

REPORT FROM FAIRFIELD:

The Committee for Jesuits in the Fine Arts

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FROM AUGUST 15 TO 19, 1966 A GROUP OF JESUIT ARTISTS AND SCHOLARS MET at Fairfield University in Connecticut to discuss Jesuit involvement in the fine arts. The group, known as the Eastern Committee for Jesuits in the Fine Arts, is one product of a renaissance of both the scholarly and practical cultivation of the arts in the American Jesuit community. The Committee includes composers, musicologists, and performers whose influence will be of the greatest importance in shaping the future role of musical education in Jesuit high schools and colleges. Father Clement McNaspy (Ph.D., Toronto, 1948) did post-doctoral work at Oxford under Professors Westrup, Wellesz, and Rubbra, subsequently became dean of the College of Music at Loyola in New Orleans, and has taught periodically at Solesmes Abbey. Through his numerous articles and books he is now a familiar figure in the forum of the liturgical arts. Father Thomas Culley completed his doctoral work at Harvard two years ago; his dissertation discussed the Jesuit German College in Rome during the 17th century. Other musicians on the Committee are studying at the Peabody Conservatory and at Columbia, Yale, and New York Universities.

Leslie J. Schnierer, a harpsichordist at Peabody, presented a paper entitled "Some Prospects for the Jesuit Musician." It did not attempt to be exhaustive, but merely outlined what Schnierer considers to be major questions facing the Jesuit musician in the realms of scholarship, performance, and education. He emphasized the need for broadly-based sources of information and for energy and ideas in attacking the problems of Catholic liturgical musicians in an era of renewal, as well as the practical difficulties faced by the individual musician in attempting to inaugurate a musical program in an educational institution. Subsidiary aspects of the paper concerned performance prospects, some specifically Christian aspects of musical education, and the field of popular religious music. The paper clearly pointed out that the difficulties confronting the Jesuit community are on a level quite different from those facing established musical institutions. They are problems not of continuing or strengthening but of beginning.

One of Schnierer's ideas is especially worthy of note in this regard. He proposed that the high school and college musical life be centered on an artist-in-residence rather than on an expensive and problematic curriculum. Schnierer cites the example of the city of Flint, Michigan, which engaged the pianist Coleman Blumfield, a student of Vladimir Horowitz, as artist-in-residence. He suggested that the concerts and workshops which benefit the city are easily extended to the college community. Schnierer hopes such an

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approach would stimulate vital interest in the arts and thereby lead to more specialized study. The realization of this goal and the emphasis which it would lend to the active musical experience would, according to Schnierer, be most welcome innovations on the Jesuit campus.

Schnierer's artist-in-residence proposal does not, however, solve the problems of education in the arts faced by large institutions. Instead, it satisfies only one aspect of musical education: instruction in performance through close contact with a professional artist. But music education cannot stop there; it must proceed to reflective inquiry into the musical experience and into music itself. A meaningful and responsible music program requires the facilities of any rigorous discipline and so must have a faculty of musically-trained and literate teachers and a comprehensive library of scores, sound recordings, periodicals, and historical, theoretical, and critical literature. A music department also requires musical instruments, considerable electronic equipment for public and private listening, and acoustically-designed classrooms. But it is unlikely that an artist-in-residence plan would bring such facilities in its train.

Despite the re-awakening concern the vast majority of Jesuit faculties in this country are still only remotely engaged with the fine arts. The financial load of providing the requisite material and personnel for an adequate music program is considerable and is a major stumbling block. Some Jesuit schools have avoided these costs by affiliation with other institutions, but this solution leaves the great majority of students untouched. It provides little or no basic undergraduate education in music but only advanced study for those already musically-trained.

If the Jesuits are to attain their limited goals, it would appear that they must undertake a thoroughgoing review of the fine arts and make better use of their own creative talents. More musician-musicologists are needed in music, men whose musical and intellectual abilities would instill a genuine understanding and love of music in their students. The problem of facilities cannot be resolved quickly, but the problem of trained personnel needs to be resolutely approached at once. We may conclude that an educational community with long experience and a modicum of creative talent is awakening to the pressing need of a practical cultural life. The success of its endeavor is dependent on the study, concern, and support of those experienced in educational problems of the arts in general.