

## Alphage's Guide to Byzantine Chant

(Version 1: August 2021)

Greetings in Christ to the faithful of the Orthodox Church. Allow me to share with you the resources and guides which helped me learn how to become a Byzantine Chanter. This guide is intended for anyone in the Orthodox Church who wants to be able to actively approach the chant stand and chant alongside their proto-psaltis (first-chanter).

This guide is particularly designed for chanters in the jurisdictions which use the ancient Byzantine tones.

That is, the Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches of:

**Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Church of Greece, Church of Albania, Church of Cyprus.**

Within the United States and the United Kingdom, the following jurisdictions utilize Byzantine Chant:

**Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (of America + Thyrateria & Great Britain), Antiochian Archdiocese, Serbian Archdiocese, and the Romanian/Albanian Dioceses (OCA).**



## Materials and Sources

Before continuing on to the guide itself, I want to start by giving you a list of resources for progressing through the various levels of Byzantine Chant mastery. This is not a list of every material contained in the guide, but simply a concise list of necessary materials for smooth progression as you study.

### **Liturgical Resources:**

*Ages Initiatives Digital Chant Stand:* <https://www.agesinitiatives.com/dcs/public/dcs/dcs.html>

This provides you with the rubrics, compiled services, and sheet music for everyday of the year and for every service of the day (matins, vespers, liturgy, Akathist, etc...). Become familiar with it! There is an archive going back to 2019 and an App which can be put on your phone.

*The Typikon Decoded*, Archimandrite Joe Getcha: <https://www.amazon.com/Typikon-Decoded-Orthodox-Liturgy/dp/0881414123>

This is the most important liturgical book you will ever purchase in your life. This book will teach you everything you need to know about liturgical rubrics and structure. This book will teach you what the meaning behind every hymn is. For example, have you ever wondered what an exapostilarion is? Do you want to know the difference between Apolytikion and Troparion? Do you want to know how all the liturgical books work together (menaion, otchoechos, pentecostarion, etc...)? This book explains everything. Buy it ASAP and read it at least 3 times cover to cover as you train to become a chanter. Use the index to learn the vocabulary of chant!

### **Hymnology:**

*A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Egon Wellesz:

Scribd: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/9629654/A-History-of-Byzantine-Music-and-Hymnography>

Archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/historyofbyzanti00egon/page/n9/mode/2up>

Use this book to understand the development and importance of hymnography in the Byzantine Rite. Use this book only for theory. The practical notation side is outdated and incorrect. (Do not attempt to use the book to learn Byzantine notation).

### **Textbooks & E-Guide:**

*Greek Orthodox Archdiocese ‘Learn to Chant’*: <https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant---sunday-orthros?inheritRedirect=true>

A critical guide that will help you learn how to chant. This work was undertaken by Fr. Seraphim Dedes, who is also heavily involved with Ages Initiatives.

*Byzantine Music Theory and Practice Guide*, Greek Archdiocesan School of Byzantine Music:

Full textbook download (free!): <https://www.scribd.com/doc/138382388/Byzantine-Music>  
This textbook is going to be your foundation. Use it alongside all the YouTube and electronic resources given.

*Reading Psalmodia*, David J. Melling:

Another textbook to teach you Byzantine Music. Work through it alongside the above *Byzantine Music Theory* and the YouTube resources.  
(<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/32046820/david-j-melling-reading-psalmodia-fullpdf>)



# καλλιστος

## The Beauty of Byzantine Music from Around the World

**Old Rome:** Greek Anaphora in the Old Roman Catacombs: <https://youtu.be/-GTrFKjgYwY>

**Serbia:** Fr. Jeremiah, a blind monastic, chanting Byzantine hymns in Church Slavonic:  
<https://youtu.be/YqMwuMAWFRA>

**Germany:** Christus ist Auferstanden, German Chant <https://youtu.be/dDoNoJdfVfQ>

**South Africa:** Great Doxology [https://youtu.be/\\_9bxpfXK07g](https://youtu.be/_9bxpfXK07g)

**Syria:** Patriarch John X of Antioch, Liytya <https://youtu.be/J2fnAECnprk>

**Ireland:** Ard Chiárain Monastery, Magnificat <https://youtu.be/gzRHRs1Z0BE>

**Mount Athos:** Byzantine Orthros & Liturgy <https://youtu.be/q4VSG6fsHgE>

**Lebanon & Tripoli:** Byzantine Women's Choir <https://youtu.be/V9rG6tePDEY?t=254>

**USA:** Hymn of Kassiani [https://youtu.be/\\_aY4eQE1a34](https://youtu.be/_aY4eQE1a34)

**Rwanda:** Hymn in Liturgy <https://youtu.be/QqrGyGsENK8>

**Kenya:** Great Entrance <https://youtu.be/yUnwfbryLdc>

**Egypt:** Orthros <https://youtu.be/y8CgVEs7S1I>

**Phanar, Constantinople (Turkey):** Diptychs: [https://youtu.be/YxTr\\_yhj-yE](https://youtu.be/YxTr_yhj-yE)

**Romania** <https://youtu.be/uRHODNWa1l8>

**England:** Lincolnshire/Derbyshire: <https://youtu.be/X-08EuOecvU>

**Japan:** <https://youtu.be/8X-nw7kzAgE>

**Guatemala:** Hymn of Kassiani: <https://youtu.be/pG57tEz2tKU>

**Congo:** Central Africa [https://youtu.be/08pUP\\_4qZC0](https://youtu.be/08pUP_4qZC0)

**Visoki Decani Monastery:** [https://youtu.be/BCQvo\\_WbH4c](https://youtu.be/BCQvo_WbH4c)

## Introduction

Let me first state that Byzantine Chant is for everyone. I often hear people say that they are afraid of approaching Byzantine Chant because it is too traditional, too foreign, or because it lacks congregational involvement. This is not true. In fact, I would argue that Byzantine Chant, at its core, the most approachable liturgical music and allows for more participation from those in the congregation who desire to sing. Because Byzantine Chant is for everyone, a portion of this guide will be for people who **cannot read music at all**. Yes, you can learn Byzantine Chant without any prior knowledge of music and without learning notation. You can easily become a beginner by doing this, and if you are good at memorization, you could lead vespers, matins, akathists, and Liturgy at a parish in need.

To become advanced, you must, of course, acquire musical literacy. Anything past the beginner's stage will be for people who already know music, or who are willing to study musical notation. With enough practice, you will be able to do more than just "survive" leading vespers, matins, akathists and liturgy. You will be able to glorify the Lord with a steady and well-trained voice. You will be able to sing Cherubikons and complicated festal hymns.

It is my recommendation that anyone who is interested in Byzantine Chant should at least **attempt to learn Byzantine notation**. I will, however, state that the vast majority of proto-psaltis in the United States of America and the British Isles use Western notation, and that they do very well and maintain the tradition beautifully. However, there are certain elements of Byzantine Chant that are lost without reading from Byzantine notation. If you have the will-power, it is my recommendation to learn Byzantine notation. (You will also become invaluable to your parish and you can pass on this ancient tradition to the faithful with you!)

One final word: Even if you do read music, please also read the "For the Humble Novice" section which is dedicated to those faithful men and women who cannot read music at all. **Memorization is necessary, even for people who can already read music. Do not progress to the "Beginner" section without fully reading the "Novice" section, no matter what your background and training is.**

If you desire to become a Protopsaltis, I recommend studying under a Master Chanter or to enroll in the Byzantine music program at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

Your prayers!

Sub-Deacon Alphage

## For the Humble Novice

Welcome to the short and concise guide to picking up Byzantine Chant. This first rank of the guide, “the Humble Novice,” is where I began my journey. I could not read music at all, and had no time to study Western or Byzantine notation. I knew, however, after attending Byzantine services, that I wanted to sing at the chant stand because Byzantine music was the most heavenly and beautiful sound I had ever heard. I suddenly understood what Saint Vladimir meant by "We knew not whether we were on Heaven or on Earth... We only knew that God dwells there among the people, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations."

**Absolute Basics:** There are eight (8) Byzantine Tones. Here are the common ways they are written:

Tone 1 (or) I

Tone 2 (or) II

Tone 3 (or) III

Tone 4 (or) IV

Tone 5 (or) Plagal 1<sup>st</sup> (or) V

Tone 6 (or) Plagal 2<sup>nd</sup> (or) VI

Tone 7 (or) Grave (or) VII

Tone 8 (or) Plagal 4<sup>th</sup> (or) VIII

You may also see people say “Mode” instead of Tone. They both mean the same exact thing.

Why are tone 5-8 called “Plagal?” It is because they are similar to the first 4 tones and differ in very small ways. Thus, you will find that Tone 2 and Plagal 2<sup>nd</sup> (or VI, Tone 6) sound very close to each other. Tone I and Plagal 1 sound very close. Tone 3 and Tone 7 are very close. Tone 4 and Tone 8 are quite different, but share in certain musical theory that is more advanced and not fit for this section of the guide.

## **The Theological and Liturgical Significance of Each Tone**

The hymns of music in Byzantine Chant are written poetically and the hymnographer who writes the lyrics will always keep in mind the tonal setting when writing hymns. Even if the hymnographer cannot write notation to accompany his words, the hymnographer’s composition always keeps in mind the most likely tone to fit the hymn. This is because each tone in Byzantine Chant has a distinct message which it conveys through the words. This system goes back to the times of the Ancient Greeks, who maintained a system of chant that was “baptized” into the Church along with the gentiles. In ancient days, the tones of Ancient Greek chant could move people to tears, to joy, to fear and to all kinds of emotions. After it was baptized into the Church, it was tempered by the dispassion of the hymnographer saints. Still, though, Byzantine Chant still maintains a healthy and Orthodox sense of emotion in its style. In this sense, Byzantine Chant is the ultimate combatant against the negative influence of secular music. If a parish has a good assembly of Byzantine Chanters, people can interact with the Ancient musical tradition of Godly hymnography that moves

us to repentance and gives our ears something holy embrace. The hope of this is that the music will help change our hearts and minds to be oriented towards God, rather than towards ourselves or towards Satan, which is the goal of much of the unholy music which plays on the radio and on the internet.

### **Tone 1 (or) I**

Tone 1 conveys a sense of mystery, a tone of the miraculous, or surprise.

“When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure Body; Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world...” (Troparion of the resurrection, Tone 1)

### **Tone 2 (or) II**

Tone 2 conveys a somber, startling or shocking message.

“Verily, the angel came to the tomb and said to the ointment-bearing women, the ointment is meet for the dead, but Christ is shown to be remote from corruption...” (Troparion of the Myrrh Bearing Women, Tone 2)

### **Tone 3 (or) III**

Tone 3 conveys a sense of joy, a sense of the heavenly.

“Let the heavens sing for joy and let everything on earth be glad...” (Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 3)

### **Tone 4 (or) IV**

Tone 4 conveys something frightening or martyric. Almost always the tone set for angels and martyrs.

“Commanders of the heavenly hosts, we who are unworthy beseech you...” (Troparion of the Archangel Michael and the Bodiless Powers, Tone 4)

“By choosing the Apostles' way of life, you succeeded to their throne... you defended the Faith to the very shedding of your blood, O Holy Martyr among bishops Ignatius...” (Troparion of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Tone 4)

### **Tone 5 (or) Plagal 1<sup>st</sup> (or) V**

Conveys a similar sense of mystery, but also contains words of worship and teaching.

“Blessed are you, O Lord, teach me your statutes... the Myrrh bearing women were amazed, when they beheld you, numbered among the dead”... (Evlogetaria, Tone 5)

### **Tone 6 (or) Plagal 2<sup>nd</sup> (or) VI**

Tone 6 conveys true sorrow and sadness. It is used frequently for burial services.

“When the angelic powers appeared at Your grave, the soldiers guarding it feared and became as dead...” (Resurrectional Apolytikion, Tone 6)

### **Tone 7 (or) Grave (or) VII**

Conveying, like Tone 3, a sense of joy, but also wonder.

“You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, revealing Your glory to Your disciples as far as they could bear it. Let Your everlasting Light also shine upon us sinners, through the prayers of the Theotokos. O Giver of Light, glory to You!” (Troparion of the Transfiguration, Tone 7)

### **Tone 8 (or) Plagal 4<sup>th</sup> (or) VIII**

Tone 8 is often considered most pleasing to the ear. It is uplifting, resurrectional, and powerful.

“Blessed are You O Christ Our God! You have revealed the fishermen as most wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them You drew the world into Your net, O Lover of Man, Glory to You!” (Troparion of Pentecost, Tone 8)

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## Beginning to Learn the Tones

**How do I begin to learn these tones?** If you cannot read music, you must begin memorizing. To memorize, you need to listen to the tones all day long.

**What do I need to memorize:** There are two things you need to memorize in order to acquire the tones:

1. The melody
2. The Apechema (more on this below)

### Melody

**Let's begin with the melody.** We will start in Tone 1. The particular hymn we will look at is the Troparion of the Resurrection, which is always in Tone 1.

Open this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QueUo4iW8l8>

Listen to the hymn: “When the stone wast sealed by the Jews, and the soldiers were guarding thine immaculate Body...”

Listen to it a few more times.

Now open this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Me0cKSz4b0>

Listen to the hymn: “When Thou, O Lord, Was Baptized by the River Jordan...” (Tone 1)

What do we notice when comparing these two hymns? The melody is almost the same. The words are different, the structure of the hymns is slightly different, but the core of Tone 1 is always going to be basically the same. If you can memorize and learn a melody, you can sing at the chant stand.

**This is how Byzantine Chanters are able to sing hymns from the liturgical books without sheet music.** (Also known as, “Free Chant”). They memorize the melodies and put complicated variations of the tones in their head. If you watch a master chanter, he can sing a paragraph of text (without sheet music) in the correct tone with perfect pacing and pitch. Now you need sheet music for more complicated things (such as Cherubikons and complex hymns with variables), but for the basics of ever-day parish life, much of the core of Byzantine Chant can be memorized.

### The Apechema

Return with me for a moment to this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Me0cKSz4b0>

In the first 6 seconds of the video, pay close attention to the word the chanter uses. What exactly is **A-na-nes?** It is not a part of the regular hymn. You will not find it in the lyrics. It is called an “Apechema.” It is the melodic introduction that prepares the Psaltis (cantor/chanter) to chant in a specific tone. The point of the Apechema is to give the basic pitch of the scale and to indicate to everyone at the chant stand exactly which tone you are transitioning into.

Most of the time, if you want to sing a hymn in Tone I, you will use this phrase, “A-na-nes,” to get yourself into the tone. There are many, many variations of the apechema for every tone. If you want to memorize the eight tones, **you must pickup the standard apechema for each tone along with the melody.** Note that there are different apechema’s for more complicated variable melodies. Those are not as important as the standard, everyday, apechema for the eight tones.

On the next few pages you will find recordings to practice memorization, along with a page of all standard 8 tonal Apechemas for each tone. The written words will only be useful, however, alongside recordings that will teach you how to pronounce and sing these.

## Ison

**One final note, in regards to the Ison:** The “Ison” is also called a “drone.” It is a note that is held by one of the chanters at the chant stand which maintains the pitch and key of the melody of the tone. Here is an example of what the Ison sounds like: (Listen carefully to the background voice behind the chanters voice!)

Example of holding Ison: <https://youtu.be/uRHODNWa1l8>

Learning to hold Ison is an art. If you can do this for your head-chanter, you will become their best friend. In the advanced section you will find guides which will help you do this. Once you commit melodies to memory, you can also begin holding ison—albeit, somewhat imperfectly without knowledge of notation.

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**\*Note:** I recommend recording hymns with the program [Audacity](#) and putting them on your phone as mp3s. This way, as you walk, bike, or drive, you can listen to these hymns on repeat. You may also find different versions of the hymns I have linked below, if you prefer a certain chanters voice or recording over these! There are plenty of recordings out there!

## Tone 1:

**Hymns to memorize** “Hymn of the Cross... O Lord, Save Your People and Bless Thine Inheritance...,” “When the stone had been secured...” & “Holy Theophany”

(Optional:) “The Hymn of the Circumcision of Christ”

Theophany of Christ with Apechema:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Me0cKSz4b0>

“When the Stone had been Sealed...” with Apechema

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ly5f5egps\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ly5f5egps_o)

O Lord, Save Your People...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPc0WXbfiCQ>

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 1:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-1>

Circumcision of Christ with Apechma (highly recommend): Unfading Rose, Spotify

## Tone 2:

**Hymns to memorize** “Apolytikion of the Myrrh Bearing Women” & “Apolytikion, When You descended unto death, O lord, who yourself are immortal Life...”

Apolytikion of the Myrrh Bearing Women: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JK-WzQuND2g>

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 2 + When you Descended Unto Death, O Lord:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-2>

Tone 2 Hymn with example of Apechema: \*Note, this is from a livestream from the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Lancaster, PA

<https://soundcloud.com/user-5235040/antiphon-viii-tone-2/s-o041eZmSWp9>

### **Tone 3:**

**Hymns to memorize** “Hymn of the Resurrection, Let the Heavens sing for joy and let everything on earth be glad...”

Troparia of the Resurrection in Tone 3, with Apechema:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QwVwlZZ\\_qM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QwVwlZZ_qM)

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 3:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-3>

### **Tone 4:**

**Hymns to memorize** “Troparion of Saint Ignatius of Antioch” & “Apolytikion of the Resurrection, Having learned the joyful proclamation of the resurrection...”

Troparion/Apolytikion of the Resurrection Tone 4, with Apechema:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKYE1uWWj8s>

Troparion of Saint Ignatius:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpRfjKInROM>

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 4: <https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-4>

### **Tone 5 or Plagal I:**

**Hymns to memorize** “Apolytikion of the Resurrection, Let us worship the Word, who is unoriginate...”

Troparion of the Ressurection, Tone 5, with Apechema:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbCVexMs83M>

Additional Antiphonal example, with Apechema, from Holy Week: \*Note, another recording from the Greek Orthodox parish in Lancaster, PA

<https://soundcloud.com/user-5235040/antiphon-iv-tone-5/s-2CQWrWTrl3n>

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 5: <https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-plagal-of-the-1st>

## **Tone 6 or Plagal II:**

**Hymns to memorize** “Apolytikion of Tone 6, When the angelic powers were at Thy tomb...”

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 6 with Apechema:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1keEZzcgvCw>

Additional Antiphonal example, with Apechma, from Holy Week: \*Note, another recording from the Greek Orthodox parish in Lancaster, PA

<https://soundcloud.com/user-5235040/antiphon-ii-tone-6/s-LsUjIMJun09>

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 6: <https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-mode-plagal-of-the-1st>

## **Tone 7 or Grave or Plagal 3:**

**Hymns to memorize** “The Hymn of the Transfiguration of Christ” & “Troparia of the Resurrection, Thou didst shatter death by thy Cross”

Apolytikion of the Transfiguration:

English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSgnzbeEgyU>

Greek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyALUYn3c-Y>

Troparion of the Resurrection Tone 7 with Apechema:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Nub\\_F1oM0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Nub_F1oM0Y)

Greek Orthodox Chant Trainer Tone 7: <https://www.goarch.org/-/learn-to-chant-sunday-orthros-grave-mode>

## **Tone 8 or Plagal 4:**

**Hymns to memorize** “The Hymn of Pentecost” & “Troparion of the Resurrection in Tone 8”

Hymn of Pentecost:

English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h5zfd4CNQE>

Greek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxo4qoJUes8>

Troparion of the Resurrection in Tone 8 with apechema:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvP0HEljU2I>



## **Tone 1**

A-na-nes

## **Tone 2**

Ne-a-nes

## **Tone 3**

Nana

## **Tone 4**

Legetos

## **Tone 5**

An-e-anes

## **Tone 6**

Neheanes

## **Tone 7**

Aanes

## **Tone 8**

Ha-gia or Neaghie



## Further Study and Memorization

At this point, my recommendation is to invest in purchasing a few albums to accompany the YouTube links I provide. These albums will help you learn the tones:

1. ***Apolytikia of the Great Feasts – Unfading Rose*** (from either Amazon or through subscribing to Spotify). This album cannot be found on youtube. This album was recorded by a family at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and it was done specifically to teach newcomers the melodies, apechma, and hymns of the major feasts.
2. ***All Creation Trembled – Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Choir of Saint Romanos the Melodist***: (Amazon, Spotify or YouTube) This CD is from Holy Week at Holy Cross seminary. Fr. Romanos, professor of Byzantine Chant, leads and sings. This is not only a good album for learning the tones, but also for learning the hymns of Holy Week which are particularly difficult.
3. ***Grace Shining Forth – Antiochian Youth Music Ministry***: (Amazon, Spotify or YouTube) Utilize their selection of Byzantine hymns. They record both Byzantine/Western style for each hymn. Very useful.
4. ***The Divine Liturgy in English – Capella Romana***: (Amazon, Spotify or YouTube) Superb recording from the United Kingdom with many Master Chanters. Focus specifically on the antiphons and apolytikia.

### **What do I do after I have learned and memorized all these hymns?**

At this point you should begin feeling very comfortable with the melodies and apechmas of all 8 tones. Your focus now should be to master the many different elements of matins, liturgy, and vespers which remain the same every week but switch tones. For example, you will eventually need to learn all 8 versions of “Lord, I have Cried” for Vespers. **If you can read music, this will be easy after having memorized the tonal melodies and practicing apechmas. Just simply print the sheet music for hymns, such as “Lord, I have Cried.”** If you do not yet read music, it will take time to commit them to memory.

Start with Tone 1. Work on it every day and every week until it feels natural and you can recall it from memory. Pair it with other hymns and melodies from Tone 1. After you feel comfortable, move to Tone 2. Same goes for other parts of the divine services, such as, “God is the Lord” (Orthros), the Doxology (Orthros), Megalynarion or “More Honorable than the Cherubim” (Antiochians typically sing this in Tone 4, but the Greeks do all 8 depending on the week) and so on.

The best way to accomplish this is to work through the Greek Orthodox Chanting Guide and to listen to the recordings of a parish with a great chanter. My recommendation is Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Lancaster, PA. They have three years of livestreamed recordings of vespers, matins, akathists, and liturgy. You can find almost every hymn of the Church on their YouTube page if you search for it.

To find the location of a particular hymn, use AgesInitiative. For example, if I want to hear “Lord, I have Cried” in Tone 3, I would go check AgesInitiative. On Saturday September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, “Lord, I have Cried” was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> tone: <https://ages-dcs-archive.netlify.app/2019/dcs/p/s/2019/09/07/ve/en/se.m09.d08.ve.pdf>

Now I go to YouTue and find a recording from September 7<sup>th</sup>. Here is one:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL9sC9NQEEg>

Now you can listen to “Lord, I have Cried” in Tone 3 and begin committing it to memory. This can be done for any hymn you need to find in a certain tone.

**I have memorized the basic 8 Tonal melodies, the Apechema and I can either read music or have memorized the standard vesperal, matins, and liturgy hymns... What now?**

At this point you are fit to be an active chanter at the chant stand. You should feel right at home under the direction of a head-chanter at the chant stand. However, if you want to become a First Chanter or a Master, you must acquire written musical knowledge. The tradition of memorization is limited, and in the modern world, notation is the standard. There is no shame in stopping here. But, if you want to delve deeply into Byzantine Music, it’s time to learn notation, preferably Byzantine Notation (though Western is suitable for the advanced level) and how to read sheet music!

### **For the Beginner Byzantine Chanter seeking to Become Advanced or Protopsaltis**

We have now arrived to the part of the guide which requires two things: knowledge of (or willingness to learn) musical notation and knowledge of the structures of all Orthodox services. There are a few routes and options that certain individuals should take. Let us begin first with the structure of Orthodox services and hymnology.

If you do not know the ins-and-outs of Vespers, Orthros (Matins) and Liturgy, you will never be able to be an advanced chanter or chant services solo. Consider that many mission parishes only have one chanter. If you desire to help spread the faith with a music ministry, you MUST learn the in-depth structure of the services.

1. ***The Typikon Decoded***, Archimandrite Joe Getcha: <https://www.amazon.com/Typikon-Decoded-Orthodox-Liturgy/dp/0881414123>

This is the most important liturgical book you will ever purchase in your life. This book will teach you everything you need to know about liturgical rubrics and structure. This book will teach you what the meaning behind every hymn is. For example, have you ever wondered what an exapostilarion is? Do you want to know the difference between Apolytikion and Troparion? Do you want to know how all the liturgical books work together (menaion, otchoechos, pentecostarion, etc...)? This book explains everything. Buy it ASAP and read it at least 3 times cover to cover as you train to become a chanter. Use the index to learn the vocabulary of chant!

2. ***A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography***, Egon Wellesz:  
*Scribd*: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/9629654/A-History-of-Byzantine-Music-and-Hymnography>

*Archive.org*: <https://archive.org/details/historyofbyzanti00egon/page/n9/mode/2up>

Another incredible resource! Use this book to understand the development and importance of hymnography in the Byzantine Rite. Use this book only for theory. The practical side is outdated and incorrect. (Do not attempt to use the book to learn Byzantine notation).

**If you are seeking to be advanced chanter:** Western Notation is fine. Byzantine is preferred. If you already know Western notation and you are committed to staying with it, skip the Byzantine Notation section.

**If you are seeking to be a master:** You must learn Byzantine Notation.

## Byzantine Notation

### (Beginner – Advanced)

1. *Byzantine Music Theory and Practice Guide*, Greek Archdiocesan School of Byzantine Music: Full textbook download (free!): <https://www.scribd.com/doc/138382388/Byzantine-Music>  
This textbook is going to be your foundation. Use it alongside all the YouTube and electronic resources given.
2. *Reading Psalmodia*, David J. Melling: Another textbook to teach you Byzantine Music. Work through it alongside the above *Byzantine Music Theory* and the YouTube resources. (<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/32046820/david-j-melling-reading-psalmodia-fullpdf>)
3. Nicholas J. Jones Byzantine Chant YouTube Guides (use with GOA Theory/Practice):
  - a. Original 3 Tutorials (Start Here):
    - 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnzOI1847hU>
    - 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SX96N80CDB4&t=114s>
    - 3 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOJSzNIAZ6k>
  - b. Updated 10 Videos:
    1. [https://youtu.be/dNVLbs\\_758U](https://youtu.be/dNVLbs_758U)
    2. <https://youtu.be/5l3oT9VQcfU>
    3. <https://youtu.be/1173LyMn7uE>
    4. <https://youtu.be/O-11sqt8TkU>
    5. <https://youtu.be/K6Mpbz0ObRY>
    6. <https://youtu.be/ppGXTJp56EU>
    7. <https://youtu.be/qCuRY9-PvgM>
    8. <https://youtu.be/eWNf0E1GN4k>
    9. <https://youtu.be/7JUJ7sGkB0>
    10. <https://youtu.be/5vBtHskE7jQ>
4. Trisagion School of Byzantine Music: If you'd prefer instruction, I recommend this school. <https://trisagionschool.org/>
5. Byzantine Notation flash cards: These are absolutely invaluable! Get them if you can! <https://trisagionschool.org/shop/>
6. Learn to hold Ison 1: <https://youtu.be/F1i-7mWckCI>
7. Learn to hold Ison 2: [https://youtu.be/Bxt\\_DB\\_R8A8](https://youtu.be/Bxt_DB_R8A8)

## Diving into Byzantine Chant Theory:

Begin immediately with the Antiochian Village Byzantine Music Guide. The Antiochian guides will utilize your knowledge of music and help you learn the Byzantine Tones in more depth, going far beyond memorization. An added bonus: Western notation is used in these videos.

Tone 1: <https://youtu.be/1W55qjjp0nE>

Tone 2: <https://youtu.be/vKyqPouO4og>

Tone 3: <https://youtu.be/dpavRICxjEM>

Tone 4: <https://youtu.be/zafWPTDlRo0>

Tone 5: <https://youtu.be/L3YGEylHB8o>

Tone 6: [https://youtu.be/4eHQIrdHS\\_I](https://youtu.be/4eHQIrdHS_I)

Tone 7: <https://youtu.be/NdLFOQT7C3w>

Tone 8: [https://youtu.be/xR27\\_4DAo9U](https://youtu.be/xR27_4DAo9U)

After completing these 8 guides and studying them numerous times, alongside hours of practice in your parish, **at least 1-2 years of going through the cycles of Matins/Vespers** AND after memorizing the hymns and variables from the “Humble Novice” section, you should be **considered advanced**. Whether or not you read Byzantine notation or Western notation doesn’t matter. You are advanced and most likely, a fairly strong chanter. Note that you have to be doing more than just Sunday liturgy to get to this point. Weekday Matins/Vespers is crucial to becoming a proper chanter.

## For the Advanced or Protopsaltis of a parish Seeking to Become a Master

### **(Expert - Master Level Byzantine Notation & Theory)**

Being that I am not a master, and that I am still attempting to gain full fluency in Byzantine notation, I can only share resources which will help you become a Master. There are three ways to becoming a Master:

1. Ideal: Apprentice with a Master
  - a. This is extremely difficult in Western countries. Master Byzantine chanters are not common outside of major cities and metropolitan areas. However, if you find one, ask if you can apprentice. They will hopefully one day prepare you for examination and to the point of true “Mastery.”
2. Ideal: Enroll in an official Byzantine Chant program
  - a. My recommendation is the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology certificate in Byzantine Chant. At the end of your studies you will sit for the examination and leave a Master Chanter. There are other smaller programs throughout major cities in the United States (some unreliable though). There is an official School of Byzantine Chant outside London in the U.K for any British / Irish

learners. The Trisagion Online School is attempting to train people to mastery as well.

- b. Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain School of Byzantine Music:  
<https://www.thyateira.org.uk/archdiocese/school-of-byzantine-music/>
3. Not Ideal: Study online through independent means
  - a. For most people this will be the most realistic option, and the final portion of this guide will give you resources to accomplish this. It will take a significant amount of time and practice to do this alone. Nothing can replace instructors or masters. However, as a Westerner in the Orthodox Church, I understand how impossible it is to find Masters of the Sacred Arts, whether it be chanting or iconography.

**All of these methods will require learning Byzantine Notation**

**Online Study to Mastery**

Here are the resources and methods you can use to obtain mastery through self-study:

By far the best independent self-study guide to get you to a mastery of Byzantine Notation and Chant is Patriarchal Psaltophiles on YouTube. He has 120+ lessons and wrote his own textbook to teach people how to chant in the Byzantine tradition faithfully. I can't recommend this enough. This is currently what I am using to become a better chanter. He offers everything for free, so you can download his textbook at NO COST. You can also order a physical copy from Amazon. Use it alongside the 120+ videos.

YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6mo0C9ZQoWwQUb902w5jMQ>

Physical Book: [https://www.amazon.com/dp/1091091854?ref\\_=pe\\_3052080\\_397514860](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1091091854?ref_=pe_3052080_397514860)

Free E-Book / Website: <https://www.patriarchalsaltophiles.org/book>

**Final Word: On Akathist Services**

I wish to end with Akathists, because, like a Theotokion, it is always beautiful to end with the Mother of Our Lord and Savior. The Akathist service is one of the later developments of the Byzantine Rite. We know of early Akathists happening in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, but most modern Akathists come from the late Byzantine period, around the 11<sup>th</sup> century going into the 12<sup>th</sup>. These are beautiful services and they often lead to miracles because of the powerful intercessions of the Theotokos. Many of the hymns in these services are unique, and in order to get the tones down just-right, I recommend listening to them from two sources:

1. *The Great Paraklesis* by Eikona (YouTube/Spotify):  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_mUxJnQqHlUPTKBSxX\\_h0BKrZLbz5RkA](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_mUxJnQqHlUPTKBSxX_h0BKrZLbz5RkA)
2. Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, PA: They have numerous Akathist recordings.

## Most Holy Thetokos Save Us

Ἄξιόν ἐστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς,  
μακαρίζειν σε τὴν Θεοτόκον,  
τὴν ἀειμακάριστον καὶ παναμώμητον καὶ μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ  
ἡμῶν.

Τὴν τιμιωτέραν τῶν Χερουβεὶμ καὶ ἐνδοξοτέραν ἀσυγκρίτως  
τῶν Σεραφεὶμ,  
τὴν ἀδιαφθόρως Θεὸν Λόγον τεκοῦσαν,  
τὴν ὄντας Θεοτόκον, σὲ μεγαλύνομεν.

**Through the prayers of our Holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ Our God, have mercy upon us, and save us.**

**Amen.**