

# orarion

arranger's guide

VESPERUS TECHNOLOGY LTD  
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# 1. About this guide

In this short guide, we will cover some tips and techniques for using Orarion's flexible notation system to create beautiful, practical scores as efficiently as possible.

The image displays a musical score for the 'Our Father' prayer, written in Orarion notation. The score is presented in two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. The lyrics are: 'Our Fa - ther, who art in Hea - ven, ha - llowed be Thy Name,'. The second system continues with the lyrics: 'Thy King - dom come, Thy will be done on earth as it'. The notation uses vertical stems and horizontal lines to represent notes and rests, with various symbols like 'v' and 'V' indicating specific musical features. The overall style is clean and functional, designed for practical use in liturgical settings.

We will cover: a quick process for writing lyrics, recreating existing music in Orarion for editing, how to control spacing, functions of the Chant Editor and functions of the Lyrics Editor.

As always, if you have any questions or comments, please do contact us and we'll be very happy to help! Our e-mail is [support@vesperus.co.uk](mailto:support@vesperus.co.uk).

## 2. A quick process for writing lyrics

Orarion's notation system is fairly unconventional but once you get used to it, it's typically much faster and easier than point-and-click scorewriters. In this section, we'll describe a process we recommend for using the Lyrics Editor. We'll demonstrate it through an example. Recall the melody for Stikhira Tone 6:

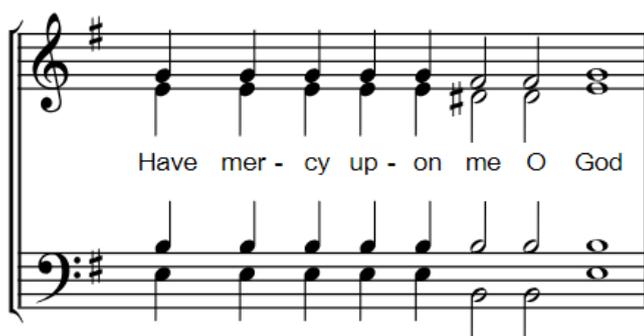


The image shows a musical score for Stikhira Tone 6, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) and four phrases. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The notes are: Phrase 1: G4, A4, B4, C5; Phrase 2: B4, A4, G4, F#4; Phrase 3: E4, D4, C4, B3; Phrase 4: A3, G3, F#3, E3. The bass staff contains a simple accompaniment of whole notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4.

We will set the phrase 'Have mercy upon me O God' to Phrase 1 from here. (To see what the rhythm symbols do, see the relevant section in the User Manual.)

1. Split the text into syllables: Have mer- cy up- on me O God
2. Assign the rhythm symbols: Have mer- cy up- on me\* O\* God\*\*
3. Decide where the chord changes go:

Have mer- cy up- on / me\* O\* / God\*\*



The image shows the musical notation for the phrase 'Have mercy upon me O God'. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3. The bass staff contains a simple accompaniment of whole notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4.

We've found that this process works the fastest. It's also a good idea to regularly check the chant's template (unless you know it really well!).

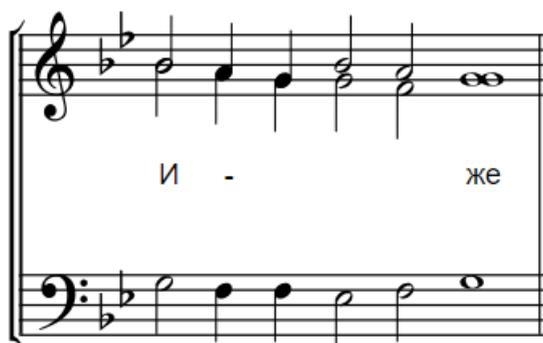
### 3. Creating a chant from music

Quite often, conductors find that some old music they have isn't quite right for their current choir. Or maybe something they found on the internet needs a couple of changes. Whatever the situation, you can rewrite the score exactly the way you want, using Orarion. In this section, we will look at a quick way of writing pre-existing music in Orarion, so that we can edit it later to suit our purpose.

The first step, as usual, is to set a chant. If you're working from some pre-existing music not made in Orarion, then you'll have to create a new score. Take this bar from a Cherubic Hymn (not written in Orarion), for soprano, alto and bass:



First, we need to break this down into individual chords, and at each one record which voice sings which note. Each time any voice moves onto the next note, this is a new chord, regardless of note durations. So we must think of the above passage like this:



#Now we can easily read off what notes should be written for each voice in the Chant Editor:

Soprano: B4 A4 G4 B4 A4 G4  
Alto: B4 A4 G4 G4 F4 G4  
Tenor: R0 R0 R0 R0 R0 R0  
Bass: G3 F3 F3 E3 F3 G3

(since there's no voice 3)  
(note the consecutive F3's)

The lyrics for this passage would then be “И\* / - / % / \*! / \* / же\*\*”. Just as we originally wanted, this produces:

A musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature. The lyrics "И - же" are written below the top staff. The music consists of a series of chords and notes, with a fermata over the final note of the top staff.

Note the presence of the exclamation mark: this is to stop Orarion from connecting the quarter note G4 in the alto part to the subsequent half note. If we had no '!' there, Orarion would have written:

A musical score for two staves, identical in key signature and bass line to the first passage. The lyrics "И - же" are written below the top staff. The music is similar to the first passage, but the note before the final fermata is a dotted quarter note instead of a quarter note.

While technically this is the same thing, sometimes you may want to control these note splits to help phrasing.

Once you've rewritten the passage with Orarion, you can start editing it as needed!

Let's do a slightly longer example, with SAT-B arrangement and all four voices:

A musical score for SAT-B arrangement. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature. The lyrics "Бла-же -ни ни-ши-и ду - хом," are written below the top staff. The music consists of a series of chords and notes, with a slur over the final notes of the top staff.

Here, we can see that we will need to look carefully at the chords present in the melismatic passage on 'кротции'. Splitting this passage up as before, we get:

The image shows a musical score for a melismatic passage. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in the key of G major (one sharp). The treble staff contains a series of chords: G4, B4, C5, B4, A4, C5, B4. The bass staff contains a series of notes: E3, E3, E3, E3, E3, E3, E3. The lyrics 'Бла - же - ни крот - ци - и' are written below the treble staff, with hyphens indicating the melisma.

And we can now just read off the chords for this phrase:

**Soprano:** G4 B4 C5 B4 A4 C5 B4  
**Alto:** E4 G4 A4 G4 F4 A4 G4  
**Tenor:** E4 E4 E4 E4 E4 E4 E4  
**Bass:** E3 E3 E3 E3 E3 E3 E3

Now using the lyrics 'Бла- / же-\* ни / крот / - / % / ци- / и\*', as expected, Orarion generates:

The image shows a musical score for the phrase 'Бла - же - ни крот - ци - и'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both in the key of G major (one sharp). The treble staff contains a series of chords: G4, B4, C5, B4, A4, C5, B4. The bass staff contains a series of notes: E3, E3, E3, E3, E3, E3, E3. The lyrics 'Бла - же - ни крот - ци - и' are written below the treble staff, with hyphens and asterisks indicating the melisma.

## 4. Spacing

Since individual bars in many Orthodox hymns end up quite long, there can be spillover onto the next system of music. Occasionally, this can look as awkward as this:

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "al yet wast pleased for our sal - va - tion to be in - car". The second system has the same clef and key signature, with lyrics: "- nate of the Most Ho - ly Mo - ther of God and e - ver Vir -". In both systems, two chords are circled in red. In the first system, the second chord of the circled pair is placed on the second line of the staff instead of the first line. In the second system, the first chord of the circled pair is placed on the second line of the staff instead of the first line.

There wasn't enough space for the second of the chords circled in red on the end of the first line, so it was placed in the second line. Musically speaking, it would be much more correct for them to be next to each other.

One way to solve cases like this is to change the Note Spacing value in the Lyrics Editor. However, this changes note spacing across the whole score, and might cause similar problems in other parts of the score.

Another way is to change spacing of individual chords. If we add some extra spacing to some of the notes in the top line, we can push the first circled-in-red chord onto the second line. We do this by adding an underscore somewhere in the lyrics for the preceding syllables. Orarion interprets underscores as blank spaces, so will increase the spacing around that note. For example, if we changed "*to be in- car\* / -\**" to "*\_to \_be \_in- \_car\* / -\**", we get:

The image shows a system of musical notation with a treble clef staff and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "in - car - nate of the Most Ho - ly Mo - ther of God and e -". The first chord of the circled-in-red pair is now placed on the second line of the staff, and the second chord is placed on the first line. This is achieved by adding underscores to the lyrics: "in - car - nate".

on the second line, which is much better!

Since Orarion works like a music typewriter, you can make use of extra spacing wherever you like. For example, if you wanted to visually emphasise a particular bit of text, you could increase the spacing around those notes. Similarly, if you don't have enough space for writing in musical direction symbols (like slurs and dynamics), then you can increase space just around that particular passage.

## 5. Useful functions for the Lyrics Editor

### 5.1 Controlling the self-formatting feature

We've mentioned the [!] command for controlling the self-formatting feature. Here is are a couple of examples of it in action:

flesh / % / is / % / weak\*

Musical notation for the phrase "flesh / % / is / % / weak\*". The notation consists of two staves. The top staff has five notes: a quarter note on E4, a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4 with a sharp sign, a quarter note on B4, and a half note on C5. The bottom staff has five notes: a quarter note on G3, a quarter note on A3, a quarter note on B3, a quarter note on C4, and a half note on D4. The lyrics "flesh", "is", and "weak," are positioned below the notes on the top staff. The first and third notes on the top staff are separated from the others by a wide space, corresponding to the % symbols in the text above.

flesh / %! / is / %! / weak\*

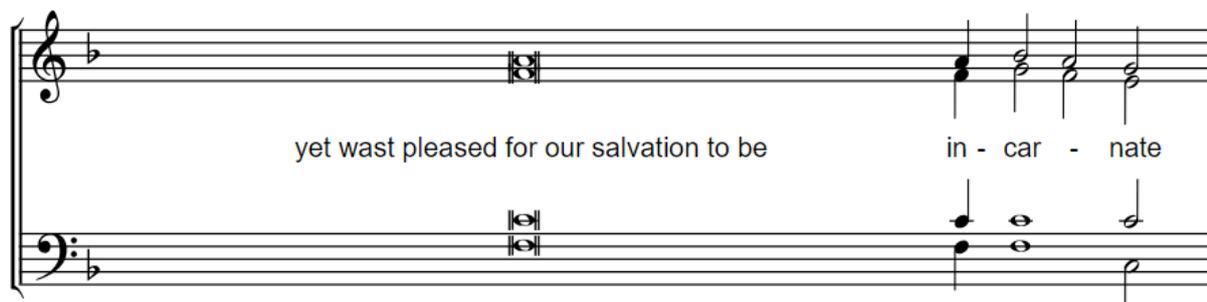
Musical notation for the phrase "flesh / %! / is / %! / weak\*". The notation consists of two staves. The top staff has five notes: a quarter note on E4, a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4 with a sharp sign, a quarter note on B4, and a half note on C5. The bottom staff has five notes: a quarter note on G3, a quarter note on A3, a quarter note on B3, a quarter note on C4, and a half note on D4. The lyrics "flesh", "is", and "weak," are positioned below the notes on the top staff. The first and third notes on the top staff are separated from the others by a wide space, corresponding to the %! symbols in the text above. The first note on the bottom staff is also separated from the others by a wide space, corresponding to the ! symbol in the text above.

The first [!] stops the E4 in the alto part from joining up to the previous E4, and writes it as a separate note. The second [!] stops the B3 in the tenor part from linking up with the preceding B3.

This feature can be useful when fine-tuning the music. On some occasions, like the Cherubic Hymn example in the beginning of Section 3, splitting up some notes can aid phrasing.

## 5.2 Chanting on one chord

If there's a very long phrase that is to be chanted on one chord, it's often a good idea to write the text all under one centred chord, like this:



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The text "yet wast pleased for our salvation to be" is written on the staff, followed by "in - car - nate". The text is centered under a single chord that is sustained throughout the phrase. The chord is represented by a double whole note symbol with three asterisks (\*\*\*) above it.

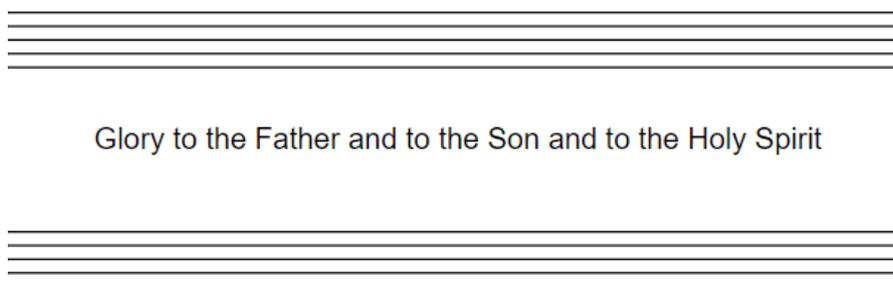
To do this, just write the relevant text as it is (don't split into syllables), and connect the words with underscores ("\_"), then add [\*\*\*] on the end to produce the double whole note symbol as above. You can, of course, replace \*\*\* with any other duration you like!

## 5.3 Inserting blank spaces and rests

To print some text **without** notes written in the staves, just write the text connected as above, and instead of adding a duration symbol at the end, just add the [&] symbol. For example, typing

Glory\_to\_the\_Father\_and\_to\_the\_Son\_and\_to\_the\_Holy\_Spirit&

will produce



The image shows two empty musical staves. Between the staves, the text "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit" is centered. The text is connected by underscores, and an ampersand (&) is at the end.

Rests can be drawn in this way too: first create a blank space for a rest by just typing in an & which will produce an empty space with no text (you can make this as long as you like by adding underscores **before** the &). Then in the Formatting Editor add the rest, as you would any musical symbol.

## 5.4 Font Options

To edit font options, click the 'Font Options' button in the toolbar and it will bring up this menu:

Font options ×

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Note spacing:

Font family

Font size

Stretch last line to fit page

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If you set 'Stretch last line to fit page' to *No*, this will notate the final line with the same note spacing as the rest of the piece, and will draw the staff up to where the music finishes. For example:

ther and the Ho - ly Spi - rit O Christ our God, tramp - ling

The image shows a musical score for the first line of a hymn. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a series of chords and single notes, with lyrics underneath. The bass staff contains a bass line with notes and rests. The music is in a common time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "ther and the Ho - ly Spi - rit O Christ our God, tramp - ling".

down death by death, save us!

The image shows a musical score for the second line of a hymn. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a series of chords and single notes, with lyrics underneath. The bass staff contains a bass line with notes and rests. The music is in a common time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "down death by death, save us!".

Had we set 'Stretch last line to fit page' to Yes, Orarion would have written the following:

ther and the Ho - ly Spi - rit O Christ our God, tramp - ling  
down death by death, save us!

#### 5.4 Old Slavic and Glagolitic Lyrics

Orarion supports Church Slavonic letters (and abbreviations) as well as Glagolitic characters. For best visual results, select the 'Church Slavonic (by Ponomar)' font from the Font Options menu, and write the lyrics as needed.

ГО - БЕЗ - НА - ЧАЛЪ - НО - Е ГЛО - БО УТ - ЦУ И ДУ - ХО - ВИ, ѿ  
ДѢВЫ РОЖДШЕЕСА НА СПА - СЕ - НІ - Е НА - ШЕ, БОГ - ПО - НАМЪ, ВѢР -

For typing Slavonic characters, we recommend using the Slavonic Computing Initiative's online keyboard: [https://www.ponomar.net/cu\\_vkeyb.html](https://www.ponomar.net/cu_vkeyb.html). Copy and paste the words straight into the Lyrics Editor.

## 6. Useful functions for the Chant Editor

### 5.1 Deleting a voice

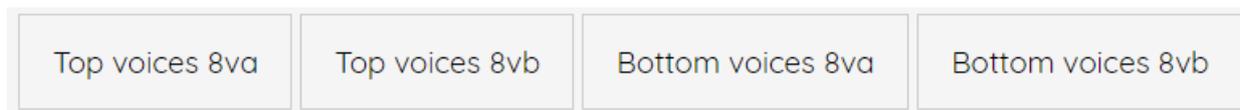
To delete a voice in any one chord, just replace the note in the Chant Editor with 'R0'. To get rid of the voice entirely (in any one phrase or for the whole chant), you can simply delete all the notes in that voice. For example:



When you click '**Save Template**', Orarion will automatically fill in this missing line with R0s. When you then use the template, that phrase will be written for just soprano, alto and bass.

### 5.2 Octave Shifts

In the bottom row of the Chant Editor toolbar, you will see four buttons:



The buttons with '**8va**' will shift the relevant voices up an octave, while '**8vb**' will shift them down an octave. Which voices are considered top and which bottom depends on the Arrangement type currently selected. If you're working in SAT-B, top voices will include the tenor line.

Remember to save your chant once you're finished with octave shifts, especially if you intend on transposing afterwards.

### 5.2 Transposing

To transpose your chant template, just click '**Change Key**' and select a new one. For some key changes, you may need to use octave shifts to bring up voice parts to their proper range.