

Performance Notes

This is an example of what was known in the Renaissance and Baroque eras as *alternatim praxis* (i.e., two different forms of music used in alternation with one another). This form was particularly popular for the performance of the *Magnificat*, the canticle of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:46–55), which is the musical climax of the Office of Evening Prayer or Vespers in the Roman Rite.

When sung in *alternatim praxis*, the canticle is introduced by the antiphon. This is begun by the cantor, who sings to the asterisk (*) in the text; at that point, the choir/assembly joins in and completes it. The cantor then sings the first half of the first verse of the canticle, which is sung to one of the Gregorian tones; the choir/assembly joins in at the asterisk again. The second verse of the canticle is sung in harmony by the choir. The third verse (and all of the succeeding odd verses of the canticle) are sung by the choir/assembly to the chant; the fourth verse (and all of the succeeding even verses) are sung by the choir to the harmonized settings. The canticle ends with the singing of the Lesser Doxology, divided into two parts (the first sung to the chant; the second, to a harmony that matches the first harmony—a musical pun, since the text being sung is “as it was in the beginning . . .”). When the doxology is ended, then the antiphon that had been sung before the canticle is reprised at the end. When the antiphon is sung at the end of the canticle, it is *not* intoned by the cantor, but sung by the entire choir/assembly.

Here is an example of an antiphon “on the Magnificat” in Tone VIII. It is from the current Liturgy of the Hours, and is assigned to be sung on Mondays in weeks one and three of the four-week Psalter. It can be sung at any time, since the text of the antiphon is taken from the text of the canticle itself.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'Cantor' and the second 'All'. The lyrics are: 'My soul pro - claims the great - ness of the Lord, — for — he has looked with fa - vor on his low - ly serv - ant.'

MAGNIFICAT

SATB Choir, Cantor, Assembly

Lk 1
The Book of Common Prayer

Tone VIIIg
J. Michael Thompson

Cantor
My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God

Cantor/Choir/Assembly
my Sav - ior; for he has looked with favor on his low - ly serv - ant.

Choir
mf
3
S.A.
From this day all gen - er - a - tions shall call me

T.B.
mf

6
blessed: the Al - might - y has done great things for

9
me and ho - ly is his name.

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13 *Cantor/Choir/Assembly*

He has— mer - cy on— those who fear— him in ev' - ry gen - er - a - tion.

15 *Choir*

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scat - tered the proud in their con - ceit.

19 *Cantor/Choir/Assembly*

He has— cast down the— might - y from their thrones, and has lift - ed up the low - ly.

21 *Choir*

He has filled the hun - gry with good things,

Filled

good things,

and the rich he has sent a - way— emp - ty.

emp - ty,

a - way.

26 *Cantor/Choir/Assembly*

He has— come— to the help of his— serv - ant Is - ra - el,

for he has re - mem - bered his prom - ise of mer - cy,

♩ = c. 96
Choir
mp

28

The promise he made to our fathers, to

32

A - bra - ham and his chil - dren for - ev - er.

35 Cantor/Choir/Assembly

Glo-ry to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho-ly Spir-it:

♩ = c. 64
Choir
mf

37

As it was in the be - gin - ning, is

40

now, and will be for ev - er. A - men.