

Church Music Progress in Europe—Slower but Better than in U.S.²

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By SISTER M. FLORIAN
REICHERT, S.S.L.

This is the second in a series of articles on church music. Sister Florian is director of liturgy and music at Nazareth Motherhouse, a member of the diocesan music commission and has composed musical settings for the new English texts of the Mass. She has also set a collection of psalms to music, "Nimé Songs from the Old Testament," published recently by the World Library Publications in Cincinnati.

Happily or unhappily the birth pangs of musical experimentation, resulting from the Vatican Council's decrees on the use of the vernacular in the "new" liturgy, are being felt on a world-wide scale. Unhappily, because the pain becomes very real amid discordant criticisms; happily, because it is easier to endure agony or joy when the fruitful results born of trial and error are shared.

"The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." So reads the Council's "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" in an introductory sentence.

It was my very great privilege to make recently a year's study comparing the "signs" of liturgical and liturgical music in several European countries. My first observation is that the new forms of liturgy and church music are growing there logically and perhaps more slowly than here in the U.S.A. Americans are inclined to want things done quickly and efficiently, with a minimum of effort and energy. Results are, therefore, often the product of popular fashion and very poor taste.

Fundamental to any real progress in these changing times is a right sense of values and infinite patience. I have a feeling that Europe is a little ahead of the hare in the race because of consistent plodding.

It was noteworthy and encouraging that in none of the countries visited are liturgists, composers or liturgists satisfied with the "status quo." Every person interviewed expressed concern over the vernacular texts. Each emphasized that liturgical music is still in its formative stage. On the other hand, all are



be so. There is little to prove that things are different elsewhere in Italy.

Although low Masses are generally being said throughout Europe in the local language, high Masses are still usually sung in Latin.

Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, a member of the Vatican's liturgy commission, announced last year that all parishes in his diocese of Bologna would learn a sung vernacular Mass. This gesture was attacked and reported in all Italian newspapers as "contrary to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."!!!

In Austria, likewise, in the Cathedral of Salzburg, a Mozart Mass was sung with the Mozarteum Orchestra in celebration of St. Sylvester. Only in the baroque Franciscan church did the week-day congregation participate in the ordinary parts and the Our Father. At St. Stephen Cathedral in Vienna, while Cardinal Koenig pontificated, a von Hassler Mass was flawlessly rendered by a mixed choir. There was no involvement of the assembly present.

Germany Ahead
Germany seems to have moved further ahead. Even in remote little village churches Mass is celebrated on altars facing the people. The voices of men especially ring out sonorously in the famous "Sing-Messe" pattern of four hymns appropriate to the chief parts of the Mass. There is great variety of music due, no doubt, to the twenty-five or thirty years of using the official "Trier Mass and Hymn Book" with which young and old are familiar. Striking indeed is the vivacity, confidence and, incidentally, the good tone quality

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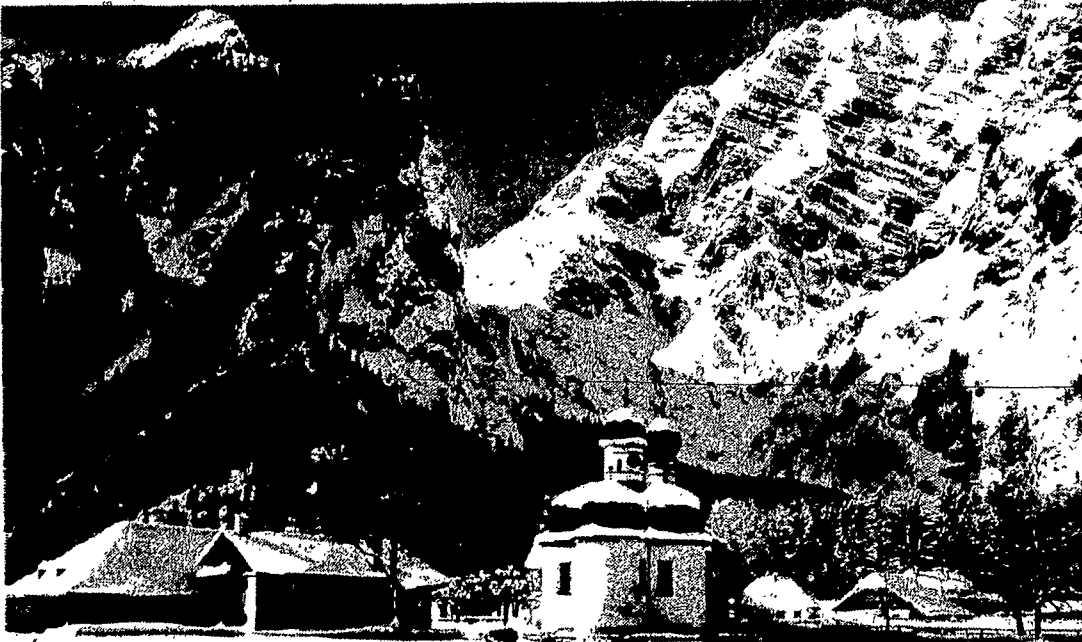
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Sisters of Notre Dame staff school at Berchtesgaden where Sister Florian attended New Year's Eve service—entire congregation joined in hymns of rite.

Several German houses are publishing good Mass and psalm settings now in use. Hans Sahel, educator and composer of Trier, has published an excellent volume "Singendes Gottesvolk" (Singing People of God). Music by Gerhard Kronberg of Augsburg and Kasper Ulenberg of Freiburg is written in the same idiom, for choir and congregation. This I found pleasantly singable in parishes, convents and in a little seminary in Lantershofen near Bonn in western Germany.

Youth groups in Germany, Holland and France are singing hymns and psalms in jazz and folk settings. Some are very obviously popular in the sense that they are being done in typical "beatle" style with strong accent on the beat. These are sung for the most part at rallies or meetings or youth. Others are really reverent, inasmuch as the elements of jazz and folk music are more judiciously used and rendered.

Urgency in Holland
Particularly in Holland is the changing temper of Catholicism noted. An openness to all things, a new spirit of legitimate independence and honest inquiry extend into all areas of thought: theology, liturgy, music, politics. Father Lucas Brinkhof, O.S.F., director of the Liturgy Center in Nijmegen, attributes much of this spirit to the excellent system of communication in the Netherlands and to the nearness of this small country to other cultures on which it keeps a close pulse-count.

"The Dutch temperament honest and loyal," says Jesuit Father Henri Holtsein, of the Institute Catholique of Paris, "is not content with mere words or desires for reform." Dr. Cornelius Bouman of Nijmegen University also commented on the spirit of urgency in matters theological and liturgical.

Folk Elements and Innovations
Experimental structures of the Eucharistic celebration are authorized by the Dutch bishops, who have witnessed these rites in about five experimental centers. The Werkgroep voor Volkstaaliturie, an ecumenical

group of students and teachers at the State University of Amsterdam work in a small downtown Scriptorium lettering and writing stencils by hand. It was refreshing to participate in the Sunday Mass with this group.

The controversial but much loved Jesuit Father J. van Kilsdonk, Catholic chaplain at this University, was obviously in intimate contact with the congregation through the meaningful celebration. Music used here, as well as at the Augustinian "Boskapel" in Nijmegen and at the Grail Headquarters in Tiltenerberg, is original and composed for special groups and occasions.

Texts are often created by persons of different faiths. A large percentage of psalms are done by the priest-poet Father Hubert Oosterhuis and set to music by his confrere Father Bernard Huijbers. Both are Jesuits on the faculty of St. Ignatius College in Amsterdam. Father Huijbers uses syncopation in most of his settings which are easily sung by alternating choir and congregation. Often a low drum-beat is used with organ accompaniment in a truly appealing manner.

Bible vigils and ecumenical prayer meetings are common in the University town of Leyden, where old Dutch folk melodies were effectively used for hymns.

Three of the most selective publishers of church music in Holland work together: J. R. van Rossum, Utrecht; W. Bergmans, Tilburg; and Annie Bank Amsterdam. "Annie" is a charm-

ingly disarming person, an artist and a fine musician.

Examining this music and talking with these people leaves one with a sense of "delight" which the Constitution on the Liturgy says "adds to prayer." Here, too, is an experiential realization that music need not be dominated by extremes. Both the Dutch and the French are prepared for innovations without discarding the true values of the past.

Exhilarating

France and Belgium have perhaps carried the renewal in music and liturgy farthest along. In contrast to the German and the Dutch, French liturgical music has an inherent refinement and is enhanced by a much finer texture than that of its neighbors. Its beauty and sense of balance in quality and form preclude anything like "musical snobbery." Composers are using dissonance to be sure and contemporary techniques are employed, but there are few unpleasant, avant-garde works.

Those of the blind composer and organist, Jean Langlais of St. Clothilde in Paris might be considered a bit extreme, but admittedly artistic. One leaves with the impression that French music is being written with clarity, delicacy of taste, and deep spirituality. People like Monsignor R. P. Beillard, president of the Union Federale Francaise de Musique Sacree, (Continued on Next Page)

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and Jesuit Father Jose neau, member of the board, are apparently concerned with intelligibility with modern complex style.

Here, as elsewhere in student congregations at St. Severin and St. des Pres, large city and area ones for like Edise d'Estimier of the Stranger) when Gelineau is stationed, ally drawn into an experience of the litur a familiar French m used for a brief psalm sung by the congrega alternated with hara tings of verse by the

After finding so many similarities, one feels that form is evolving a form for a distribution This is not so evident ca, where everybody is to sing everything all Certainly European functional, practical a ingful, but always gear needs and limitation parish.

Best in Belgium
One experience at Sunday morning Mass: gium exemplifies the Europe's renewal. A tor, poor mining folk village of La Bouverie of Mons, in a church and unpretentious townsfolk could not visitor to it, makes brant, happy parish fe a liturgy that is tr The pastor long con Sunday Mass can have

Icons For
Moscow — (RNS) — Radio announced the of two ancient icons Joseph's Orthodox mo nearby Volokolamsk. it had been called Sergeyev, Russia's top on iconography, as tional fani."

One of the icons, "ity," is by the legen sian painter, Paisii, w by authorities as the of all icon painters.

"There is no doubt Trinity" is by Paisii."



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