

Report — November 2011

Introduction

The Department approved the Composer's Guide and the Process in September 2009. At the meeting Bishop Hopes was asked to have oversight of the process. The Composer's Guide was issued in February 2011 once the texts of the Missal had been finalised. A report was presented to the Department at its November 2011 meeting.

Scope of process

The process is for any musical setting of a prescribed liturgical text which is published in England and Wales.

Prescribed means a text, such as the Gloria, where that is the only one which can be sung at that point in the liturgy. So the process includes the main parts of the Ordinary of the Mass but does not include Antiphons (because other texts may be freely sung at that point).

In terms of the guidelines it is permitted to use a new setting in a local community. Publication is understood to mean to make available to others either freely or for a fee whether by printing or electronically. A number of settings which are only intended for local use have been submitted, it is understood that the composer wishes to know they are working according to the Bishops' guidelines.

The process only covers settings published in England and Wales. Therefore settings published elsewhere may be distributed here and it is assumed that they have gone through a similar process. However where a publisher intends to publish (e.g. include in a hymnbook) rather than simply distribute settings from outside England and Wales, these must be submitted.

The process is primarily concerned with conformity of the text to the Missal within its liturgical context, in a similar way to a Concordat. However it is not unconcerned with the musical setting and there are some issues that directly bear on this.

An overview of the process

Settings are submitted either on paper or more usually electronically. In preparation for the panel meeting the setting is logged and any details removed as it goes to the panel anonymously. Paper copies are posted to all panel members and the expectation is they all review every setting before a meeting.

The panel meets about once a month and has met 9 times since February 2011. Dates of future meetings are given on the website together with a submission date.

At a meeting each piece is gone through in turn with comments by all members and a recommendation is made. Following the meeting these are reviewed by Bishop Hopes. On a number of occasions the panel have referred particular issues to Bishop Hopes for guidance. A certificate is sent out to publishers/composers with the decision, a list of reasons and, where appropriate, some observations. The decision is one of three possible: accepted, withheld editorial, withheld. Depending on the decision the setting may either be published or resubmitted.

The Composers' Guide provides criteria for the process. Though it is a substantial document it does not and cannot cover every potential issue. An important part of the process is to recognise that accepted settings form, for want of a better term, 'case law'. This, therefore, means that a consistency of approach is important. One aspect of this has been rewritten Mass settings where the composer has fitted the new words to a previous composition. It was decided that these should given, if needed, a slight leeway with the guidelines and therefore could not necessarily be seen as model examples.

It is fair to note that as the process has developed how it might best be run has become clearer. The Department agreed to the need for some minor modifications to the Composer's Guide to express these more clearly.

The overall desire is that it is not burdensome but that it is efficient. Therefore it was identified that where the correction of issues was editorial, and did not affect the musical setting, any resubmissions would be dealt with by the Liturgy Office. In a similar way if a publisher wished to publish a setting which had already been accepted for another publisher this also could be dealt with by the Office providing that it was unchanged from the previous submission.

Some statistics

Publishers	53
Submitted settings	179
Accepted settings	143
Settings currently Withheld	25
Settings currently Withheld Editorial	11

Not every accepted setting chooses to be listed as a setting approved for publication on the website, particularly those intended for just local use.

As a rough guide the results of any meeting seems to be 20% accepted, 40% withheld editorial and 40% withheld.

Reasons

For decisions which are either 'withheld editorial' or 'withheld' reasons are given. Where appropriate, reference is made to the Composer's Guide.

Withheld editorial

Common reasons include:

- Spelling — to give a single example, many composers when they come to set text and hyphenate it incorrectly spell Resurrection — *Res-sur-rec-tion*.
- Punctuation & capitalisation — it is required that the punctuation and capitalisation given in the Missal is followed. Part of the purpose of the Composer's Guide is to provide an accurate text.
- Hyphenation — this is an issue where a composer mistakenly splits a single syllable word when it is sung on two notes — *Lo-rd*
- Missal tones for Invitation to Memorial Acclamations & Doxology — one of the requirements of the Composer's Guide is that the Missal tones are indicated at an

appropriate pitch. This is a consequence of the desire to encourage priests to sing their part.

- Indication of Ministry — clarity of who is intended to sing which text.

Depending on the number of mistakes the certificate will either give a general indication (Gloria: punctuation) or more specific examples (Kyrie: comma after 'Christe,'). A reason for this is to encourage composers/publishers to pay attention to the text. Withheld editorial settings are resubmitted to the Office. This is usually dealt with quite swiftly. Often a publisher will not pick up every correction in the resubmission and so at this stage specific examples will be given.

Withheld

Common reasons include:

- Text omitted or added — For example added text would include: *Lord have mercy on us all* or *sins of all the world*; omitted text might be a single word or a phrase.
- Incorrect text — some publishers may not have been aware that the final version of the Missal text of some sections, such as the Doxology, differs from that previously released.
- Sections missing — incomplete Eucharistic Acclamations — composers do not have to write complete Mass settings, they can just write a Gloria, for example. The Composer's Guide does require that the Eucharistic Acclamations (Holy, Memorial Acclamations, Amen) are complete. This is for two reasons: to respect the unity of the Eucharistic Prayer and, in case of the Memorial Acclamations, so as not to limit the legitimate choice of the presider and local community.
- Unity of Eucharistic Acclamations — because of the integrity of the Eucharistic Prayer the Composer's Guide also requires that the Acclamations have some musical unity. It should be noted that the Guide is quite broad in how it defines unity and it is not limited to the repetition of the same melody, indeed this can be awkward where the words are shoehorned to fit. If this is an issue the publisher/composer is invited to demonstrate any unity which may not have been perceived by the panel. Where this is the case the reason is withdrawn.
- Structure of the text — the Composer's Guide permits the use of refrains and gives the example of the Gloria. Settings have been withheld where a Gloria refrain has been inserted into the middle section, for example, after the first 'have mercy on us'.

It is the view of the panel that the structure and context of the Sanctus does not lend itself to the inclusion of a refrain. If 'Holy, Holy...' is used as a refrain it is an odd text to end the setting with; if 'Hosanna' is used at the beginning of the setting it is not quite the song of angels.

- Range — some settings of texts intended to be sung by the whole congregation include notes, in particular a top F or F#, which would be beyond the compass of any ordinary congregation.

Settings which are withheld have to be resubmitted to the panel. It may be helpful to note that all the reasons are connected with the musical setting.

Repetition

Before the process began a major concern for people seemed to be repetition of words and phrases. The Guide permits both but notes that 'it should neither unduly prolong the setting nor adversely affect the structure or meaning of the text'. It should be noted that it has been far less of an issue than any of the others mentioned. However it may be helpful to give a couple of examples where the panel noted that either meaning and/or the structure was adversely affected.

...until you come, come again.

*We proclaim your Death, we proclaim your Death,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
we proclaim your Death, we proclaim your Death,
we profess your Resurrection
until you come again, until you come again,
until you come, until you come, until you come again.*

Future work

In recognition of how the process has developed since it began, for example the role of Bishop Hopes, and in response to some of the queries that have been received the Department agreed to a few amendments to the *Composer's Guide*. They also approved a document on the texts from the Missal for the Liturgical Year. In addition they welcomed the provision of some Information Sheets about aspects of the Process but they cautioned that the documents which may provide a helpful summary do not negate the need to read the *Composer's Guide* for a broader understanding of the place of music within the liturgy.

Conclusion

One of the advantages of the process is that the emphasis on adherence to the text of the liturgy which, to some, has been an unfamiliar limitation has shown that a creative and musical response is possible. Indeed the process so far has shown that there many good, competent composers writing music for the Church in England and Wales. They are often skilfully preparing music that reflects the needs of the liturgy as well as providing for a range of musical resources. This has not been true of every setting that has been submitted. Some lack musical competence and imagination even within their chosen style. Such settings, even if just intended for local use, can raise the question about whether they are worthy for use in the liturgy. Within the current remit of the process there is little that can be done — though usually lack of musical competence is matched by lack of ability to notate, editorial knowledge or presentation skills.

The publication of the 3rd edition of the Roman Missal in English is an opportunity for parishes to reflect on how music is an integral part of the liturgical celebration. Many parishes have laudably begun by singing the chants given in the Missal itself. As they now look at other Mass settings they can consider how the music serves the text, the liturgical context and enables the full, conscious and active participation of the whole assembly in the Mystery we celebrate.

<http://www.romanmissal.org.uk/Home/Music/Composing>