

PETER LA MANNA

Peter La Manna died on the afternoon of January 16, 1990. Although many will miss and memorialize him, the Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians has particular reason to rejoice and be grateful for Peter's ministry, art, and advocacy.

Peter LaManna, as much as anyone, founded this Conference on the heels of his service with Richard Proulx and Gerald Muller on the search committee for the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. When it became obvious that their constructive professional dialogue should be shared and advanced throughout the community of Cathedral musicians, Peter La Manna volunteered to host the original thirteen founding Cathedrals in Philadelphia on November 13 and 14, 1984. For that small number of musicians, exceptional memories abound, but for all of us who eventually grew into the CRCCM, it was the high standards and manner of one such as Peter which was to shape, and guide this organization. He was its senior advisor, theorist, and trustee.

Peter was cherished by his friends, his associates and colleagues, his singers, his students, and the multitude of ordained clergy that he counselled and taught. More than any musician, Peter had an ardent and categorical dialogue with the ordained clergy and the hierarchy of the official Church. Yet, it was a relationship predicated on mutual esteem born not of reverence for the status of high ecclesiastical authority, but of the sincere approbation of the worth of every single human being that Peter touched, even Archbishops.

Art stood at the very core of Peter's being. The music of the Church was his daily work which he undertook with humility, faith, and adamant high standards. Peter could have been termed a traditionalist, but never a reactionary, a visionary, yet hardly an iconoclast. He loved chant and understood it intimately. For him chant wasn't old music - it was ongoing and renewing. It was, as he said again and again, prayer.

At the Conference in Corpus Christi, only two weeks before he died, Peter's spirit burned bright on a superb Wednesday afternoon when he, once again, presented his insights into chant performance. He made prophetic remarks, however subtle, about his own mortality and the approaching end of his term on earth, but perhaps his real farewell to this Conference came in his brilliant analysis, not emotional but intensely felt, of the introits of the three Christmas Masses. How the Father embraced his Son in the cold quiet of midnight, how the shepherds came to behold the Babe at first light, and how in resplendent radiance of daylight the Universe resonated with unbridled rapture.

Peter has quit the cluttered streets of this life to embrace *his* Father in person. *He* has met the Babe. And now, at long last, all Creation resonates with the vibrancy of *his* art. For that art and those rich and wonder filled seasons with Peter La Manna among us, *Deo gratias!*

The Steering Committee

CONFERENCE OF ROMAN CATHOLIC
CATHEDRAL MUSICIANS