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from such popular



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In the twentieth century, the view of music by the Roman Catholic Church was defined in two statements: the first of them, *motu proprio* of 1903, proclaimed return to Gregorian chant, restoration of unaccompanied polyphonic singing, and composition of contemporary music for liturgy (Wilson-Dickson 1992, 214). Thus, a more professional approach was taken to composing and performing church music — which in its turn, brought forward the necessity for educating and training the priesthood in church music. The tendency to restoring the medieval Christian music found a major response among French organists and composers who formed a whole tradition of improvising and composing church liturgy in the twentieth century. Among the organists and composers who relied heavily on the tradition of Gregorian chant were Louis Vierne, Charles Marie Vidor, Charles Tournemire, Jean Alain, Marcel Dupre, and Jean Langlais.

But the most outstanding is the figure of Olivier Messiaen whose creative work features a broadest range of Christian content and ideas realized by means of innovatory treatment of scale and rhythm. The distinguishing feature of Messiaen's music is that it incorporates not only the legacy of Gregorian chant but also the sounds of contemporary Western music with those of the nature and of the East (Wilson-Dickson 1992, 216). His music of immense complexity represents a careful balance of medieval symbols and oriental traditions weighted in a simultaneousness of diversities. After the decline of professional music for liturgy in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century witnessed a spiritual revival in professional art to which the church hardly related. The dramatic events of the two world wars inspired composers to seek a special spirituality in music. The genre of

oratorio was restored to a new glory, and the word of Bible was brought to concert halls.

The leading composers who created large-scale oratorios reflecting the central themes of Christianity were Arthur Honegger, Frank Martin, Igor Stravinsky, and Benjamin Britten. In their works, the nature of concert music was reassessed: appealing rather to the spiritual than to the emotional domain of human beings, concert music was called to satisfy “humanity’s deep need for spiritual understanding” (Wilson-Dickson 1992, 222). New content demanded new form, and the music of the time broke up with the traditional functional harmony and demonstrated a tendency to minimalism of expressive means. This allowed to concentrate more on the “purity of sound, perfection of tuning, and exquisite blend” — the qualities that turned music performances into spiritual experiences (Wilson-Dickson 1992, 222).

The second Roman Catholic Church statement on the role of music, the 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, brought about too rapid a change that resulted in nothing more than a crisis. Accentuating the necessity for the congregation’s active participation in the liturgy led to dramatic changes. Those involved abandonment of Latin and consequential loss of most chant and polyphony repertoire; antiartistic feeling brought about by the plain unison of the congregation instead of the professionals singing in perfect harmony; and derivation of liturgy music from such popular sources as dance, pop, and even rock music.

Eventually, it was hard to discern the difference between a liturgical event and a rock concert. As a response to such crisis of professional tradition in

liturgy, a Silvanes cultural center was established, where training is given in professional liturgy activities to preserve the venerable standards of excellence. In addition, renewal of psalmody is observed in certain liturgy practices that use Latin as a neutral language universal for all nations and perform music emphasizing the orderliness and simplicity of sixteenth-century style.

## **Works Cited**

Wilson-Dickson, Andrew. (1992).

The Story of Christian Music. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.