



# Learning Your Part

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(Saint Nicolai Mass)

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**NEW Player Controls**

100

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Speed Balance

Movement		Vocal Parts				
(1)	<i>Kyrie</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>
(2)	<i>Gloria</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>
(3)	<i>Credo</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>
(4)	<i>Sanctus</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>
(5)	<i>Benedictus</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>
(6)	<i>Agnus Dei</i>	<a href="#">Tutti</a>	<a href="#">Soprano</a>	<a href="#">Alto</a>	<a href="#">Tenor</a>	<a href="#">Bass</a>


 Many thanks to the Central United Church of Christ, Jefferson City, Missouri for generously donating a score of Haydn's Saint Nicolai Mass from which these CyberBass learning files were sequenced.

My first stop was to [Cyberbass](http://Cyberbass), a website that provides rehearsal midi files for well over 100 oft-performed works of the choral repertoire. You can listen to the midi files directly from the website for free or order a learning CD that highlights your own part (prices vary by title).

It so happened that I had been assigned to sing alto I, soprano II, and soprano I, depending on the section of the *B Minor Mass*, so it worked well for me to be able to choose my part on Cyberbass. I got my score out and turned to the "Cum Sancto Spiritu" section that had been giving me fits. I clicked on "soprano II" and listened to the whole thing once. My part was louder on piano in the foreground. The rest of the parts were played, much softer in the background, on something that sounded like a harpsichord,

I clicked "start" and tried to sing along. Well! The lightning fast tempo left me in the dust a number of times, and there was no way to slow things down. (I later learned that Windows Media Player 11 includes a feature that allows you to slow down the tempo. My Vista-based PC did not take kindly to the upgrade, though.)

Needing something with more flexibility, I turned to SingleParts™ learning CD, available from [RehearsalArts](http://RehearsalArts) for \$18.50 (I chose the soprano II version). These practice CDs combine professional choral and oratorio singers on each part with a good recording of the choral work for the background context. Your part, sung beautifully with proper

expression and dynamics, is in the foreground, and the other parts, the soloists, and the orchestral accompaniment are somewhat softer in the background.

The CDs also include StudySpots™, slowed-down versions of some of the piece's trickiest passages. (The same movements at performance tempo follow immediately after the slow version.) I tried the "Cum Sancto Spiritu" at the slower speed. What a difference that made! I felt more successful in actually singing my part, rather than just hanging on for dear life. I also liked the sound of the orchestra and voices better than the electronic piano sounds of Cyberbass, though I would have preferred a straighter-toned singer on my part (this is Baroque music, after all). And the fact that I had only the soprano II part was a drawback.

There are several other learning systems out there. Hammond Music Service's [Song-Learning Systems™](#) has CDs for some 450 works (prices vary according to the length of the work and how many CDs you buy). You'll hear a grand piano playing your part in the foreground, with all other voice parts, accompaniment and soft, metronome-like percussion in the background.

[Hear and Singharmony™](#) has produced learning CDs for Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Magnificat*, and Vivaldi's *Gloria* that feature a real singer on your part in the foreground with the orchestra in the background (prices varies by title).

The Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia also has rehearsal CDs for a number of choral works, produced primarily for use by [three choral members who are blind](#). Call executive director Lynn Faust at 215-463-6394 for more information about how to buy copies.