

## FORTH IN PRAISE LITURGY COMMISSION MUSIC

### Singing Day on 9 April 2011 Results of Questionnaire

More than 80 people from parishes throughout the archdiocese attended the Singing Day on 9 April. This number in itself showed the level of interest in, if not anxiety about, the coming changes. A few weeks later we sent out a questionnaire to our mailing list, asking people to comment on the music we had looked at, and to say whether they would use it in their own parishes.

There were eighteen replies, but this might represent more than eighteen points of view, as people came in groups of up to eight. Although it is too small a sample to give a definite picture, the results are suggestive of trends in the thinking of parish musicians.

Questions were all voluntary (nothing *had* to be answered) and all open-ended (i.e. no tick-box or ranking 1-10). We tried to distinguish between straightforward liking or disliking of the music and the question 'will it work in my parish?' but many people took these two questions together.

Below is a list of the music which was used on the day and the questions asked, followed by a rough analysis of the answers:

#### THE MUSIC

- The official ICEL chant
- Noel Donnelly: *Dalreoch Mass*
- James MacMillan: *Newman Mass*
- Evelyn Stell: *Gloria 2, Sanctus 2, Sanctus 3, Acclamations to well-known hymn and chant tunes*
- Maeve Logan: *Sanctus, Memorial acclamations*
- Tony Giovanazzi: *Gloria, Sanctus*
- Dan Schutte: *Mass of Christ the Savior*
- Christopher Walker: *Celtic Mass*
- Owen Alstott: *Heritage Mass*

#### THE QUESTIONS

1. Were you at the Singing Day on 9 April (if not, we're still pleased to hear from you)?
2. Which of the above pieces did you personally like?
3. Which did you personally not like, and why?
4. Which of them would you be prepared to introduce into your own parish?
5. Which would you definitely NOT introduce, and why?
6. Were there any aspects of the Singing Day that you specially liked?
7. Any that you specially disliked?
8. Was there anything, such as a style of music, you thought we should have covered, and didn't?
9. Is there any other comment you would like to make about the Singing Day?
10. Would you be interested in practical sessions for organists? For instrumental groups? For cantors in a teaching role?

## THE ANSWERS

Four people liked everything, and several others remarked on only one or two pieces of the music. The numbers given below in relation to particular settings represent only the definite answers given, and are not comprehensive.

**James MacMillan's Newman Mass** was generally liked ('beautiful'), but three people felt they couldn't teach it because of the amount of practising needed; one had already tried and failed. Another person thought their parish might learn it for a special occasion, while two more thought that it might become well known because of the Bellahouston association, like its 1982 predecessor.

The outright winner was **Noel Donnelly's Dalreoch Mass**. Five people particularly liked it, and no-one at all said they couldn't teach it in their parish. [*Forth in Praise comment: the Dalreoch doesn't have a Gloria, and the Gloria seems to be the biggest problem musically with the new translation. Maybe Noel will come up with something ...* ]

The outright loser was the **ICEL chant**, which was led by Patricia Carroll on the day. Six people said they didn't like it and/or it would be difficult to teach. Two of the six, perhaps presciently, thought we might *have* to learn it, so would be prepared to give it a go. Another person hadn't previously considered it at all, but would do so now. In general, though, comments were negative – 'cold', 'bare', 'rhythmically ambiguous', 'too difficult for general use', 'I would not attempt to teach it'. [*Forth in Praise comment from Evelyn, whose colleagues may not agree with her(!): it isn't that bad, really. The rather strange notation puts people off, and it does need accompanying strongly during the learning phase.*].

Of the rest of the music, **Evelyn Stell's Gloria** and two **Sanctuses** had five favourable comments, but one person thought the music too difficult rhythmically, and the acclamations likely to become hackneyed. **Maeve Logan's Sanctus** and **Acclamations** received only three comments but all were favourable ('simple and easy to learn'), while **Tony Giovanazzi's Gloria** and **Sanctus**, which he led himself on the day, evoked three very enthusiastic comments, and three not-so-enthusiastic.

Of the American Masses, **Schutte's 'Mass of Christ the Savior'** was most liked, then **Alstott's 'Heritage Mass'**. Neither of these had any adverse comments. **Christopher Walker's 'Celtic Mass'**, however, had people ranged on both sides.

Other points mentioned were:

- high praise for Misia Paul, who was the main leader of the day.
- people enjoyed meeting and singing with other parish musicians (this was said by just about everyone).

but

- church was cold [*Forth in Praise comment: Father Kelly has asked us to point out that the outside temperature on 9 April was 20 degrees.*]
- shuffling bundles of music around was awkward.

Most people would like another Singing Day as the time approaches for the new translation to come into force.