Course Descriptions
Find out more about each session here.

General Sessions

The Divine Liturgy (Wednesday through Saturday)

This year’s theme explores the service that is probably most familiar to all of us: the Divine Liturgy. Although we celebrate this beautiful service at least once a week, there is much for us to learn about its history, theology and liturgics. Daily thematic sessions, presented by both clergy and laypeople, will focus on a particular hymn or section of the Liturgy as it relates to our ministry of music: the history of its composition and usage, when and how it is appropriately sung, and its significance within the service as a whole.

New Music (Wednesday through Saturday)

Immediately following each thematic lecture on the Divine Liturgy, a variety of presenters will introduce several different settings of that hymn or section. This time-honored tradition of musical sharing goes back to the early days of the SMI, when choir directors would lay out stacks of mimeographs on a long table for other musicians to pick up, but the effect is the same: to provide us all with a few alternatives to the longtime standbys in our parishes. In addition, it’s extremely valuable to observe and participate in the process of learning a new piece of music under a variety of directors.

Choral Rehearsal (Wednesday through Saturday)

Along with our focus on the simplest of services, this year we want to bring back an emphasis on the simplest method of improving choral unity and performance: regular rehearsals. To that end, we will hold a group rehearsal each evening in preparation for the next day’s Divine Liturgy. Again, we will have the opportunity to observe a number of different directorial styles; our directors are all highly trained in specialties, varying from Byzantine chant to operatic conducting. These sessions are also useful in that they help us learn to recognize and fix common choral problems.

Understanding the Typikon: Liturgy (Friday 11:30-1)

The Typikon is one of the most important texts for clergy and readers, but unfortunately it is poorly misunderstood by many musicians. What exactly is a Typikon, who writes it, and how can it help us to plan our services? Dr. Sam Cohlmia will answer these questions, giving us a more comprehensive understanding of the various systems that interact to form the Typikon – fixed and movable feasts, longstanding traditions and local variances, and most importantly, the rich theology that governs the rules of our worship.
ANNUAL DEPARTMENTAL REPORT (SATURDAY 11:30-12)

Since the addition of a full-time chairman a year ago, the Department of Sacred Music has grown tremendously in scope, diversity and public profile. Paul Jabara will take us through some of the newest and most exciting initiatives in the department: among the highlights are a growing number of smaller-scale SMI’s and workshops, an expanded Byzantine program, an ever-growing ministry to our young musicians and an updated and streamlined website. This presentation will be interactive, however: we want to hear from you about what programs you find most helpful and where you would like to see growth in the future.

COMPOSITION IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH (SATURDAY 12-1)

Surprisingly, despite the Antiochian Archdiocese’s rich tradition of composition, Nazo Zakkak is its first Composer in Residence. Nazo first presented at the SMI one year ago, and his music proved immediately inspiring to musicians of every school and tradition. Throughout the past year he has been working on an original setting of the Divine Liturgy, which we hope will become the standard throughout the archdiocese. During this session, he will present some pieces of that setting; he will also speak more generally about the process of composing Orthodox hymns and explain why new music is so important.

YMM PERFORMANCE (SATURDAY 2-3)

Since our Youth Music Ministry program debuted five years ago, performances by our young musicians have been one of the highlights of the Sacred Music Institute. However, this performance is truly special because it will present highlights of the YMM’s first-ever professional recording sessions, which we undertook this year in conjunction with NAC Teen SOYO; the CD will be available in the fall. In addition, it includes quite a few alumni of the YMM program, who are now attending the SMI regularly as adults.
BREAKOUT SESSIONS

BYZANTINE NOTATION

Thursday 10-11:15: Introduction to Byzantine Notation
In this introduction, we will learn the basics of Byzantine Chant and Byzantine Notation, with an emphasis on reading music as quickly as possible. This will give a beginning foundation to anyone unfamiliar with the notation, and it is not heavily based on theory.

Thursday 2-4: Symbols and Simple Rhythms
We will learn the ten symbols needed for ascending and descending in Byzantine music, along with rhythmic symbols that lengthen the duration of a note. This course will build on the introductory course, recapitulating in greater depth what was introduced.

Friday 10-11:15: Complex Rhythms
Moving forward in complexity, we will introduce rhythmic markings that shorten the duration of Byzantine notation symbols. These rhythms are essential to the character of Byzantine music, but are one of the more difficult aspects to internalize for a Western musician.

Friday 2-3: Qualitative Symbols
There are many different ways to musically perform Byzantine notation symbols. This session will introduce many of the qualitative symbols that are difficult to reproduce in Western music, but inform the chanter how to articulate a specific pattern of music. We will also discuss interpretation of symbol combinations.

Friday 3-4: Martyria, Scale Changes and Tempo
During the last two sessions of the Byzantine Notation course, we will tackle some of the most complex topics: the markers that indicate where a chanter should be, as well as tempo markings and changes between different scales. This session is heavily based on theory and is more advanced, so while it is still fairly introductory in nature, it may be too in-depth for some participants just learning the notation system.

Saturday 3-4: Martyria, Scale Changes and Tempo
This is a continuation of the previous session, building on the advanced topics introduced.
CHANTING WITH PROSOMIA

Thursday 10-11:15: History and Theory of Prosomia
By way of introduction, we will explain the basic facts of prosomia: what they are, who utilizes them and in what context, and why chanters will find them useful.

Friday 10-11:15: Learning Common Prosomia
We will learn three basic model melodies: “Thou art the joy” in Tone 1, “As one valiant” in Tone 4, and “O strange wonder” in tone 8. All three of these melodies are very common and in fact make several appearances in this weekend’s services!

Saturday 3-4: Singing Prosomia from Text
After reviewing the model melodies we learned in the last session, we will practice singing these melodies using only the metered texts, as you might during a service. By the end of our course, you will have three new melodies to use, plus a template for learning the others.

CONDUCTING

Thursday 10-11:15: Leading with Confidence
A confident leader projects focus and poise through a variety of means: body posture, breath control, and controlled gestures. In this introductory session, we will demonstrate and work with participants to practice the physical motions of conducting. We will also discuss the role of the conductor and what s/he needs to prepare in advance of each rehearsal, such as memorizing cues, determining correct pitches and matching voice types.

Thursday 2-4: Regular Beat Patterns
Choral music generally follows a pattern of two, three or four beats per measure, and there are various conducting patterns that can help a choir follow the music more easily. During this double session, we will demonstrate and practice some of these patterns by conducting actual pieces, and we will include practical application as well, such as dynamics, cutoffs, eye contact and unified endings.

Friday 10-11:15, 2-3: Rehearsal Technique
Now that we have established the basics of conducting during services, we can work on preparing for rehearsals. This double session will enable directors to teach music to their choirs from beginning to end: selecting appropriate music, learning parts in advance and giving proper pitches, teaching parts individually and adding one at a time until the piece is complete. If you’ve ever struggled while teaching a new piece to your choir, you need to attend and practice with us!

Friday 3-4, Saturday 3-4: Rehearsal Workshop
During the last two sessions, we will practice what we have learned in a workshop setting. Participants will have the opportunity to teach and rehearse new pieces with a “choir” of other directors.
**Music for Small Choirs**

*Thursday 10-11:15: How to Lead a Small Choir*
No matter the size of your parish, as a director there will be times when you will be called upon to lead a small ensemble of singers. This may be an ongoing situation, as in a mission church; it may be a deliberate choice, as for a wedding or weekday Liturgy; or it may be an unexpected event, as when many choir members are traveling during the summer. Regardless, there are steps you can take before and throughout the service to improve sound, unity and focus. You may even find you prefer directing a small group in the end!

*Friday 10-11:15: Panel Perspectives and Discussion*
This session will build upon the previous one by including a number of different panelists, each of whom has extensive experience with mission churches and / or small choirs. Each panelist will present a 5-10 minute summary of his or her perspective, i.e., the most crucial aspect(s) of directing a small group of singers. The remainder of the session will be devoted to answering questions and troubleshooting problems, so please consider sharing yours here!

**Byzantine Chant Basics**

*Thursday 2-3: Becoming a Chanter*
If you’ve recently started learning to chant, you probably have a lot of questions. Where do you find the right music and learn to sing it properly? Should you learn another language or notation system? Do you need lessons, and is there a preferred style or method of training? Which decisions are yours to make, and when should you consult your priest first? Although we won’t be able to resolve everything definitively in one hour, but we can give you the resources you’ll need to begin seeking answers. Bring your own questions, too!

*Thursday 3-4: A Chanter’s Vocation*
In this continuation of the previous session, we’ll look at the concept of vocation as it applies to chanting. When we chant, what is our job, and how can we perform it to the best of our ability? How can we grow spiritually through chanting when it’s so difficult just to remember what hymn comes next? What kind of atmosphere do we want to foster at the chanter’s stand, and how can we bring that about? Discussion will range from ideology to practical solutions, and may continue for an additional hour if there is sufficient interest.
VOCAL TECHNIQUES

Thursday 3-4: Breath and Posture
The way we stand and breathe is tremendously important to the sound we produce, as evidenced by the fact that we’re going to take a whole session of the Vocal Techniques class to practice it! Be prepared for an active session in which we tackle warm-up exercises, breathing techniques and other physical aids to a clear, strong and pleasing vocal tone.

Friday 3-4: Vocal Production
Once correct posture and breathing are established, a free and open vocal production will follow. In this session, we will work on proper vocal production – getting a full, balanced sound – using a variety of singing exercises and, if time permits, full pieces of music.

Saturday 3-4: Singing in a Group
Although we have concentrated thus far on steps the individual can take to ensure his or her voice is the best it can be, most of us spend the majority of our musical ministry singing with others, whether a few chanters or a large choir. If you are a soloist, what modifications do you need to make in order to listen and blend with others? If you are a director, how can you coax a unified sound out of a group of singers? How does placement affect the choir? We will discuss these questions and others, demonstrating and practicing along the way.

UNDERSTANDING THE TYPIKON

Friday 2-3: Understanding the Typikon: Vespers
In a smaller-scale continuation of the general session on the Divine Liturgy, we will look at the Typikon for Vespers, seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the various systems that interact to form the Typikon – fixed and movable feasts, longstanding traditions and local variances, and most importantly, the rich theology that governs the rules of our worship. There will be additional time for questions during this session.

Friday 3-4: Understanding the Typikon: Orthros
In a smaller-scale continuation of the general session on the Divine Liturgy, we will look at the Typikon for Orthros, seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the various systems that interact to form the Typikon – fixed and movable feasts, longstanding traditions and local variances, and most importantly, the rich theology that governs the rules of our worship. There will be additional time for questions during this session.

WESTERN RITE MUSIC

Thursday 2-3, Friday 2-3: Music for Divine Liturgy
These sessions will be devoted to exploring the musical heritage of the West as it is expressed in our Western Rite parishes. Examples of hymns and other chants will be offered which can be used in both Eastern and Western liturgical services and paraliturgical occasions (such as during veneration and as preludes to weddings) to enhance musical diversity. We hope you can join us.