

# **SYLLABUS FOR A FOUNDATIONAL CHURCH MUSIC COURSE FOR SEMINARY OR CONTINUING EDUCATION USE**

**By Carol Doran**

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The following outline for a foundational course in church music was developed by the AGO's Seminary Relations Committee (now the Committee on Seminary and Denominational Relations) as a course of study appropriate for seminarians. We also envision the use of all or sections of it by Guild members who teach courses in continuing education for musicians and clergy and for people planning presentations in churches or for chapter meetings. This outline and bibliography may also be useful for those undertaking study on their own. Questions about this course may be directed to:

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## **The Critical Importance of Clergy Musical Confidence in Working with Music and Musicians**

Ordained leaders of congregations who have learned to use their voices well (for preaching and singing), are knowledgeable in the basic vocabulary of church music (“staff,” “manual,” “plain-song”) as well as basic music reading skills (able to play hymn melodies on some musical instrument) are most likely to be confident collaborators with musicians in planning worship and long-range program development. If those preparing for ordination have not acquired these critical skills before coming to seminary, that institution is probably the last place they will be offered an opportunity to gain them.

Because seminaries vary in their commitment to provide this training, however, and seminarians often do not realize its importance until they are pastoring congregations, the musician teaching seminarians often is required to function as both music educator and music advocate. The great joy which often comes to those musicians is the eventual response from students who recognize the potential of music to build up congregations and who find joy in their newly-claimed abilities to make music with their own voices.

## **This Course**

The material shown here is a basic outline of a course about twelve weeks in length, with one or two meetings a week. It is intended to be adjusted by instructors to be most useful in their specific situations. Assessment of student learning (quizzes, brief papers, etc.) should be included as the instructor finds

appropriate. The reality of time allotted to teach seminarians music will probably permit only a spirited introduction to each subject. Presented effectively, however, such introductions will serve as foundations for the students' lifelong interest in and study of the music of the Christian tradition.

We strongly recommend using at least one of the class meetings to invite a person who knows the Roman Catholic Music Tradition well to present a general overview of the practice of music in twenty-first century Catholic Communities. The musical practices developed by this Church following the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's continue to influence the ecumenical church today.

**Begin each class meeting with prayer, and then, group singing.** In addition to reviewing effective vocal technique for all, this segment will be a good place to teach music that is of particular denominational focus. Some groups will use this time to practice effective song-leading; others will concentrate on learning the presider's sung role in liturgy. Some may find it most useful to make singing the major focus of the course, coordinating the historical and discussion elements as enrichment to the group's vocal development.

We suggest the purchase of *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel, An illustrated guide to all the major traditions of music in worship*. The author is Andrew Wilson-Dickson. It is published by Fortress Press, 2003 (paperback, about \$25.00), ISBN 0-8006-3474-8. With its many color photographs and direct quotations from writings of those who have been prominent in the history of Christian Music, *The Story of Christian Music* (SCM) is an attractive and useful volume. **One notable error should be brought to the reader's attention: "Tommy Dorsey" on p. 204 should read "Thomas A. Dorsey."**

The class also will be asked to read *Church Organs: A Guide to Selection and Purchase* by John K. Ogasapian (Baker Book House, 1990; available from AGO Headquarters) for Week Five, and pp. 11 – 91 in *Trouble at the Table* by Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1992) for Weeks Eight and Nine.

### **Course Bibliography**

(Resources intended to be helpful to instructors in expanding the course outline to fit specific situations):

*Acoustics for Liturgy: A Collection of Articles of the Hymn Society in the U.S. and Canada*. Meeting House Essays, Number Two (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

*African American Christian Worship* by Melva Costen (Abingdon Press, 1993).

*All in Sync: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion*. by Robert Wuthnow, (University of California Press, 2003).

*Beyond the Worship Wars* by Thomas G. Long (Alban Institute, 2001)

*Church Organs: A Guide to Selection and Purchase* by John K. Ogasapian (Baker Book House, 1990; available from AGO Headquarters)

*Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* by Carlton R. Young (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993)

*A Concise Dictionary of Church Music*, Edward Foley, editor (Liturgical Press, 1999)

*Foundations of Christian Music: The Music of Pre-Constantinian Christianity* by Edward Foley (Grove Books Limited, 1992; distributed by The Pastoral Press, 225 Sheridan St. N.W., Washington DC 20011-1492)

*From Sacred Song to Ritual Music: Twentieth-Century Understandings of Roman Catholic Worship Music* by Jan Michael Joncas (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1997).

*Gather* (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, Inc., 1988)

*The Hymnal 1982 Companion*. Raymond F. Glover, editor (Church Publishing Corporation, 1990) Three volumes, the first of which contains thirty-seven essays about various aspects of church music as well as a brief glossary.

*Introduction to Christian Worship* (Revised Edition) by James F. White (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990)

*Leading the Church's Song*, Robert Buckley Farlee and Eric Vollen, editors (Augsburg Fortress, 1998) Important and useful information (including demo CD's) about ways to understand and lead people in singing music from a variety of the world's cultures.

*Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal* (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, Inc., 1987)

*Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church* by Alice Parker (Liturgy Training Publications, 1991).

*Music in Catholic Worship: The NPM Commentary* (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops; The Pastoral Press, 225 Sheridan St. N.W., Washington DC 20011-1492, 1983)

*Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, Compiled and edited by James Abbingon (Chicago, GIA Publications, 2001)

*The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel, An illustrated guide to all the major traditions of music in worship.* by Andrew

Wilson-Dickson (Fortress Press, 2003, paperback, about \$25.00, ISBN 0-8006-3474-8.)

*Strong, Loving and Wise* by Robert Hovda (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1980)

*Trouble at the Table* by Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992)

*True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder and Majesty* (by Donald Hustad (Hope Publishing Company, 1998).

*Words That Hurt/Words That Heal* (Nashville: Graded Press, The United Methodist Church, 1985) A serious consideration of “inclusive” or “expanded” language.

*Worship* (Third Edition), ed. Robert Batastini (Chicago: G.I.A. Publications, Inc., 1986)

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## **Week One: Claiming your Voice for Liturgical Leadership**

The videotape titled "Breath" from *The Singer's Voice* (video series) is an excellent resource for use in teaching the fundamentals of vocal mechanics to inexperienced singers. The tape is available from Caldwell Publishing, P.O.Box 3231, Redmond WA, 98073 (800/284-7043) [www.caldwellpublishing.com](http://www.caldwellpublishing.com).

Introduce concepts of (1) lifting the soft palate, (2) expanding the ribs, and (3) engaging the abdominal muscles to produce vocal support. Have the class practice doing this.

Assignment for Week Two: Read SCM: pp. 9 - 13

## **Week Two: Exploration of the Variety of Worship Resources Appropriate to Your Tradition**

Practice singing, using principles learned in Week One.

Discuss ideas encountered in reading assigned for this class.

Using hymnals and/or other service materials well-known to your denomination, explore the literary and musical characteristics of various kinds of service music and hymns in common use (metrical hymns, Scripture paraphrase, call-and-response, Taize, praise songs, etc.), taking care to include congregational song characteristic of groups other than the dominant culture. (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, published in 1989, includes many styles.) Work to strengthen and expand vocabulary relating to the various forms.

Discuss ways to locate the materials needed for worship planning by means of indices and related reference books such as hymnal companions. Explain the information that is available on the page for each composition (poet, composer, etc.) and demonstrate the use of the metrical index for locating matching hymn texts and tunes. Recommend that students begin their own expanded subject index of worship resources as a means of exploring these materials in greater details.

Assignment for Week Three: Read SCM, pp. 16 - 28 (optional pp. 29 - 54)

## **Week Three: Early Christian Song**

Practice Singing. Use music that represent settings of text from the Old Testament. A metrical psalm would be a good choice.

Review psalm, hymn, and canticle texts from the Bible. Explain the concept of "hymn" as a product of human composition in contrast with Biblical texts as divinely inspired works. Lead the class in singing psalms and canticles (which are Biblical texts other than Psalms which are intended to be sung) using a variety of musical styles (through-composed, metrical, and responsorial settings, etc.)

Assignment for Week Four: Read SCW: pp. 58 - 66

### **Week Four: Luther and Calvin**

Begin by singing together (with good vocal support) a Lutheran Chorale and a psalm (from your hymnal) which originated in The Genevan Psalter.

Discuss the theological positions regarding congregational song held by these two reformers. How does the congregational song from these two important traditions differ in text and in music?

Assignment for Week Five: Read *Church Organs* by John Ogasapian

### **Week Five: Instrumental Music in the Church**

Consider the historical and contemporary rationale for and against the use of instrumental music in worship. (Church documents from your tradition will be helpful here.) With reference to *Church Organs: A Guide to Selection and Purchase*, discuss a case study in which a church considers repairing or replacing an aging instrument. What is a process they might use?

Discuss strengths and weaknesses of acoustic and electronic instruments, and of acoustically natural and amplified sound. Review in class what students have learned about the difference between mechanical, electro-pneumatic and electric action, the Hammond organ and instruments that use electronic tone generators.

*Leading the Church's Song* (see bibliography) will be helpful in considering the ways a variety of musical instruments may be used in Christian worship.

Assignment for Week Six: Read SCM: pp. 110 - 117

### **Week Six: Isaac Watts and the Wesleys**

Begin by singing a hymn by Watts and one by Charles Wesley.

Discuss the historic period during which these men worked, and what was happening in the English Churches at that time. Consider the differences

between their approaches to hymn writing, and the influence wielded by each. Sing and discuss as many of their hymns as possible with particular attention to developing patterns for analysis and evaluation of congregational song.

Assignment for Week Seven: Read SCM: 182 - 206

(Please remember that "Tommy Dorsey" on p. 204 should be understood to mean "Thomas A. Dorsey," the "father of the Gospel Hymn.")

### **Week Seven: American Roots**

Sing together several hymns that were written on American soil.

In light of the reading assignment, discuss the variety of groups that have contributed to the rich tradition of American congregational song from which we continue to benefit today. Sing and discuss examples from these groups.

Assignment for Class Eight: Read pages 47- 91 in *Trouble at the Table* by Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger.

### **Week Eight: Music Ministry - Musician and Minister as Colleagues**

Consider the historical and contemporary roles of the musician serving the church. What changes in the musician's task have been caused by the abundant new music and liturgical resources currently available?

Discuss the nature of the finest clergy-musician working relationship that might be imagined. What practical steps could institutions (seminaries, churches, denominations) take to help build quality, productive, professional relationships? What are steps in an effective process to search for and call a musician to serve your church?

Assignment for Class Nine: Read SCM pp. 243-246 and *Trouble at the Table*, pp. 11 – 45.

### **Week Nine: What is "Good" Church Music?**

Sing together a piece of congregational music that is likely to be new to everyone in the class.

Using the brief essays in the reading assigned for this class, invite the class to discuss their responses to the selection. What criteria are useful in identifying "good" music. Why do our ideas on this subject vary so greatly? How can we as Christians be reconciled to the variety of ways we sing of God?

Assignment for Week Ten: Each student is invited to bring copies of a favorite hymn or song. (There should be enough for everyone in the class to use when

singing. Photocopying for use in class **only** is allowed under the copyright law.) They should be prepared to introduce the piece to the class by mentioning the qualities that make it suitable for congregational singing in worship. Be certain to engage an accompanist several days before the class presentation in order to allow adequate preparation time.

### **Week Ten: The Riches of Diversity**

Determine the number of minutes each student will have to introduce the hymn or song they have brought to class. Each student, in turn, tells the group what they find valuable, attractive and appropriate in their selection. The group sings the piece and then comments on the qualities they recognize in the selection. **This is not a debate about whether or not students in the group “like” the piece. The purpose of the exercise is to broaden awareness, through the comments of others, of the many aspects of a composition that they previously may not have noticed. It is also intended to provide experience in using the vocabulary of music description. The experience of civil discussion of church music (guided by the class instructor) also is a goal for this class meeting.**

Assignment for Week Eleven: Begin to write a (not more than) one-page, double-spaced (font 12) “Theology of Church Music” paper, to be presented in class (and turned in) on the last day the class meets. Among topics discussed might be the following: How will what you believe about God influence your choices of music to be used in worship? What principles will you value in making musical decisions about worship? What do you understand the role of lay (musical) leadership to be in helping to shape your church’s musical practice?

### **Week Eleven: The Ability of Music to Facilitate Worship**

Begin by singing together the instructor’s choice of an effective (new) selection of congregational song.

(These last two weeks are intended to provide time for the class to review and discuss what they have learned.)

Following an introductory presentation by the instructor, have the class discuss together the ways in which accompaniment of congregational song, choir presentations, and instrumental music create an atmosphere in which worship may effectively take place. What are some techniques musicians can use to “welcome” people into singing? Discuss the influence on the worship program of the theologically sensitive musician and the musically sensitive pastor.

Assignment for final week: Complete and prepare to present your “Theology of Church Music.”



## **Week Twelve: Review and Reinforcement**

Begin by singing together the favorite hymn of the person willing to be first in presenting their "Theology of Church Music" to the class.

Let individual class members present their papers. Encourage brief responses by the class to noteworthy aspects of the papers. (These should be in the area of recognition of work that has been well done rather than negative responses.)