



GOFFREDO PETRASSI

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fanciful text, by the great Italian lyric poet Giacomo Leopardi, discusses the nature of existence after death, and the music is appropriate to such a subject.

Petrassi calls his work a "Dramatic MacGrigal." It is scored for male chorus, accompanied by three pianos, brass, contrabasses and percussion—a combination from which the composer, and Hugh Ross, elicited appropriately eerie music. Petrassi, a native of Rome, was composer in residence at the Berkshire music centre, in Massachusetts, last year.

The concert began with the brief and exhilarating "Eternitie" for chorus and orchestra, by Jan Meyerowitz. The text is by Robert Herrick, the English cavalier poet of the 17th century. Meyerowitz, born in Germany in 1913, came to the United States in 1946.

As may be seen from these brief descriptions, this programme covered a great deal of musical background. But regardless of any other considerations, the important thing about it was its presentation of music that was fresh, new and of our time. This is, I think, particularly significant in choral music, where the great works of the past, both sacred and secular, make up a greater proportion of the literature than do classical works in symphonic music.

Hugh Ross, Music Director of the Schola Cantorum since 1927, has a theory to account for what he calls the "reflorescence" of choral music. It is due, he believes, to the fact that our modern musical idiom has become stabilised. This is important for composers of choral music who, because of the nature of their medium, cannot experiment as readily as can composers of instrumental music. Therefore, says Ross, brilliant choral music is being produced now because composers "have developed a style in which all of the earlier work has been absorbed into the main stream of musical history."

It is an interesting theory, and Ross's long and close association with choral music gives it additional importance. But whatever the reason, the Schola Cantorum's memorable concert demonstrated that great choral music is indeed being composed in our day.

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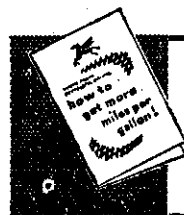
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