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Review of Sacred Choral Music

Sacred Choral Music III/Choeurs religieux et liturgiques III. Edited by Clifford Ford. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Musical Heritage Society, 1999. (The Canadian musical heritage; v. 25.) 291 p., ill. ISBN 0-919883-33-8 \$49.99

The third installment of the Canadian Musical Heritage collection of sacred choral music presents a mixed assortment of musical traditions all found in Canada between approximately 1920 and 1950. Included are examples of music intended for use in the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, concert works, and a small sampling of music composed for the Ukrainian church liturgy and for the Jewish synagogue. As always with this well-researched series, the music is preceded by a lengthy introduction, bibliography, and detailed critical notes in both official languages. Brief biographies are provided for those composers who do not have their own entries in *EMC2*, and the prefatory material contains several facsimile reproductions of original manuscripts and prints.

The editor's introduction is a clearly-written historical account of the beginnings of the musical traditions represented in this volume and the circumstances surrounding their first appearances in Canada. Some attention is given to the changing relationship between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in the 20th century, but more than half of the discussion deals with the Ukrainian and Jewish liturgies. The editor gives a cogent explanation of performance practice matters and, in the case of Jewish synagogue music, a brief explanation of the liturgy. It is perhaps unfortunate that the relative length and detail of these introductory explanations is not balanced by the number of related compositions included in the anthology (six in all), which is comparatively small.

By far the majority of the music in the collection is taken from Catholic and Protestant traditions, and is arranged by category: anthems, Christmas music, motets (on Latin and vernacular texts) and concert works. Twenty composers are represented, the best known probably being Healey Willan and W.H. Anderson, with multiple examples. All the church pieces are relatively accessible to a modern choir. The concert works, including Willan's monumental *An Apostrophe to the Heavenly Hosts*, are longer compositions requiring (as explained by the editor) "expertise beyond the average church choir."

The irregularity of the print quality in this edition is explained by the aim of the series editors: "to reprint the music of Canada's past in a form as close to the original as possible." Thus, facsimile reproductions of music printed by several different publishers are combined here with new computer engravings (by the editor) of music found only in holographic manuscripts. The print facsimiles are generally all readable, although the ink in older editions does not always reproduce with great clarity (sometimes smudged, sometimes faded); the new engravings, presumably done with music notation software, are eminently legible.

For the scholar, the editor's critical notes show evidence of careful research throughout. In many cases, multiple sources for these pieces have been consulted, and the notes indicate clearly any variances between them. In the case of a work that has appeared in clear print but also exists in one or more manuscripts, the print copy has been taken as the primary source ('A'), and any variances in the manuscript sources have been noted (as in Anderson's *O For a Closer Walk With God*). Slightly less clear are the criteria for determining source primacy for those works which have been newly engraved. Occasionally, as in Willan's *Rise Up, My Love, My Fair One*, the editor does in fact include a helpful note of explanation which sheds some light on how these engravings, some of which are clearly composites of more than one source, have been constructed.

Text translations appear in the notes for the Ukrainian and Hebrew texts, and a pronunciation guide for the transliteration of the Ukrainian Cyrillic (although not for the Hebrew) has been provided. To serve better the needs of performers, the text translations might be more useful if placed at the end of each work. This is equally true of the Latin pieces, which in their day were no doubt well understood as part of the pre-Vatican II liturgy, but today might benefit from a translation.

On the whole, this volume of sacred choral music is a well-constructed anthology which serves the needs of both the scholar and performer. It would be a valuable addition to any library as well as a useful repository for church choir directors.

Brian E. Power
Department of Music
Brock University

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