

CMAA Supports Sacred Music Tradition in the Southeast

by Maria Rist
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In a region where only 2-3% of the population is Catholic, the Church's sacred music tradition is now supported by a new Southeastern Sacred Music chapter of the CMAA and a series of summer workshops. This summer, the second annual Southeast Summer Sacred Music Workshop was hosted by my parish, the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Chattanooga, on July 22-23, with 115 participants from seven states. This year's one-and-a-half day conference followed last summer's successful Saturday workshop hosted by CMAA's Bridget Scott and Fr. Charles Byrd at Our Lady of the Mountains in Jasper, GA. Bridget and I were both formed by past workshops in Auburn, AL hosted by Scott Turkington, Jeffrey Tucker, and Arlene Oost-Zinner, as well as the CMAA's summer Colloquium. We were aware of a handful of parishes in our area who integrate sacred music into their liturgies. Recognizing the potential effectiveness of a sacred music workshop, several of us decided to join forces this year to present some possibilities to many parishes in our region and creating a support network for collaboration.

Workshop planning began in January by choosing a weekend, which happened to include both our name days, July 22 (St. Mary Magdalene) and July 23 (St. Bridget). Pope Francis later elevated the memorial of St. Mary Magdalene to a second class feast in line with the Apostles, giving cause for celebration. I called an initial planning meeting with Bridget Scott; Mary C. Weaver, director of the Pope Benedict XVI Schola in Knoxville; the basilica's organist, Andrea Tierney; and the basilica's rector, Fr. David Carter. All the remaining planning and preparation was done from our separate locations, with email and phone conferences. CMAA's General Manager, Janet Gorbitz, was our key consultant. She guided and assisted us from start to finish on agenda, advertising, pricing, food service, and book sales. Mrs. Gorbitz also volunteered starting templates for tracking registration, housing, and budget, which proved very helpful. Mary Weaver established an infrastructure for workshop promotion and registration. She developed our new chapter website, online registration, email list, and facebook page, and she produced our workshop book very similar to the book she creates for the CMAA Colloquium each year.

Our vision was "an invitation to choirs and musicians of all levels, as well as clergy, to experience and learn the sacred music tradition of the Catholic Church." To appeal to Church musicians of different levels of experience and interest, the planning team decided to offer a complete track in Gregorian chant aimed at beginners, as well as breakouts for polyphony, organists, and music directors. We were grateful to recruit Dr. Jennifer Donelson as our primary chant instructor and speaker. Dr. Donelson had been instrumental in the successful summer workshops hosted by MusicaSacra Florida, and she gave further advice on agenda, pricing, and repertory. We enlisted CMAA's Bruce Ludwick Jr, Organist and Choirmaster of St. Paul Cathedral in Birmingham, to lead the organist sessions, alongside the basilica's organist, Andrea Tierney, and to direct the advanced mens' chant schola. Bridget Scott would lead sessions on polyphony, Ward method solfege and traditional Catholic funeral music. Mary Garner, director of the Knox Latin Mass Schola, would co-host a joint session on repertory and resources for choirs. Organ students Ericka McCarty and Joseph D'Amico played during the recital and the closing Mass. Andrew Leung, who had co-hosted the 2015 workshop in Jasper, was unable to attend but graciously assisted us with planning and with promotion through his blog on Corpus Christi Watershed. Fr. David Carter, the Basilica's rector and an excellent singer, would lead us from beginning to end by

delivering talks and homilies, moderating the musicians' Q&A panel, teaching a breakout session for clergy on the pastoral and practical skills necessary to implement sacred music in parishes, and reverently celebrating the solemn sung Vespers and closing Mass. There were ten presenters/performers in all.

The workshop schedule was jam-packed from start to finish. During the welcome and check-in period, guests were offered a guided tour of the Basilica, and confessions were available in the church. Father Carter opened with an inspiring talk on the Revolution of Obedience: obedience to the Church's directives for the liturgy, reinforced by the Second Vatican Council. Participants then chose one of the 2-hour sessions on chant fundamentals, polyphony, organ, and clergy. The group broke for dinner-on-your-own, and returned to the basilica for our evening festivities, including a solemn Vespers for the newly elevated Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, an organ recital, and an open mic for choirs and organists. Fr. Carter began by giving a tutorial on how to chant Vespers, so that all attendees could participate. He then celebrated Solemn Vespers with the attending clergy in choir, using a program commissioned by Fr. Samuel Weber, OSB, for this workshop. Conference participants divided between high and low voices to chant the Vespers. Bruce Ludwick Jr served as cantor. The basilica's Gloria Dei Schola sang a processional motet, *Maria Magdalene* by Andrea Gabrieli, and the polyphonic verses of the *Magnificat*. The organ recital included sacred organ repertory of different periods and styles, and our organists did a fine job of bringing out the colors of the basilica's beautiful instrument. Rounding out the evening was our open mic session, which included Gregorian chant, Renaissance polyphony, organ music, and a new setting of the *Gloria in Excelsis*, sung and played by its composer.

Saturday began with a breakfast buffet and choice of a solfège warmup or a catch-up course for people who had missed the Friday's chant session. Participants had their choice of the fundamentals chant track or special topics: traditional Catholic funeral music, repertory and resources for choirs, and/or a private organ lesson with Bruce Ludwick Jr. Dr. Donelson brought all participants together for an enlightening talk on the Spiritual Fruits of Gregorian Chant. During our onsite lunch, everyone was invited to address questions to the panel of our musician-presenters. Questions centered around how to integrate Catholic sacred music within the culture of pop and Gospel styles that is common in most Southeastern churches. After lunch, participants chose to rehearse the chant propers of the Mass with one of three scholae: fundamentals, advanced women, or advanced men. Dr. Donelson led a full-group rehearsal for the Ordinary parts of the Mass, including the full Gregorian *Mass IV cunctipotens genitor Deus* and the ICEL English *Credo I*, and the polyphony choir rehearsed once more. Those who had chosen the chant or organist track on Friday were invited to join in this rehearsal so that they could participate in the polyphony. We had a final call for the book table, and confessions were again offered before Mass.

The workshop culminated in a solemn Mass sung by the workshop participants, celebrated ad orientem and with incense. The sung dialogues of the Mass were led by the priest and deacon, and the readings sung by cantors. Chanted propers came from the Graduale Romanum, the Plainchant Gradual, and Richard Rice's *Communio with English Verses*. The polyphony choir sang a polyphonic Offertory by Jon Naples and two motets, *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* by Victoria and *Teach Me, O Lord* by Thomas Attwood. At the end of Mass, the men's schola sang the solemn-tone *Salve Regina* with a drone. Two congregational

hymns were sung in harmony. This Mass was an opportunity for everyone to experience and be inspired by the ideal of a fully sung Ordinary Form liturgy.

Some lessons that the team learned in planning and implementing this workshop are related to the attendees' needs, budgeting, and flexibility.

- People of varying backgrounds will come. It is good to plan sessions for different levels. If possible, offer flexibility so that people don't have to choose just one track. We laid out our schedule so that people had a chance to participate in other courses besides the primary track they chose, and we included all the materials in the workshop book for all to access, regardless of their session choices.
- Be sure to offer something that would attract your own parish musicians to participate in the workshop, and consider offering them a discount on the registration.
- There is not enough time in a short workshop to present all the essentials of sacred music. Consider including all the material you would like to cover in a packet or book that people can reference later.
- Most attendees were willing to stay overnight on Friday. A full two-day workshop might provide even more flexibility in programming.
- The hosting organization must be prepared to lose money. Most people sign up at the last minute. You will not have a clear picture of the cost until very close to the workshop. Plan your pricing based on smaller number of attendees than you hope for. Unless you have funds available to cover costs, regional workshops are largely a volunteer effort. It is helpful to discuss the financial reality with your presenters up-front. In the end, our registration filled to capacity, and the costs of our workshop were covered, allowing us to give our presenters a modest donation.
- Hotels can be expensive. It is good to provide a low-cost housing option if possible.
- The tasks involved in administering a workshop are many. It is best to start planning at least six months in advance, and to pace yourself. The music director serving as the primary administrator can expect to be very busy up to and during the workshop. Consider delegating most of the teaching or performing responsibility, freeing yourself for hospitality and administration and to really enjoy the workshop you have put your heart into.
- Plan in advance for a survey to collect feedback, as well as any other follow-up activities that you want to do. Putting on a workshop takes a lot of energy, and you may feel drained for awhile afterwards.
- Invest in a CMAA membership for your parish, and you will get top-notch assistance from CMAA with your workshop.

Participants from the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul and the planning team believe the workshop was successful in its initiative to offer instruction and experience in the music of the Church. Everyone had the opportunity to experience a fully sung Mass and Vespers. Although no one could attend every session, all got to bring home a 226-page book packed with resources, sample propers in English and Latin, and a compilation of helpful reference material. Many purchased books and chant collections from the book sale. Our attendees came from diverse parish backgrounds but shared common enthusiasm for learning more about sacred music and bringing it home to their parishes. The consensus among attendees who have offered feedback was that this workshop was enjoyable and helpful. With these first two workshops behind us, the new Southeastern Sacred Music chapter now has an infrastructure for networking and discussing topics, as well as hosting future events.

The participants from these first two summer workshops have developed a camaraderie through our shared experiences, similar to what many experience when attending the CMAA Colloquium, and these friendships can lead to progress in sacred music in the southeast. Already, for example, two Chattanooga area parishes that we are aware of are implementing what they learned at the workshop, using two different approaches. At one parish, the choir has started singing Gregorian chant and motets in Latin. At another parish, the clergy and choir are introducing the sung dialogues of the Mass in English to the people gradually, with future plans to introduce the propers in English. Fr. Carter and I are working with them to help with this transition. Through this process, bonds of Catholic unity are being formed among very different parishes.

A regional sacred music workshop can be highly successful in a parish of any size or means with a supportive pastor and a team of musicians who are willing to volunteer to plan and implement it. Local workshops may be the best way to share the sacred music tradition with other parishes. The process of putting on a workshop is somewhat like missionary work: challenging and unpredictable, but of inestimable value to the hosts and the recipients.

To join Southeastern Sacred Music, visit our website: southeasternsacredmusic.com.

You can also follow Southeastern Sacred Music on facebook by joining the group or liking our page. Photos and video clips from the July 2016 workshop, including a full audio recording of the Vespers, are available on facebook. Planning is under way for next summer's workshop.

The transcript of Fr. Carter's *Revolution of Obedience* talk can be found on the Joy of Tradition resource page on Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul's website: <http://www.stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/joy-of-tradition>

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