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THE CAECILIA

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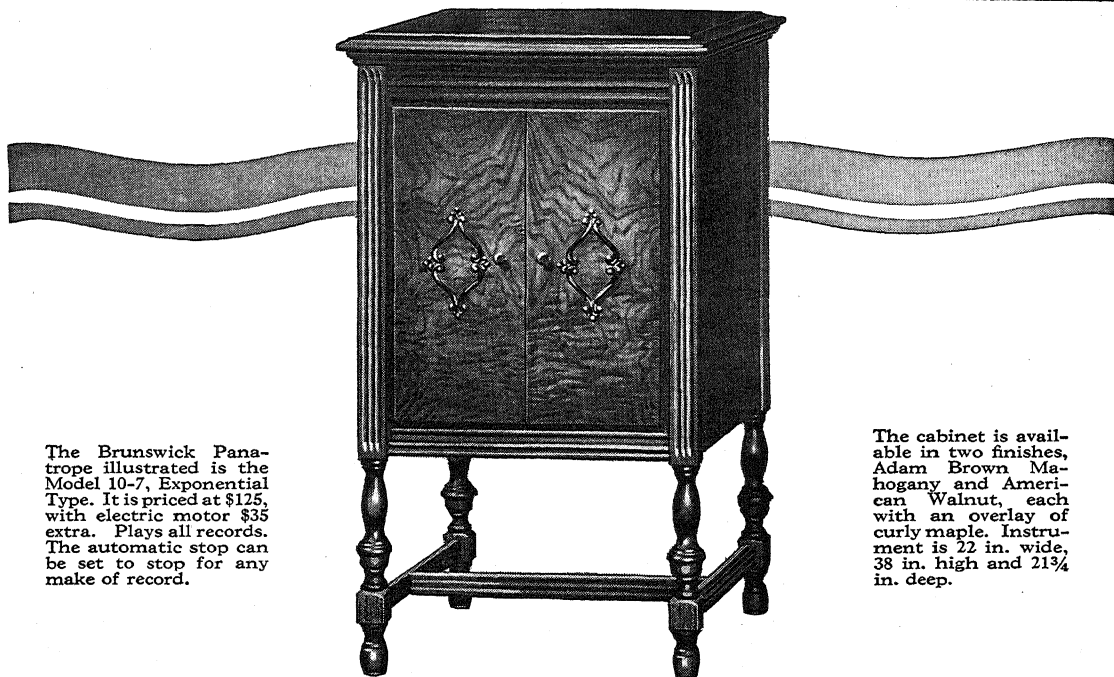
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by

By *H. J. Gruender, S. J.*

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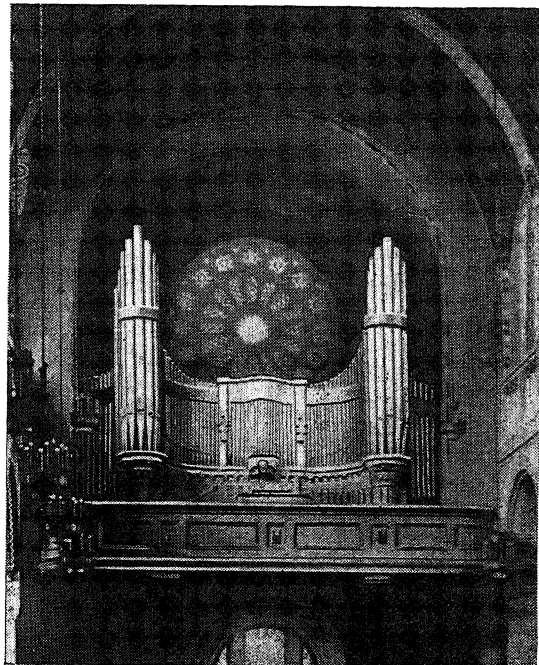
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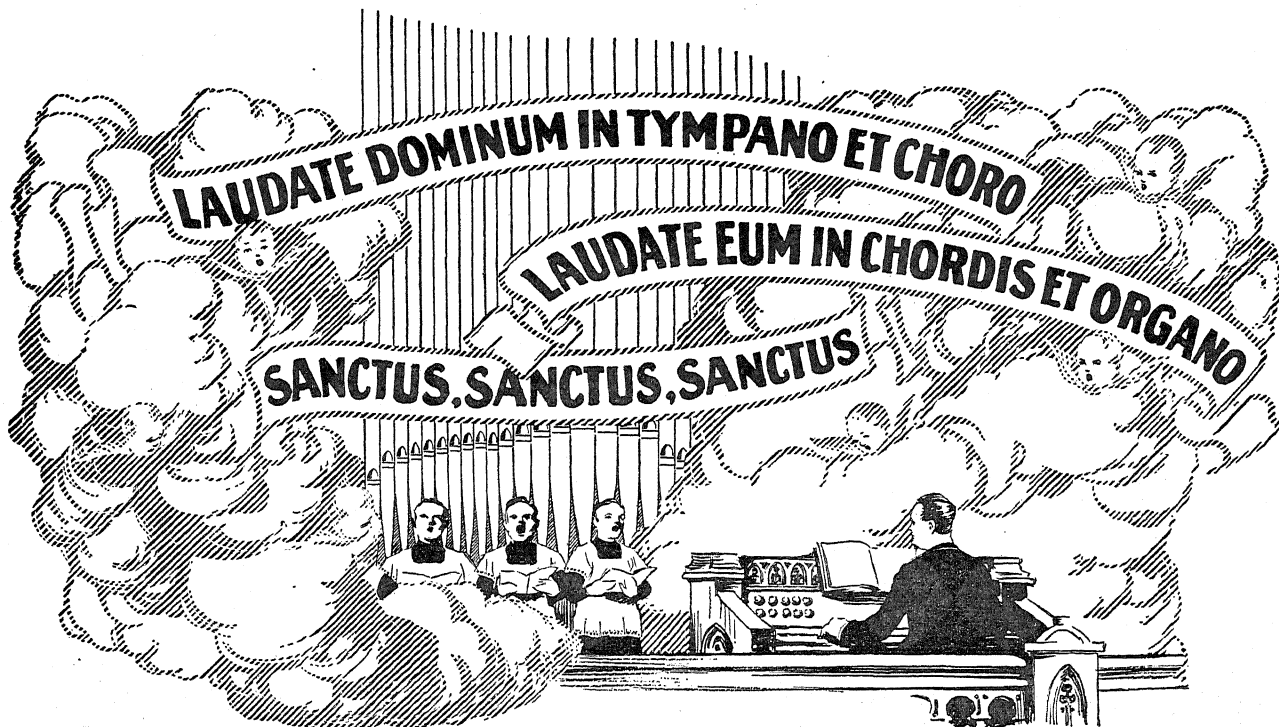
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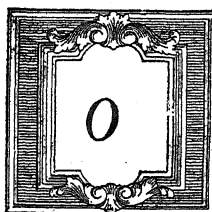
Choice of the Masters



Entertainment In Church Music

E. Langer

"Some people to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but for the music there."



ONE subject of controversy has for a long time been the question whether music of an entertaining character may be admitted into the liturgical services of the Catholic Church.

Many, even at the present time, are of the opinion that music is employed in church to attract the people thither, to afford them pleasure, and to agreeably engage their attention during the tedious moment of the service. In this regard, we must, first of all, be convinced of the correctness of this idea. Therefore, the question arises: "Is church music employed with a view to entertain? May it entertain?" And how naturally are both questions answered with a decisive "No!"

In the proper time and place "entertainment" or "amusement" is in itself nothing objectionable; it is a kind of recreation which is distinguished from passive repose by being connected with activity; or, in other words, in order to relax the tension of strained human action, something is inserted or performed to

agreeably engage the attention. Hence, the corresponding expressions in romantic parlance, "*divertimento*," "*divertissement*," refer, etymologically to a diverting, or turning away of the attention from a subject of serious occupation, which diversion corresponds to our idea or conception of distraction; thus, we speak of making or causing one distraction or amusement.

Now, the house of God is in the holy scripture expressly called a "house of prayer"; and "prayer is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God." The church assembles the faithful in her holy temples to prayer, and to Divine service, which should be a solemn act of homage to God of the assembled Christian people, which act, however, has value and significance only in so much as it is an expression of interior devotion,—that is, complete oblation. If then, this devotion is pre-eminently an act of the will which at the same time submits its intelligence to God and to His service, one part of this devotion must necessarily be attention. This attention, certainly, can be diverted by involuntary, interior distractions, or by external, disturbing influence, with-

out thereby destroying the inherent qualities of devotion, but these distractions may not be caused or willed by the worshippers, nor may any one knowingly direct the attention of the faithful to such disturbances. Least of all, could we presuppose or expect this of the Church, the leader and director of the common acts of devotion of the faithful.

The Church wisely employs other means to relax the strain of close attention. What a wealth, what a multiplicity of practices of prayer and devotion does she not display in the ecclesiastical year! The great drama of our faith is enacted anew throughout the year in the feasts of our Lord and of His Blessed Mother, with the feasts of the saints as a beautiful variation and accompaniment. To answer precisely this purpose the Church has admitted art into her services. Architecture, painting, sculpture, and even the elements of dramatic art are utilized,—but music especially, holds a pre-eminent place in the liturgy, being reserved for the particularly solemn forms of Divine worship. "The Church has always cherished and protected art, because in it she recognizes a means of expressing spiritual beauty under sensible signs, so that it pleases and rejoices the heart of man." (*Meschler, S. J. The Gift of Pentecost.*) But the Church can never concede that during Divine service, in her solemn forms of representing the common devotion of the faithful, anything distracting, or anything that might lead their attention away from the ground-theme of their devotions be interpolated. Not all beautiful and artistic music is fit for Divine service, because, in it, not unfrequently, the composer seeks to display his talent, or to afford musical enjoyment to the audience. While these compositions might fulfill their purpose if heard in the theater or concert hall, they ought to be banished forever from the house of God, because in the endeavor to describe scenes or express the feelings evoked by certain favorite phrases, the august presence of the Blessed Sacrament and the sacred functions of Divine worship are lost sight of. The Church, the sacred tabernacle of the Most High, can never, under any circumstances, even passingly, be degraded to a place of amusement without violating the reverence due to God.

Every liturgical function, as a continuous act, excludes all the more every intentional interruption of the cycle of thought, and this, too, for esthetic reasons. Even secular music-dramas, wherever artistic unity is taken into consideration, are so conceived that the interlude (*intermezzo*) will be introduced, not as an opportunity for pleasant gossip or conversation, but as a means of preserving the corresponding mood, and to fill up the pauses necessary for development of the drama. If this is not heeded by the audience, our would-be art enthusiasts give evidence of the low degree of their esthetic taste. During the liturgical services, however, the interpolation of an *intermezzo* not serving this unity of thought, would not only affect the esthetic, but, at the same time, it would injure the religious, moral feeling; and, consequently, nothing that is rendered during the Divine service, not even an artistic performance, may be conceived as an amusement or diversion. If this were at all permissible, one might just as well make pauses during the liturgical functions to declaim any kind of whimsical, secular poem, so that the faithful, recreated by this diversion, might again resume their devotions.

Just a little reasonable consideration will convince us that music is not employed in church to amuse the people, and, by this means, preserve their good dispositions. To elucidate this, we will, therefore refer to the established rules and regulations of the Church in this regard. Whichever utterances of the ecclesiastical authorities, or of men imbued with the spirit of the Church we may consult, we will not find a single assertion from which we might conclude that church-music is intended for amusement, but we will always find that it is employed as a means of promoting devotion, elevating the mind, and of awakening pious sentiments. Still more, the ecclesiastical regulations positively forbid and exclude any amusement or distraction which may be caused by music. Thus, we read in the "*Ceremoniale Episcoporum*":

"Cavendum autem est, ne sonus organi sie lascivus, aut impurus, et ne cum eo proferantur cantus, qui ad officium, quod agitur, non spectent, nedum profani aut lubrici."

"Care must be taken that the sound of the organ be not lascivious or impure, and that it be not accompanied with melodies which bear

no relation to the office which is being performed, and that it be not profane nor indecorous."

Organ playing, we see from this, must always be in close relation with the solemn functions which are being performed,—it may not be an "entertainment." For all other church music, vocal as well as instrumental, we have the following regulation:

"Idem quoque cantores et musici observent ne voeum harmonia, quae ad pietatem augendam ordinata est, aliquid levitatis, aut lasciviae praeseferat, ae potius audientium animos a rei divinae contemplatione avocet."

"Let the chanters also, and the musicians observe the same precautions, that the harmony of the voices, which is designed for the increase of piety, may not savor of levity or sensuality, and so divest the minds of the hearers from the contemplation of Divine worship."

It is utterly impossible to associate church music of an entertaining character with this regulation. Quite similar are the prescriptions we find in the "*Regolamento sulla Musica Sacra*" for Italy. In the very beginning (Art. I. par. I), music of an entertaining character is excluded from church. We read there:

"La musica vocale figurata permessa in chiesa è soltanto quella, di cui i canti gravi et pii sono adatti alla Casa del Signore ed alle divine lodi, e servono.....ad eccitare vieppici i fedeli alla devozione."

"Figured music, permitted to be performed in church is only such as is earnest and devout, and becoming the house of God and His praises, and which assists the devotion of the faithful."

It is expressly added that this refers to the accompaniment of the organ or of other instruments as well as to the singing. Music of an entertaining character might cause the faithful to forget that they are in the house of God, and assisting at His Divine service.

With reference to organ interludes. Article II of this "*Regolamento*" requires that it should correspond in every respect to the venerable liturgy:

"Gli interludi organici sinfonici rispondano alla serietà della sacra Liturgia."

In Article IV. the same thought is again expressed in the form of a direct prohibition:

"La musica vocale e strumentale proibita in chiesa, e quella che per il suo tipo o per la forma che la riveste, tende a distrarre gli uditori uella casa d'orazione."

"Vocal and instrumental music that is forbidden in church is such, which according to the forms in which it is presented, diverts the attention of the faithful from their prayers."

Music of a distracting character could not be debarred from church in more explicit terms; consequently, there remains not a doubt as to whether it is allowed or not.

In conclusion, we will briefly consider one objection which is frequently made. This argument is usually put in terms similar to this following: "If, attracted by the enjoyment that the music affords, some individuals attend the services who would not otherwise do so, they, at all events, see and hear many things good and edifying, which, possibly, will attain some good results. At any rate, it is certainly better that they go to church to enjoy the music than to other dangerous places; at least, they obey the commandment of the Church. Right here we must assert that whoever attends church on account of the enjoyment he finds in the music, does not at all fulfill the commandment of the Church, which requires that the faithful assist at Mass with *attention* and *devotion*. But we know from experience that people of this type rarely practice any devotion themselves, and frequently they are the causes of disturbance and disedification to those who are sincerely fervent and devout.

Now, if in consideration for people who attend Divine services for amusement only, music of an entertaining character would be admitted, this concession would, undoubtedly, imperil the devotion of those of a good mind, at least it would expose it to many temptations, and for the sake of these pleasure-loving people the house of God and His worship would be degraded to the level of a theater or an ordinary play-house.

That, finally, one who might have entered the Church with indifference may unexpectedly receive a stimulus towards amending his life, may occur once in a hundred instances for God knows how to direct the most perverse actions of men to good. Nevertheless, we may not conclude from this that we are justified in committing evil to attain some good,—not even for a certainty,—still less, if these good results are only a probability, consequently we may not introduce music of an entertaining character into the liturgical services in order to bring about the conversion of even one hardened sinner.

 The Caecilia

 OTTO A. SINGENBERGER.....Editor

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His Eminence, George Cardinal Mundelein,
Archbishop of Chicago, Ill.

Excerpts from the Cardinal's letters:
December 12th, 1924—

"The CAECILIA deserves every commendation and encouragement, for it is practically 'a voice crying in the wilderness.' I know of no other monthly periodical in the English language midst the great multitude of publication that espouses the cause of sacred music and brings to our notice those compositions that are in harmony with the wishes and regulations of Pope Pius X of saintly memory.

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June, 1925—

" . . . We are happy to welcome it (The CAECILIA) to the sacred precincts of our Seminary . . .

"We commend it to our clergy and our sisterhoods, for we feel that in supporting it . . . we are helping to safeguard a precious inheritance that has come to us from the first ages of the Church."

THE "MOTU PROPRIO"—A "NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION"

On November the 22nd, 1928 twenty-five years will have passed since Pope Pius X issued his **Motu Proprio** on church music. That occasion should give pause for retrospection. It will be a vantage point for the plans and resolutions of all church musicians who work with an ideal.

Clouds of timidity and prejudice are gradually clearing away. We are com-

ing generally to recognize a vision in the enactments of the **Motu Proprio**—vision of an extremely practical character.

The problems attendant on liturgical music have not been created by enthusiasts or dilettantes. They will not be solved by literary controversy. They will never be solved, except on a basis of constructive common sense. That is the meaning of the **Motu Proprio**.

Pius X was keenly aware of the difficulties. But he had an objective. He realized that liturgical composition and performance call for something more pertinent than musicianship, something deeper than surface piety, something more penetrating than good taste or sense of the congruous.

Music, to be Catholic, must embody the spirit of the liturgy. It must symbolize and give utterance to Catholic tradition. Liturgical composition constitutes a **genre** unto itself. Its purpose and standards—its essence!—cannot be grasped from a secular viewpoint. Until one has come to appreciate the inner spirit of Catholic tradition, to realize the intimate logic of its liturgy, how can one qualify as its interpreter? How can one understand the significance of the **Motu Proprio**?

Precisely to establish a concrete norm of judgment, Pius X named Gregorian Chant and the polyphony of Palestrina. In indicating these as the musical types which seem to interpret the spirit of the liturgy most perfectly, the Pontiff did not intend to galvanize the style of individuals or to blast creative musical inspiration in the Church. He did not wish to embalm Catholic music as a beautiful corpse. But a standard had to be set. The exotic and purely provincial had to be ruled out.

We cannot conceive the mature development of Catholic Church music on any other basis. To arouse and

LAETENTUR COELI

pro duabus vocibus aequalibus

H. Gruender, S. J.

Allegro moderato

Voces I-II

Organ

p espressivo

Lae -

Lae - ten - tur coe - li et ex - ul - tet

ten - tur coe - li et ex - ul - - tet

mf

mf

ter - ra, et ex - ul - tet ter - ra,

ter - ra, et ex - ul - tet ter - ra an -

mf

an - te fa - ci - em Do - - mi -

- - te fa - ci - em Do - - mi -

ni, Lae - ten - tur coe - li

ni, Lae - ten - tur coe - li et ex -

Lae - ten - tur coe - li

ul - tet ter - ra, Lae - ten - tur coe - li et ex -

An - te fa - ci - em
 ul - tet ter - ra, An - te fa - ci - em

Do - mi - ni Quo - ni - am
 Do - mi - ni Quo - ni - am ve - nit, quo -

ve - nit, Quo - ni - am ve - nit,
 - ni - am ve - nit, Quo - ni - am ve - nit,

quo - ni - am ve - nit, Quo - - -

quo - ni - am ve - nit, Quo - - ni - am

pp

p

p espressivo

- ni - am ve - - - nit, Quo - ni - am

ve - nit, quo - ni - am ve - nit, Quo - ni - am

pp sempre

mf

f

f

ve - nit, quo - ni - am ve - nit, ve - nit.

ve nit, quo - ni - am ve - nit, ve - nit.

p

p

stimulate the Catholic mind to a fuller consciousness of its heritage, liturgy must be given an orthodox setting. Catholic musicians who will light the way for the future must be grounded, nurtured, **saturated** in the truth and Christian solemnity of the forms named by the **Motu Proprio**.

There is nothing novel or experimental about the **Motu Proprio**. But its adequate observance can come only as the result of a gradual development in technical equipment and popular appreciation. The **Motu Proprio** embodies an ideal; and, however practical, worthwhile ideals require a struggle, sometimes long and painful. Various movements for its advance are in evidence. The intelligence of Catholic musicians everywhere should constitute a tremendous moral support. Official, organized effort, of course, must take the lead.

Meanwhile, we hope that consciences will be stirred by the inspiration of the twenty-fifth anniversary. There you have the making of a New Year's resolution!

The protest aroused by Cardinal O'Connell's ban on the "Beautiful Isle" is interesting, partly because it is typical. Dissenting voices seem to have missed the point of the controversy. In barring the hymn, His Eminence gave an obvious reason. He declared the song to be "cheap, trashy and vulgar". From a musical standpoint his action has no challenge to fear. He had no desire of wounding the sensibilities of those to whom the song may have grown dear through old memories and associations.

Fundamentally, the question is not one of sensibilities or of musical standards. Underlying the whole recurring situation is a matter of dogmatic importance. The song is not merely a song. It is the symbol of a theological system. That system is not the system of the Catholic Church.

From an artistic standpoint, many negro "spirituals" are superior to some of the Moody and Sanky hymns. We do not reproach the Evangelizers for not borrowing from their darker brethren. The religious sensibilities of some persons may be moved profoundly by certain snatches from the Verdi operas. It is not to their discredit, the Verdi tunes are never heard from their choir lofts. If the spirit of the Moody and Sanky and similar hymns does not correspond with that of Catholic liturgy, who is right: the Cardinal who bars them from Catholic service, or his critics who discourse on musical standards and sensibilities?

"Beautiful Isle of Somewhere", however inferior a representative, is merely one of a type. That plaintive swooping and swooning of the melodic line and the vague sentimentalism of the words—

"Some where the sun is shining, Somewhere the song-birds dwell," are thoroughly expressive of the "quiescent" phase of sectarian theology. The spirit of interior illumination, of private judgment, of comfort from the Scriptures alone, and of dogmatic indifference is embodied unmistakably in these hymns, and the finished products radiate its sad, familiar optimism. What an impatient critic might characterize as maudlin is really a religious note—the note of evangelistic confidence which underlies practically all Protestant theology. The other phase is the militant evangelism of "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching on to War".

That many of these hymns breathe a vigorous spirituality and a rugged beauty, no one will deny. But they are totally foreign to the Catholic system. They were conceived under an alien inspiration. They deny implicitly the clean-cut dogmatic principles of the Church. They are strangers to the Mass, the sacraments, to the Catholic conception of divine Grace, to the communion of saints, and generally to the heritage of Catholic Faith so beautifully symbolized in the Catholic liturgy.

Catholic ritual is a logical development, the full and perfect product of centuries of devout labor and loving inspiration. It were a shame to mar the exquisite funeral service with "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere". Secular songs are simply excluded from Catholic devotions. Protestant hymnology as a symbol of Catholic worship is a contradiction in terms.

Choirmastering



ORGANIST and Choirmaster" is the title, proud or otherwise, of many a young musician who has never stopped to think of the plain meaning of the last word in it, nor made any real progress in the mastery aforesaid. We speak of this or that one as master of the piano, organ, violin, or what not; but few can we, even in the license of everyday language, denominate masters of choirs, apart from the mere title to the office. And yet a choir must be mastered, just as an instrument, if the church-service is to be worthy or even tolerable. The choir must aim to carry out the ideas of one man, not strive to put in practice the opinions of every individual in it, not drift on in an aimless, purposeless way.

The first necessity, consequently, is that the master have an idea to carry out. The leader should never attempt to teach a new composition to his chorus until he has formed a definite conception of every effect he wishes to bring out. General effects are not what I mean, but particular effects; considering matters in the minutest detail. His copy of the composition to be studied should be so marked that he is sure of being absolutely uniform in his criticisms. I mean to say, his criticism of a particular passage should always aim at the same end; if it is a *pi-anissimo* passage which he has decided should be sung in strict tempo, let him see to it that it is sung—in strict tempo. Patience and perseverance will overcome any tendency to drag. The chorus must be taught that the choirmaster is not given to random fault-finding for the mere sake of having something to say, but that he has a determined aim and means to realize it. Once let him learn this lesson and half the battle is won. But how many conductors are like the little crooked pig with a crooked little gait going down a crooked little lane. They suggest this thing at one rehearsal, that at another; and, when the public performance comes, attempt to give yet a third rendering. If the singers do not look for any method in your madness, what you say goes in at one ear and out at the other.

The confidence of the singers must be won. They are asked to lay aside individual opinions and follow the conceptions of another. I never saw a choir that would do this until they had learned from experience that the choirmaster had always an idea, and that in the end it was certain to turn out better than theirs. When they grow eager to catch the drift of criticism the church-service improves in a wonderful way.

But it is not enough to have good and definite ideas of interpretation. They must be broad enough to fit the circumstances of the case, and there must not be too many of them clamoring for attention at one and the same time. Broad enough to suit the occasion! A body of singers which has not learned such simple virtues as prompt attack and plain enunciation cannot be expected to accomplish the subtle shading of power or tempo which marks the performance of a choir of highly trained musicians. Let them take one step at a time. I have always found it a good plan to make a note of the worst features of each service, and then to put forth special effort to correct that particular defect during the following week.

Too seldom do choirmasters hear their choirs as others hear them. They shut their ears to mistakes and complacently "preside at the organ" Sunday after Sunday, while a general stagnation reigns over all the musical activity of the church. Another thing: They too seldom hear other and better choirs than their own. No doubt it is often a difficult matter to do so: but it is absolutely necessary for the leader to get new ideas and higher ideals from time to time. He never will wince sufficiently at certain faults until he has heard them at another's service; nor will he sufficiently appreciate the necessity of bringing his own singers up to a certain standard until he has listened to a choir which has been raised to the standard in question. This standard in question is always the one just above the present grade of his own choir.

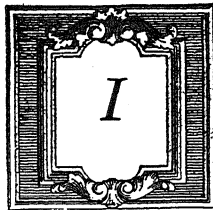
It is a great advantage to a choirmaster if he is so excellent an organist that his musicianship in that direction commands the respect and admiration of his singers. It will lend great weight to his opin-

ions. More important still, he must be a good vocal teacher. In almost every church there are many good voices which need only the efforts of a genuine voice builder to be of great value in the services. I am strongly in favor of homemade choirs myself, and consider a knowledge of the human voice absolutely essential to the successful choirmaster. If necessary, let an assistant organist be engaged to play the voluntaries. The choirmaster must be a vocal teacher. It is much better to do as suggested above, than to give one man the position of organist, and another the position of choirmaster and leave them to fight an endless battle

of precedence. I have never seen a good organist who was willing to play under the authority of a man not an instrumentalist. The one at the head of the music of a church, therefore, must be a versatile individual rather than a virtuoso. Tact, judgment, good manners, these are the chief arrows in his quiver. Personally, I do not envy him the task which is usually set before him. I fancy it is because I have myself too often been "it" to use a slang phrase. He often has to make bricks without straw; but if he succeeds he is not without his reward.—Harvey Wickham, in the "*Etude*."

The Precentor And Choirmaster In The Medieval Monastery

By Ferrer Williams



IN a monastic rule in vigor during the medieval days of Catholic England there is one highly interesting admonition. It is of interest to every present day choirmaster for it demonstrates, for all its terse wording, a problem that is ever with us. It read: "UNISON IN CHOIR." Nothing more. But that single phrase beguiled me into searching about in study of the status of the Choirmaster—precentor as they called him—of former days.

The office of Precentor was one that could be filled only by a monk who had been brought up in the monastery from boyhood. He ranked high in the monastic order. Indeed he seems to have been a privileged personage, ranking after the Abbot himself. Whilst other dignitaries were obliged to serve their turns in the Lessons and responsories, he was not to do so unless it were required in the absence of the Abbot.

All mistakes in choir—the recitation of the Divine Office—were publicly reprimanded by the precentor. He arranged these services, fulfilling partially the duties of a master of ceremonies. He selected the vestments for festal occasions and appointed the celebrant and assistant clergy.

Once the brethren had assembled for the recitation of the Office, they could not leave without his permission. He took his stand a bit to the right in the center of the Choir. Then

he would begin the chant and the right Choir would take it up. He was incensed after the Abbot and Prior.

On Sundays and feasts of equal rank the Choir was relinquished to another appointed by the precentor. This temporary precentor would bow to the precentor as he began each verse, together with the oblates—little children sheltered in the monastery. In times of manual labor the precentor was exempt. Instead he would spend some time in instruction of the novices.

In the monastery of Abingdon the office of precentor was filled by the election of the Abbot, Prior, and convent. His duties, perhaps, were arduous enough to merit the deference he received, for they embraced the task of instructing the whole community in singing and reading. In Choir, if anyone hesitated on pronunciation or tone the precentor immediately gave the correct wording or note.

When processions were held the precentor had to act also as a master of ceremonies. He was required to give all the signals to the Abbot. Naturally, being such an important factor, it was impossible for him to absent himself from divine services.

I mentioned that it was part of the precentor's duties to admonish the lagard in singing. This was done generally by a nod. When the delinquent had received this notification that he was not chanting correctly or too slowly, he had to return a bow to the precentor.

A Feast in Copes was a solemn event in monastic ceremony. On such an occasion the

precentor would distribute the festival staves to his fellow chanters. If a monk, feeling unwell, sat during the Holy Sacrifice, he must first rise and bow to the precentor.

Processions were under the direction of the precentor. He arranged the order, selected the partners and transposed the monks from one side of Choir to the other.

The present day conductor of a choir or orchestra, knowingly or not, makes use of a monastic tradition. The baton is a vestige of an old medieval custom. The offices to be recited by the officiating priest were contained on several sheets of parchment which were rolled around a slender stick. This was called the "Contacium." One can easily understand the transition to the slender wand of today. When music became secularized the divine offices found no place in the repertory of the music master. In the early nineteenth century the conductor used a roll of parchment. Our tradition calls for the stick—upon which, at one time, was rolled the sacred words of praise to God.

The precentor, in some places, made use of the "tabulae." This was a kind of metronome for the ancient chanters. It seems that in classic Greece the Coryphaeus, or leader of the orchestra, kept time not only with his foot but also by beating together two clam shells or two pieces of bone. These two bones were the "tabulae" of the monastery. A will dated A. D. 837, makes mention of 'singing tabulae,' ornamented with gold and silver."

In other houses, the precentor held a silver staff during the performances of sacred Acts. This, says Honorius, was in commemoration of the staff which the Israelite, eating the Paschal Lamb, held in his hand. Perhaps, in the Cenacle, whilst the Saviour ate this sacred repast with His Apostles, this same staff was seen.

The monastery also had another Master of music. This was generally a layman. He was teacher to the children sheltered in the monastery. He had his song-school within the Church. From its description, one is led to believe that this song-school was the prototype of our modern choir-lofe. It was wainscoted two yards high and boarded closely for the sake of warmth. A desk extended from one end of the partition to the other for the books. Benches were spread about.

The children were to be instructed in the playing of the organ every day. On feasts, when the monks sang high Mass the children would take over the choir (in the modern

sense). They also fulfilled this duty at Vespers. But at Matins one of the monks played the organ.

The Master of music had a chamber nearby and ate at the laymen's table.

The child-choristers fasted the day before they were to chant and constantly ate beans. Some more earnest of these masters endeavored to impart musical training with strenuous measures, such as cuffing, and boxing ears.

All in all, the monastery gave much thought to music. Indeed, the cranky Erasmus inveighed against so much time spent in music. He says:

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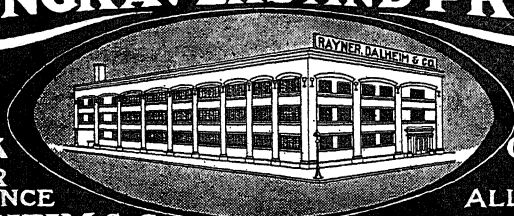
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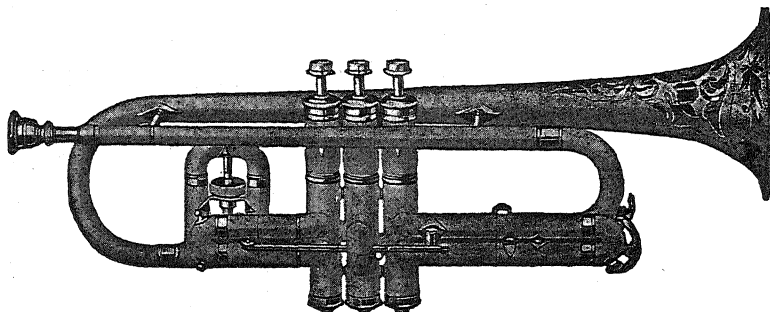


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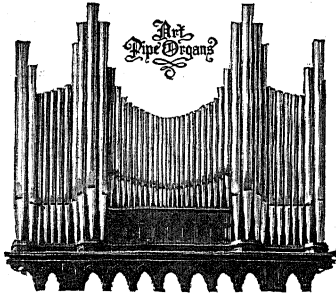
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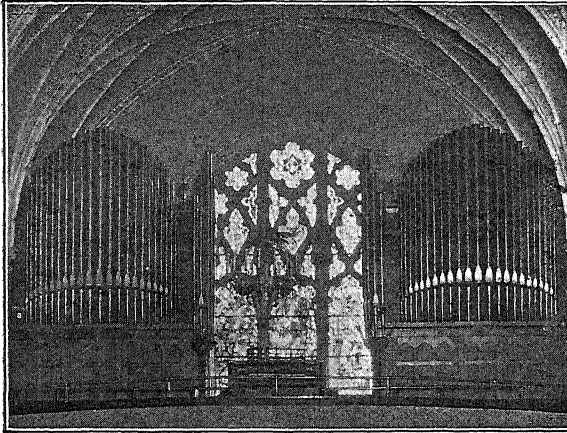
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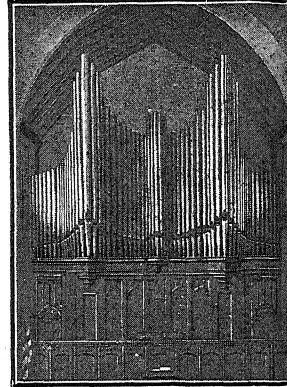
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