

Ave verum as a sort of bonus.) All of this music is concise, delightful to sing, and suitable for liturgical use. Ambitious singers will also enjoy his earlier works, the fierce penitential motets and colorful songs of rejoicing in his *Cantiones sacrae*. For those who want to explore his Latin-texted music further, a complete 12-CD set is being recorded by the Cardinal's Musick under Andrew Carwood. Nine of the CDs are available as of spring 2006. The most recent one features *Ave verum* and the Corpus Christi propers.

Practical notes:

- *Ave verum* was edited by Philip Brett in volume 6a of the new *Byrd Edition*. The book can be ordered from Stainer and Bell: <http://www.stainer.co.uk/acatalog/byrdedition.html>.
- A clear, accurate, and free score is available online from the Choral Public Domain Library: <http://wso.williams.edu/cpd1/sheet/byrd-avc.pdf>.
- Ranges: soprano d'-d'', alto f-g', tenor f-f', bass F-b-flat. Some groups may find it useful to sing the piece a step higher.
- Approximate duration: 4 minutes. 🎵

Reflections on *Kyrie Orbis factor*

by William Mahrt

Ky-ri e * e- lé- i-son. ij Chri-ste e- lé- i-son. ij

Ky-ri- e e- lé- i- son. ij Ky-ri- e e lé- i- son.

In encouraging the participation of the entire congregation in the music of the liturgy, there is an important principle: “singing means singing the Mass, not just singing during Mass.”¹ The participation of the people is all the more authentic when they are singing the central and essential parts of the liturgy. This applies particularly to the Ordinary of the Mass, for two principal reasons. First of all, the people’s parts of the Ordinary (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei) are generally liturgical actions in and of themselves, and not the accompaniment of another action.

While an introit may be a significant text, its place in the liturgical action is as an accompaniment to the procession; the procession is the action, not the introit chant. The opposite is true of the parts of the Ordinary: the Kyrie is the liturgical action and not the accompaniment of any other action; it is what is being done at the time. Thus, it is appropriate for the congregation as a whole to sing this part. Second, since the parts of the Ordinary are unchangeable, they can be repeated often, learned well, and

¹ International Committee on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982), p. 1299, R4.

thus sung without difficulty by a congregation.

This also means that these pieces for the congregation need not be limited to the simplest chants. The Kyrie from Mass VIII (de Angelis), not a particularly simple chant, can usually be sung by an average Catholic congregation, since it has been sung so often and remains in the collective memories of innumerable congregations.

But there is another Gregorian Kyrie than deserves attention in this context: *Kyrie Orbis factor*, from Mass XI, for the ordinary Sundays of the year. This is a chant of modest scope, easily learned by a congregation, but of considerable beauty—an important feature of an often-repeated chant. I have sung this chant many Sundays a year for over forty years, and it has retained all its freshness and depth over this repetition. I will try to explain some of the aspects of its beauty and practicality in the hope that many will want to incorporate it into the singing of their Sunday congregations.

In approaching the beauty of a chant, one can address concrete elements of symbolism as well as abstract elements of melodic design. Kyrie melodies have a characteristic melodic contour, which reflects something of the meaning of their texts. The characteristic contour of Gregorian chants in general is the arch,² beginning upon or near its lowest pitch, rising to a peak and then descending back down to its final. This reflects the basic aspect of prayer, rising in aspiration to a high point and returning to the point of origin.

Kyrie melodies very often show a slightly different contour—beginning at a higher pitch and descending to a low point, a gesture of humility suitable to such a plea for mercy. The initial invocation of *Kyrie Orbis factor* has this kind of contour—from its beginning note, it touches upon the half-step above, the half-step being a particularly expressive interval; then turning around the initial note, it skips downward a fifth to the final; this is followed by an ascent upward to the top note of the half-step interval and a filling out of the whole range of the fifth back down to the final, touching upon the note below it. Thus “eleison” confirms and amplifies the initial pitches of the invocation. The turn to Christ at “Christe” moves to a higher pitch, expressing a more intense address of the Son of God.

The seventh and eighth invocations return to the melody of the first, but the final one focuses upon the lowest part of the range; the contrast with the higher range of the previous lines conveys a sense of equanimity and repose that gives the chant a pleasing rounded-out quality. These matters of contour are unusual in Gregorian chants, but quite characteristic of Kyrie chants; and their effect, though subliminal, surely contributes to the quality of the plea for mercy on the part of the congregation.

The other aspect of the beauty of such a chant is that of melodic design. This chant received its final formulation only in the fourteenth century,³ and its melodic structure is more rationalized than some of the earlier melodies. The basis of its structure is the pair of intervals, the fifth and the fourth: the octave of the authentic Dorian mode comprises a fifth D-A and a fourth above it A-D, with a single note (C) below it. The

² Cf. Peter Wagner, *Gregorianische Formenlehre: Eine choralische Stilkunde*, Einführung in die Gregorianischen Melodien: Ein Handbuch der Choralwissenschaft, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1921; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), pp. 9, 286.

³ Two versions of this melody are given in the chant books, one from the tenth century and one from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, *Liber Usualis* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), pp. 46, 85; *Graduale Romanum* (Sablé-sur-Sarthe: Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes, 1974), p. 748; *Gregorian Missal* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1990), p. 113.

first Kyrie is based upon the fifth, with a half-step above it; the response “eleison” begins at the mid-point of the fifth (F), rises to the top, adding the half-step above, then descends stepwise to the bottom of the fifth, adding a note below it; the fifth is thus bordered by a single pitch at its top and bottom. The Christe adds the fourth above (A-D), but its principal notes are A-C, with neighboring notes above and below this third, complemented then by “eleison,” the same melody as before.

The final invocation is based upon the lower portion of the range, being centered upon the third, D-F, with a neighboring note above and below it, just as in the Christe. In fact, the final Kyrie repeats a good bit of the Christe melody down a fifth: Christe: D-C-D-C-A-G-A; final Kyrie: G-F-G-F-D-C-D. The three melodies are clearly distinguished in range by being centered on first the fifth, then the fourth above, and then the minor third at the bottom of the fifth, and emphasis upon these main notes is created by adding neighboring notes around them.

There is something surprisingly symmetrical to this melody. If one counts notes, one sees it: Kyrie (6 notes) eleison (12 notes); Christe (9 notes) eleison (12 notes); final Kyrie (13 notes), eleison (12 notes). Thus, in the first invocations, a proportion of one to two, in the second, three to four, and in the last, one integer over one to one (a superparticular proportion, in medieval terms). Of course, one does not have to count the notes to appreciate the proportionality involved.

There is an interesting point in the early history of the Kyrie that bears its traces in this melody. In the oldest *Ordines Romani*, ceremonial books for the early Roman liturgy, the performance of the Kyrie is described in some detail. It was what has been called a Latin-texted Kyrie, since the initial word Kyrie is replaced by a Latin phrase that amplifies “Kyrie,” Lord. In this piece the first line was “Orbis factor, Rex æterne,” maker of the world, eternal King. This was sung by deacons, and the choir responded with “eleison,” have mercy. There would be an unspecified number of invocations, but at the end the master of ceremonies would give a sign to conclude; the deacons would then sing the last invocation to a different melody, indicating that this was the final one. Our Kyrie melody shows these characteristics: while the invocations differ in melody, the response, “eleison” is always the same; and the last invocation is notably different from the foregoing ones.

The Kyrie, as sung in the Carolingian period and later, consisted specifically of nine invocations, three times three, symbolic of the Trinity, and usage until the reform of the Second Vatican Council retained this “nine-fold” arrangement. In books after the council the Kyrie is six-fold, but the rubrics allow the nine-fold for musical reasons. I find that three invocations are just enough to give a congregation not familiar with the melody a chance to pick it up by the third statement. Thus, for the sake of the congregation’s participation, the nine-fold arrangement may be used advantageously. Moreover, the reduction to a six-fold arrangement was to accommodate the dialogue between priest and congregation, each stating the invocation once; this six-fold arrangement seems to have been devised for the low Mass and need not be retained in the high Mass.

Sometimes the phenomena of the Middle Ages are instructive in thinking about how to perform a chant. Chants were performed in the earlier Middle Ages without

the aid of musical notation, being passed on intact by oral tradition long before they were written down, and scholars have often reflected upon the phenomenon of oral transmission as a factor in the nature of the chants. It is possible, even with a group of singers today, to replicate this oral transmission: A certain segment of the chant is sung to the group and they are asked to sing it back identically; eight or ten notes can be retained in the short-term memory and easily sung back. Then the next segment is sung to them and they repeat it, then these two together. Since the portion of the melody on “eleison” is the same for each invocation, it does not have to be relearned. In quite a short time, the whole melody can be sung by a large group totally without the aid of any notation.

In my experience, this is faster than simply having the group read the piece from the notation, because they can pick up the rhythmic inflection of the chant immediately. Still, the notation ought to be a useful aid as well, and I have found that one can ask a group to look at the notation as the piece is lined out and sung by imitation, just as I have described above, and they learn it all the quicker. If one is allowed a brief rehearsal time before Mass, this can be done with a congregation very efficiently. I would not do it often, but on occasion it is a very effective way to introduce a piece to be sung in that morning’s Mass.

This is thus a chant with interesting symmetries and melodic design; together with the symbolism of its descending motion, these features contribute to a piece that will bear considerable repetition and retain its uniqueness, freshness, and beauty over a long period of time. ■

NEWS

A Fitting Celebration

By Duane Galles

A solemn Mass to mark the 60th anniversary of the priestly ordination of the Very Rev. Msgr. Richard J. Schuler, Ph.D, was celebrated on October 31, 2005, at the Church of Saint Agnes in Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA. It was a *novus ordo* Latin Mass. The Twin Cities Catholic Chorale assisted by members of the Minnesota Orchestra sang Haydn’s *Paukenmesse*. The celebrating clergy were clad in festal gold vestments—*Ad incrementum decoris et divini cultus splendoris*. The principal celebrant of the Mass was Msgr. Schuler’s nephew, the Rev. Richard Hogan, PhD, who also preached. The Rev. John T. Zuhlsdorf served as assistant priest, and the Rev. Messrs. Bernard Peterson and Harold Hughesdon were deacons for the Mass.

Present in the prelate’s chair and in choir dress was the Most Rev. Harry Flynn, Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, who heartily congratulated Msgr. Schuler, praised the beauty of the music, and reminded those present that at the heart of it all was the ontological reality of the Sacrament. His excellency pointed out that the Mass he would celebrate later that day at the local prison without any attendant ceremonies would render Christ sacramentally present just as at this very grand celebration of the liturgy.

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