

Order of Mass — Hyphenation

Information Sheet 6

Introduction

An area which often confuses composers and publishers is hyphenation. Done well it is often not noticed by the singer; done poorly it can be confusing and cause distraction.

When longer words are sung they are split into separate syllables and in the printed music these syllables are connected by hyphens. In music the placement of hyphens conveys information to the singer and is shaped by two connected factors:

- it should indicate to the singer the sound to be sung,
- it should give the singer an idea of the whole word or at least avoid suggesting other words.

To illustrate this 'learning' can be hyphenated in 2 ways: 'lear-ning' 'learn-ing'. Though the first is split where the sound changes the first syllable could be pronounced in a couple of ways. The second example is to be preferred as the sound and the meaning are clearer.

Word extensions

Single syllable words, such as 'Lord', when sung over a number of notes are not hyphenated. In printed music the lengthening of a vowel sound is indicated by a word extension: 'Lord_____'. Some music notation software will add these automatically.

Word contractions

Some multi-syllable words when sung are shortened and sung to fewer syllables. An example would be heaven which can be sung as two syllables (heav-en) or one (heav'n). It is helpful to performer to indicate when a word has been contracted in such a way.

Example texts

Unlike other languages English does not have precise rules for hyphenation or syllabification. There is therefore some variation in how words can be hyphenated. The following is offered as a model but alternatives can be accepted as long as they are not confusing to the performer.

Eucharistic Prayer

Ho-ly, Ho-ly, Ho-ly Lord God of hosts.
Heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry.
Ho-san-na in the high-est.
Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Ho-san-na in the high-est.

Then the Priest says:

The mys-te-ry of faith.

And the people continue, acclaiming:

We pro-claim your Death, O Lord,
and pro-fess your Re-sur-rec-tion
un-til you come a-gain.

Or:

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we pro-claim your Death, O Lord,
un-til you come a-gain.

Or:

Save us, Sa-viour of the world,
for by your Cross and Re-sur-rec-tion
you have set us free.

He takes the chalice and the paten with the host and raising both, he says:

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, al-migh-ty Fa-ther,
in the u-ni-ty of the Ho-ly Spir-it,
all glo-ry and hon-our is yours,
for ev-er and ev-er.

The people acclaim:

A-men.

Lamb of God

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world,
have mer-cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world,
have mer-cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

<http://www.romanmissal.org.uk/Home/Music/Composing>

This information sheet is based on an idea of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Liturgy Commission Music [<http://forthinpraise.co.uk>]