Connexions module: m20330

LITURGICAL PRONUNCIATION*

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Abstract

This module demonstrates the liturgical pronunciation of Latin for choral singing. Examples are given with English equivilents for a better understanding. Each letter is explained.

1 LITURGICAL PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN FOR CHORAL SINGING

The Latin language offers the singers the advantage of singing only the five fundamental vowel sounds. None of the vowels has a second sound (diphthong). A director must take extra care to be certain that the choir does sing a pure vowel and that they do not treat the Latin language the same as they do English.

One should also be apprised that the pronunciation of the Latin language, as it appears in table 4.7, is the pronunciation used when singing. It is often referred to as Italianized or church Latin. It will, and should, differ from the Latin language as taught in the classroom by the Latin instructor. It is usually necessary to preface the first work in Latin with remarks to that effect for the benefit of some students who are currently, or have been, enrolled in a Latin class.

Latin Vowel	As In	IPA Symbol	
A	father	a	
E (also AE			
and OE)	red	ε	
I and Y	feet	lil	
O	for	lo	
U	noon	u	

Figure 1

^{*}Version 1.2: Jun 18, 2009 1:11 pm -0500

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Connexions module: m20330 2

The life of the Latin language is in the pure vowels. They need to be consistently pronounced as indicated in table 1. Again, the IPA symbol is used along with an English word that contains the appropriate vowel sound

A—is always pronounced as $| \cdot |$. Its pronunciation never changes, even when it occurs in an unstressed syllable. It never becomes uh $| \cdot |$ or $| \cdot |$.

- E (AE and OE)—these vowels should **always** be pronounced as indicated in table 1. They should never receive a second sound, such as in the word may | m |. They are not diphthongs and do not have a second vowel sound. This vowel sound is one of two that are mispronounced the most by choirs. While the vowel is to be pronounced as $| \cdot |$, it may legitimately have more brightness than we give that sound in English.
- I , Y—these vowels are **always** pronounced as |i|. The word **in** is mispronounced by many choirs as |n| (ihn) rather than as |in| (een). "In ex-celsis" is a text so often sung by choirs that it should be noted that the letter i (**in** and -sis) receives the pronunciation of |i| in both instances.
- 0—this is the other vowel that is mispronounced so often. It is **not** to be pronounced as though it were an o in the English word \mathbf{go} . It does not receive the second vowel sound of that word, the $|\ |$ vanish. The tone must be maintained on the first of the English sounds, the $|\ |$ o $|\ |$, until the next consonant or vowel is sung. Have the choir sing the $|\ |$ o $|\ |$ as they normally would, but do not let them change to the $|\ |$ vanish. Ask them to release by taking a breath at your signal. Give the signal somewhat prematurely to prevent them from sounding the $|\ |$ vanish. The Latin \mathbf{o} receives the pronunciation as in our word \mathbf{awe} , with no trace of a second sound.

U—this sound should never be pronounced as the | | in **full** or with a preceding | i | sound, as in **you**. It is always pronounced | u | as in **noon**.

Other vowel combinations such as **AU**, **EI**, **EU**, and **OU** must be dealt with individually. The **AU** should be pronounced as the **ou** in the word **house**. The first vowel should be maintained until the very last moment when the second vowel is sounded, just before passing to the next syllable.

EI, EO, EU, OU, and UI are not diphthongs and each vowel is to be pronounced as though they are two separate vowels, which they really are. Do not confuse them with diphthongs. The exception to this is the instance when **UI** is preceded by an **O** as in **oui**. The correct pronunciation is as in the English word we. One goes directly to the | i | vowel sound.

The vowel sounds in Latin never change. They must receive a consistent and correct pronunciation. Some of the consonants, however, receive more than one pronunciation depending upon their use. The following list of consonants gives all of their possible pronunciations and the situations in which these pronunciations are needed.

- C—before \mathbf{e} , \mathbf{i} , \mathbf{y} , \mathbf{ae} , \mathbf{oe} is pronounced as the \mathbf{ch} in church. In all other cases it is pronounced as \mathbf{k} . The double \mathbf{c} , as is ecce is also pronounced as the \mathbf{ch} in \mathbf{church} .
- G—before \mathbf{e} , \mathbf{i} , \mathbf{y} , \mathbf{ae} , \mathbf{oe} is pronounced as in the word gentle. In all other cases it is pronounced as in the word \mathbf{get} .
 - H—this letter is mute, except in Mihi and Nihil where it is pronounced like a k.
 - J—is pronounced as the y in yes, and is combined into one sound with the following vowel.
 - R—the **r** should be flipped.
 - X—is pronounced as **ks**.
 - Z—is pronounced as dz.
- EX—if **ex** is the beginning of a word and followed by a vowel, it is pronounced as **egs**. When combined with a consonant, it is pronounced as **eks**.
- TI—when ti is followed by a vowel it is pronounced like tsi. Exception: This is not true when the ti is preceded by s, t, or x.
 - TH—th is always pronounced as a t because the h is mute.
 - CH—ch is always pronounced as a \mathbf{k} .
 - GN—the combination gn receives the pronunciation similar to the ni in dominion.
- SC—sc before \mathbf{e} , \mathbf{i} , \mathbf{u} , and \mathbf{ae} is pronounced as sh as in the word \mathbf{ship} . In all other cases it is pronounced like \mathbf{sk} .

Connexions module: m20330 3

Several Latin texts that are sung with regularity are given along with the proper pronunciation. If the suggested pronunciation is consistently followed, a choral director will find that the tone in a Latin work will improve and that the choir will also sing the English vowels with more purity and with a better tone.

The IPA symbols will not be used to indicate the Latin pronunciation because they resemble the Latin words so closely. Instead, phonetic sounds are used for the pronunciation guide.

Hodie Christus Natus Est

Latin	Pronunciation
Hodie christus natus est	Aw-dee-eh kree-stoos nah-toos ehst
Hodie salvator apparuit	Aw-dee-eh sahl-vah-tawr ah-pah-roo-eet
Hodie in terra	Aw-dee-eh een teh-rah
canunt angeli	kan-noont ahn-jeh-lee
Laetantur archangeli	Leh-tahn-toor ahrk-ahn-jeh-lee
Hodie exultant	Aw-dee-eh eg-zool-tahnt
justi dicentes	yoo-stee dee-chehn-tehs
Gloria, in excelsis deo	Glaw-ree-ah een ek-shehl-sees deh-aw
Alleluiea	Ah-leh-loo-yah

Table 1

Agnus Dei

Latin	Pronunciation
Agnus Dei qui tollis	Ah-nyoos Deh-ee kwee tawl-lees
peccata mundi	peh-kah-tah moon-dee
miserere nobis	mee-seh-reh-reh naw-bees
dona nobis pacem	daw-nah naw-bees pah-chehm

Table 2

Connexions module: m20330

Ave Verum Corpus

Latin	Pronunciation
Ave verum Corpus natum	Ah-veh veh-room Kawr-poos nah-toom
de Maria Virgine	Deh Mah-ree-ah Veer-gee-neh
Vere passum, immolatum	Veh-reh pahs-soom, eem-maw-lah-toom
in cruce pro homine	een kroo-cheh praw aw-mee-neh
Cujus latus perforatum	Koo-yoos lah-toos pehr-fawr-ah-toom
fluxit aqua et sanguine	floo-kseet ah-koo-ah eht sahn-gooee-heh
Esto nobis praegustatum	Ehs-taw naw-bees preh-goo-stah-toom
mortis in examine	mawr-tees een ehgs-ah-mee-neh
O Jesu dulcis! O Jesu pie!	Aw Yeh-soo dool-chees! Aw Yeh-soo pee-eh!
O Jesu fili Mariae	Aw Yeh-soo fee-lee Mah-ree-eh

Table 3