

Tips for Cantors using the Galician Musical Settings

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Congregational Singing. Singing in Church and leading congregational singing is an art. The Ukrainians, through centuries of worship, have developed both a varied and complex array of liturgical music. The music presented in this collection is representative of the melodies used in Western Ukraine, commonly known as Galician Chant or “Samoilka”. It is normally sung congregationally, led by a single cantor or a group of cantors.

Certain selections, generally those used at every Liturgy, are usually sung by all the faithful. Other selections such as tropars, kondaks, and other hymns such as the hymn “All of Creation” (the hymn to the Theotokos appointed at the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great) which are used less often, are usually sung only by a trained cantor or small choir. In both cases it is imperative that a cantor know the melodies well, be well prepared for every service in advance, and sing in a manner which will be spiritually edifying to those listening and easy to follow for those who wish to sing along.

Most of the melodies included are traditionally harmonized in a very natural way, with those who are gifted musically generally singing a third below the melody. For those who do wish to sing along (and this is highly recommended!) it is imperative that they never sing so loud as to drown out the voice of the lead cantor. For those who wish to harmonize it is imperative that they never attempt to harmonize unless they know the melody well.

Absolute and Relative Pitch. When singing responses in Church we do not follow “absolute pitch”, but relative pitch. In other words, the written notes are there to indicate the melody and the intervals, but not necessarily the pitch of the note being sung. For example, no matter what key a particular hymn or response is notated in (and in general, for convenience sake they are notated so that the range of the melody remains within the five-line staff), the goal is to reflect the relative intervals. As to the actual pitch a particular response or hymn will be sung on during Liturgy, this will depend on the vocal range of the priest, the cantor, and the congregation. The melody is the melody, no matter what actual note we begin on.

Exclamation and Response. Much of the Divine Liturgy consists of a “dialogue” between the priest and the faithful. This “dialogue” becomes much more meaningful and natural when besides the words exchanged the musical tonalities of the priest and the singers are matched. To illustrate, in Galician chant if the priest is intoning a litany or exclamation on the tonic note *do* (i.e. F in the key of F, G in the key of G, etc.), the response of the “Amen” or the first “Lord, have mercy” will normally begin on the 2nd above, or the note *re* (G in the key of F, A in the key of G, etc.). This interplay between the priest’s and the cantor’s singing, when conducted properly, contributes to a pleasant aesthetic experience on the part of the faithful, and makes congregational singing much easier and more enjoyable.

Note Values. The note values (i.e., quarter, half, whole) given are only approximations, indicating which syllables of text are given emphasis. In general, the notes are written as quarter-notes (normal length) or half-notes (held longer), with eighth notes (short) or whole notes (long) used as needed. As with pitch, the note values are relative, not absolute. Using a metronome to help establish the rhythm of the hymns and responses will not only be useless, it will destroy the character of the music. Ideally the tempo and rhythm should flow from the text in an organic manner. It is very important that responses and hymns not sound rushed (as if we're in a race to see who can get to the end of the Liturgy fastest!) nor be dragged out so as to sound like a dirge. A tempo which permits all present to both sing along comfortably and understand all the words without suffering through a "pregnant pause" before the next word or phrase is sung is ideal.

The Eight Resurrectional Tones. Regarding the eight resurrectional tones, the Galician musical system actually includes 20 different melodies. Tones 1, 2, 5 and 7 have the same melody for both the tropar and the kondak. Tones 3, 4, 6 and 8 have one melody for the tropar and a different melody for the kondak. In addition to these 12 melodies the prokiemena of each tone have their own melody. A qualified cantor will know all these melodies by heart, and know how to sing the various festal tropars, kondaks and prokiemena using these melodies as a guide.

In order to successfully do this it is necessary to understand the "construction" of the resurrectional tones. They are composed of musical phrases which repeat, occasionally preceded by a special introductory phrase and/or concluded by a special ending phrase. For example the tone 2 tropar melody is very simple, consisting of one musical phrase which is repeated. The tone 6 kondak melody is more complicated, having one musical phrase with a special ending. The melody of the tropar and kondak in Tone 7 consists of 2 musical phrases, but must always end on the 2nd phrase, etc.

The Alleluia. It has become customary in many places to sing a common folk-style melody for the alleluia before the Gospel reading (a common alleluia melody is given at the end of the resurrectional tones), but technically the alleluia should be sung according to the tone given in the osmohlasnyk, menaion, triodion or pentecostarion. For those who wish to do so these alleluia melodies are included immediately after the prokiemen melodies for each tone.

The Communion Hymn. When more than one communion hymn is appointed, the first verse is chanted, followed immediately by the second. The triple alleluia is only sung at the very end, not after each one. Likewise, during the communion of the faithful "Receive the Body of Christ" is repeated slowly and piously until all have received. The triple alleluia is only sung once, at the very end.

Cantors may refer to the *Ridna Nyva* Church Calendar, especially the section entitled "General Information Concerning Rubrics" (pp, 22 - 51), for more detailed information.

Sing praises to our God sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
(Psalm 46: 6,1)