orarion

arranger's guide

VESPERUS TECHNOLOGY LTD
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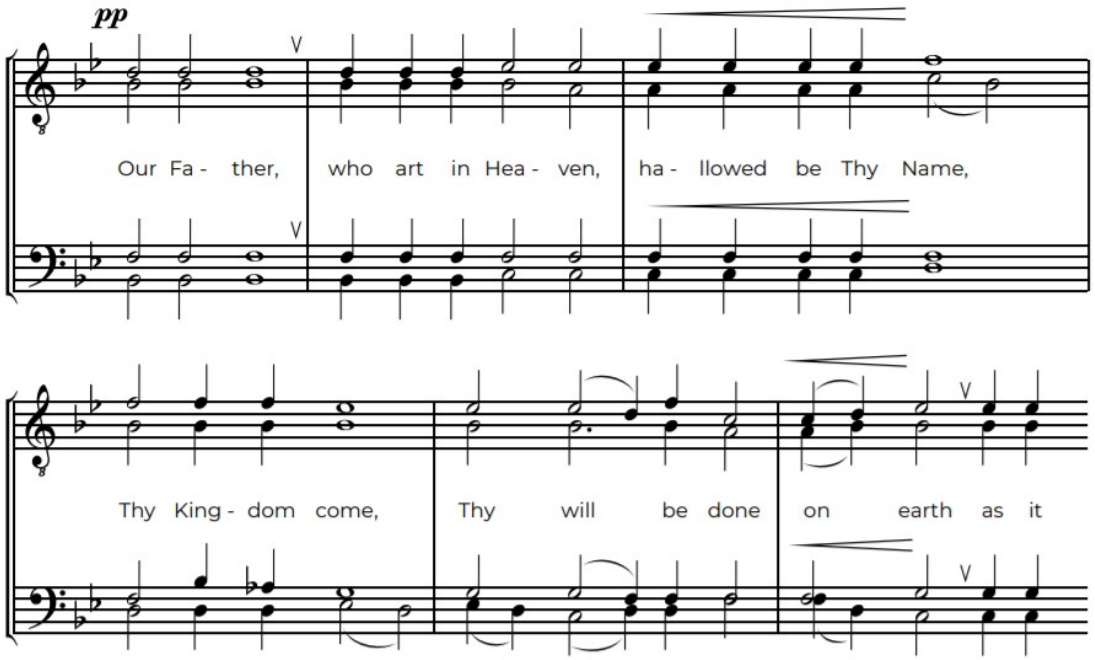
1. About this guide

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.

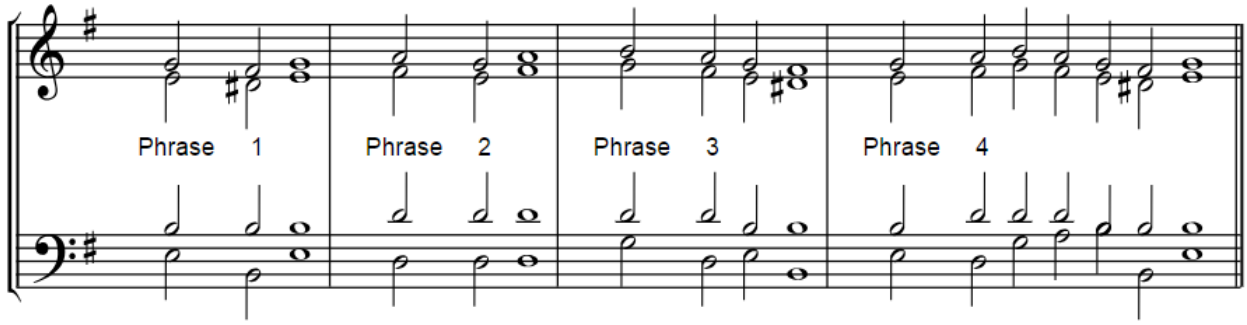


We will cover: a quick process for writing lyrics, recreating existing music in Orarion for editing, how to control spacing, functions of the Chant Editor and functions of the Lyrics Editor.

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.

2. A quick process for writing lyrics

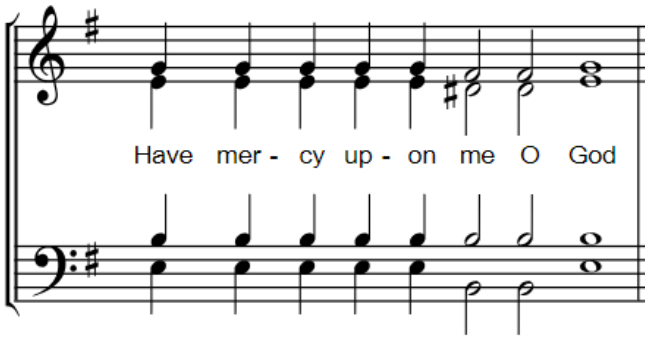
Orarion's notation system is fairly unconventional but once you get used to it, it's typically much faster and easier than point-and-click scorewriters. In this section, we'll describe a process we recommend for using the Lyrics Editor. We'll demonstrate it through an example. Recall the melody for Stikhira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



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**

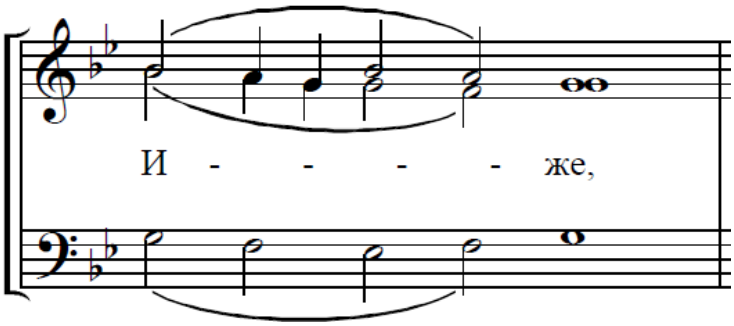


We've found that this process works the fastest. It's also a good idea to regularly check the chant's template (unless you know it really well!).

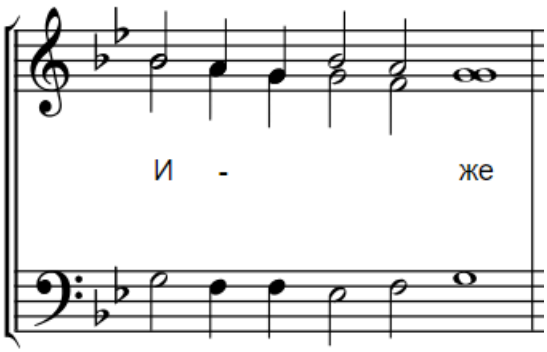
3. Creating a chant from music

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:



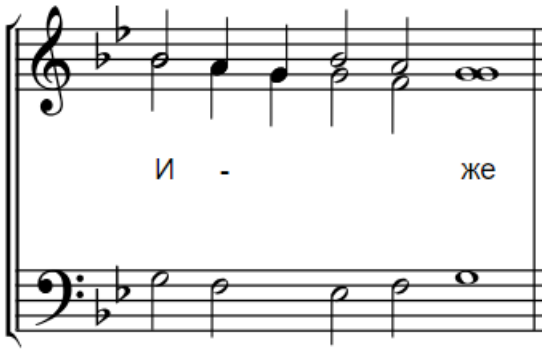
First, we need to break this down into individual chords, and at each one record which voice sings which note. Each time any voice moves onto the next note, this is a new chord, regardless of note durations. So we must think of the above passage like this:



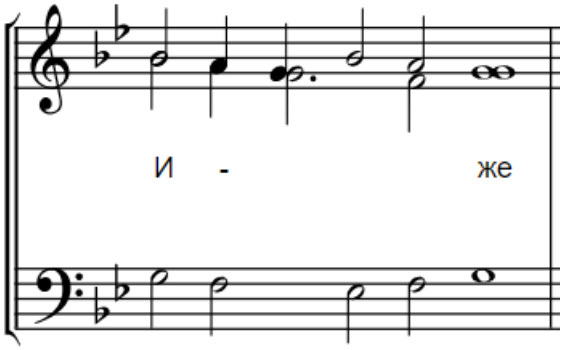
#Now we can easily read off what notes should be written for each voice in the Chant Editor:

Soprano: B4 A4 G4 B4 A4 G4
Alto: B4 A4 G4 G4 F4 G4
Tenor: R0 R0 R0 R0 R0 R0 (since there's no voice 3)
Bass: G3 F3 F3 E3 F3 G3 (note the consecutive F3's)

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



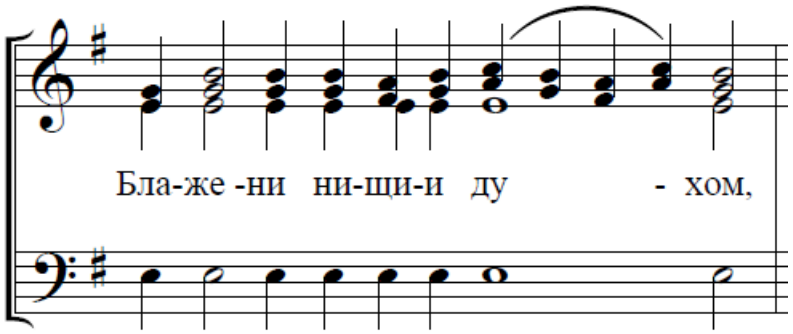
Note the presence of the exclamation mark: this is to stop Orarion from connecting the quarter note G4 in the alto part to the subsequent half note. If we had no '!' there, Orarion would have written:



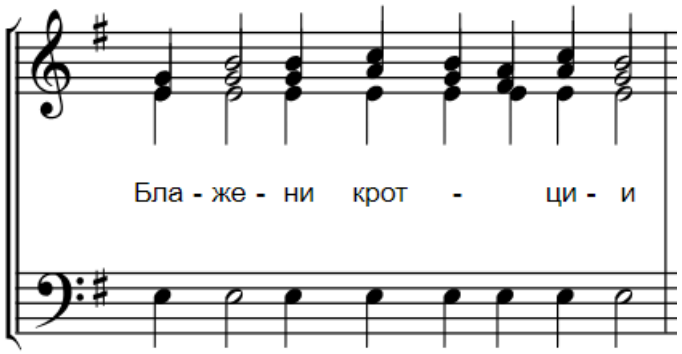
While technically this is the same thing, sometimes you may want to control these note splits to help phrasing.

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:



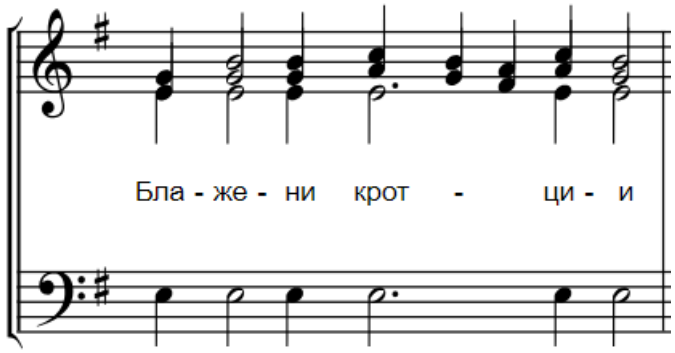
Here, we can see that we will need to look carefully at the chords present in the melismatic passage on ‘кротции’. Splitting this passage up as before, we get:



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

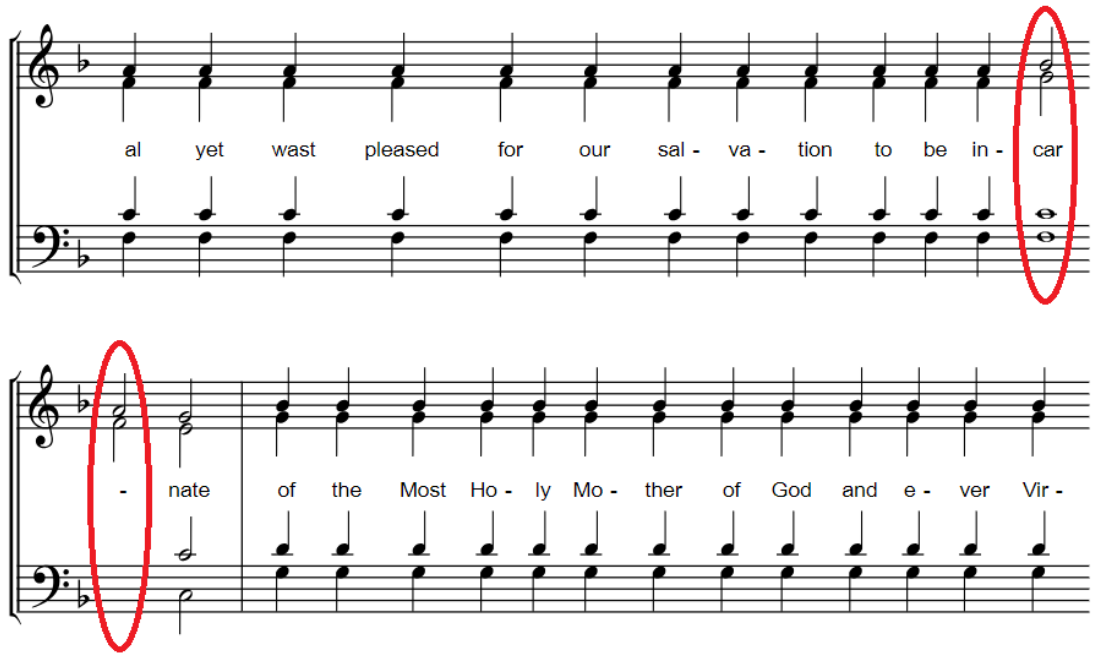
Soprano: G4 B4 C5 B4 A4 C5 B4
Alto: E4 G4 A4 G4 F4 A4 G4
Tenor: E4 E4 E4 E4 E4 E4 E4
Bass: E3 E3 E3 E3 E3 E3 E3

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



4. Spacing

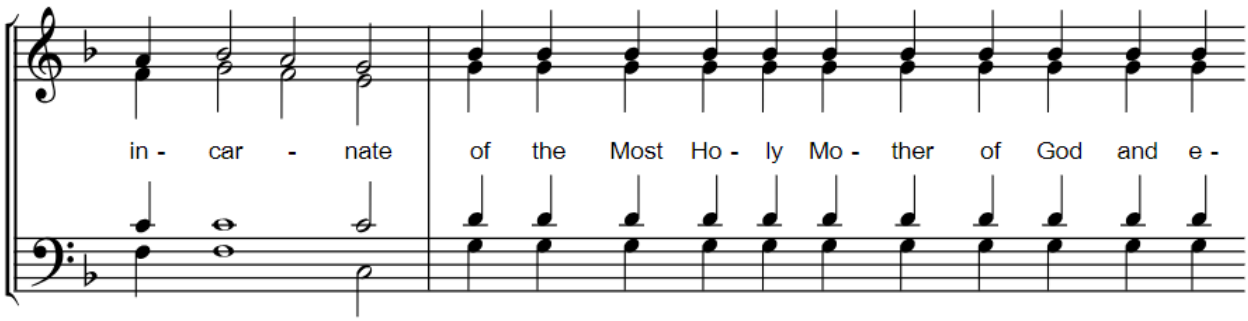
Since individual bars in many Orthodox hymns end up quite long, there can be spillover onto the next system of music. Occasionally, this can look as awkward as this:



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:



on the second line, which is much better!

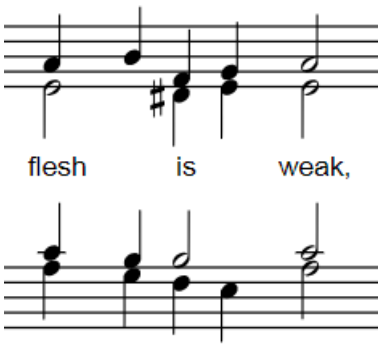
Since Orarion works like a music typewriter, you can make use of extra spacing wherever you like. For example, if you wanted to visually emphasise a particular bit of text, you could increase the spacing around those notes. Similarly, if you don't have enough space for writing in musical direction symbols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

5. Useful functions for the Lyrics Editor

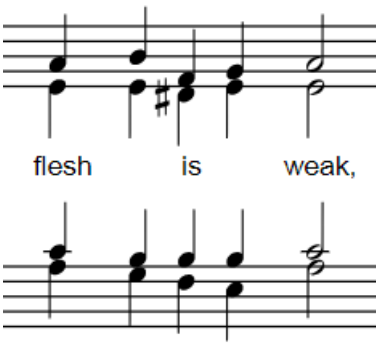
5.1 Controlling the self-formatting feature

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*



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

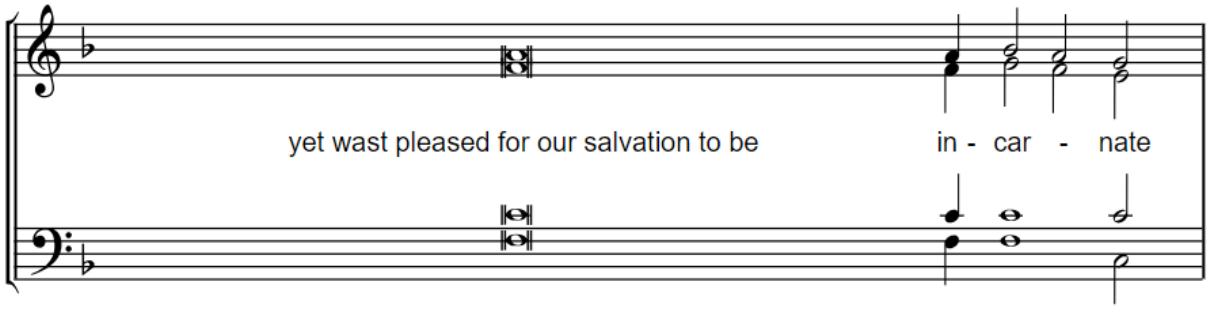


The first [!] stops the E4 in the alto part from joining up to the previous E4, and writes it as a separate note. The second [!] stops the B3 in the tenor part from linking up with the preceding B3.

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:



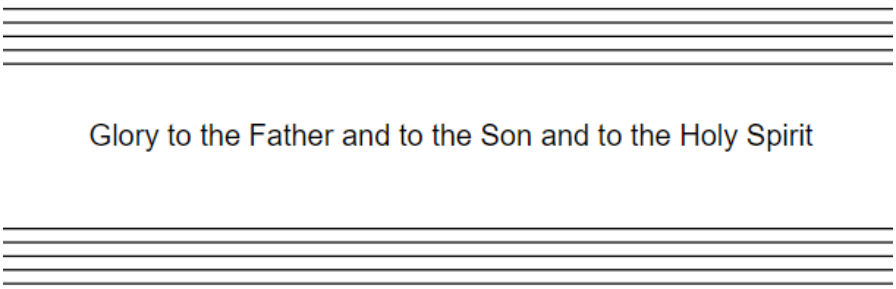
To do this, just write the relevant text as it is (don't split into syllables), and connect the words with underscores ("_"), then add [*******] on the end to produce the double whole note symbol as above. You can, of course, replace *** with any other duration you like!

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**&**

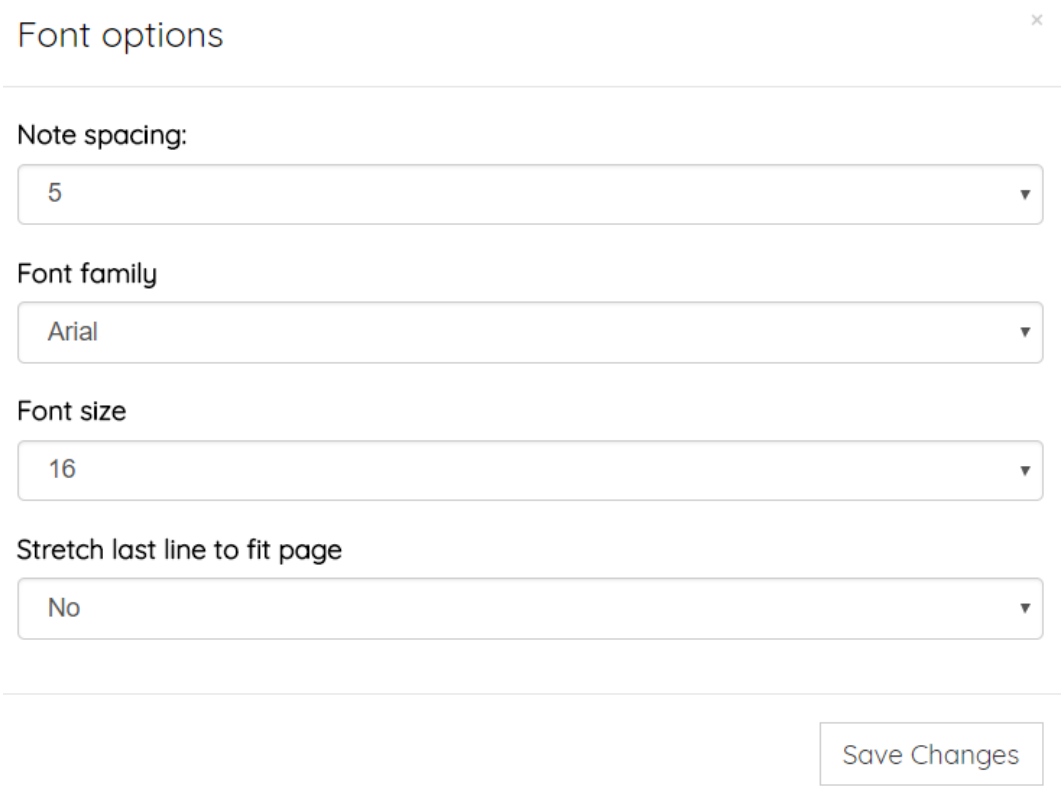
will produce



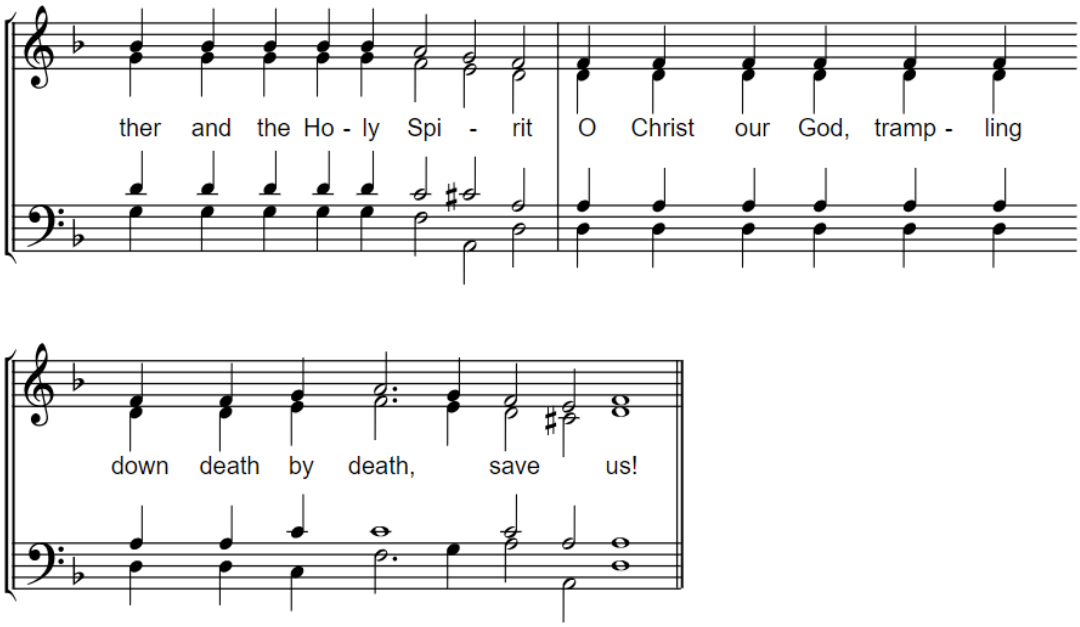
Rests can be drawn in this way too: first create a blank space for a rest by just typing in an **&** which will produce an empty space with no text (you can make this as long as you like by adding underscores **before** the **&**). Then in the Formatting Editor add the rest, as you would any musical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

5.4 Font Options

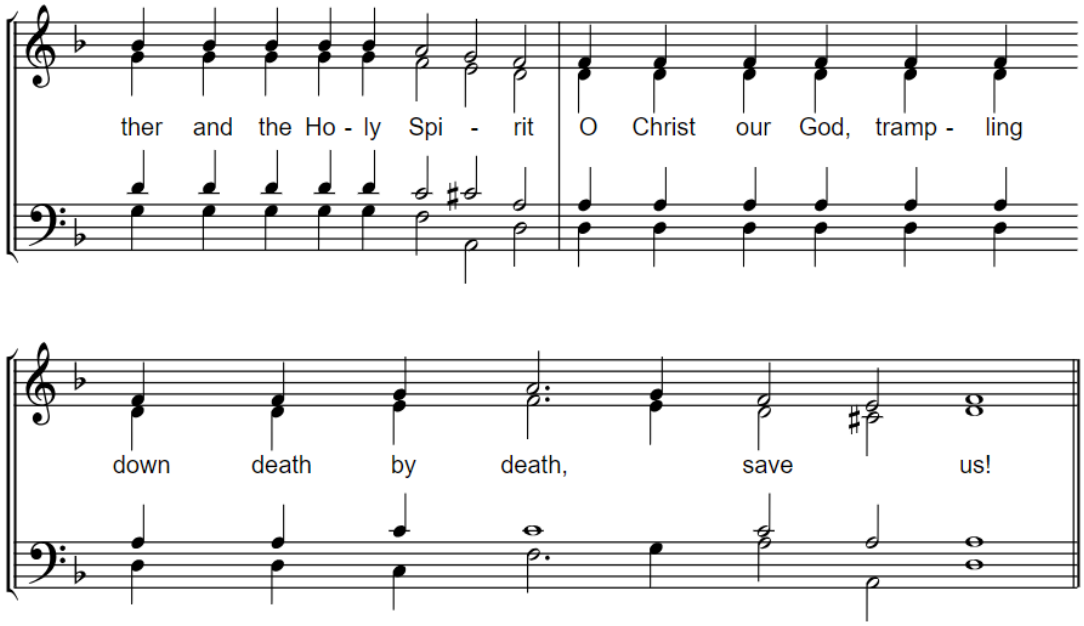
To edit font options, click the 'Font Options' button in the toolbar and it will bring up this menu:



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 stave up to where the music finishes. For example:

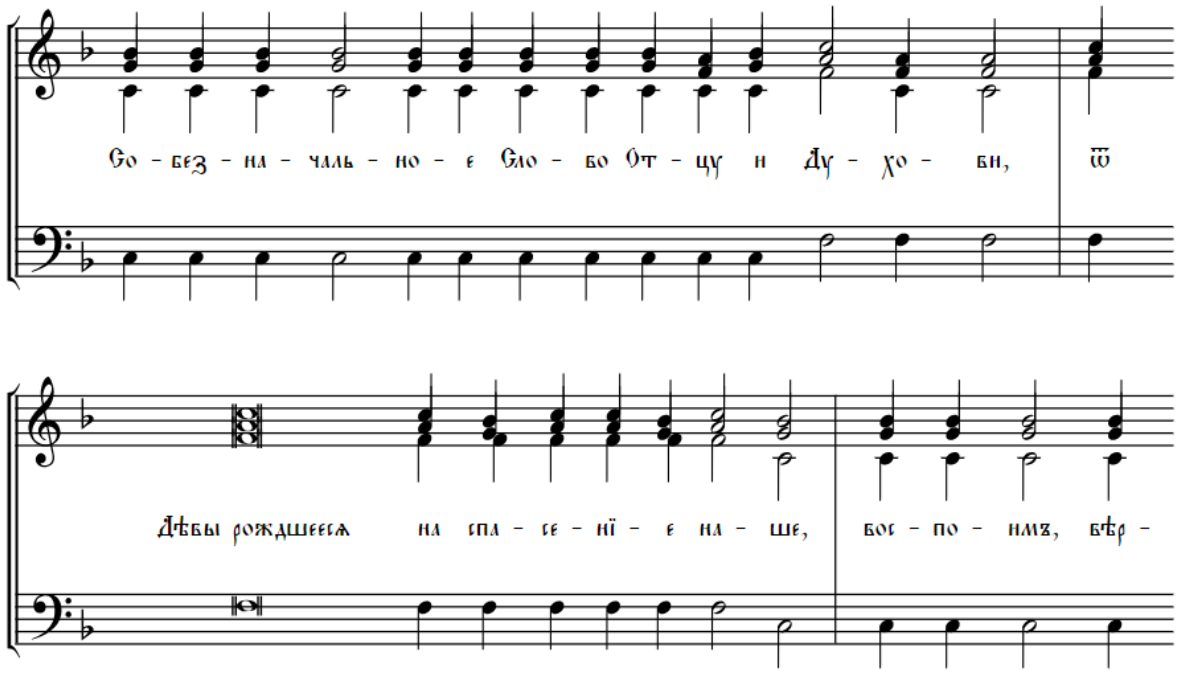


Had we set '**Stretch last line to fit page**' to *Yes*, Orarion would have written the following:



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.

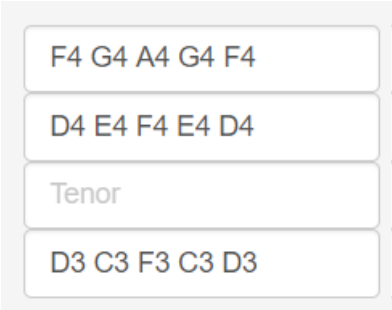


For typing Slavonic characters, we recommend using the Slavonic Computing Initiative's online keyboard: https://www.ponomar.net/cu_vkeyb.html. Copy and paste the words straight into the Lyrics Editor.

6. Useful functions for the Chant Editor

5.1 Deleting a voice

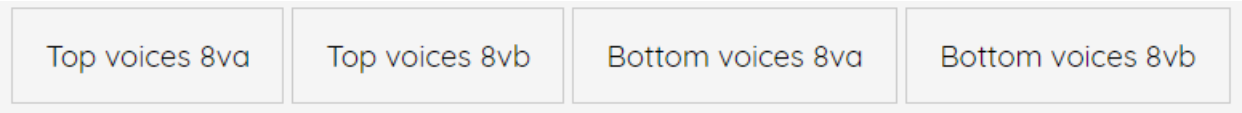
To delete a voice in any one chord, just replace the note in the Chant Editor with '**R0**'. To get rid of the voice entirely (in any one phrase or for the whole chant), you can simply delete all the notes in that voice. For example:



When you click '**Save Template**', Orarion will automatically fill in this missing line with **R0**s. 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.