



The International Society
for Orthodox Church Music

Presents

A Concert by

Yphos Byzantine Schola

Under the Direction of
Protopsaltis
John Michael Boyer

Friday, June 22, 2018
St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Great Doxology, Slow Melody, Mode I (excerpt)

Melody & Translation by Nicholas Roumas (b. 1989)

Beatitudes & Sunday *Troparia*, Mode I

Petros Peloponnesios (+ 1778) / Metrical Translation: Richard Barrett (b. 1976)

***Kontakion* of the Mother of God, Mode II**

Cappella Romana / Trans. Archd. of Thyateira & Great Britain

Sunday *Prokeimenon*, Mode III

John Michael Boyer (b. 1978) / Trans. Archim. Ephrem (Lash) (+ 2016)

Cherubic Hymn, Mode Plagal IV

Ioannis Arvanitis (b. 1961) / Thyateira

Hymn to the Mother of God, Mode Plagal IV Heptaphonic (Octavic)

Gabriel Cremeens (b. 1992) / Trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery

Communion Hymn for Pentecost, Mode Plagal I

Basil Crow (b. 1987) / HTM

~ Intermission ~

Verses Sung at Great Compline “God is With Us,” Mode Plagal II

Boyer / Lash

***Apostichon* for Vespers of Forgiveness on Cheesefare Sunday, Mode IV, Old
Sticheraric**

Samuel Herron (b. 1986) / Trans. Archimandrite Seraphim Dedes (b. 1960)

***Prosomoia* for Vespers of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross, Mode Plagal II**

Petros Peloponnesios / Boyer / Metr. Trans. HTM (Edited)

Vespers *Doxastikon* for Saint Sophia & Her Three Daughters Mode Plagal I

Cremeens / HTM

Ode IX of the Canons for the Theophany of our Lord, Mode II

Hieromonk Ephraim of Arizona (b. ~1970) / HTM

Little *Paraclesis* Canon, Odes VIII & IX, Mode Plagal IV

Ioannis Protopsaltis (+ 1866) / Boyer / Metr. Trans. Lash & David Melling (+ 2004)

***Doxastikon* for Vespers of the Dormition of the Mother of God, in all Eight Modes**

Boyer / Lash

Yphos Byzantine Schola

John Michael Boyer, *Director* *

Richard Barrett, Manager (*in absentia*) *

Devin Barnes

Christopher Hondros

Gabriel Cremeens *

Paul Kappanadze

Nicolae Gheorghiuță

John Kusske

Samuel Herron *

Chris Palo

Amy Hogg

Photini Downie Robinson

* *Featured Composer*

About the Music

Little more than a brief survey, this evening's program is intended to offer a glimpse into the repertoire of Byzantine Music composed in English, a field which has seen a considerable surge in the last two decades. Such a survey must, in the interests of time constraints, omit a great deal of material that should by rights be included, a fact that created quite a dilemma for me while conceiving of the program. With what remains, I have sought to present a wide enough variety of the sonorities and textures — as well as of the composers and translators — that make up the landscape of this young discipline.

The first portion of the program presents a few liturgical moments one might experience on a Sunday morning, from the end of the *Orthros* or Matins service through the Divine Liturgy. **The Slow Great Doxology in the First Mode** is the crowning piece in **Nicholas Roumas'** recent book *The Musical Ark*, the first book of Byzantine Music published entirely in English in Byzantine Notation. The Doxology is masterfully set in a genre that sees little use here in the United States, and stacks up to its Greek counterparts quite naturally. We continue in the same mode with **Richard Barrett's** metered translations of the *Troparia of the Beatitudes* with their corresponding Biblical verses. The *Troparia* are strophic in both their melodic and poetic structures in the original Greek, and in order to adhere to this form, Richard has recomposed **Fr. Ephrem (Lash)'s** translations to fit the original melody of **Petros Peloponnesios**.

The **Kontakion to the Mother of God** is the only piece on the program taken from Cappella Romana's 2008 record, *The Divine Liturgy in English*. Composed specifically for the authorized translation of the **Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain**, the melody is different from its Greek prototype; nevertheless, it contains enough "melodic reminders" to evoke the well-known Greek melody.

Like Roumas' Slow Great Doxology, the **Sunday Prokeimenon in Mode III** represents a genre rarely heard in Divine Liturgies in the United

States — or in Greek Orthodox parishes in general. However, it is seeing some resurgence, and I try to do my part to see that this continues. **Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash)**'s translation of this Psalm verse offers few syllables to work with, and includes two instances of consecutive accented monosyllables, a pattern that almost never occurs in Greek. This is challenging in liturgical translations into modern English, although I believe the melodic formulas employed here maintain the integrity of both the English text and the musical mode.

The first large-scale melismatic piece in the program is **Ioannis Arvanitis's Cherubic Hymn**. Arvanitis is perhaps the most highly regarded composer of Byzantine Music in Greek living today, especially with regards to his melismatic compositions, which are fully classical in style and balanced in structure. This is owed to his compositional process, in which he conceives of new melodies using the short archaic formulas of the Old (pre-19th century) Notation, expanding them into the standard format of traditional melismatic chants by means of "slow exegesis." The same process used by the Three Teachers of the Chrysanthine Reform (early 19th century), this yields compositions which are easily included alongside older classical selections. Applying this technique to the Thyateira translation, rather than sounding like an adaptation of a classical setting, Arvanitis gives the English text its own classical treatment.

Gabriel Cremeens' Hymn to the Mother of God is a prime example of the repertoire of the Ἄξιόν Ἔστιν, or “It is Truly Meet,” which — especially in the 19th and 20th centuries — became a regular showcase for virtuosity both of composition and vocal facility. Based on the melody by Anastasios of Parla, the piece nevertheless showcases Cremeens' own virtuosity in composition. It is set in the Plagal Fourth Mode “*Heptáphonos*,” or “Octavic,” a variant which favors cadences on the upper octave of the mode's base.

Basil Crow's Communion Hymn for Pentecost takes us from our normal Sunday Liturgy fare into music for a particular Divine Liturgy, that of the Sunday of Pentecost. Crow's setting in the Plagal First Mode, although a short piece for a communion verse, is nevertheless beautifully composed using classical melismatic formulas.

In Greek parishes, Great Compline is synonymous with Holy and Great Lent and with the beloved refrain, “**For God is With Us.**” Setting these verses in the traditional Plagal Second mode, I tried to strike a balance between composing for the English text and maintaining the melodic trajectory of the Greek original.

In the Byzantine tradition, the first *Apostichon* in Vespers of Compunction is chanted in the Old, or Slow Sticheraric style. **Samuel Herron's *Apostichon* for Forgiveness Vespers on Cheesefare Sunday**

mirrors the Greek original by Iakovos Protopsaltis (+ 1800) but is composed specifically for **Fr. Seraphim Dedes**'s translation. The Old Sticheraric genre is a form which forces the listener and cantor alike to meditate on the meaning of the text by giving each word more time to be experienced. If we allow it, it can take us on a journey of both textual and melodic expression.

The remainder of this evening's program gives us a taste of the beginning, middle and end of the ecclesiastical year: the strophic *Prosomoia* for **Great Vespers of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross**, translated metrically by **Holy Transfiguration Monastery** (with my own edition for modern English), are a prime example of the power of the *Prosomoion*, in this case sung to the soft-chromatic plagal second melody "Ὅλην ἀποθέμενοι," or "Having laid up all their hope." Cremeens's **Doxastikon for St. Sophia and Her Three Daughters** (September 17) was his first composition project, and has since become a modern classic. **Hieromonk Ephraim** (the younger) of **Arizona** is one of the most prolific composers of Byzantine Music in English, and his setting of the **Canon for the Feast of Theophany** is a prime example of the work he has done in systematically applying melodic formulas to English text. In this case, the translation by HTM is not metered, so each troparion is an original composition in the mode and style of the *Eirmos*.

This brings us to the end of the ecclesiastical year, with the Dormition of the Mother of God. In the fortnight leading up to the feast, every evening's vespers is augmented with the service of *Paraclesis*, alternating Little and Great. The late **David Melling** was a close collaborator with Fr. Ephrem (Lash), and together they produced the entire **Little Paraclesis**, metering Fr. Ephrem's translation to fit the melodies of the *Eirmoi* perfectly. Years later, I took their translation and set it to Byzantine notation according to the melodies of Ioannis Protopsaltis. This evening we present a small excerpt, Odes VIII and IX.

We close the program with the *Doxastikon* for **Vespers of the Dormition of the Mother of God**. Set in all eight ecclesiastical modes, the Greek prototype is often assigned to be sung as an examination in Byzantine Music pædagogy. My setting seeks to evoke Petros Peloponnesios's masterpiece by emulating his overall structure; however, as it is composed specifically for the English text, many changes had to be made. If there is anything inspired in the melody, it is due to Petros' prototype; where it fails, the shortcoming is my own.

— John Michael Boyer