

**Klymasz, Robert B. ed. 2000. *From Chantre to Djak: Cantorial Traditions in Canada*. Hull, Quebec: Canadian Music of Civilization. 185 pp. ISBN 0660178346**

*From Chantre to Djak: Cantorial Traditions in Canada* is a collection of essays, papers, and extracts in English and French compiled and edited by Robert B. Klymasz, curator of the East European Programme, Cultural Studies Division of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The book is published by the Canadian Museum of Civilization in its Mercury Series (Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, paper 73), and contains seven essays (eight, including the preface) and two extracts: *An Introduction to the Precentor's Companion* [1916] (Russian Orthodox Church) and *Rubrics for the Chant of the Mass* [1934] (Roman Catholic Church). There is also an extensive bibliography compiled by the editor and short biographical notes on each of the contributors.

In his Introduction, Klymasz states: "The goal here is to help document our cantorial traditions and to suggest avenues for future research into this rich yet neglected aspect of musical creativity." It is apparent that the editor viewed this project in its broadest sense by bringing together an eclectic assortment of perspectives and emphases.

In the Preface, Natalie Kononenko compares the role of the Ukrainian minstrel to that of the cantor. Joseph Roll's autobiographical essay, "Becoming a Cantor," gives a personal account in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. In contrast, "How I quit being a cantor: Chanting Aesthetics and 'Mood affect'" by Michael Owen Jones, describes the personal struggle of a cantor in Manitoba who eventually leaves the church and becomes a near-recluse. A study of the cantor/choral director Claude Gosselin in the Roman Catholic Church of Saint-Coeur de Marie in Quebec City provides the opportunity to place in historical context the fortunes of Quebec cantors from the French regime to the present day in Anne-Marie Poulin's essay, "Pour la suite de la 'beauté': le parcours de Claude Gosselin, chantre de Québec depuis 1943." Claudette Berthiaume-Zavada's "Au-delà de la tradition... Rôle et fonction d'un chantre dans la survie d'une église à Montréal" analyzes the mechanics of cantillation as practiced in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Sainte-Marie-la-Protectrice in Montreal. Bohdan Medwidzky attempts to compare the roles of cantors and godparents in his essay "Cantors and godparents in Ukrainian Folklore." A number of Jewish cantors were interviewed to provide a wide-ranging discussion in I. Sheldon Posen's essay "God is in front of me': Cantors of the Ottawa Jewish Community, 1998." And finally the revival of plainchant in the Anglican liturgy, spearheaded by Healey Willan, is the subject of Marcia Ostashewski's essay "Cantor Albert Mahon and Canada's Anglican Plainsong Revival."

Whether called chantre, djak, khazan or cantor, he or she can be found in diverse religious traditions in Canada. In this book the reader is introduced to Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox rites, the Roman Catholic tradition of Quebec, in addition to descriptions of Anglican and Jewish practices. Many readers no doubt will

be unfamiliar with at least some of these traditions and will be drawn to the book for illumination. In Anne-Marie Poulin's study of Claude Gosselin, she provides background regarding the role of the cantor in Quebec society by consulting historical documents. She explores the conditions of employment – typical length of tenure, salaries, and other duties, such as town crier. Gosselin is featured because of his defence of traditional music for the Mass despite Vatican II. I was privileged to have heard his choir in the mid-1980s performing a mass setting by early Canadian composer, Alexis Contant.

Sheldon Posen gives the reader excerpts from interviews with five khazan in Ottawa, exploring multiple facets of the role of the cantor in the modern-day Synagogue. Here, as in Claudette Berthiaume-Zavada's analysis of chanting in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Sainte-Marie-la-Protectrice in Montreal, the mechanics of chanting are explored, such as the modes used and the extent of ornamentation and improvisation.

Michael Owen Jones' study of the life of Gary Robertson describes his life struggles to become a Ukrainian Orthodox cantor, reflecting the struggle of the Ukrainian Church in Canada to establish a national identity. There were no priests among the first Ukrainian immigrants and they had to call upon the services of Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and even Presbyterian congregations. Gary Robertson charted a course among the disparate influences on his early formation — to speak English, Polish or Ukrainian, or to follow the Ukrainian Greek Catholic or Ukrainian Greek Orthodox rites. Eventually he became a reclusive lay monk on his farm after the on-going conflict with the priest in the parish forced him to retire.

"Becoming a Cantor" by Joseph Roll is an interesting personal account; except for a short stay in Toronto, his experiences are American. Similarly, Kononenko's Preface makes little reference to Canada. Bohdan Medwidsky's essay compares godparents and cantors in Ukrainian culture but I failed to grasp the connection between godparents and cantorial traditions. Drawing on several ethnomusicological models, Marcia Ostashewski's essay on Albert Mahon and the Anglican Plainsong Revival is informative, explaining how Mahon's role as cantor at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Toronto was shaped by his association with precentor Healey Willan, and evolved over a twenty-two period ending with a disagreement over liturgy with one of Willan's successors at St. Mary's.

The documents completing this book provide some useful background information, in both historical and ritualistic terms. "An Introduction to the Precentor's Companion" spells out the proper form of cantillation, providing historical background on the tones and chant forms. "Rubrics for the Chant of the Mass" lists the rules for chanting on the part of the Priest, the cantor and choir.

Some common threads throughout the book include the effects of modern urban life on the role of cantors and the appearance of women as lay cantors. The cantor's varied roles as teacher and musical-spiritual leader — conducting choirs, arranging or composing music, and most importantly by teaching — have been changing significantly in the past thirty years. How they have coped with these

changes is as varied as the traditions from which they came. In my own research for the final volume of sacred choral music for the Canadian Musical Heritage Society's anthology, I became familiar with both the Ukrainian and Jewish rites and the role of the cantor in each. The relative lacunae of sources — at least that are not in Ukrainian or Hebrew — have made me aware, as Klymasz points out, that the subject deserves more attention. Let us hope that this book will spark new interest in this fascinating and under-studied subject.

**Clifford Ford**