

# Smooth Archdiocesan Choir Fills Basilica in Debut

PHILADELPHIA ARCHDIOCESAN CHOIR and CATHEDRAL-BASILICA CHOIR, Peter La Manna and Rosemary Hudecheck, conductors; Robert Russell, organist. At Cathedral-Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul, 18th and the Parkway.

By TOM DI NARDO  
Special to The Bulletin

Yesterday's concert marked the debut of the 200-voice Philadelphia Archdiocesan Choir, formally organized only last winter; the cathedral was packed, demonstrating reassuring support. In an unusual program, the choir, together with the cathedral's regular chorus, proved quite accomplished, filling the basilica with waves of full and resonant blended sound.

Verses from Isaiah formed the unaccompanied words to Randall

## Entertainment

Thompson's "The Peaceable Kingdom," written in 1936 for his Harvard-Radcliffe choruses and just before his directorship at Curtis. The title is based on the famous painting by the Quaker preacher and American primitive Edward Hicks, a rendering of other Isaiah texts with animals con-

templating the viewer while Penn and the Indians are involved with the treaty in the background.

The work is written in a conservative harmonic idiom, sometimes thick and declarative, then pastoral with celestial flow. The central "Howl Ye" was brisk and thus muddy due to the

great echo, but powerful in its final plummeting wash of sound; the finale was a lusty edifice of joyfulness. Peter La Manna led with firm control.

Two recordings of this work are domestically available, but curiously the opening Haydn "Te Deum" is not. A late composition with the original orchestral part reduced for organ, it is a lovely, powerful work that wrapped the Latin text in massed sonority as it cascaded through the large area. The choir found its fervency and momentum.

Assistant Conductor Rosemary Hu-

decheck led the 50-voice Basilica Choir in six pieces; more clarity was evident and balance more discernible due to the scaled-down size. Brief works by Aichinger, Handl, Viadana (a fluid work, with tenor lines rising majestically), and Byrd (an understated, heavenly wisp, Ave Verum), came from the early baroque. The choir was excellent in these, as well as the Messaien "O Sacrum Convivium," in which unexpected, tender open chords ripen in ravishing chromatic harmony, and Woolan's "Ingrediente," full of complex chords accented without stridency.