places a sacred responsibility on them during our worship services. They are called to be knowledgeable not only of the hymns and responses, but also about the correct order of the worship services. The choir is entrusted to be a participating part of the worship service and its members must respond to that trust accordingly.

As St. John Chrysostom writes, *"When we sing church hymns, we must be careful that we do not pronounce only the words with our tongues while our hearts wander elsewhere."* Every hymn, every phrase, every verse of the church service must be rendered clearly and fittingly. This requires singers who are inwardly committed not just to the music, but also, and primarily, to the Faith.

There are various aspects of being a choir member – most importantly, there is a liturgical role, and of course there is a musical role. But also, there are outreach and educational roles that are important to the work of being in a choir. With dedication, choir members, even though volunteers, should be able to commit to the following roles and accompanying responsibilities.

A. Liturgical Role

The music of the Orthodox Church is an integral part of worship services. Choral music must add to the liturgy, not distract from the prayerful environment of worship. The Bishops and priests stand in the place of Christ in creating the Liturgy as "heaven on earth." They are the leaders and the ones who are celebrants of the mysteries of God, who is their Author. Those who sing represent the angels, who stand around His throne offering Him hymns of praise. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians in his first letter suggests the Orthodox "phronema" for choir members in their role during divine services: *"I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the mind also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the mind also."* [1 Corinthians 14:15, RSV]. First and foremost, then, choir members must evaluate themselves according to the following guidelines:

- Take the time to be spiritually focused before beginning a worship service.

- Be on time and ready to sing when the service begins.
- Concentrate on the worship service, actively participating by making the sign of the Cross, standing, reverencing, and praying whenever appropriate.
- Learn about the structure and meaning of the various services and the changing cycles of the ecclesiastical year.
- Understand the meaning of the hymns and their significance in the service.
- Search for spiritual meaning in everything you sing. Remember, singing or chanting is not simply a performance but an act of worship – "singing is believing."
- Participate in the sacramental life of the church, such as receiving frequent communion.
- Refrain from creating distractions, thus separating yourself and others from the worship experience (e.g., milling around, passing notes, talking).

B. Musical Role

Not all choir members are trained musicians, able to read music and experienced in singing with a group. However, even with "amateurs" and "volunteers," choir members can grow in their knowledge of music and creating a sound that matches the beauty of our services and their surroundings – the music, the chanting, the icons, the vestments all strive to be as perfect and beautiful as possible as we offer up worship to God. Choir members can enhance their church musicianship by attending to the following:

- Attend rehearsals. A choir is not a group of individuals wearing the same robe; it is a unit, a team, each supporting the other. This teamwork is learned through participating in rehearsals.
- Be punctual for rehearsals and all church services.
- Be respectful of each other, the priest, and the director. Even though singers may have good suggestions to offer during rehearsals, the director has the final word and works with the priest to plan and coordinate the music for the worship services of the parish. If you do have a suggestion, it's best to offer it before or after the rehearsal so rehearsal time doesn't get bogged down with discussion.
- Be open-minded to learning new music and not complain that "we have always done it this way."
- Keep your eyes on the director for direction and cues.
- Mark your music with the director's instructions and keep your music in proper order.
- Be sensitive to tempo, balance, dynamics, articulation, and phrasing when singing, according to your director's instruction.
- Warm-up your voice before rehearsals and services, and use your singing voice at other times during the week.

C. Outreach Role

Choir members offer significant amounts of their time and talents to the church, and thus serve as examples to others. The choir member's role does not end on Sunday

when the Divine Liturgy ends – rather, there are opportunities to encourage others to participate in the parish's music programs.

- Encourage others to join your choir.
- Be supportive of those in the process of joining the choir – make them feel welcome and comfortable.
- Be a "mentor" to newcomers by assisting them with the music, robes, line-up, and the like.
- Be especially generous with your help and support of young people who come to sing with you.

D. Educational Role

Again, because choir members are not always trained musicians, they should take advantage of as many opportunities as possible to improve as church musicians. Choir members should take advantage of learning experiences that offer opportunities for them to grow in the use of vocal techniques, introduce them to new repertoire, and help them learn more about the services, music, and tenets of our faith. Choir directors, priests, and parishes should support their choir members' quest for additional knowledge.

- Work to improve your music knowledge even if you are not a trained musician. Continue to improve your music reading skills and vocal techniques, through the help of your director and/or by attending local, regional, or national church music events.
- Work to improve your knowledge of the Liturgy, worship services, and the changing cycles of the year, through the help of your priest, your director, and/or by attending local, regional, or national religious education events.
- Participate in Church Music Institutes and workshops offered by the Church Music Federation of your Metropolis and national events sponsored by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.
- Attend the annual conference of the Church Music Federation of your Metropolis. These will help improve your musicianship, introduce you to new music, connect you with other church musicians, and inspire you to return to your home parish with renewed dedication.
- Look for opportunities to enroll in music and/or Orthodox coursework. Several of the Church Music Federations have scholarships to support your participation.

St. Athanasios the Great, in the 4th Century said, "*When chanters chant with the tongue and also with the mind, they greatly benefit not only themselves but also those who want to hear them. To recite the psalms with melody is not done from a desire for pleasing sound, but it is a manifestation of harmony among the thoughts of the soul.*"

(Adopted July 2007)

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Position Statement Regarding

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHOIR DIRECTOR
Guidelines for Selection and Development

The following *Guidelines* identify skills, knowledge, and personal attributes that the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians believe to be integral to the role of a choir director in the Greek Orthodox Church. Identifying an individual who can fulfill this role in the Orthodox Church is challenging, but not impossible. While a professionally-trained candidate may not always be available, finding an enthusiastic musician and leader who is willing to be trained might be a more realistic option.

Recognizing it is a rare person who possesses <u>all</u> these qualities, the *Guidelines* should be viewed from a two-fold perspective: first, as a tool for clergy and parish council members when selecting a choir director; and second, as goals for all choir directors to pursue in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

A. The Director's Musical Role
Choir directors must be well-trained in the fundamentals of music, conducting, and vocal and choral techniques. Ideally, the director should have a degree in music with a special emphasis in voice or choral conducting. Parishes are encouraged to provide continuing training through local community colleges, private lessons, and Orthodox Church Music Institutes and workshops provided by metropolis church music federations and/or National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. A choir director should strive to possess the following attributes:

1. Has a working knowledge of the fundamentals of music
2. Can play a keyboard instrument.
3. Has a good ear for pitch and rhythm
4. Understands how to create balance for a choral ensemble
5. Has a working knowledge of basic vocal fundamentals and choral techniques, and able instruct singers in them
6. Has a working knowledge of the rudiments of conducting, including:
   a. beat patterns
   b. attacks and releases; cueing
   c. expression
7. Has a working knowledge of the organ and the ability to help the organist effectively accompany and support the choir during rehearsals and/or services
8. Has a working knowledge of English diction as it applies to choral singing

B. The Director's Pedagogical Role
Choir directors must be effective teachers, using rehearsal time wisely to educate members musically as well as spiritually --- with the end result being an improved

music program for the parish and greater liturgical understanding for all. While many people possess great knowledge of music, some have difficulty imparting that knowledge to others. The following pedagogical skills are considered essential when selecting a choir director and when working as a choir director:

1. Assesses the capabilities and qualities of individual choir members and place them in the proper section
2. Plans rehearsals to accomplish short and long-term goals
3. Conducts effective, productive rehearsals
4. Detects and corrects errors
5. Selects music suitable for the level of the choir, introducing new music as is appropriate and practical for the demands and needs of the individual parish
6. Trains choir members both as individual vocalists and as ensemble musicians to create the most appropriate choral sound
7. Provides instruction about the liturgical and feast day hymns and services
8. Develops and trains assistant directors and/or organists as necessary

C. The Director's Liturgical Role

The music of the Orthodox Church is an integral part of worship services. Choral music must add to the liturgy, not distract from the prayerful environment of worship. Choir directors must understand the rubrics, structure, and meaning of the various services. Thus, it is important that the choir director possess the following knowledge regarding Orthodox worship:

1. Has considerable knowledge of the Divine Liturgy and other services of the liturgical year
2. Has a thorough knowledge of Greek Orthodox religious practices
3. Has a working knowledge of the Greek language and its phonetics
4. Communicates regularly with the parish priest regarding all details of the services in which the choir will be participating
5. Works with the priest to develop a plan for expanding the choir's role in other services (special feast days, holidays, etc.)
6. Sets and cultivates a spiritual tone for the choir
7. Works closely with the parish priest to determine the proportion of English and Greek liturgical music as appropriate for the parish

D. The Director's Administrative Role

While a strong musical background is important, so is the choir director's ability to be an organized administrator. Strong organization and preparation behind the scenes creates a more polished and professional parish music program. Participating in various parish events, fundraisers, and special musical programs is customary for choirs. Without strong administrative skills, and a cooperative team of choir members, the director will have difficulty achieving the goals of the choir. Suggested responsibilities in this area include:

1. Maintains a special and close relationship with the priest, who, according to the Archdiocesan Uniform Parish Regulations, has "charge of all matters of divine worship and the personnel connected therewith"
2. Communicates effectively with the priest, choir, organist, psaltai, parish council, and Church School
3. Provides leadership in planning and carrying out the goals and objectives of the choir, in conjunction with the parish priest

4. Coordinates the activities of the choir with the parish and ensures the cooperation and support of the choir
5. Represents the parish and the choir at the Metropolis church music federation; and nationally, supports the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians
6. Exercises authority in all musical matters
7. Is responsible for implementing the following:
   a. recruitment of new choir members
   b. attendance and punctuality rules
   c. development and maintenance of a music library
   d. care and maintenance of robes
   e. development and use of a choir budget
8. Participates in the selection and hiring of the organist
9. Researches and introduces new Greek and English liturgical music, relative to the needs of the parish, and the ability of the group

E. Other Important Attributes

The choir director has a very visible position within the church. As part of the liturgical ministry team for the church, the choir director must possess certain spiritual and personal attributes, exemplifying a lifestyle that adheres to the teachings of the Orthodox faith.

1. Serves as an example of appropriate behavior and spirituality
2. Conducts services in a manner conducive to worship
3. Relates to the choir, clergy, and parishioners in a sensitive, understanding, and patient manner
4. Strives to learn and improve

F. Remuneration

The position of choir director carries tremendous responsibilities. Besides handling regular services, the choir director must commit time each week to preparation, rehearsals, and communication with the priest and choir members. Parishes might recall the old but important saying: "you get what you pay for." Parishes that do not compensate musicians adequately (or not at all) for their services will have a more difficult time establishing consistency and setting a standard for higher musical and spiritual goals. Also, holding a person accountable, either on Sundays or during the week for preparation and rehearsals, may become more problematic. Thus, it is strongly recommended that choir directors be remunerated to provide the best and most suitable music programs for their parishes, formulated in full cooperation with their parish priests. Directors' salaries should also be reviewed once a year for merit and/or cost of living increases, if appropriate. The following four factors should be considered in determining equitable remuneration:

1. Musical training (college degree, private instruction, and/or informal training)
2. Experience with both vocal and choral music
3. Scope, duties, and time requirements of the position (choir directing only, or responsibilities for additional church music programs such as a youth choir, music education in the Church School, men's choir, and/or chanting)
4. Budget of the community (the budget of the parish should include a line item for an appropriate monthly stipend for the director and a separate item to support purchase of music and to cover continuing education of its church musicians.)

(Adopted July 1984)

Teaching Yourself to Teach a New Piece of Music to Your Choir

Have you ever looked at a piece of music that you need to teach your church choir but don't know where to begin? This is not uncommon for directors in the Antiochian Orthodox Church (and many others too!) Here are some tips on how you should approach a new piece of music, first, as you teach yourself and then, as you teach your choir.

1) Look at the page of music, almost as a design that has beauty of its own. This helps us to visualize passages, recognizing where patterns appear, helping us decide what, and how, to rehearse

2) Identify the key and practice singing the first five notes of the scale, ascending and descending, and then sing the corresponding triad.

3) Identify the time signature and practice your conducting patterns

4) Play the melody on the piano (this is a basic requirement for directing) until you can play it without hesitation.

5) Once you begin "feeling" the melody (often soprano), put it aside and practice the other parts until they, too, become comfortable. Play them on your piano as you are singing. Remember, the piano is the primary tool used to teach amateur choirs (we fall into this category), so keyboard proficiency is a prerequisite, even before singing!

6) Continue by practicing the vocal lines in the following suggested pattern:

   a) Soprano
   b) Bass
   c) Soprano
   d) Bass
   e) Alto
   f) Soprano
   g) Alto
   h) Bass
   i) Tenor
   j) Bass
   k) Alto
   l) Tenor
   m) Bass
   n) Soprano
   o) Bass

Notice that the bass line is repeated often. This is because the base line, almost always, forms the foundation for the choir. The more solid the bass line, the easier it is for everyone else to sing well and in tune.

7) Take the time to mark where you would like each section to breathe. Mark your music with a *pencil* as you will undoubtedly change your mind as you develop a deeper understanding of the music. Sing through each line to determine where the natural breath should be. Remember, you do not necessarily have to breathe after each comma or period, even though these are often the spots to do so. Hint: NEVER allow *any* breaths in the last bar or during the final words of a sentence. Rather, teach the choir to stagger breathe, where each individual breathes at a *specific* pre-determined spot, allowing the musical flow to continue.

8) Visually "inspect the music". Look for patterns where two or more parts either sing the *same notes* and plan to rehearse them together. Likewise, look for two or more parts that have the *same/similar rhythmical patters* and rehearse them together

REMEMBER: A DIRECTOR WHO DOES NOT KNOW EACH OF THE PARTS HE/SHE IS TRYING TO TEACH WILL NOT HEAR MISTAKES WHEN THEY HAPPEN.

Introducing new music to your choir- Rehearsal Technique

The next step is to introduce the music to your choir

1) Teach the choir just as you taught yourself, the same patterns, in the same fashion.
2) First, play the piece on the piano. If your piano skills are not proficient enough, search for a good recording. The choir *needs* to hear how the music is supposed to sound. You will lose them if you simply begin teaching parts.
3) If you are unable to play the piano, you must find someone proficient enough to play the music without stumbling/playing wrong notes during rehearsals
4) Choose ONE phrase, usually the first, and practice singing the words to the rhythm, *without* music.
5) "Layer the music" as you introduce each voice. One example would be to rehearse the following way:

   a) Sopranos
   b) Basses
   c) Soprano
   d) Bass
   e) Soprano
   f) Bass

g) Soprano & Bass together, repeating three times
h) Tenor
i) Alto
j) Tenor
k) Alto
l) Tenor
m) Alto
n) Tenor and alto together, repeating three times
o) Tenor, alto and bass, repeating three times
p) Add the sopranos, and repeat at least three more times

Notice that apart from learning their part at the beginning, the sopranos do not return until the very end. This is because we, generally, are too dependent on the soprano line. Strengthen the bottom voices first. When rehearing, say for example, the altos, it could take time until the music is solid. That could be boring for the others and chatter often ensues, disrupting the pacing and effectiveness of the rehearsal. If you see that happening, ask *everyone* to sing the alto part along with the altos. After all, you can't talk and sing at the same time! And the bonus is that choir members are learning other parts too, helping tremendously and gaining a deeper understanding of the music.

The suggested rehearsal pattern above must be rehearsed *without hesitation or pause between parts*. If you find that to be too challenging, then continue practicing, on your own time, the individual parts more until you are comfortable. Choir members should be inspired by their director, not be put in a position where they see their director stumble, making everyone feel uncomfortable. This is what happens when we, as directors, are not prepared.