

## Preparing hymns from the Northern Christadelphian Choir for playback using MP3 players.

**NOTE: Now that the whole 2002 Hymn Book is available in MP3 format on a DVD, the notes below are obsolete but they have been left on the website for reference. Please see the website for details of how to order the MP3 DVD.**

A request we often receive is whether we can supply the recordings of the 2002 Hymn Book in MP3 format. This article is intended to suggest at least one way in which you may do this yourself now.

If you are already experienced in ripping tracks off CDs you won't need to follow the detailed guidelines below. However, there are a few points worth noting:

- a. You will want to rename the ripped tracks with the relevant hymn number for ease of identification.
- b. You might want to identify each track with information about how each hymn is introduced. See paragraph 3 below for some hints.

### Stages in preparation:

1. Choose a suitable MP3 player
2. Convert music from CD to MP3 format
3. File labelling
4. Copying onto MP3 player
5. Arranging suitable amplification in the Hall
6. Deciding on playback procedure during services

1. In starting to investigate this method of useage, I chose to buy a Windows Mobile PDA. The one I chose was the Fujitsu Siemens Pocket Loox 520 for the following reasons:
  - a. it runs Windows Mobile 5 which includes Media Player that will play MP3 files.
  - b. it takes SD memory cards which are available now in large enough sizes to take the whole hymn book in MP3 at quite high quality without too much compression.



- c. it has a headphones output which can be used to feed an amplification system.
- d. The sound reproduction from this unit is very good.

This PDA is now not available but, in practice, any reasonable MP3 player should do the job, the main requirement being that there is some sort of menu screen similar to that seen in the photo whereby individual tracks can be accessed easily and quickly. An iPod could be ideal.

2. I took all the choir's available hymns CDs and used Media Player on my PC to "Rip" the tracks off the disks onto the PC's hard disk in MP3 format. The latest versions of Media Player make this very easy to do but you may have to change some settings:
  - a. Go into "Rip Settings" and set Format to MP3 and Audio Quality to 192kbps (this setting gives good reproduction but acceptably small files sizes – there's room for experimentation here!).  
*If you have an older copy of Media Player, go into Tools/Options and choose the Rip Music tab, then*
    - o Set the format in the drop down box to mp3
    - o Set the Audio quality slider to read 192kbps
  - b. Make sure you know where your ripped tracks are going on your hard disk! In the latest versions you'll find this noted under Rip Settings, More Options, on the Rip Music tab.
3. Your tracks will receive an automatically generated file name which isn't much use when you need to find the correct one during a service. I went through each set of tracks after ripping from each CD and renamed them to reflect the correct hymn number, e.g. 001, 002, .... 335, 336 etc). Also, since the recordings have different styles of introduction (a chord, a chord and first line, or just a first line) I added a suffix to the file name to indicate this so that the filenames ended up like: 001-L, 002-LC, 003-C with C indicating a chord from the organ, L indicating the first line of the hymn being played by the organ. LC obviously indicates that both are used as is common Christadelphian practice.  
All tracks on a particular CD use the same style of introduction, so you don't have to check every hymn! I think the only odd one out is on Opus 54 where hymn 104 is different from the rest. See the note on the CD inlay card.  
There are also a very few accidental duplications of hymns across the set of CDs. You will want to "weed these out" once you've got the full set onto your hard disk.
4. Once all the tracks are ripped and renamed correctly it's a simple job to copy them onto the memory card in the PDA or onto your MP3 player. With the compression settings noted in 2.c above I could comfortably fit all available hymns onto a 2GB card leaving enough room to add the rest of the hymns as they are recorded and become available.
5. You will need some sort of amplification and speakers in the hall. If you already have PA facilities you may not need anything extra. Every hall is different so experimentation may be necessary but any reasonable system with enough power output and a means of connecting an

external device (the PDA/MP3 player) should work fine. You will need a lead to connect the two together, most likely a 3.5mm stereo jack to 2xphono plugs lead. Make sure that the headphones output on the PDA or MP3 player is set to a fairly high level to get good quality sound.

6. Using the system in practice depends on individual circumstances. My feeling would be that any reasonably competent president should be able to find the hymn he needs on the PDA/MP3 player as easily as finding it in the hymn book, however, some may prefer to leave it up to the hall attendant! Whoever does it, all that is needed is:
  - a. Before the service, start up the PDA/MP3 player and go to the folder where the hymns are stored.
  - b. Scroll down the list to find the first hymn for the service. From the suffix on the filename it will be possible to alert the congregation to how the hymn is introduced (chord, first line etc.).
  - c. After announcing the hymn, simply tap on the hymn and it will play, automatically stopping at the end.
  - d. Simply follow the same procedure to find and play the next hymn. Easy!

I hope that the above is helpful and that you successfully get up and running in you own ecclesia.

*Ken Hardy 17/11/2006, updated 01/01/2010*