

## ALTERNATIM -

a liturgical practice whereby the organ alternates with voice(s), typically in the plainsong-based music of Organ Masses (Ordinary of the Mass, occasionally Propers) and at Matins or Vespers in Magnificats, Te Deums and Hymns. *A* is comprised of versets, succeeding lines or short verses of text that are either sung (unaccompanied) or set for organ (solo). It is logical to assume that *a* grew out of preludare and intonazione traditions where the organ played first in order to set the pitch for singers, but proof of this is lacking. A passage in [Dante](#) indicates that *a* practice was well established by late 13<sup>th</sup>c, probably associated with the improvisare traditions of organ playing at that time. The [Codex Faenza](#) from c1430 contains the earliest extant *a* pieces, organ settings of the Kyrie and Gloria from Mass IV. This is the earliest surviving music to document *a* with the organ, a practice that flourished in Catholic traditions from about the 13<sup>th</sup>c, and in Lutheran traditions after the Reformation. Typically a 9-fold Kyrie in *a* would run thus:

Kyrie Eleison	(1st verset, played as an organ solo, maybe using the set plainsong fragment, maybe not, but at the correct pitch to act as a praeambulum or preludium for the singers).
Kyrie Eleison	(2nd verset, sung by the singers, unaccompanied, to the set plainsong melody and words)
Kyrie Eleison	(3rd verset, organ solo, as 1st Kyrie)
Christe Eleison	(4th verset, sung by singers as per 2nd verset)
Christe Eleison	(5th verset, organ solo)
Christe Eleison	(6th verset, singers)
Kyrie Eleison	(7th verset, organ)
Kyrie Eleison	(8th verset, singers)
Kyrie Eleison	(9th verset, organ)

*A* continued in both traditions while other newer forms developed and subsumed it to a degree, never entirely replacing it. In Protestant Germanic regions the chorale took over from Gregorian chant during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>c, and chorale verses sometimes alternated between vocal and instrumental performance. *A* survived in both traditions well into 20<sup>th</sup>c, essentially until Vatican II.