

Seminar by Jeff Ostrowski

“Secrets of the Conscientious Choirmaster”

Drawn from his 7 years of presentations at the annual Sacred Music Symposium

The following document provides a blueprint for:

1st Video • **INTRODUCTION**

2nd Video • **MONDAY** (94 minutes)

3rd Video • **TUESDAY** (71 minutes)

4th Video • **WEDNESDAY** (87 minutes)

5th Video • **THURSDAY** (3 hours, 35 seconds)

6th Video • **FRIDAY** (77 minutes)



MONDAY (1 of 3)

0:00 • Prologue about “Rhythm” which **sets up** Monday’s talk

— Digression on “The Hard Work Must Be Done”

3:11 • Introduction to *The Five Days* (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday)

4:31 • “Everything We Do Is Intended To Teach”

6:00 • If you’re a choirmaster: “Don’t Waste Your Beginning”

10:02 • Jeff “opens” with a Bach Fugue, which will be used to introduce **Monday’s Technique**

13:02 • How Jeff opened the Symposium in real life: “Plastic mustaches”

15:02 • What is a “fugue” anyhow?

15:50 • The concept of “disguise”—*hence the plastic mustaches*

18:01 • the “signature piece” from Sacred Music Symposium 2023, and how Jeff’s seminar reinforces that signature piece

20:19 • Really quick review—Re: “What is a fugue?” pipe organ example by Felix Mendelssohn

22:51 • A “cool” thing about that particular example by Mendelssohn, and why fugue structure relates to the pieces at the Sacred Music Symposium

25:09 • The technique of Monday is **Tonal Answer**

—with a digression about Disney songs (Aladdin+ Little Mermaid)

27:22 • “Getting back to the fugue and the mustache disguise”

28:26 • Definition of “Tonal Answer” ... Three-Two-One Vs. Two-Two-One

30:54 • The way Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart summarized counterpoint rules

—The concept of **Mirror Counter-Subject**

MONDAY (2 of 3)

33:52 • Johann Sebastian Bach does something incredible, and Jeff explains.

34:48 • Mode 7 Psalm Tone (from “Magnificat”) in the context of MIRROR COUNTER-SUBJECT

—Including huge, massive Capital “M” with birds, from the Renaissance “choral part books”

Part “B” of Monday’s talk:

“Jeff’s Rules Of Gregorian Accompaniment”

41:28 • Jeff talks about his transition to a more “dry” subject

43:45 • Jeff speaks about “approaching perfect consonances” in the context of the MIRROR COUNTER-SUBJECT

44:52 • Jeff explains why choirmasters and organists need to know about plainsong harmonization

46:20 • Chords

46:47 • Chordal Variety

48:37 • Voice-Leading

49:46 • Harmonic Rhythm

50:32 • Mirror-Image Bass Line

50:56 • Avoid “Wander-itis”

53:39 • *First example* of a bass-line that avoids “Wander-itis”

55:01 • *Second example* of a bass-line that avoids “Wander-itis”

56:58 • Harmonies (avoiding **harmonic** “wander-itis”)

58:15 • Counter-Exposition Texture

MONDAY (3 of 3)

59:41 • Dissonance & Consonance

1:00:19 • Pedal Tone

1:01:27 • Conjunct Motion

1:02:37 • “One More Tool”

1:03:11 • What does the *Attentive Accompanist* do when it comes to plainsong melodies repeat the same thing over and over again, like a psalm tone?

—Jeff gives an example from when he was commissioned to write harmonizations for the Saint Michael Hymnal (4th edition)

1:07:03 • Jeff gives another example, this one from “Vidi Aquam”

1:08:37 • Jeff gives another example, this one from “Lucis Creátor”

1:10:09 • Jeff gives another example, this one from a Bach CHORALE

1:10:41 • Jeff gives another example, this one from “Speciósus Forma”

1:11:45 • Jeff gives another example, this one from “Ego Sum Panis Vitæ”

For approximately the next 20 minutes, Jeff gives examples which are “bad” or “not optimal” or “poor” or “reprehensible”—*however you wish to think of them.*

1:29:09 • Jeff discusses the false notion that “fewer chords mean less dissonance”

1:31:43 • Jeff ends the presentation by carefully comparing a harmonization he created—using the principles he just finished explaining—to a very curious and disappointing harmonization of the same piece by an organist considered (by some) to be the greatest organist of all time. The specific piece they look at is the hymn for Lent: *Audi Benigne Cónditor.*

TUESDAY (1 of 2)

0:00 • Brief Review of Monday

04:13 • Tuesday's Technique is "Counter-Exposition"

05:02 • Brief "reminder" or "explanation" that 4ths invert to 5ths, and vice-versa

07:48 • Mentioning the role the "Ave Maris Stella" (Gregorian Chant) played at Sacred Music Symposium 2023 in the context of what Jeff just explained about 4ths and 5ths—in the context of composers such as Father Tomás de Victoria, Giovanni Aninuccia (choir-master at the Vatican), and others.

12:00 • Formal definition of "Counter-Exposition"

13:01 • More explanations (with examples) of "Counter-Exposition"

18:03 • Part "B" of Tuesday's talk: **"Secrets of the conscientious choirmaster"**

18:42 • Introduction

19:16 • Repeating Repertoire (including examples of what Jeff is talking about)

29:30 • "Sing, Sing, Sing"

31:45 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (A)*

33:51 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (B)*

35:13 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (C)*

38:02 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (D)*

40:44 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (E)*

41:52 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (F)*

47:15 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal (G)*

TUESDAY (2 of 2)

50:00 • *The First Five Minutes Of Rehearsal* (H)

54:17 • Re: Attendance Policies

55:11 • Terminating choir members

57:14 • *How to Rehearse* (“**Part a**”)

58:45 • *How to Rehearse* (“**Part b**”)

The rest of the talk (until marker **1:11:31**)
is completely dedicated to
“**Part b**” of How to Rehearse

WEDNESDAY (1 of 3)

0:00 • Introduction to Wednesday's Technique, which is **AUGMENTATION**

1:06 • **AUGMENTATION** in the context of Catholic composers

2:25 • **AUGMENTATION** as related to Bach Fugue #2 WTC bk ii

— Mention (“reminder”) is made to Tuesday's technique, as related to this Fugue *** This is **teaching technique** you should remember; relating what you're doing to something you've already taught

—Mention (“anticipatory”) is made, in the context of this Fugue, of a technique that will be introduced on Friday →→→ This is **teaching technique** you should remember; relating what you're doing to something that will be taught at a later time

11:21 • Another example is given of **AUGMENTATION**, in the context of a choral Mass setting by Father Cristóbal de Morales

— Brief digression on the “versions” of the Mass by Father Morales

— Brief digression as Father Morales a type of “bridge”

13:31 • Jeff explains a little bit about where this Mass came from, specifically the *Chanson* it was based on.

16:28 • A professor at Juilliard and his wife recorded this chanson **specifically for** Jeff's lecture, and this beautiful recording has been included

18:53 • Jeff relates the Bach example earlier with the example by Father Morales, again in the context of **AUGMENTATION**, including examples recorded by Jeff & associates for your benefit

23:04 • Another example is given of **AUGMENTATION**, this time by Father Guerrero, and from every point of view, his composition (“Cónditor Alme Síderum”) is nothing short of breath-taking

26:35 • To further demonstrate that **AUGMENTATION** was used by all great composers, Jeff gives a marvelous example by Father Tomás de Victoria. This is also meant to “show” you or “drive home” to you or “emphasize” or “highlight” or “underscore” the importance of using examples which **build upon** one another. So, this example uses the plainsong *Ave Maris Stella*, which Jeff has already mentioned in an earlier presentation, so he is “building upon” what is familiar to students. Do that with your choirs!

WEDNESDAY (2 of 3)

- 29:37** • To further strengthen Jeff’s assertion that all great composers use **AUGMENTATION**, Jeff then shows how Luca Marenzio used **AUGMENTATION** in the “signature piece” from SACRED MUSIC SYMPOSIUM 2023—which Jeff spoke about in an earlier presentation (but in a different context).
- 33:29** • To further underline Jeff’s statement that all great composers use **AUGMENTATION**, Jeff provides a **striking** example from Orlando de Lassus, considered one of the greatest choral composers of all time. What’s great is that 99% of musicians will recognize the plainsong CANTUS FIRMUS Lassus uses in **AUGMENTATION**.

Essential Choir Technique • “SSS”

- 37:37** • By speaking of Roger Wagner + Frédéric Chopin + Ignaz Friedman, Jeff sets the stage in the context of “overstatement”
- 40:28** • Introduction to the concept of “SSS”
—“No two instruments are as different as the piano and the organ.”
- 44:21** • To illustrate the concept of “SSS” Jeff uses a different from a Mass setting by Father Morales he spoke of earlier. [Notice that, time and again, Jeff employs examples from pieces he’s previously made students aware of—**because doing so** helps them learn better.]
- 46:30** • Now Jeff uses a piece by Thomas Morley, the famous Renaissance theorist and student of William Byrd, to illustrate the concept of “SSS.”

Wednesday “Part B”

Tips for the Conscientious Choirmaster

- 50:01** • “Dirty secret about ranges”
- 54:10** • Your absolute “best friend” as a choir Director
- 1:01:04** • “The Cemeteries” (example)

WEDNESDAY (3 of 3)

1:03:41 • How to get ahead

1:04:26 • Repetition + The trap we fall into over and over again

Dealing with Jerks

1:05:28 • *Dealing with Jerks* (Part A)

1:07:34 • *Dealing with Jerks* (Part B)

1:09:20 • *Dealing with Jerks* (Part C) + “The chef in a kitchen”

1:14:26 • Starting Pitches

1:17:48 • *The Beginning Of Mass* (for the choir director)

1:18:37 • “Existential Crisis” of a choirmaster

1:21:08 • You’re not in college anymore

1:23:07 • *Things you should not plan* (You heard me correctly!)

1:24:44 • A Little Tip for choir directors

1:25:34 • “The art of this job”

THURSDAY (1 of 3)

- 0:00** • Information about the “opening prayer” which Jeff uses with his volunteer choirs.
— brief digression on Cardinal Merry del Val (biographical information) and his role with the *Vatican Commission on Gregorian Chant*
- 2:38** • Jeff explains why he’s been sharing with you one technique on each day, in the context of making sure your volunteers keep coming back
- 5:00** • Introduction of Thursday’s technique, which is **STRETTO**
- 6:29** • Reminder of Jeff’s “secret way to make singers pay attention during rehearsal”
- 7:49** • Jeff gives an example of **STRETTO** using a Kyrie by Father Guerrero
- 10:53** • A brief “anticipation” of a concept that will be introduced later, and this is **something you should do** with your choir members. That is to say, even when you’re not yet ready to formally introduce something, you can “anticipate” (mention it) to help them start thinking about it, to “keep it in their coat pocket.”
- 16:24** • An example of **STRETTO** by Father Victoria. Jeff uses a Kyrie sung by participants at the Sacred Music Symposium. Whenever possible, try to use examples **which your volunteers** are familiar with.
- 22:07** • Brief digression on “ligatures.”
- 23:18** • Jeff explains where you can go to “find more STRETTO.”
- 25:06** • Example how J.S. Bach uses **STRETTO**—using Fugue #20 bk i WTC
- 29:50** • How can you distinguish **STRETTO** from a canon?
- 32:13** • Brief digression on “canons” and how canons, rounds, and contrafactum can be used (with great success) for volunteer choirs.
- 35:44** • Jeff continues talking about **STRETTO** with a Fugue he played in high school **but uses that to explain** how sometimes it’s best not to explain or “justify” what you’re doing with your singers. Sometimes one must simply “do”—and the understanding of certain techniques will come later. For example, what do you do as a choirmaster **when your singers complain** about using solfège?

THURSDAY (2 of 3)

49:09 • Brief digression on the importance of “musical diversity”

50:50 • Excerpt by Charles Rosen on “musical diversity” demonstrated **with the same Fugue** we’ve been talking about.

51:48 • For the final example of **STRETTO**, Jeff uses an example from Bach’s “Art of the Fugue”—but that means he must give a very brief introduction to Bach’s “Art of the Fugue” so that you will understand its significance.

1:03:44 • Since Bach’s “Art of the Fugue” was mentioned, Jeff just can’t resist briefly “reinforcing” or “reminding” folks about the concept of TONAL ANSWERS, a concept spoken of toward the beginning of the seminar.

Thursday “Part B”

Tips for the Conscientious Choirmaster

1:05:20 • “Irrational Fear”

1:06:19 • Jeff gives his “Recipe of four (4) parts which account for whatever success he’s had directing choirs”

1:12:40 • Exploring the concept of: “Bringing tons of repertoire”

1:17:19 • Exploring the concept of: “Succeeding at an impossible task”

1:20:18 • Exploring the concept of: “The **crucial** secret to success”

1:23:29 • Exploring the concept of: “Your attitude”

1:24:49 • “Not Piano Music”—exploring the concept of volunteers’ vocal memory

1:27:27 • “Let them comment”

1:29:05 • “Seasonal pieces”

1:29:44 • Metamorphic music (examples provided)

1:38:05 • Random Thoughts (1 of 2)

THURSDAY (3 of 3)

1:41:00 • Random Thoughts (2 of 2)

1:41:30 • For those who don't feel at home with Gregorian Chant...

Thursday “Part C”

The eight church modes

1:42:20 • Jeff explains and illustrates **the Eight Church Modes**—Because he would feel bad if you went through this entire seminar and didn't know anything about the church modes

2:08:58 • Keeping perspective

Thursday “Part D”

The key to rehearsing (even though you have singers in front of you who are at all different levels; some are practically professional singers, while others don't know where middle C is)

2:13:24 • “Golden Mean” or “Golden Ratio”

2:15:43 • How to keep from being discouraged as a choirmaster working with volunteers

2:21:40 • “Nothing is hard if you know how to do it”

2:26:12 • Brief digression on “nuts and bolts”

2:28:47 • How do you keep your singers engaged when there is such disparity in terms of how skilled each of them is at music?

The final 32 minutes

of Thursday's video explains

and demonstrates

how to accomplish this.

FRIDAY (1 of 2)

0:00 • Offering Intentions to God at Choir Rehearsal

0:45 • Jeff explains why we learn techniques as choir directors

1:50 • Friday’s “Technique” is **INVERSION** (Viktor Borge)

4:09 • Prepping you for Charles Rosen **INVERSION**

— with mention of Franz Liszt & Pope Pius IX, Czerny, and Beethoven

— with mention of Ignaz Friedman & Flora Grzywinska

8:40 • Charles Rosen excerpt on Fugue #22, bk ii “Great 48”

11:00 • Glenn Gould introduces the same fugue, showing **INVERSION**

13:52 • Jeff plays for you two versions of Fugue #22, bk ii “Great 48”

— with brief digression “stretto” vs. “canon”

23:29 • Jeff slowly and carefully explains Bach’s astounding “stunt” with **INVERSION**, which occurs at the Golden ratio

— begins with another video (Gould explaining **INVERSION** section)

29:43 • Jeff shows a Bach **INVERSION** in a Gigue

33:15 • Explains why **INVERSION** is something church musicians should know about

33:37 • Jeff talks about a Mass Setting by Father Guerrero that uses **INVERSION**

39:23 • Jeff briefly talks about how **INVERSION** comes into play with the “signature” piece of Symposium 2023

40:35 • Prologue to “Part B” of Friday:

FRIDAY (2 of 2)

“Part B” of Friday:

How to go about recruiting choir members

42:12 • INTRODUCTION

44:02 • Section A

44:33 • Section B

45:15 • Section C

46:02 • Section D

48:07 • Section E

53:00 • Section F

56:44 • Section G

57:50 • Section H

58:15 • Section K

59:00 • Section J (First Part)

1:01:47 • Section J (Second Part)

1:06:55 • Section L

1:09:11 • Section M

1:11:40 • Section N