Youth Music Network

Spotlight On:
Diana Ott, Youth and Adult Choir Director
St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
St. Louis, Missouri

Diana Ott is an educator, choir and theater director, and vocalist who inspires students and choir members with her talent, her exuberance, and an unrelenting sense of humor. She joined the St. Nicholas choir in 1992, began serving as youth choir director in 2004, and as adult choir director in 2014. In addition to conducting each Sunday’s liturgy, Diana has also integrated music into the weekly Sunday School curriculum and teaches hymns to the children ages 3 to 11.

Diana has served as choir director for the Chicago Metropolis’ annual youth choir conference ten times since 2008, leading 30 children initially and now up to 70 children each year. Through her enthusiasm and creativity, she is able to capture and direct the young people’s youthful energy to produce glorious sounds at each conference, culminating in the children’s singing the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Youth from the 5th through 12th grades also constitute a chanters choir to sing the stichoi, communion hymns, and recessional such as “Agni Parthene.”

For her exemplary contributions to church music in the Metropolis of Chicago, Diana was awarded the Patriarch Athenagoras Medal.

Submitted by: Theodora Varvares Hart
Students on Stage

Introducing Peter Kontominas

Peter Kontominas has been singing in church since preschool, when his parish of St. Nicholas in St. Louis had a weekly all-English youth liturgy in its downstairs chapel. He continued singing in the Sunday School choir and performed in many annual Christmas pageants. His ability to project was at times better than that of older actors and he readily demonstrated what was needed from the children regarding projection and expression as a character in the pageant.

When Diana Ott became the youth choir director in 2004, Peter was there. He saved every piece of music given to him in a binder and was always able to find the music needed when called upon.

Peter also attended every annual Chicago Metropolis youth conference. He was an anchor for the children who had never sung in a choir. When the chanters academy was added, that became truly the chance for his voice to shine, singing with the other 5th through 12th graders the antiphonal stichoi, communion hymns, and recessions. As his voice deepened, he became an excellent chanter and singer.

Peter seamlessly moved into the adult choir. All the members of the youth choir are encouraged to sing with the adult choir; Peter was among the first to just come up and join the adult choristers.

He is also a master pianist. During one of the Chicago Metropolis youth conferences, there was a talent show. The parents and the children were in complete awe of Peter’s performance, the culmination of the show.

Peter is in college now, but he still sings when he is home. He is truly an anchor and devoted member of the St. Nicholas Choir in St. Louis, Missouri.
Many of you had questions for Kathy Meck, choir director of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in San Diego, California, requesting specifics of her warm-up activities for her youth choir. Hopefully we will have more specifics for you in the next issue. Thank you for your patience!

Editor's Note

On behalf of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians, as editor, I would like to encourage you to submit articles spotlighting those amazing individuals that are teaching and directing Orthodox Hymnology to our youth as well as those youth that participate and exemplify some of our best young people singing and chanting our Holy Orthodox Hymns!

Also send in any articles highlighting concerts, classes, participations in services of our churches. These may all be submitted to:

Denise Karras
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Many thanks to those of you who have submitted articles and photos for these past issues.
The National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians first published this series of Orthodox Hymns in 1975. The series was developed to be used both in the parish Sunday School and at home with the parents. The cover of each hymn has the icon that goes with each hymn for the children to color, and there are instructions for the teacher or parent to use to explain the icon and the relationship to the hymn.

Many of you have these hymns in your classrooms and use them regularly. The Holy Synod with the assistance of the National Forum recently agreed to a new and consistent English translation of the hymns of our church. This has been a long process, but the translations have been completed. As a result, the translations that are used in the Hymns of the Orthodox Church Series are now obsolete. The National Forum is currently reproducing the Hymns of the Orthodox Church Series with the newly approved English translations.

Included in the Hymn Series article is the music and translation of Through the Prayers of the Theotokos in both English and Greek. Some of the teaching tips, key words, and teaching suggestions will be included. Below is not the entire lesson, but only a brief overview of what the National

Through the inter-ces-sions of the The-o-to-kos, Sa-vior, save us. (2x)

Through the inter-ces-sions of the The-o-to-kos, Sa-vior, save us.
About the Hymn: “This hymn asks for the prayers or intercessions of the Theotokos, the Mother of God. It is sung near the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, following the opening petitions and Kyrie Eleisons. ..........

Key Words:
Prez-vee-es..............intercessions (prayers)
Theh-oh-toh-koo.......Theotokos (Mother of God)
Soh-ter:.....................Savior
Soh-sohn ee-mas......save us

Teaching suggestions:
1. Discuss the importance of the Theotokos in our Church. She is called the Mother of God, Because she gave birth to Jesus Christ..........
2. Discuss the concept of intercessory prayer. We pray that the Theotokos will intercede for us to God.

About the Icon............
The icon on the cover depicts a close-up of the Theotokos. Because of her importance in the Orthodox faith, the Theotokos is traditionally found in two very prominent icons in every Orthodox Church............

The text above is taken from the last edition of the Hymns of the Orthodox Hymn Series. The music and the words are the newly approved English translation by the Holy Synod with the assistance of the National Forum.