

CHURCH MUSIC STUDIES AT THE ISM

by Martin D. Jean, director of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music and professor of organ at the Institute and Yale School of Music

TRAINING THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH musician was the core reason for the founding of the Institute of Sacred Music. It is by no means the only thing the Institute does now; however, it still lies at the heart of our mission.

In 1993, J. Irwin Miller, one of the Institute's founding benefactors, expressed it this way: "Our overriding intent has always been to help create and to support a place which will turn out the J. S. Bachs, the Henry Purcells, the committed practicing church musicians of their generation, who will magnify the ministry of church music in their time, who will link Christianity with beauty, and increase in today's world the power of the ministry of the Christian gospel."

As the Institute's endeavors expand under the broad auspices of the mission laid down by our founders, the faculty at the same time is eager that this core enterprise not be lost. To that end, the ISM faculty has developed a curriculum in church music studies which lays out for our music students a number of important ingredients to prepare them for church music ministry.

This curriculum is designed for those ISM organ, choral conducting, and vocal students in the School of Music's programs who are headed towards careers in parish music. Students who follow the plan for church music studies will get a foundation in the Bible, theology, and history, by choosing as their electives from each of the following four categories of courses.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

One course from the Old Testament/New Testament Interpretation sequence

LITURGICAL STUDIES

Foundations of Christian Worship
Creativity and the Congregation

HISTORY OF SACRED MUSIC or RELIGION AND THE ARTS

J. S. Bach's First Year in Leipzig
Mozart's Sacred Music
Music and Theology
Iconography of Christian Art
House of the Lord



ART OF MINISTRY

Hymnody as Resources for Preaching and Worship
The Parish Musician

The church musician also has specific skills to develop beyond academic knowledge, and so ISM faculty members are developing more skills-related courses. This is done also as a response to many alumni comments we received over the summer via our alumni survey. More than a few noted a wish for more such courses during their time here, and so a student will now choose three courses from the following list, which we intend to grow over the coming years:

Elements of Choral Conducting (for organ majors)
Voice for Non-majors
Choral Ensembles
Organ for Non-majors
Leading Congregational Song
Church Music Skills

Finally, a proseminar in worship and church music, designed for Master of Divinity and School of Music students to read and write about and discuss important issues facing people in professional ministry today, will be offered each year. Tom Troeger and I taught this course for the first time in the fall of 2006.

The ISM faculty is excited about bringing more intention and focus to an enterprise that has existed here since our founding. It is our hope that this curriculum will bring together into closer conversation future pastors and musicians whose desire it is to serve the Church more faithfully, intelligently, and artfully.