



Notable Notes

The Electronic Newsletter of the Southeastern Federation of Greek Orthodox Choirs and Musicians —December 2008
click on <http://www.sfgocm.org/news>

In order for this monthly newsletter to reach everyone, we need your help with news articles, essays, observations or anything else of import to our Federation

NEW PHOTO AND VIDEO FEATURE

We have opened an adjunct site for photos and videos! If you have any pictures or videos, please send them on to leonk@bellsouth.net and I'll upload them onto the site. To view them, **and there are lots from the Greece Trip**, please visit it by clicking on [our new photo site](#).



Editor's Note: Contributor Heather Stubbs has provided Notable Notes with her unique aural observations and impressions of the CMI held in Atlanta in November

RAISING THE BAR: AN EARLY CHRISTMAS PRESENT by Heather Stubbs of the Annunciation Choir in Atlanta, directed by Christina Polizos

November 8th 2008 was a day I will not soon forget. When Dr. Rodney Eichenberger began our morning session, he tested our ability to follow his gestures by becoming louder or softer.

Now, as a blind person who can't see her director, I wondered how his directing style was different from Christina Polizos'? What I discovered, much to my surprise, was that I was using some of the same hand motions and gestures he was! What a thrill! For someone who memorizes the music, I've always found it very difficult to adjust to a different director, because I memorized much more than the music.

As the morning session progressed, however, I became more and more comfortable, especially when he took the time to show me his hand positions when I wasn't sure, so that I would understand more and more not only how he directed, but how other directors would find it easier to direct their own choirs. After all, this was a session for the choir *and* the director. Now, we're talking.

I always spread my hands further apart when I wanted the sound to get louder and brought them closer together to become quiet. I also raised my hand up when I wanted the pitch to go up, which he described that he did the same.

When the floor opened up for questions, one of them addressed the ever-present single singer with the "vibrato from Hades!" Yes, he had an answer for that, too. Imagine someone singing and shaking their hands vigorously. Go ahead and try it. What do you hear? I remember doing that as a child standing in the corner just to see what it sounded like. Of course, as children, we think it's rather funny, just as a belch or a sneeze sounds funny. Any adult, however, would either find it very insulting or extremely hurtful, especially if that person were an older singer who had been performing for half a century and had a very lovely voice and sang very well. The point was, however, to bring it to one's attention by the director if nothing else worked. By the end of the morning session, I began to have a much deeper respect for what directors go through, especially if they have such a diverse choir with men and women of all ages. Then the afternoon session started. Dr. Eichenberger opened the floor to choir members to volunteer. He then put us through our paces by asking us to follow his and then each others' hand gestures and sing certain notes or words. That experience really set the stage, because it

helped us develop an even greater respect for each other. Dr. Eichenberger stressed how important it was to not only follow our director, but listen to each other and strengthen our performance through this very powerful form of communication. Now, I'm not a director, but after that session, I have wanted to learn the ropes, so I may direct with confidence not only in myself but in the choir. Dr. Eichenberger also emphasized the benefits of memorizing the music, because it allows us to fully focus on the director instead of the music in front of us.

One of his students was Mac Wilbur who is the current director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Now, let's look at that. Here's a volunteer choir composed of 360 men and women ages 18 to 60 who come from all walks of life. Many of these people grew up singing, some with no formal vocal training, and yet, their desire to lift their voices in Praise was and is still so strong that it flourished. Today, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has won Grammy and Pearl awards and has been entertaining many through their many recordings and the radio and TV program "Music and the Spoken Word" for over 50 years. The choir has been labeled as one of "the worlds finest choirs to date." Now imagine it: they don't have any music in front of them. They've memorized it. So how do they bring this music to life, each performance sounding just as good if not better than the first? I imagine that it's the tight bond they have with each other and the full respect they give their director.

Toward the end of the afternoon session, each choir director was called to come up and direct a specific song we had in our notebooks. With the skills Dr. Eichenberger taught us, we were able to perform well enough that it sounded as if we'd been practicing all day for each piece. And, you could say we had. The confidence Dr. Eichenberger gave us and our directors was so welcome, and the appreciation we had for the music and our directors was mutual to say the least. I dare say that with enough practice, and, when we put our music down and focus on the directors and our knowledge of the music, we might just be able to sing like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, too. Will we follow his lead? Stay tuned, (and tuned in to the music), and God only knows what we really can do! I know I can.



PROFILES FROM THE LOFT



Editor's Note: Rosemary Hendrix has started here what I hope is a trend. She has written and supplied the photo of a choir member. Please feel free to do the same so that we can keep Notable Notes alive!

Peter Zervakos lives and breathes music - thankfully he does this at the Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta. I knew Peter as a young man, in the choir under the directorship of Irene Constantinides. He studied music at the University of Georgia. He was a member of

the UGA famous Redcoat Band, earned both an undergraduate and graduate degree in music, then earned his Ed.S. in order to enter



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into the public school sector from which he will retire soon. He is our principal organist, one of two assistant directors and has found the time to organize two outstanding orchestras - in his "spare time." Peter was awarded the Athenagoras Award from the SFGOCM in 2008 for his outstanding contribution to music. Yiassou!

Let me tell you a little of Peter's personal contributions to his faith and his love of music. First of all, Peter places his love for Christ and his love for his family as THE priorities in his life. He lives his faith and he shares his God given talents. His family of three lovely daughters and his charming wife, Sally are all musically talented. They are all members of the choir and the orchestra. "There are musical instruments in every room in the house..." states Sally with a smile.

In this busy world, when there just seems to be so few hours in the day, Peter Zervakos seems to find the time to share himself with others.



From the National Federation

Nick Giannoukakis, through the AMERICAN SOCIETY OF BYZANTINE MUSIC AND HYMNOLOGY, is offering an opportunity to individuals and Byzantine choirs to participate in the development of an audiovisual album of "BYZANTINE CHOIRS OF THE HELLENIC DIASPORA". It will be of high historical importance.

If you are interested in participating, please see the details below from Nick – note the deadline for submission is February 1st.

In preparation for the Second International Conference to be held in Athens in the Spring of 2009, the American Society of Byzantine Music and Hymnology and the co-organisers, are preparing an audiovisual album entitled "BYZANTINE CHOIRS OF THE HELLENIC DIASPORA." Canada, Europe and Australia will be represented by a number of Byzantine Choirs.

The Society has requested participation from US Byzantine choirs, in communication with the Archdiocese and the Metropolises.

This communication serves as an auxiliary notification-request, through the National Forum of Church Musicians, to individuals and choirs who wish to participate in this historically unique and relevant album.

To be considered, choirs should select traditional Byzantine music material of a theme (and in a language) of their choice (duration no longer than one hour) and preferably recorded in live video-DVD format (i.e., choir should be visible; recorded in an empty church or other ecclesiastically-relevant place). Alternatively, audio is acceptable in CD form. The material should be new (and not from other published projects or previous copyrighted recordings).

Accompanying the audiovisual material should be a description of the choir and its history, a short bio of the director and a list of all current and past choristers.

As part of the Conference events, this album will be unveiled at an evening event attended by diplomats from embassies of the participants, musicians, musicologists, academics, writers, artists, poets, and other people of the Greek fine arts Diaspora.

When the Conference website is up, we also encourage a representative of each choir to register to attend the meeting to receive a plaque of recognition for their role in preserving and disseminating Byzantine music in the Diaspora.

The deadline to submit the materials is February 1st, 2009.

Please submit to:

The American Society of Byzantine Music and Hymnology
c/o Dr. Nick Giannoukakis
Center for Russian & East European Studies
University Center for International Studies
4400 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

[To email Nick Giannoukakis, click here!](#)

[To email the Society of Byzantine Music and Hymnology, Click here!](#)



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