

YOUTH MUSIC CONNECTION

A Publication of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians

Welcome to our second issue of the *YouthMusic Connection*, our new e-Newsletter for Orthodox Youth Music enthusiasts! The tremendous need for sharing information about formulating and perpetuating youth music programs in our churches has never been more apparent than in these past few months. The stir created after the publication of our first issue is a testament to this. Meaningful discourse between caring and dedicated individuals who have a love of Orthodox music is a critical part of the ongoing ministry of "The Church Militant": a way of sending our Orthodox faith into the future through the voices of our children. As in our last issue, we are spotlighting a noteworthy youth music program and a youth director that have experienced success through their efforts in their respective parishes and communities. As in our first issue, we will also include short descriptions of parish programs, upcoming events, resources, practical tips, and an FAQ section. However, this letter will be only as informative as YOU, the readers, make it! Please let us know everything that is happening with your young choir or chant groups. Tell us about your failures as well as your successes, and we will all be richer in the knowledge that we impart to one another!

In Christ's service,
Joanne H. Kambouris, editor

In the Spotlight!

Metropolis of New Jersey: On Tuesday, July 18th through Thursday, July 20th, 2006, the third annual Liturgical Music Workshop was held at Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church of Baltimore, Maryland. As its name states, this three-day workshop concentrated on the music of the Divine Liturgy in both Greek and English. Twenty-four children between the ages of 5 and 16 were in attendance. On the afternoon of the third day, the workshop concluded with a recording session. There are many music ensemble opportunities at St Demetrios for these children to share and use their God-given talents. During the course of the year, the youth have sung during the Divine Liturgy, in the Junior Chorus, played hand bells in the Bell Choir, and performed in the Youth Music Ministry musicals (*Damn Yankees* this October). They have also participated in Christmas and Lenten programs, a talent show, and have performed at many area hospitals and nursing homes. Also, the Junior Chorus had the honor of performing at a special tribute for His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey. Many of these children have recently been featured in a professionally recorded music video that was created for the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). This workshop and the other very successful youth music programs at St Demetrios are under the direction of Saint Demetrios' Director of Music, Jennie Cocoros Kegel



Children and staff of St Demetrios' Summer Liturgical Music Workshop

Metropolis Youth Music News

- **Detroit:** Annunciation Church, Memphis, TN
The children who participate in the junior choir in Memphis begin singing when they are 3-4 years old. Although they are young, the kids quickly become familiar with the melodies of the hymns, and by the age of five, they are actively singing. Due to their exposure to the hymnology from a young age, it is hoped that they will stay in the choir as they mature. This year, their goal is to learn the entire Divine Liturgy. They will sing half of the Liturgy on Church Music Sunday, and will include the hymn "God Grant You Many Years" in dedication to their Senior Choir. Many of these students have attended the St. Nicholas summer youth camp which has increased their interest and learning of liturgical music.
Stephanie Poplos, Junior Choir Director

- **Denver:** Holy Trinity Church, Rock Springs, WY
Here in Rock Springs, our children have started singing responses during the Divine Liturgy. Our priest gave each child a CD of a children's choir singing which allowed them to learn a number of hymns in English.
Angelina Pryich, Youth Choir Director
- **New Jersey:** St George, Trenton, NJ
Our youth music program has been ongoing for about four years. The children have learned the Liturgy in both English and Greek, and have sung for both Christmas and Lenten programs and as part of our Federation Conference Youth Choir. They sing every Sunday together with the adult choir, but only in Greek. Independently, they will sing the Liturgy in its entirety three times this year in both languages. We have lost

some of our good singers to GOYA, but we continue to plug along with 8-10 faithful singers. Our priest wants us to sing MORE, perhaps once a month!

Hope Demitry, Youth Director

"Youth"ful Tips and Suggestions

- **DON'T GET DISCOURAGED!** "Numbers" of kids in your youth music program will ebb and flow from year to year. When working with children's choirs, always think in the "long-term" and how you will positively affect the future choirs of our church rather than in the "short term" of today.
- **BE CONSISTENT!** How many times have you read the *same bedtime story to your young child* and they still want to hear it again? That is because children LOVE and draw comfort from consistency! Come up with a general routine for your rehearsals and stick with it. They will love the "sameness" from week to week.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please send us your questions! We will post them along with appropriate and timely answers provided by our most experienced youth music directors from across the Archdiocese.

Upcoming Events

Metropolis of Chicago:

Nov 4-5, 2006. **Youth Choir Conference**, St Andrew Greek Orthodox Church, Chicago, IL. Music is a composite of traditional liturgical melodies.

Director's Corner

Name: Celeste Alexander, Youth Choir Director
Parish: Annunciation Cathedral,
 Atlanta, GA (Metropolis of Atlanta)
Group: St Romanos Youth Choir



Celeste Zoe Andrews Alexander, a native of Charlotte, NC, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from UNC-Chapel Hill, and a Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy from Brenau University in Gainesville, Georgia.

Her experience includes five years of elementary general music teaching, ten years as a pediatric occupational therapist, service as cathedral organist at Holy Trinity in Charlotte for thirteen years, as well as adult and youth choir director from 1990-1993.

Celeste currently resides in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband Stephen. She has served as the St. Romanos Youth Choir director at Annunciation Cathedral since 1996. She began co-directing the youth choir this year with another dedicated church musician, Kay Nastopoulos.

The Youth Choir is open to children in grades K-5. Weekly rehearsals center around hymns of the Divine Liturgy, in both Greek and English. Also included are various types of children's music such as Greek folk songs and fun, non-Orthodox hymns. The children typically sing in Liturgy once in the fall and twice in the spring. They participate in the Christmas pageant, Heretismoi services, Saturday of Lazarus service and perform at the Annual Mother's Day Luncheon in May.

The Youth Choir follows the Sunday School calendar. Weekly rehearsals are held immediately after Sunday School dismissal. We began using the Orthodox Hymn series published by the National Forum and transitioned to the Kevin Lawrence setting of the Divine Liturgy a few years ago.

Communication with the parents is vital to the success of the program. Emails, telephone calls, bulletin notices and separate flyers help keep parents informed of what their children are learning and experiencing in choir. Many directors will speak to the fact that it is the dedication of the parents that can make or break a program. It is consistently communicated to the parents, in many different ways, the value of children learning about Orthodoxy through hymnology.

Celeste enjoys spending her free time with her husband and best dog, Riley. She enjoys reading, exercising, traveling, and spoiling her godchildren. If you would like to contact Celeste, she can be reached at the following email address: celeste_stephen@mindspring.com

National Forum Resources

2006 Liturgical Guidebook (Youth Music Resources)

A comprehensive listing of all youth music related materials produced by the National Forum (See pages 153-157). Check with your choir director to see the 2007 Edition, coming out in early January.

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 chapter on available resources, and frequently asked questions from directors of children's choirs. By Joanne H. Kambouris and Lynne Jebeles.

Please send all correspondence, ideas, and information to:

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