

MUSIC FOR EVERYONE



WHEN we attend a place of worship, we do so in order to offer respect and reverence to our Creator. Other reasons are, or should be, of secondary importance.

It would seem, therefore, that if music is used in this context, it must be of the highest quality. This ideal has been the aim of cathedral and other specialised "chancel" choirs, and has led to a kind of professional musical remoteness, which has produced beautiful offerings, but has almost entirely ruled out congregational participation.

In recent years, however, both Anglican and Roman denominations have tended to bring their acts of worship out of the chancel, and into the body of the church, in order that the congregation can become actively involved in the proceedings.

The design of churches and chapels of Free denominations moves the focal point from the altar to the pulpit, in some cases with the pipes of a large organ to provide an imposing background. We are concerned broadly with these conditions, though the pipes are not always present. One immediate conclusion can be made. If the focal point is the pulpit, and the whole format of the service tends towards the sermon, each sermon preached on every Sunday of the year must be of first rate quality.

We now draw a second conclusion. The music of the service can help or hinder the preacher, but can never take the place of the preaching. Once this is realised, the use of music in the worship of the Free Churches at least, is clear. A good deal of it will involve the congregation, a small percentage can be given over to the choir, but the order of service must lead expectantly towards the sermon.

The singing of hymns will form the major musical participation of the congregation. It must be

Our role in WORSHIP



• Dr Lloyd Webber is Director, London College of Music and Director of Music, Central Hall, Westminster.

By W S Lloyd Webber

stressed that a hymn is a combination of words and music, and if the tune is mediocre, the words are better said, in which case the product ceases to be a hymn. A careful and inspired choice of hymns is therefore essential.

The instrument used to lead the singing is still, in most cases, the organ. It may be pipe or electronic, about which a word later. Assuming that we have an organ capable of some variety of tone colour, the organist should be sparing in the use of swell reeds. Over use of these fiery creatures is very tiring to the ear, but if discretion is observed, they can be quite effective.

The organist must feel the exact pace and mood of each individual hymn. While a basic rhythmic sense is essential, the congregation must have time to take breath. As the organ is meant to lead the congregation, it must never become inaudible. The confidence and vocal efforts of the singers will then disintegrate, with pitiful results.

In our typical service, the choir will no doubt sing an introit and an anthem. The number and composition of the choir will vary very widely, and the choir will probably reflect the state of health or decay of the church it serves.

Its members should realise that their talents are directed towards

worship on a Sunday. They are not a choral society, and will be judged by their efforts on Trinity XII, and not by the grand Passiontide Cantata, when they were fortified by lapsed members, students and singers not normally given over to worship on the Sabbath

The music sung should be well within the ability of the choir. The choirmaster must be on the lookout for items which will not only enrich the repertoire but will not offend the ears of the congregation. Over use of ancient anthem books can depress members, but one or two old favourites may still deserve very occasional repetition. Some recent collections of anthems provide effective material for consideration.

Consideration of the use of instruments other than the organ is not within the province of these short comments. A popular service or a social hour can include steel bands or guitars. I merely note this, and pray not to be involved.

The advent of electronic organs has caused a good deal of consternation, but it should be realised that they are merely another method of sound production. Pipe organs are very expensive, and take up a lot of space. If, however, a church is already the possessor of a good pipe organ whose action is worn out, extra space is not needed

and funds permit, no call for an electronic instrument can normally be justified. But in a small modern building an electronic organ will prove more resourceful than a pipe organ costing the same amount of money. Each case can be approached calmly and without rancour.

It is good to note the ecumenical aspect of the work of the Royal School of Church Music, and also the untiring efforts of the Methodist Church Music Society. A keen organist and choirmaster will find that these two organisations provide stimulus and guidance for all his activities. He will realise as the years go by that the real function of music in worship is not to satisfy individuals, but is part of the ideal expressed in these lines of one of our most beautiful hymns:

O come to the Father,
through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory!
great things He has done!