

for Montserrat July 1968

For the last few decades the contemporary composer who was interested in writing ecclesiastical music was looking with envy at the architect who was allowed to build churches of the most unconventional types while "modern" music was not permitted to cross the doorstep of the cathedral. We know that ~~some~~ some of the ~~specimens~~ specimens of progressive ecclesiastical architecture were rejected by the authorities and others ~~caused~~ made the parishioners raise their voices in protest, but on the whole the idea that the physical appearance of the house of worship ought to reflect the artistic accomplishments of the time has been ~~accepted~~ accepted everywhere.

Why did this not happen in music? ~~One~~ One of the several reasons is that the appearance of the building, no matter how provoking it may be at first sight, will gradually become familiar to people who see it casually day after day. Music that sounds alarming because of its newness ~~produces~~ produces a shock that can not be mitigated by casual repetition, for it is just this repetition that is not tolerated because of the shock of the first appearance. The <sup>(modern)</sup> edifice ~~of the modern~~ days have permanently no matter how shocking it was when it was new, and the protesters eventually give in. Architecture has in this respect the better nerves than music, as it only ~~accepts~~ ~~accepts~~ ~~accepts~~ because of its physical solidity.

Another circumstance that stands in the way of modernism in church music is the fact that truly new music is relatively difficult to perform, and generally out of reach for the average church choir. Again, the architect is at a tremendous advantage, because he does not need any interpreters. The craftsmen who carry out his design will do so with unflinching precision whether it is second-hand Renaissance or first rate "Avantgarde". Neither one is more difficult to execute than the other.

Things have somewhat changed since the Church has decided on certain innovations of the spirit and style of her liturgy. The fact that a substantial part of the text of the Mass is now being sung in the language of the respective country has made elements of the folk music acceptable. The <sup>(instrumental)</sup> sounds characteristic of some of this music pave the way from the ~~homogeneous~~ homogeneous timbre traditionally associated with ecclesiastical music to the more colorful, vivid mixtures of new music. While it seems that even some forms of so-called avant garde music would not any longer be rejected as <sup>detrimental</sup> ~~detrimental~~ to the attitude of worship, ~~there~~ there are still a number of technical

difficulties. ~~Should~~ hampering progress in this direction. Problems of intonation and rhythmic coordination ~~that~~ that are inevitable accessories of new music are still beyond the grasp of average church choirs composed of amateurs. Another source of difficulty is the acoustical conditions of most churches, which make the clear perception of more complicated textures impossible. In addition to all that, a serious stylistic problem arises from the principle of including ~~the~~ responses to be sung by the congregation into the structural whole of the composition. Since ~~these~~ such responses by necessity must be of utmost simplicity it is extremely difficult to integrate them with a body of music composed in an advanced style. At any rate, very important steps have been taken to ~~encourage~~ <sup>again</sup> the modern composer to write for the Church without demanding of him a sacrificium intellectus. We may hope that some of the remaining problems will be solved step by step.

Works conceived in this style would still be reserved for professional ensembles and progressive-minded directors.

more in the same way