

YOUTH MUSIC CONNECTION

A Publication of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians

Welcome to our new e-Newsletter for Orthodox Youth Music enthusiasts! This publication is being sent to all persons who are interested in promoting or starting youth choirs and/or chant programs in their parishes. With each issue, we'll spotlight a particular youth music program and also a particular youth music director. We'll also include short descriptions of parish programs, upcoming events, resources, practical tips, and an FAQ section. Please send us your news, ideas, suggestions, and comments so that we may include them in our future issues. Contact information can be found below. We are waiting to hear from *you!*

In Christ's service,
Joanne H Kambouris, editor

In the Spotlight!

The Orthodox Youth Choir of Tampa Bay is a newly formed choir for unchanged voices comprised of young people ages 10-15. These students come from various Orthodox parishes throughout Florida's Tampa Bay area. Although the study of sacred music is of primary focus, quality secular music is also studied and performed. Together since October of 2005, this group performed several times during its inaugural year, including two performances for His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew during his pastoral visit to Tarpon Springs in January 2006. The choir also performed at a Christmas concert and the Three Hierarchs celebration at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Clearwater, Florida. They participated with a Pan-Orthodox adult choir in the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers at St Stephanos Greek Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg, and sang for the last Salutations service before Pascha. In the fall, choir members will serve their respective churches through active participation in weekly Divine Liturgies. Also, they plan to sing at a wedding, several concerts, and will enter the Hellenic Dance Festival Choral competition in February. The choir is under the direction of Joanne H. Kambouris and spiritual advisor, Father James Rousakis, both of Holy Trinity, Clearwater, Florida.



The Orthodox Youth Choir of Tampa Bay performs at the Patriarchal Luncheon on January 5th, 2006

Metropolis Youth Music News

- **San Francisco:** Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church, Shoreline, WA

The Holy Apostles Youth Choir joins the parish chanters at the psalterion, leading the congregation for all liturgies and special services. This year, many of the children and teenagers (ages 8 - 16) chanted for Lent and Holy Week services. The goal at Holy Apostles is to incorporate youth singers in every aspect of the liturgical life - singing for baptisms, weddings, and memorial services as well as every Divine Liturgy. Holy Apostles Youth choir is currently preparing to record a special CD of various liturgical hymns that should be ready for distribution in the fall of 2006. "Out of the mouths of babes and children comes perfect praise!" Psalms 8:2

Presvytera Pat Tsagalakis, Youth Choir Director

- **Chicago:** St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, St. Louis, MO

This youth program has 15 children ranging in age from 2nd to 9th grades. Using Tikey Zes' unison hymnal, they sing the liturgy once a month throughout the year, mostly in English (though they do incorporate Greek). During Pascha, the children

joined the senior choir for the Anastasi Service, singing the second repetition of "Dhefte Lavete Fos" after the priest (a "goose bumps" moment...!) Some of the kids frequently come up and sing with the "big people" on Sundays. They are warmly encouraged and welcomed by the adults.

Diana Ott, Youth Choir Director

- **New Jersey:** Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Egg Harbor Township, NJ

The Youth Choir participates on Sundays when they typically sing the communion hymn alone. Additionally, I work with them for the Christmas pageant, where they learn a variety of church music. For Holy Friday, I teach them the Lamentations and have the older ones join the adult choir to sing them. We also have them sing during the Vespers of our church's feast day. Finally, I work with the GOYANs for the "Sights and Sounds" competition, a regional Orthodox festival of music, drama, literature, and art, where they perform Orthodox hymns and choral speaking. Thank you for any future support you can give us as we try and teach our youth the beautiful hymns that have been entrusted to us by our church.

Presvytera Voula Liacopulos, Choir Director

"Youth"ful Tips and Suggestions

- **RELATIONSHIPS COUNT!** One of the most important steps in establishing a great youth music program is fostering a rapport between the director, clergy, adult choir director and chanters, parish council members, Philoptochos and other parish leaders.
- **GET ORGANIZED!** Our time is precious. Since many youth music programs run on a very limited rehearsal schedule, ensure the most efficient use of time and energy by having a clear rehearsal plan, with all materials ready to hand out *before* your students arrive.

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

Is something exciting happening in your Metropolis that is related to Youth Music? Send us the dates, times, and a short description!

Director's Corner

This is will be a regular feature of our newsletter. It will focus on youth directors, their reflections about teaching Orthodox music to children, and their insights regarding the challenges and triumphs we all have in common.

Name: Christine Kerxhalli, Youth Choir Director
Parish: Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Rochester, NY (Metropolis of Detroit)
Group: Annunciation Youth Choir



Prior to starting the Annunciation Youth Choir, Christine taught hymnology as part of the Sunday school program. Bringing a small electronic keyboard and hymnals with her as she traveled to each room, all students were taught age appropriate music. She started the Annunciation Youth Choir in 1998 with Fr. Jerry Tasikas' blessing,

patience, and support. Students range in age from 1st grade through high school. She offers organ lessons and music reading lessons in both western and Byzantine notation. Hymns are taught in both Greek and English, along with their meaning and significance. The Youth Choir began by learning the entire sequence of the Divine Liturgy, and would participate once a month by singing an Apolitykion and the Hymn of the Church in English. Fundraisers were

held to allow the choir to buy their own robes by the end of their first year. Now, eight years later, the choir actively sings for the church services during Lent, feast days, and during the Senior Choir's summer break.

It is Christine's belief that ultimately, it is the *parents* who really make a difference in the success or failure of a program. No matter how interested, musical, or talented a child is, the program will only be as successful as the parents' dedication to having their children learn about the sacred hymns of the church. There will always be peaks and valleys in the children's participation; the important thing is to pray and not give up!

While not a degreed musician, Christine studied piano and clarinet for many years as a youth at the Eastman School of music. She is studying Byzantine chant and is working toward completing her Master's Degree in Applied Orthodox Theology through the University of Balamand in Lebanon. She holds a Master of Science in Applied Statistics from the Rochester Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Physics and Chemistry from SUNY College at Brockport, New York. She is now retired and devotes her time to church work.

Christine is married and has two married daughters and three grandchildren. Her favorite thing to do when she is not teaching at the church is spending time with her family. You may contact her at: kerxhalli@aol.com
 Web page for Youth Choir:
<http://hometown.aol.com/kerxhalli/youthchoir.html>

National Forum Resources and Publications:

2006 Liturgical Guidebook (Youth Music Resources)

A comprehensive listing of all youth music related materials produced by the National Forum (See pages 153-157).

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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