

YOUTH MUSIC CONNECTION



**A Publication of the National Forum of
Greek Orthodox Church Musicians**

Greetings in Christ to all of our wonderful youth music devotees! Many of you have been wondering what has happened to our *YouthMusic Connection* e-newsletter over the past year, and quite frankly, your editor has been incredibly busy with the fundraising and organization of a wonderful choir tour of Greece for the Metropolis of Atlanta last month. Attending the trip was my own *Orthodox Youth Choir of Tampa Bay* together with our adult singers from across our Metropolis, many of whom attend Dormition Church of Greensboro, NC. The trip was a life-altering experience for everyone, but the greatest impact was felt by our young singers who were able to walk in the footsteps of the apostles in the land of the early Church. Needless to say, while our fundraising activities enabled our youngsters to attend the trip for only the cost of their lunches and dinners, many other worthy activities were set aside, including the publication of our e-newsletter! However, we are back on track at present and we begin our second year of the *YouthMusic Connection* with a special focus on new, budding youth programs that are just getting started. In previous issues, we have highlighted some of the best and brightest programs in the country, some of which have been in existence for many years or even decades! With the onset of aging adult choirs that have fewer young people joining their ranks, never has there been a more important time to teach the love and appreciation of liturgical church music to our children. Considering the myriad of competitive factors working against us, this is no easy task! Every choir or chant program has to begin *somewhere*, however. Whether you are starting from scratch, or trying to revive a struggling program, we invite you to submit your news, questions, complaints, and accomplishments to this publication so that others may also benefit from your experience. This newsletter is emailed to over 1000 recipients and is probably forwarded onto several hundred more! I pray that it reaches everyone who wishes to further their understanding of the youth music ministry for the greater good of all within our church music community.

Wishing you a blessed ecclesiastical year,



Joanne H. Kambouris, Editor

In the Spotlight!

Metropolitan Methodios of Boston Announces Formation of a Youth Choir

It has long been the dream and vision of Metropolitan Methodios to establish a Metropolis Youth Choir which would attract young people from the communities throughout New England. "Music, both religious and cultural, is a very important aspect of our Greek Orthodox Heritage which we must teach and bequeath to the young generation," Metropolitan Methodios has often said. Planning toward making this dream a reality began last spring when he met with clergy and choir directors to discuss the formation of a Youth Choir for the Metropolis of Boston. Everyone in attendance agreed that a Metropolis Youth Choir would enhance the participation of young people in our churches and the continuation of our rich cultural and musical traditions. The following expectations were discussed.

Each district of the Metropolis will have their own Youth Choir represented from all churches of that region. They will meet as a Metropolis of Boston Youth Choir joining children from other regions. Anyone, age 8-18 is eligible to join, especially students in Middle School and High School. Elementary school voices must be included as they will gain the experience and ability to lead. The choir will perform both liturgical and non-liturgical music, rehearsing monthly to ensure progress and retention of music learning. Rehearsals will take place at different parishes to encourage participation throughout the Metropolis. The choir will perform for various functions and events during the year, and chant during liturgies at churches throughout the Metropolis. Also, the choir will sponsor Christmas and Lenten Concerts as well as perform for various community functions.

The formation of a Metropolis of Boston Youth Choir is indeed an exciting venture! It will require the cooperation of clergy, choir directors, and families to succeed. For further information, contact Church Music Federation President, Heidi Mason at HeidiM50@aol.com and Metropolis Youth Choir Coordinator, Tony Vatosios at vatosios@comcast.net.

Metropolis Youth Music News

- **Metropolis of New Jersey: St George, Bethesda, MD**

We have a full-time youth Liturgy in a conjoined chapel just for our Church School. In December, we sang on four different occasions in addition to the Divine Liturgy. On Christmas Eve, the Church School choir led the *congregation* in singing Christmas Carols in both Greek and English after the Liturgy. This year, the children fully participated in the Holy Week services on Palm Sunday, Holy Friday, and Holy Saturday nights. Our community is large enough to have two simultaneous services; one in the main church, and the other in the church hall. The response and support I receive from members of our community is wonderful, but rehearsals are difficult to arrange. We rehearse once a month before Liturgy at 8:00 am for one hour, with breakfast offered to those not fasting for communion. I do believe the breakfast attracts the teens and sustains the little ones. Without it, their participation is lackluster. Our chapel Liturgy begins at 10:00 and ends at 11:00, with homily included. After Liturgy, students attend classes until noon. Parents who attend Liturgy in the main church are able to have a quick sip of coffee and socialize before their children are dismissed. I try to offer a tiny snack after church while the kids are hanging up their robes. I am very fortunate to have a "Choir Mom" to assist them. Her 20-year old daughter is my assistant director. This is my mission- my stewardship to the church. Of all of the things I have done to serve the church, this is absolutely the most gratifying. We all learn every week from the readings, the Apolytikion, the Kontakion, and the homily.

Joanne Johnson, Director
abcmom@cox.net

- **Metropolis of Detroit: Holy Trinity, Indianapolis, IN**
 We have created two youth music groups at Holy Trinity in Indianapolis – a preschool group and a group of first through fifth graders. The preschool program lasts throughout the Church School year. In the beginning, they sing fun songs with "finger play", movement, and simple Christmas songs for our annual Christmas program. We feel it is important for the "little ones" in this age group to have fun and develop their love of singing. After they experience this in a church

classroom setting, they are more open to learning church hymns as they get older. Hymnology classes for the 1st - 5th graders run 15 minutes, with the children coming to class immediately after they receive Communion. Following Hymnology, the children go on to their Church School classes for another 45 minutes. Parents have become used to socializing at the Coffee Hour as they wait for their children. During the first half of the year, Cindy works with these older children to prepare for the Christmas program. During the second semester, Vicki works with this group to learn liturgical hymns so they can participate in the Divine Liturgy. They learn the hymns in both English and Greek, and enjoy their liturgical participation. The children are "collecting" a variety of arrangements of Enite/Praise the Lord in different languages which they sing while the congregation receives Communion. With consistency, we've found that a lot can be accomplished even in only 15 minutes! Finding opportunities for the children to participate in the Divine Liturgy and in special programs is essential for keeping them motivated. They shine! And they feel huge amounts of accomplishment and pride in their participation in the services!

Cindy Hackett cmh0127@aol.com and
Vicki Pappas pappas@indiana.edu
Hymnology Program Coordinators

- **Metropolis of Chicago: St. Athanasios, Aurora, IL**
 We are in our third year of developing our Youth Choir. We began in January 2006 by preparing the children to sing the Liturgy of St. Basil on Holy Saturday Morning. This service is especially attractive to the children, with the Old Testament Bible readings, the flowers strewn in church by the priest, and the fact that many young children attend this service in lieu of the Anastasis service later that evening. Our children are led by adult choir members. The children's first Holy Saturday was so well received that we began a full-year program the next fall. Currently, there are three segments to our Youth Choir year. The children learn parts of the Sunday Liturgy from September to November, and sing the Liturgy in church on a November Sunday. They learn Christmas Carols from November to December and sing these songs in our Christmas Pageant. The children

prepare Holy Saturday material from January through Easter. After Easter, they work on fun religious material and sing these songs at our Sunday school graduation. Our Youth Choir welcomes all Sunday school children from 1st grade and up. It is our hope that this experience helps the children learn and appreciate the beautiful hymns of our church while gaining Orthodox fellowship and sense of service as they offer their voices to God and our parish family. Finally, the Youth Choir aspires to encourage the development of future adult choir members, thus helping our choir's continued growth in years to come.

Christine Drechsler, Sunday School Director

- **Metropolis of Atlanta:** *Holy Trinity, Charleston, SC*
The Junior Choir of Holy Trinity Church in Charleston, South Carolina has been in existence for five consecutive years, although it had waxed and waned for several years before that. Presently, there are 22 members and a team of six adults who share in the direction of the choir. From September to May, the choir practices on the last Sunday of each month and sings for Divine Liturgy on the first Sunday of each month. We use The Divine Liturgy Hymnal of Kevin Lawrence and we sing in both Greek and English. The Junior Choir participates in other events such as singing in nursing homes and the annual Nativity play. We are interested in learning about new Orthodox music appropriate for young voices.

*Cali Spyropoulos cspyrop2000@yahoo.com and
Penelope Jebeles pjebeles@dorchester2.k12.sc.us,
Co-Directors*

- **Metropolis of Chicago:** *Multiple parishes attend the 11th Annual Youth Choir Conference*

The Metropolis of Chicago will hold its 11th Annual Youth Choir Conference on the weekend of November 7-9, 2008. The St. Nicholas parish in St. Louis, MO will host the event. Church School students in the second grade or older, and those belonging to organized youth choirs are invited to attend. The music of Nancy Takis was selected for the children to sing this year. They will attend workshops about the Psalms and vocal technique and will also participate in some fun activities. The director of this year's Youth Conference Choir will be Diana Ott, youth choir director at St. Nicholas Church in St. Louis. The accompanist will be Michael Doran, who is the choir director of St. Nicholas. This conference has been in existence for the past eleven years at the request of the youth choir members. Young people used to participate in the adult choir conference, but they became bored with singing the same hymns, so they requested their own

conference. If anyone is interested in attending or would like more information, contact Diana Ott at 636-230-8066 or email: dianaott@juno.com

Denise Karras, Metropolis Youth Music Coordinator

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Which Liturgy music do you recommend for ages 5 through 16? We break them up by age groups but I'd like to have one versatile liturgical music book. The hymns should be in Greek with a good English translation. Transliterated Greek will be essential.

Tula Christopoulos

Holy Trinity, Egg Harbor Township, NJ

A. *Dear Tula,*

The National Forum's Liturgical Guidebook is an annual publication that has many resources for Youth Music listed in its bibliography. We will also be posting resources for Youth Music on our new website. Watch for the National Forum link on the Archdiocese website www.goarch.org later this summer. In the absence of a "standardized" English translation of the Greek Orthodox Liturgy, these resources have been previewed as appropriate for use with youth music programs. We also suggest that you contact your New Jersey Metropolis Church Music Federation President, Kathryn Athanasoulas, who may have access to "hard copies" of music for your review. Her email is kathanasoulas@hotmail.com. Your Metropolis Youth Music Coordinator is another resource person who can help. Her name is Sondra Awad of Richmond, VA and she can be reached at AwadS@wjcc.k12.va.us for questions and recommendations. Enlisting the help of knowledgeable people such as these is the best way for you to choose the publication that is most appropriate for your particular program.

Q. We're a small parish of about 125 families and have tried to work youth chorale into a successful monthly Wednesday night supper without success (too many conflicts with other youth activities). Practices on Sundays have been difficult as well, with many of our participating families finding it impossible to stay on Sundays an extra hour. Their smaller children are tired and hungry, and some of them drive as many as 90 miles to make it to Liturgy. Do you have any suggestions for the smaller parish setting to alleviate these problems?

Fr. Alex Chetsas

Holy Mother of God, Tallahassee, FL

A. Dear Father Alex,
 Many parishes integrate a hymnology program into their Church School instruction, even if it's just 15 minutes per week to teach hymns and/or to rehearse their youth choirs (see Indianapolis article above). As you are aware, our hymns can potentially teach our theology as effectively as a prepared lesson plan from a curriculum manual. The National Forum has several resources that teachers can use to teach these hymns without necessarily having musical knowledge or talent (see next page). Alternatively, some parishes have students arrive early for rehearsals prior to Liturgy (see the Bethesda article above) Still other parishes have formal evening youth choir rehearsals that require families to "choose" choir for their child, much like they would choose a sport or music lessons.

Director's Corner

Name: Renée Root, Youth/Adult Choir Director
Parish: Sts. Constantine and Helen, Newport News, VA (Metropolis of New Jersey)
Group: Sts. Constantine and Helen Youth Choir

Renée Skrevanos Root, mezzo soprano, received a Bachelor and Master of Music in Voice Performance from Indiana University School of Music. She has appeared as soloist in opera, oratorio and concert performances with such groups as the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, the Annapolis Chamber Orchestra and Chorale, the Evansville Philharmonic, and the Breckenridge Music Institute. She has twice been a district winner and regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, as well as the Colorado Young Artist Competition.



Renée has taught voice since 1978 and has been on the faculties of the University of Colorado/Denver, Western Kentucky University, Drake University, and Christopher Newport University. She has received two awards for teaching excellence from the University of Colorado/Denver and was included in the Who's Who of America's Teachers 2000. Besides directing the Adult and Youth Choirs at Sts. Constantine and Helen, Renée is the Virginia Supervisor for the Eastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. She also maintains a private voice studio in her home.

The mission statement of the Youth Choir, which is open to all students between grades 4 and 8, is ".....to

glorify God through song while promoting a lifetime love of music, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We will strive for excellence in singing and understanding the rich musical heritage of the Orthodox Church. Through the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Blessed Saints, we will endeavor to imitate their Christian love and character in all that we do."

Renée is married to professional baritone, Scott Root. They have one adult son, Nick. She can be reached at reneroot@cox.net.

Upcoming Events

Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs Chicago Metropolis

Youth Music Conference

November 7-9, 2008

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church -
 St. Louis, MO

Some parting thoughts from one of our choir directors to her students:

My Angelic Choir:

YOU were WONDERFUL today. You came early, worked hard, sang the Liturgy, worked hard again and then, finally, at brunch, you gave our Metropolitan a most glorious gift -- your sweet young voices. It was a long day and you stayed on task! Bravo! This weekend was all about the 40th Anniversary of our St. George church. There was a lot of talk about the PAST and about THE FUTURE. You, my Angels ARE the Future. You have started your Stewardship to our church at tender ages and your first Stewardship gift is from your heart, through your voices. I can't think of a better way for you to begin YOUR OWN MISSION WORK in the Greek Orthodox Church. In singing the Liturgy, you LIVE the Liturgy. Because you are focused on the words we sing, you naturally are more focused on the Liturgy. Maybe that is why I love singing. And I love working with you!

Our very early meeting, rehearsal, and breakfast worked out very well, don't you think? I think we shall do it again...especially with the Holiday Season just around the corner. The next time you won't need to stay as long, either.

With Love,
 "Singing Praises unto HIS Name"
 Miss Joanne [Johnson]

National Forum Resources

2008 Liturgical Guidebook (Youth Music Resources) A comprehensive listing of resource materials for youth music available in our Archdiocese (see pages 157-161). Check with your choir director or priest to see the 2008 Edition.

Starting a Youth Music Program in Your Parish A practical guide for starting and maintaining a quality youth music program from the ground up. Includes many useful ideas and suggestions, an extensive list of available resources, and frequently asked question. By Joanne H. Kambouris and Lynne Jebeles. Contact Vicki Pappas to order a copy. Cost is \$15 plus shipping and handling.

Hymns Of The Orthodox Church: Teaching booklets and a CD or cassette tape for 12 hymns of the Divine Liturgy. Each booklet includes music for Greek and English texts, information about the hymn; scriptural references; an associated icon, and teaching suggestions. The CD features EIKONA singing the hymns. Various ordering options are available:

- (1) Family Packet (CD plus a children's booklet for each hymn): \$20 each.
- (2) 20-copy packets of booklets for any one hymn: \$9 each.
- (3) Classroom Special (all 12 hymns with 20 booklets each plus a CD): \$110.
- (4) CD only is \$15.
- (5) Cassette tape also available for \$12.

Please add shipping and handling to your order.

For More Information

Please send all correspondence, questions, ideas, and information to:

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