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Here's an idea to interview someone for DoM ...

General Discussion: Music

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Felipe Gasper August 2 Edit Announce Sink Close Delete Discussion Thanks

99.107.254.218 Posts: 440

Hand him/her a Graduale Romanum and say, "turn to the (nth) Sunday of Ordinary Time, and sing me the Offertory antiphon."

Discuss.

Kathy August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

198.228.228.41 Posts: 3,410

Great question! Not a complete interview: no questions about organ builders, budgets, human interaction, philosophy of liturgical music, problem solving, organizational skills--but a key question!

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).



Ben Yanke August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

64.233.172.41 Posts: 2,266

Good idea. Or at the very least a communico or introit.



CHGiffen August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

24.245.53.205 Posts: 2,138

The candidate flunks if (s)he cannot figure out which Offertory Antiphon goes with, say, the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time (which isn't the way things were done in 1961).

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).



melofluent August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

108.64.107.112 Posts: 2,229

Hi Felipe!

Though I agree with you and other commentators that such a tactic "cuts to the chase," I also think that might be counterintuitive in that some very good candidates might feel it confrontational on one hand, and that it doesn't provide the musician any intellectual "wiggle room." In other words, wouldn't you want to assess a person's adaptability as well?

How about-

1. Have the candidate identify the two clefs and explain their purpose.
2. Ask them about the function of tetrachords.
3. If they get the clefs, ask them to identify the solfege note starting a chant, identify the "final" by solfege pitch, and what seems to be the reciting solfege pitch is. If s/he successfully does that (which even non-neume readers could intuit), then let them try "Ubi caritas" or some other metric hymn-chant in neumes.
4. Ask them to provide a rationale or framework for why they would teach chant, lead chant and use chant in normative Catholic worship.

And so forth. Give the candidate some wiggle room, and you'll know how they'll function in a varied, real world of parish worship concerns. YMMV

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).

CharlesW August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

209.179.50.1 Posts: 5,098

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A truly good and accomplished musician who could likely work at any of the finer places, would probably smack you in the face with the GR, tell you to quit wasting his time, and where you can go as he moves on to a better place. LOL.

Thanked by (3): [Gavin](#), [Spriggo](#), [Richard Mix](#).

Kathy August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

50.246.120.197 Posts: 3,410

A truly good and accomplished musician who could likely work at any of the finer places, would probably smack you in the face with the GR, tell you to quit wasting his time, and where you can go as he moves on to a better place. LOL.

And this would be useful information, much better gained during the interview process than during the next May crowning when you ask him or her to do something else that s/he feels is beneath the high dignity of a DM's station...

Thanked by (1): [Ben Yanke](#).

CharlesW August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

209.179.50.1 Posts: 5,098

There are legitimate interview questions, then there are the esoteric and non-relevant questions that are designed to highlight the interviewer, not the interviewee - if there is such a word. If this were a strictly OF parish, handing someone the GR and expecting them to try to make equivalents between two different calendars, would seem a bit pointless, if not ridiculous. Interviews need to stick to the essentials of the work that will actually be done, not try to delve into the unlikely and rarely seen.

Thanked by (3): [Spriggo](#), [Gavin](#), [Andrew Motyka](#).



Gavin August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

104.2.50.162 Posts: 2,635

This is a bad question. A better one would be for the interviewer to hand the candidate the book, and say, "teach me to sing this Offertory chant."

I was reflecting on my early mentors. I remember one who said to me, in my first year of organ playing, "you have a lot of talent, but talent is nearly worthless in church work. Develop your skills at dealing with people. That's what will get you farther." It certainly has.

Thanked by (5): [CharlesW](#), [Ben Yanke](#), [Andrew Motyka](#), [Kathy](#), [MarkThompson](#).

FidemInFidebus August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

71.74.96.130 Posts: 32

Melo: Yikes! I had theory exams that were almost identical to your "interview" LOL! All the same I think yours is a great idea. And Gavin's as well. It's one thing to know all the stuff, quite another to be able to teach it.



Ben Yanke August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

50.50.68.123 Posts: 2,266

If this were a strictly OF parish, handing someone the GR and expecting them to try to make equivalents between two different calendars, would seem a bit pointless, if not ridiculous. Interviews need to stick to the essentials of the work that will actually be done, not try to delve into the unlikely and rarely seen.

What does having a strictly OF parish have to do with ignoring the Graduale Romanum? I assume we are discussing the 1974 edition, which, as you should know, is the normative music book of the Ordinary Form, containing the official chants for the full new calendar and new feasts as well. It's very applicable to the ordinary form. It's not a book for the EF, that's the liber usualis.

Thanked by (1): [M. Jackson Osborn](#).

brndurham August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

99.123.213.106 Posts: 24

^ Except when trying to find the Sunday after Pentecost equivalent to Ordinary Time. That's a bit of trouble. Admittedly, I have a distinct preference for vernacular propers over the Latin ones, unless the Ordinary Chants of the Mass are sung in Latin as well. Which is why I go looking for faithful English

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More unrevised propers to fill gaps in rev. ed. of The American Gradual

2 July 13 [David Sullivan](#)

adaptions of the Propers for Solemnities like Christmas that are close to the Graduale melody, rather than just using the actual Graduale Introit, *Dominus Dixit*.

CharlesW August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

209.179.50.1 Posts: 5,098

No, I wasn't thinking of the 1974. How many OF parishes use it? Inquiring minds want to know. I suspect one has to have some EF leanings to even know about it or want to use it. Even in my parish the missal antiphons have replaced it. I don't see any great rush among OF musicians to implement it and am afraid it may die away from lack of use. Now I didn't say that is what I want, just that I think that is the way things are.

Thanked by (1): [Kathy](#).



melofluent August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

108.64.107.112 Posts: 2,229

Ben, that's a digression that isn't very valuable at this point, coming from someone whose experience has been in the rarified and magnificent atmosphere managed by a true expert, our friend Aris. The point of an interview for a Director of Music is to assess the skills of an expert practitioner of teaching, leading, evangelizing, recruiting and maturing the skills of all interested parties, not an expert in the theory, musicology and academics of chant. Ergo, from the flipside of our practicums, if I wrote "DMaj9/F#=?" on the exam, I'd be more interested in knowing how the candidate would render that rather than hear an argument or philosophy about chordal nomenclature. That's kind of the same question Felipe asks for in the OP, but one which is of fairly equal value in the "marketplace" of church music, no?



Ben Yanke August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

50.50.68.123 Posts: 2,266

Except when trying to find the Sunday after Pentecost equivalent to Ordinary Time. That's a bit of trouble. Admittedly, I have a distinct preference for vernacular propers over the Latin ones, unless the Ordinary Chants of the Mass are sung in Latin as well. Which is why I go looking for faithful English adaptions of the Propers for Solemnities like Christmas that are close to the Graduale melody, rather than just using the actual Graduale Introit, *Dominus Dixit*.

Not sure I understand. The new GR is completely revised, so it has no references to the sundays after pentecost. It's completely for the OF, just like the Liber is completely for the EF. On the 17th sunday of ordinary time, you simply open it up, and find *tempus per annum XVII* (or whatever the latin phrase is, I don't remember, don't have one in front of me). I'm not understanding what is so difficult here: The graduale is a book completely for the ordinary form.

Thanked by (1): [M. Jackson Osborn](#).

brndurham August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

99.123.213.106 Posts: 24

I must be using the wrong Graduale edition, then. Darn- I knew I shouldn't have trusted Amazon.

Thanked by (2): [CHGiffen](#), [CharlesW](#).

Kathy August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

198.228.228.41 Posts: 3,410

Sight-singing a chant is a basic skill. Not sure what the issue is here.

Thanked by (1): [Richard Mix](#).

kenstb August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

67.86.174.65 Posts: 257

Very interesting comments. I would ask an applicant to improvise a melody from a figure bass and to transpose it once he/she had done so. I would hope that anyone applying for a DoM position would be able to sing chant or play anthems at the organ at prima vista. Still an ability to work with and inspire people is of greater use to a DoM than impressive talent as a musician.

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).

dad29 August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

108.233.65.2 Posts: 601

A better one would be for the interviewer to hand the candidate the book, and say, "teach me to sing this Offertory chant."

Hear, Hear!!! This is the winner!

Not one member of a church choir, nor one member of the congregation, will give a flying fig about 'where's solfege'? Their only concern will be 'can I get home by 10PM on rehearsal nights' and/or 'will Mass last longer than 75 minutes'?

The interview committee, of course, will be concerned that they will be able to hear their favorite '70's pops-based 'hymns.' And that the MD will work 60 hours/week and be able to cut/paste everything so that the entire budget--including wage, benefits, and expense, will be less than \$20K/year or so.

Ph.D. required, by the way.

Thanked by (3): [Gavin](#), [ClergetKubisz](#), [CharlesW](#).

Kathy August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

166.137.89.171 Posts: 3,410

Btw, how is this exercise more confrontational than the audition portion of (presumably) every interview for musicians?

Here's a routine reminder: Be patient about legitimate differences in personal taste.

brndurham August 2 Edit Delete Thanks

99.123.213.106 Posts: 24

Besides, I'll have you know, when I started as a cantor last October, I didn't have a good grasp of how to read regular music, much less sight-read chant. I just learnt by ear, until I learnt in December how to read both. Even now, though, I prefer to learn by ear, and mostly use the actual chant score to remind me if I'm unsure of part of the melody.

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).

Felipe Gasper August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

99.107.254.218 Posts: 440

This is a bad question. A better one would be for the interviewer to hand the candidate the book, and say, "teach me to sing this Offertory chant."

When's the last time you were able to teach a piece of chant without first being able to sing it?

Thanked by (3): [ClergetKubisz](#), [CHGiffen](#), [Kathy](#).



ClergetKubisz August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

75.30.80.242 Posts: 544

Yes, singing is the first step to teaching a song, but it's not the whole process. It would be beneficial to see if a candidate can teach new music effectively, or if they are of the teach by rote (strictly) and intense repetition school.

Another question would be "Is this person going to make my musicians better at what they do, or just teach them new music?" Sometimes learning new music is the key to getting better, but it is very possible to teach a bunch of new sings, but the group never actually improves. This also depends on what Fr wants in regards to the music and what his view of the function of music in the liturgy is.

Thanked by (1): [Gavin](#).

BruceL August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

216.219.3.242 Posts: 576

There is a director at a TLM oratory in the Midwest whose audition was substantially composed of this very thing, except with a Liber and the interview consisted of both sight-singing and improvisation on the chant.

Thanked by (2): [Kathy](#), [M. Jackson Osborn](#).

CharlesW August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

209.179.50.1 Posts: 5,098

I am not convinced there is one ideal way to interview any more than I am convinced that any two parishes are alike and want the same thing. Walking into an interview, a candidate often doesn't know what is important to the pastor and what is not. He may not give a fig about chant and may have other priorities. It is good to scope these things out ahead of time if possible.

Thanked by (2): [Noel Jones - The Catholic Choirbook](#), [Gavin](#).

Andrew Motyka August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

99.132.177.53 Posts: 895

I have had several pastors ask me to help draft job descriptions for openings in their parishes, and one of my main pieces of advice is: be specific about what you want. Anyone looking for a job has a tendency to "read into" a job description things that either get him excited or turn him off. Don't use euphemism, don't speak in generalities. Ask for what you want and you'll get it.

Thanked by (3): [Kathy, CHGiffen](#), [Noel Jones - The Catholic Choirbook](#).



Kevin in Kentucky August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

71.228.227.100 Posts: 619

I have consulted on 4 positions in the last year, one in my neighborhood and 3 in other parts of the country. In all 4 instances I met with the pastor and the committees before they began taking resumes. I walked in with my Graduale, several hymnals and a list of questions. In only 1 of the 4 did the pastor know what the Graduale was. In the others, neither the pastor or the committee knew what it was.

One might like to engage in wishful thinking about knowing the GR, but it still remains an "little known secret" in most cases. And in three of the cases, the clergy had graduated from seminaries in the last 5 years. Please do not tell me the seminaries are getting better. Personal knowledge of 3 indicates otherwise. I realize that doesn't amount to much, but its what I know.

And I daresay that 95% of the candidates knew nothing about the GR. The question introduced by Mr. Gaspar is at most a moot point right now and maybe in the future it might become a reality, but not now.

As to the advice proposed by Mr. Motyka, it is the same as I give. You get what you ask for so say what you want.

Just keep working for change and educate where you are.

Thanked by (5): [melofluent](#), [donr](#), [CHGiffen](#), [Noel Jones - The Catholic Choirbook](#), [Kathy](#).



Kevin in Kentucky August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

71.228.227.100 Posts: 619

deleted



PaixGioiaAmor August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

75.118.61.143 Posts: 1,208

The original example is a bit ridiculous.

And even in places in which there is a premium placed on Gregorian Chant, the ability to read it at sight from original notation is one person's opinion of what should be a priority.

Chant is but one piece of a large puzzle, which includes the ability to play the organ, direct choirs, get along with people, select appropriate music and lead a parish in the appropriate direction, etc.

And, even if the parish is using chant - there are valid arguments for using modern notation.

Yeah - the new DOM can sing an offertory from the GR. He has also driven away 20 families from the parish, has gotten 3/4 of the choir to quit, and has the Pastor pondering what to do about the large decrease in weekly offertory giving.

But at least he can render a chant that most of the parish doesn't want to hear at sight.

A far better interview question will be "How have you been successful in the past at getting parishioners and choir members to "buy in" to the idea of using chant and polyphony in the mass?"

Thanked by (5): [Kevin in Kentucky](#), [Andrew Motyka](#), [CharlesW](#), [irishtenor](#), [Gavin](#).

donr August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

184.98.20.24 Posts: 670

I think you should give him/her a piece of polyphony that is 6 part and ask him to sing all six parts, all at once. Now that would be someone to hire :-)



CHGiffen August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

24.245.53.205 Posts: 2,138

I think you should give him/her a piece of polyphony that is 6 part and ask him to sing all six parts, all at once. Now that would be someone to hire :-)

Calling Matthew Curtis, calling Matthew Curtis, ...



MaryAnn Carr Wilson August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

166.137.210.36 Posts: 1,462

I like the original question, and agree that if it's in the job ad, it's fair warning.

There are a lot of good candidates out there who might not be up to par on this one of several factors, though having this as part of an interview would signal good priorities and concrete expectations.

Maybe preparing one proper chant of the candidate's choosing, and having to sing one acapella from sight would also be a good combo. I also agree that teaching a chant- perhaps an introit or hymn, depending on the student singers- would also be an important demonstration.

I don't recall the OP ever claiming his question would be the bulk of an interview...

Thanked by (1): [Kathy](#).

kenstb August 3 Edit Delete Unthank

67.86.174.65 Posts: 257

Somehow this thread became personal to some of you. From reading it, I'm not quite sure how that happened. The original question was interesting, but it wasn't an invitation to take verbal swings at each other. Everyone is entitled to an opinion.

Thanked by (3): [chonak](#), [CHGiffen](#), [Kathy](#).



chonak August 3 Edit Delete

173.76.42.134 Posts: 4,701

[I have removed some of the digression comments above.--admin]



melofluent August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

108.64.107.112 Posts: 2,229

And for the record, my Daltry reference was inclusive of many older (Greatest Gen/ Boomers/GenX's) priests who have, in my presence as well as God's, literally changed their tune.

I can name that tune in three notes: Fr. Jeffrey Keyes.

Kathy August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

166.137.89.173 Posts: 3,410

Ok. And I'm having trouble imagining Fr Jeffrey Keyes disagreeing with the statement that sight-singing chant is a basic skill for DMs.



melofluent August 3 Edit Delete Thanks

108.64.107.112 Posts: 2,229

Thank you for making my point. I knew him when.



Gavin 12:44AM Edit Delete Thanks

104.2.50.162 Posts: 2,635

Yeah - the new DOM can sing an offertory from the GR. He has also driven away 20 families from the parish, has gotten 3/4 of the choir to quit, and has the Pastor

pondering what to do about the large decrease in weekly offertory giving.

But at least he can render a chant that most of the parish doesn't want to hear at sight.

I can't agree with this enough.

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