

Paisley Philharmonic Choir

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Pronunciation Guidance for Ecclesiastical (Church) Latin

It is not expected that choir members should learn all of this by heart! It's worth a read through to see what you might encounter, and dipping into for reference when you're not sure about something. There are various different ways that Latin is pronounced, it's good to have a standard for the choir. Generally, you will pick up pronunciation while singing with others in your choir parts.

Single Vowels		
A = ah	Pronounced as in: rather, father, partner e.g. sanctus, patri (<i>sahnk-toos, pah-tree</i>)	NOT: <i>lamb, can</i>
E = eh	Pronounced as in: fed, egg, bet e.g. mentum, requiem (<i>mehn-toom, reh-kwee-ehm</i>)	NOT: <i>prey, grey</i>
I = ee	Pronounced as in greet, reed, plead e.g. qui, venit, filii (<i>kwee, veh-neet, fee-lee-ee</i>)	NOT: <i>pink, king</i>
O = aw/oh	Pronounced as in bore, ought, or alone, phone e.g. gloria, omnia , (<i>glaw-ree-ah, ohm-nee-ah</i>)	NOT: <i>gone, pot</i>
U = oo	Pronounced as in soon, prune, plume e.g. unum, cum, dominum , (<i>oo-noom, coom, doh-mee-noom</i>)	NOT: <i>trust, cull</i>
Y = ee (as I above)	Pronounced and treated like 'I' above e.g. kyrie, martyr (<i>kee-ree-eh, mahr-teer</i>)	NOT: <i>why, sky, yes</i>
Double Vowels		
There are some general rules when two vowels occur together, and some exceptions. Usually both vowels are sounded, though the first tends to be more prominent, and each vowel is treated as a separate syllable.		
OU AI	nouem (nine) = <i>no-oo-ehm</i> ; prout (according to) = <i>pro-oot</i> ; ait (he said) = <i>ah-eet</i> ; maiorem (major) = <i>mah-ee-or-ehm</i>	
However, ae & oe are diphthongs and pronounced as one sound (like E above), and therefore one syllable.		
AE OE	italiae (of Italy) = <i>ee-tah-lee-eh</i> ; aeternum (eternal) = <i>eh-tehr-noom</i> poeni (punishments) = <i>peh-nee</i> ; coelum (heaven) = <i>ch eh-loom</i>	

AU EU	au & eu can form one syllable but both vowels must be distinctly heard, with the emphasis on the first. If the syllable is sung over several notes, the second vowel is not heard until the last note before the next syllable. laudate (praise) = <i>lahoo-dah-teh</i> ; augustus (majestic) = <i>ahoo-goos-toos</i> deus (god) = <i>dehoos</i> ; aqueus (watery) = <i>ah-kwehoos</i>
EI	When used with an 'exclamation' like 'hei' (ah! alas! woe!), is treated as AU and EU in one syllable = <i>ehee</i> . Otherwise as separate syllables: Mei (mine) = <i>meh-ee</i>
QU NGU	QU followed by another vowel is pronounced as one syllable: qui (who) = <i>kwee</i> ; quam (how) = <i>kwahm</i> ; antiqua (old) = <i>ahn-tee-kwah</i> NGU followed by another vowel is also pronounced as one syllable: lingua (language) – <i>leen-gwah</i> ; sanguis (blood) = <i>sahn-gwees</i>

CONSONANTS	
C	C before e, ae, oe, i, y is pronounced ' ch ' as in church: coeli (sky, heaven) = <i>cheh-lee</i> ; abducere (to take away) = <i>ahb-doo-cheh-reh</i>
	CC before e, ae, oe, i, y, is pronounced ' tch ' as in catch, itch: ecce (behold) = <i>eh-tcheh</i> ; accelero (speed up) = <i>ah-tcheh-leh-ro</i>
	SC followed by e, ae, oe, i, y is pronounced 'sh' as in shed, short: ascendit (went up) = <i>ah-shen-deet</i> ; <i>crecens</i> (growing) = <i>kreh-shens</i>
	Except for the above, C is pronounced ' k ' as in 'cat' in other Latin words like cantus (song), sanctus (holy), constans (constant)
	CH always sounds like 'k', even before E and I Cherubim (cherubim) = <i>keh-roo-beem</i> ; machina (machine) = <i>mah-kee-nah</i>
G	G followed by e, ae, oe, i, y, is pronounced softly as in gentle, generous: longaevus (long-lived) = <i>lon-geh-voos</i> ; regina (queen) = <i>reh-gee-nah</i> ; aegyptius (egyptian) = <i>eh-geep-tsee-oos</i>
	GN has a softened sound like 'signora' in Italian. The nearest English equivalent would be something like 'nyuh': agnus (the lamb) = <i>ah-nyoos</i> ; magnus (big) = <i>mah-nyoos</i> ; magnificat (magnifies) = <i>mah-nyee-fee-caht</i>
H	In most cases 'h' is silent. However, it is sometimes pronounced as 'k' in the two Latin words nihil (nothing) = <i>nee-keel</i> ; and mihi (to me) = <i>mee-kee</i> . In ancient manuscripts these words are often written as 'nichil' and 'michi'. The 'k' is, however, softened.

J	J is often written as I (e.g. juris or iuris ‘of law’) and is pronounced as Y: jam/iam (already) = <i>eeam</i> ; alleluia = <i>allelooea</i> ; major = <i>mah-eeor</i>
R	The R sound should always be heard, even when with another consonant (e.g. carn <u>r</u> is (<i>carr-nees</i> not <i>kah nees</i>), and should be said with a slight roll of the tongue. Care should be taken with where the vowels and consonants are sounded in a syllable: kyrie = <i>kee-ree-eh</i> ; not <i>keer-ee-eh</i> sapere = <i>sah-peh-reh</i> ; not <i>sah-pehr-eh</i> diligere = <i>dee-lee-geh-reh</i> not <i>dee-lee-gehr-eh</i> This is particularly important when words span over several notes in the music, so that the sounds are made consistently at the appropriate places.
S	S is pronounced as in ‘sing’, not with a ‘z’ sound as in raise
T	T is pronounced as in English, except as follows:
	TI before a vowel and any letter (other than S, X, T) is pronounced ‘ tsee ’: patientia (patience) = <i>pah-tsee-en-tsee-ah</i> gratia (grace) = <i>grah-tsee-ah</i> constitution (constitution) = <i>con-stee-tu-tsee-ohn</i> laetitia (joy) = <i>leh-tee-tsee-ah</i>
	TH is always pronounce as just ‘ T ’ Thomas = <i>toh-mahs</i> catholicam = <i>cah-toh-lee-cahm</i>
X	Pronounced as a softened ‘ ks ’ when occurring between vowels: exaudi (listen) = <i>ehks-ahoo-dee</i> pax (peace) = <i>pahks</i>
	XC followed by e, ae, oe, i, y is pronounced ‘ ksh ’: excelsis (high) = <i>ehk-shehl-sees</i>
Y	Is a vowel in Latin, pronounced like I = <i>ee</i>
Z	Pronounced as dz : zizania (weeds) = <i>dzee-dzah-nee-ah</i> Lazarus = <i>lah-dzah-roos</i>
B, D, F, K, L, M, N, P, Q and V: are all pronounced as in English	
Double Consonants like terra and bella should be sounded: <i>Tehr-rah, Behl-lah</i>	