

Your Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, Your Eminence Metropolitan SABA, Reverend Clergy and Esteemed Members of the Board of Trustees and Faithful of the Archdiocese,

Christ is in our Midst! Greetings in the Name of Our Lord from the Department of Sacred Music. Our Mission Statement: The Department of Sacred Music of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America guides chanters, choirs and congregations to musical excellence in worship for the glory of God.

My name is Mareena Boosamra Ball and I am honored to be the Chairwoman for the Department of Sacred Music for the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. I work in conjunction with Fr. John El-Massih who oversees Byzantine chant. Our Department is made up of the finest musicians of our Archdiocese, who meet regularly as a team via Zoom across 4 time zones.

Diocese of Los Angeles and the West – Regina Roum
Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York – Kh. Suzanne Murphy
Diocese of Miami and the Southeast – Kh. Nora Bleam
Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest – Kris Howard
Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America – Christy Farha
Diocese of Worcester and New England – Charles Marge
Diocese of New York and Washington, D.C. – Kh. Nancy Hanna Long
Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic – Kh. Nancy Hanna Long
Missions Music Coordinator: Very Rev. John Finley
Historian: Michael Farrow
Members-at-large: Greg Abdalah, Danielle Prontka and Zhanna Lehmann

This past year has been filled with so many wonderful musical experiences, projects and future visions!

Summer Sacred Music Institute 2022

“Proclaiming the Word, Living the Liturgy” was the theme, featuring keynote speakers Benedict and Talia Sheehan. Nearly 100 participants attended and enjoyed presentations by this dynamic couple, in combination with choral and chant sessions taught by a team of priests and teachers. Bishop THOMAS presided.

Youth Music Ministry

The mission of the Youth Music Ministry is to bring together young Orthodox Christians with a love for music and a desire to serve their Church, to work toward the common goal of understanding and living the theology of Orthodox hymnography to the glory of God. They study Choral Music, Byzantine Chant, Proper Vocal Production and Technique; they learn challenging new music to be performed with their peers and they participate in every Divine Service.

Winter Sacred Music Institute 2023

The Institute was held this February at the beautiful St. Anthony Orthodox Church in San Diego California. The theme of the conference was “Preparing for Great Lent: Windows into the Tridion Season”. Over 70 participants were in attendance.

Music Library and Website

Updating the music library and arranging music is an ongoing project of the Department of Sacred Music. We currently have approximately 2,600 individual Hymns. The team of Fr. John El-Massih, Christopher Holwey, and Chadi Karam are continually revising, updating and setting hymns for Divine services. Peter Samore and Dn. Christian Manasseh are currently in the process of reconstructing the entire digital music library to make it more user friendly. It is our hope that this will be completed by this summer.

New Music Committee

Throughout the year Orthodox Composers submit their choral works to the New Music Committee, who review selections, make suggestions and send their critiques to the composer for changes. The committee is Michael Farrow, Christopher Holwey, Charles Marge and me. Byzantine arrangers submit their music to Christopher Holwey and ultimately, Fr. John El-Massih for final approval.

Antiochian National Choir of North America

A new initiative has been launched. The Antiochian National Choir of North America brings together dedicated, advanced, proficient singers of Byzantine and Western choral traditions. Singers who are selected will be well rehearsed in advance, to reflect the heavenly beauty of the ecclesiastical music of the Orthodox Church. The audition process yielded 40 singers each for the 4-part and Byzantine choirs. This ensemble will debut at this year's National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.