

## MUSICIANS "ON THE SIDE"

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## MUSICIANS "ON THE SIDE"

### "ORGAN"IZING MY PSYCHOLOGICAL LIFE

Thomas R. Clark

OVER THE YEARS, many people have assumed or expected that my doctor's degree was in music—particularly when they've seen me seated at a large four-manual console that looked like the cockpit of a 747 jumbo jet and playing music "from Bach to rock and back." Because of my part-time employment as an organist for several large United Methodist churches over several decades, it has been difficult at times for folks to picture me in my day job as a "shrink," seeing patients and consulting to scores of businesses, police and fire departments, professional sports, and churches while also owning and directing a multispecialty clinic of eight to nine doctoral psychologists who see patients of all ages—children, adolescents, and adults. People have been even more stunned and surprised as to how such disparate fields, each commanding a high performance level, could be combined. "How do you balance them?" they ask.

Indeed, I've often wondered that myself. Surrounded as I am on a daily basis by "cops, jocks, and uniforms," I have sometimes marveled at how and why it has become so easy for me to navigate the transition from my clinical psychological world to the world of the organ and organists (and I thought cops were temperamental with unresolved power and control needs!). The two fields can and do overlap for me, though.

Several years ago, when Joyce Jones asked me to speak on "Stress and the Performing Musician" as part of Baylor University's annual organ conference, I became even more aware of the overlap. Being a doctor *or* an organist is a unique stress, but being a doctor *and* an organist brings additional unique stresses. Of course, the only people with no stress are people who are dead; life and living bring stress (both positive and negative). As I like to say at the police academy when I speak on "Stress Arresters" (a true word-play), the goal is

to keep stress from becoming distress.

What about therapy for the doc? Well, getting lost in a mystical Dupré antiphon like "I Am Black but Comely, O Ye Daughters of Jerusalem" is great therapy for this shrink. I found it especially relaxing and thrilling to perform it as part of my recital (all from memory) at Washington National Cathedral in 1992, during the Centennial Convention of the American Psychological Association (where I had participated in a symposium presentation). I also played works by Campra, Buxtehude, Bach, and others before doing a fantasia arrangement of my own based on five themes from *Phantom of the Opera* (which I admit was a stretch even for the cathedral). As a finale, I played the Mulet *Tu es petra* (which can certainly increase the blood pressure) on that fabulous, huge Skinner/Aeolian-Skinner. The recital was dedicated to police throughout the United States, and there were officers present from local, county,

and state police departments as well as the FBI and Secret Service (how's that for reaching out to a new public for the organ!).

In 1976, during the American Bicentennial, I played a recital at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris during the 23rd International Congress of Psychology (where I also presented a paper), and in 2000, I played on the largest outdoor pipe organ in the world at Balboa Park in San Diego during the Millennial Convention of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

My recent CD, titled *God's Psychology—A Musical (Rx) Prescription for Stressful Times*, is another attempt at crossover. And later this year, I hope to complete the recording of an organ CD, professional schedules permitting.

I love wearing two hats, as it were, and breaking expectations as I "organ"-ize my psychological life.

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*The work of the Committee on Sharing Skills and Resources and the funding for January Jubilees are made possible in part by generous donations from Rodgers Instruments Corporation, Forrest T. Jones & Company, and a friend of the AGO.*



## EASY DOES IT! (UNLESS IT DOESN'T)

Wayne L. Wold, AAGO

**W**E SEE THE descriptor "easy" attached to many music publications—choral, handbell, instrumental—and reactions to seeing that term vary widely. Some directors say, "That might suit my group very well, but they would feel insulted using a publication labeled 'easy.'" Other directors might think using an "easy" piece of music is beneath their dignity and might ruin their professional reputation. Other directors would quickly grab up such a publication, knowing that their choir members—and they themselves—would welcome pieces that are considered "easy." Others may not need "easy" pieces all the time, but they might need them for summer choirs, or at the music-heavy times of the year, or at any time when preparation time or musical resources might be less than usual.

We can also find publications for organ or piano labeled "easy." Reactions to finding such publications vary from "grab it up" to "I can't be seen playing from anything labeled this way." But for a vast numbers of keyboardists, many of whom lack the training, time, or confidence to move up to the next level, "easy" pieces fill a need. Teachers also find "easy" pieces to be helpful tools in training beginners while still allowing them to master pieces they can play confidently and musically for worship services, programs, or just for themselves. And finally, let's face it, even we experienced keyboardists find weeks when we need to use pieces that fall far below our level of proficiency.

So what exactly can be considered "easy"? There is surely no one industry standard, since that term can be found attached to a wide range of levels. And what is easy for one player or one choir may not be easy for another. In the end, it is up to each one of us to choose pieces that suit our groups, our worship settings, our students, and our selves. Let's take a look at some of the ways a piece of music can be "easy" and consider how it might or might not quite live up to that label.

**"Easy" in Choral Music**

Many choral pieces are considered "easy" because they make use of a familiar tune; not having to start from scratch can save a lot of time, since many portions of the piece are already known. But be on the lookout for places where the familiar tune has been altered or where individual parts go back and forth between the familiar tune and new material. Having to deviate from a tune already known can be harder than learning an entirely new tune and take up much more time in the long run.

More often than not, choral pieces are labeled "easy" because they call for fewer than four parts. SAB and SB works abound these days, and they clearly fulfill a need for some choirs at certain times of the year or even year-round. But reduced voicings alone don't make them easier; in fact, they can be far more difficult. What to watch out for? First, make sure they sound complete. Many SAB pieces sound like an SATB piece with a tenor part missing. Well-written SAB pieces sound "just right" in themselves. Second, check each part for its singability. In many SAB pieces, the "B" part, for example, can jump around from a tenor range to a bass range, making the part awkward for any voice. Third, in some SB-voiced pieces, the "B" part is often less like a bass line and more of a melody or counter-melody. This can create a wonderful sound, but for singers more accustomed to a homophonic texture, singing polyphony can take some getting used to.

Finally, be picky as you choose "easy" pieces. Make sure they truly fit your group, and know that you don't need to compromise on musicality just because it is "easy."

**"Easy" in Organ Music**

Many organists get thrust into playing entire worship services long before they have the technique and repertoire to competently and comfortably do so. Many of us gained our expertise in leading hymns and litur-

gical music through trial and error, and we beg forgiveness from those who may have had to struggle while we muddled. The number of items an organist is expected to play in any given worship service can be quite large, and they can vary widely—from chants to chorales, from gospel to global, from cantatas to canciones, and choruses that range from profound to pitiful. Add to that any number of additional voluntaries and accompaniments, and quite an unwieldy monster has been created. Even the most experienced organists seek out spots where they can use pieces that are “easy”—either music they already know or new pieces that are “easy” (at least to them).

What is considered an “easy” organ piece varies a great deal from one organist to the next. For example, some folks take to playing contrapuntal music very easily, while others are more chord-oriented and find playing more than one melody to be quite challenging. By far, the biggest obstacle to overcome for those who are new to playing the organ are the pedals, so that is where we will concentrate for now.

First of all, know that not every-

thing played on the organ must use the pedals. Entire schools of organ composition call for pedals minimally or not at all, including much Baroque- and Classic-era music from Italy, Austria, southern Germany, France, and England. Plus, many hymns and liturgical pieces are playable with just the manuals. Pick a piece of liturgical music that will be used for several weeks in a row and work that up. Or, pick a hymn that is coming up in a few weeks, work it up with pedals, and then play just that one hymn with pedals. All the while, practice the pedals, using both specific exercises and the pedal parts of hymns and literature, and continue to use them as your comfort level expands. Eventually, you will reach a point where playing with pedals is easier than playing without them.

As you scope out organ works with “easy” pedal parts, keep your eyes and ears open for characteristics that make them easier. These include (1) pedal parts with repeated patterns, such as passacaglias and chaconnes; (2) pedal parts where the feet play mostly in alternation, such as many Baroque preludes and fugues, as op-

posed to those that call for several notes in a row from the same foot; and (3) pedal parts that are not meant to be played completely legato, such as most Baroque music and any piece where there are rests between the pedal notes. One more word of advice—once you reach your goal of pedal proficiency, don’t toss out your manuals-only or “easy pedal” organ collections. If the music is good and appropriate, continue to use it!

Whether music-making is your full-time occupation, or if you are one of the thousands who do music “on the side,” keep up the good work!

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**Wayne L. Wold**, AAGO, is a member of the AGO’s Committee on Sharing Skills and Resources; director of music ministry at First Lutheran Church, Ellicott City, Md.; and associate professor and chair of the music department, Hood College, Frederick, Md.

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### WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE GUILD

Elisabeth V. Pinter

**W**HILE GROWING UP, my mother read to my siblings and me constantly, and one of the repeated stories she read to us was *The Little Red Hen*. The moral of the story is that in order for all to enjoy the delicious homemade bread and not be frustrated, all of her friends were needed to help grow the wheat, harvest the wheat, grind the wheat into flour, and bake the bread. I have often thought of this story and reflected on how, at various stages in my musical life, I was only the consumer and not the helper. This was especially true during my high school and college years.

My mother drove a moody teenager every other week to Vegas (a 3½-hour one-way drive) so I could start organ lessons, and my first teacher often times gave a two-hour-plus lesson. When I moved to New Jersey, my dear

teacher Felix Molzer paid for half of my lessons, labeling it "scholarship week." He went the extra mile in helping me find employment at a church in my senior year and even called while I was in college for the occasional pep talk. Since he was a member of the AGO, I benefited from the Monmouth AGO Chapter, which awarded me a scholarship so I could further my college studies in the organ.

While in college, I was amazed by the talent that surrounded me in classes, at concerts, and especially in the practice rooms/halls. Anytime I needed to hear *live* inspiration, all I had to do was open my practice-room door and voilà, music filled the air! I am not sure if I contributed much for others during those years, but now I realize that it is my turn to grind the wheat. I must make the opportunity to return the favor.

As a member of the Guild, I feel there is a responsibility on my part to support my local chapter, encourage my students to not quit, attend local concerts, and, more importantly, keep the excitement of organ music growing among ourselves and new listeners. It has been said that Sunday is the most segregated day of the week. We practice, learn new pieces, accompany choirs, and yet, we as organists can't attend each other's weekly mini-recitals because we are all usually playing at different places around the same time. This is why I am a member of the AGO and why I will continue to be. It can be a support group of our peers, an avenue that unites us through our common love of music while inspiring us to stretch our own fingers on a continuous basis.

I was recently asked, "Why should I be a member of the Guild?" I respond-

ed with a simple answer: "We need you and want to keep connected with what you are doing." I have thought since then how much better the response could have been; but if we don't feel needed, why continue something? Find out how you are needed in your local chapter. It can begin with something little, an idea that turns into a yearly tradition, which then turns into a highly anticipated event!

A few years back, I was asked to give a Christmas recital. By no means am I an outstanding organist, but I do love to share the sounds of the organ. I have been able to gear my program toward children and newcomers. As a result, thinking of creative ways to incorporate various themes and nontraditional Christmas music into the recital has been met with great success. My last recital had more than 200 people in attendance, and it was so satisfying to hear responses such as "I am so mad that I haven't come before," "I didn't know the organ could sound like that," and "I am going to learn to play the organ!" I have already picked out my theme for next year and can hardly wait to see how the music unfolds in the coming months.

There has been a wonderful shift in how organ recitals are presented. No longer does the organist simply play, but now many recitalists speak to their audience, offering verbal notes on the music or explaining how they selected the repertoire for their program. The concert halls and churches seem to shrink, and a new level of intimacy is created—two old friends getting together, sharing the sounds of music. I can't think of a better way to spend an afternoon or evening.

This is why we practice, this is why we play, this is why we share, and this is why we are members of the Guild.

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**Elisabeth V. Pintar** is dean of the San Jose, Calif., AGO Chapter. She earned a BS degree in music from BYU and subs for various churches in the South Bay area.

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## ANGELS AMONG US: EXPANDING OUR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Christopher Cook

ONE OF THE perennial topics floating around local, regional, and national leadership meetings is how to attract and retain new chapter members. Working against the inexorable “graying of the Guild,” our leaders have been generating wonderfully creative ideas for quite some time. Chapters implement them sincerely, but the results are mixed. We want more: more members, more growth, more member participation, more new ideas to attract more members, and more members becoming more active. What we all really want is more hope that the instrument we love will be invited back as a full participant in the cultural conversation again. We want more people to join us because there are more challenges that lie ahead.

Lists of creative ideas for achieving “more” always include some mention of hospitality as an essential ingredient in the recipe for a healthy chapter. We would be led to believe that a friendly chapter is a growing chapter. How could it not be true? Who would want to join a grumpy chapter, an elitist chapter, or an “insider/outsider” chapter? The question for us to consider is, “Whose perspective counts?” If I am a longtime insider, then the chapter is made up of my small circle of friends who are friendly with me. On the other hand, if I am an outsider, new to the area and looking to make friends, I wonder if the old-timers ever will notice me. Regardless of my passion for the organ or my ability to play it, how could I ever hope to be included in a group that started 20, 30, or 40 years ago? Does my new chapter have a plan for including people like me? Plans for chapter growth need to pay attention to the emotional climate at chapter events and to our informal communications between meetings.

Our desire for chapter growth may place more expectations upon the role of hospitality than it can bear alone. Do we really expect the friendliness of



thentic community that provides a context for their lives—a place where they can find support, opportunities to learn and grow, and people to offer positive regard for who they are. Chapters that understand the needs of people, whether old friends or the newbies in town, have the capacity to develop new and effective ways of being responsive. Responsiveness to the needs of its members creates positive experiences for both givers and receivers. Building positive experiences among our people is one of the primary ways we can build and sustain healthy chapter dynamics. Clearly, hospitality—creating a welcoming environment—has an essential function in healthy chapters.

One of the earliest models for hospitality comes from the Old Testament. Patriarch Abraham and his wife, Sarah, extended their hospitality to three strangers traveling through their area (Genesis 18:2–8). Without considering the social status of their guests, they brought them into their home and offered rituals of hospitality—rest, refreshment, and nourishment—with no expectation of reward. That their guests were angels was a bonus. Isn't it everyone's dream that the entire Guild would be built on living relationships where all are welcomed, encouraged, and supported? We will know our strategic plans are working when new members bring their friends with them, so they can be a part of the good things they have found. There are many organist angels among us. When our Guild is infused with Abraham and Sarah's generosity of spirit, the weight of hospitality will be no heavier than the wings of an angel.

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**Christopher Cook** is director of worship, music, and arts at Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church in San Diego, Calif. He will present a new workshop, "Learning Techniques for a Lifetime of Music Making," this summer during the AGO National Convention in Boston.

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our chapter alone to cause it to grow? Probably not. Hospitality needs supporting strategic plans to sustain and amplify initial successes. The good news is that developing new strategies to identify and retain new people invites chapter members to rediscover what they themselves valued when

they joined their chapter. Now, as then, people are seeking places where they may feel significant; they are looking for an organization that contributes to the making of meaning in their lives; they need contact with the kind of people who offer them uplift and hope. They are looking for an au-

## MUSICIANS "ON THE SIDE"

### THE HUMBLE HYMN IN SERVICE MUSIC

Mary Lou Lohr

HOW CAN IT be Saturday already? I'm one of those part-time organists who utters those words pretty frequently. Every Sunday afternoon, I breathe a sigh of relief and realize I have the whole week stretched out before me to work on next Sunday's music. Fortunately, I am not required to program my service music so that it can be printed in the bulletin. This works well for me because I have too many last-minute changes on Saturday afternoon ("What on *earth* made me think I could play this piece this week?") to have to commit myself that far ahead of time. I do occasionally let the church office know in time for bulletin-printing what I'm planning to play, and then as that Saturday rolls around, I start to panic and wonder if perhaps I spoke too soon.

The question, then, for most weeks is: What in the world can I play that they haven't already heard a million times? I have only a modest repertoire of pieces I can pull out and play with ease at the last minute, so there are some collections on which I heavily rely. *The Organist's Companion* from Wayne Leupold Editions is a handy semimonthly subscription. It follows the liturgical year with many hymn-based pieces that range in difficulty from "wow, this is pretty easy" to "holy cow." Lorenz Corporation also publishes several semimonthly subscription collections (*The Organist*, *The Organist Portfolio*, and *The Sacred Organist*) that contain a wide variety of service music. I have actually bought old editions (back to the 1970s) of these publications on eBay. Lorenz also has a publication called *Suddenly Sunday* that has some very nice, accessible pieces. I have several collections of easy-but-interesting pieces by J. Wayne Kerr and Kevin Hildebrand. The Bach "little 8" preludes and fugues are always good to work in from time to time. (Actually,

any Bach is good to work in from time to time. I wish I knew how to play more of Bach's music; I keep telling myself it's never too late to learn.)

What I rely on the most, though—especially when I'm really out of practice time or there is an extra service to play (such as a funeral or midweek Advent or Lenten service)—is the hymnal. In fact, several hymnals. Sometimes it's fun to play a new or unfamiliar hymn, and it is of course a good way to introduce a newer hymn to a congregation. Other times, I just play several well-known, season-appropriate hymns for my service music. I used to have a few pang of guilt, feeling that maybe I am "cheating" in some way, but then I realized that the truth is, many people would rather hear their favorite hymns than a number of elaborate organ pieces. Even on a small organ (I play on a 14-rank Holtkamp), varying the registrations from flutes to strings or from a single 8' Principal registration to one with some mutations and color can change the hymns from meditative to exuberant to any other emotion or effect you might be trying to achieve. I once had somebody tell me after a funeral I'd played that the preservice music was the most moving and beautiful he'd ever heard. I thanked him and thought to myself, "But it was just a bunch of hymns." That was when I realized how useful and meaningful hymns can be as service music, even if you don't have the gift of improvisation. That is the beauty of the organ. Something seemingly simple can be made to sound magnificent and completely different from verse to verse.

So, if you are someone like me who has to spend 40+ hours doing something nonmusical and don't get nearly as much practice time as you'd like, I would gather some good collections as mentioned earlier and build a library of hymnals, old and new, from various denominations.

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**Mary Lou Lohr** is music director-organist at Ascension of Christ Lutheran Church in Beverly Hills, Michigan. A member of the Detroit AGO Chapter and a member of the Lutheran Church Musicians Guild (a Detroit-area group for organists and choir directors), she also sings with the Detroit Lutheran Singers, a 50-member performance choir that brings sacred music to the southeast Michigan area.

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## WHEN BIGGER IS BETTER: DIGITAL PHOTO FILES

Linda Everhart

**T**AO EDITOR Todd Sisley reports that nearly every day, he has to explain to people that a photo they have submitted for publication in the magazine is not usable because of low resolution. "But the picture looks fine on my computer. What is the problem?" asks the bewildered contributor.

### The Demanding Requirements of the Printing Press

Electronic devices are a lot more forgiving than the printed page. Printing requires a much-higher-resolution photo. Your low-resolution photos may look great on your computer screen, or printed on your inkjet or laser printer, but they won't look good in a professionally printed publication like TAO unless they meet the industry standard of 300 pixels per inch. More on that below.

Because low-resolution photos look fine on your computer, you may be tempted to try to submit photos that you have grabbed from the Internet. But this is an instance where you really cannot trust your own eyes. You have to know whether you have enough *pixels*.

### What Are Pixels?

Today, most people are using digital cameras, tablets, and smartphones to take pictures. When you take a picture with a digital device, your image is made up of tiny blocks of the image called pixels. Pixel stands for *picture element*. In general, the higher the pixel count, the more information or detail is captured in an image.

If you zoom in close on a photo on your computer screen, you may be able to see the pixels: rows and rows of tiny squares. Pixels are units of visual information. A high pixel count means there is more visual information in your photo. If

you have captured a lot of visual information (pixels) you can print large photos. If you haven't captured enough pixels, there is not enough visual information to "spread out" over a larger print area, and you will be severely limited in the size at which your photo can be printed.

Once you've taken your photo, the number of pixels in your photo is set. It never increases. Your photo's pixel count is determined the second you push the shutter button. The pixel count is expressed in terms of pixel width times pixel height—3264 x 2448 pixels, for example. When you multiply those two dimensions, you realize that your image contains 7,990,272 pixels.

### How to Take a High-Resolution Photo

Your camera may enable you to adjust the number of pixels it captures for each image. The language that camera manufacturers use varies, but you should always select the highest image quality available on your camera menu. If your choices are normal, fine, or superfine, choose superfine. If your choices are basic, normal, or fine, choose fine. You get the idea. If you are



This low-resolution photo is made up of only 320 x 240 pixels and looks blurry even at a small size.



This high-resolution photo (3,264 x 2,448 pixels) contains almost eight million pixels. (The image was captured with an iPhone 5.)

using the camera on your smartphone, the image size is fixed; you cannot adjust it.

### Don't Let Smartphone Pixels Get Lost in Transmission

The good news for smartphone photographers is that the fixed resolution on newer phones is generally adequate for prints up to five by seven inches, with pixel dimensions starting at 2,688 x 1,520 and going up from there. The bad news is, it's easy to throw away these valuable pixels when you send the file via e-mail.

After you've captured a large image on your camera, be careful to preserve all the visual information when you send the image electronically. When you attach a photo to an e-mail on a smartphone, you will be asked if you want to resize the image. The answer is No! Do not resize your image. You will have four options: small, medium, large, and actual size. Always choose actual size to avoid losing image quality.

### The Magic of 300 Pixels Per Inch

Professional printing presses require images that contain at least 300 pixels per inch (ppi). Below this threshold, you will start to see the jagged edges of the pixels; in other words, your photo will be pixelated.

Suppose you've already taken a picture and want to find out if it is suitable for printing. Just divide each pixel dimension by 300. If you have taken a digital photo that is 2,448 x 3,264 pixels in dimension and divide each dimension by 300, you find that you could print the photo up to 8" x 10". Photos featured in AGO Chapter News in TAO are typically 3.5" x 2.5", so you should think of pixel dimensions of approximately 1060 x 750 as the minimum acceptable standard. Of course, bigger is better.

### Not Sure of Your Photo Size?

To find the pixel dimensions of your photo, open the image on your computer. Click on *File* on the toolbar. Select *Properties* from the drop-down menu. The Properties dialog box that opens will provide you with the details of the photo, in-

Desired Print Size in Inches	Minimum Pixels Required for Professional Printing
5" x 3"	1,500 x 900
3.5" x 2.5"	1,060 x 750*
6" x 4"	1,800 x 1,200
7" x 5"	2,100 x 1,500
8" x 10"	2,448 x 3,264

\*AGO Chapter News

cluding the pixel count. On a Mac, locate the file in *Finder*. Select *Get Info*, and look for dimensions. Once you have located the pixel dimensions for your photos, you will be able to easily determine if it is suitable for publication in TAO. Just divide each dimension by 300 to calculate the largest possible print size for your image.

### Why Bother?

They say a (good) photo is worth a thousand words. But what does a bad photo say? Does it say you or your organization are technologically challenged and out of touch with today's media? Does it make you look incompetent? Does it sap your publication of vitality? If you think the answer to any of these

questions might be Yes, then it is worth spending an hour or so wrapping your head around all those little pixels. It's much simpler than the technology of couplers, pistons, and midi-sequencers that you deal with every day.

**Linda Everhart** is a writer and video producer living in Pittsburgh, Pa. For many years, she was producer of music television at PBS affiliate WQED. She is member of the AGO Marketing Committee and serves as a consultant to the Task Force on Educational Videos.

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## THE UNKNOWN ORGAN MUSIC

Anthony Williams

**D**URING THE past few years, I have had the pleasure of presenting workshops on organ music of black composers to several of our AGO chapters around the country. What I have discovered is that I am discussing a rather large body of wonderful organ music that is basically unknown to most organists. However, these workshops have been met with great enthusiasm from the attendees, and I have heard that some have looked into purchasing some of the pieces that I demonstrated. As part of this workshop, I include a handout of several pages listing all the pieces I am aware of. I announce at the beginning of my workshops that my handout is a growing work in progress.

My interest in the organ music of black composers had its beginnings while I was in high school, when a friend of our family, Edith Work, found I was studying the organ and brought some pieces that her husband had written. John W. Work III (1901–67) was a composer, ethnomusicologist, and a member of the music faculty at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and had written a few pieces that were published in the 1950s and early 1960s by Lorenz in its collection *The Organ Portfolio*. When I graduated from high school, Mrs. Work came to the house with a large gift-wrapped box that contained a copy of the manuscript of *From the Deep South*, an organ suite that Mr. Work had composed in 1936.

While in graduate school at the University of Michigan, I learned the piece and soon began the quest to find pieces by other black composers. What I found was that many of the organ pieces by black composers, like the John Work suite, were in manuscript and not readily available. Only a handful of pieces were in print at the time. I also discovered that there were only a few organists who actually knew about this music. One person who had a very extensive collection of music and was a great resource was the late Eugene Hancock. It was he who actually acquainted me with some of the



Anthony Williams

composers. Also, Ralph Simpson, former professor of music and chair of the music department at Tennessee State University in Nashville, was a great resource. A composer as well, Simpson sent me copies of his organ pieces and also introduced me to other composers. In 2007, I premiered a piece that he wrote for me on a faculty recital at Fisk. I have programmed this piece on subsequent recitals.

One might ask, if this is such great music, why was so much of it not published? At one time, due to the past racial climate in this country, a person of color had a difficult time getting music published. While working on my dissertation "The Keyboard Music of John W. Work III," I found a letter to a publisher that Work wrote when submitting a manuscript. He asked that if the manuscript was not accepted for publication, that they return it to him—and he included money for the return postage. He stated in his letter that he was used to being rejected by publishers. I am sure that other composers of color had similar experiences.

In recent years, I am both happy and excited to find that this music is becoming more available thanks to recent publications. One of the first collections was the *ECS/AGO African-American Organ Series* published by ECS Publishing. This set, which consists of individual pieces, was pub-

lished in 1996 for the 100th anniversary of the American Guild of Organists. Another is a six-volume collection edited by Mickey Thomas Terry titled *African-American Organ Music Anthology*, published by MorningStar. It brings back into print some of the few pieces that had been previously published, and also includes first-time publication of pieces that had been unavailable for years. There are also a few new pieces that were commissioned for this collection.

A third collection is *King of Kings*. In two volumes, compiled and edited by James Abbington and published by GIA Publications, it returns to print previously published works as well as some previously unavailable ones. New compositions were submitted for this volume, including *King of Kings* by Ralph Simpson, to which the collection owes its name. There are other individual pieces by various composers that are being published by companies such as MorningStar Music, Vivace Press, and Wayne Leupold Editions.

It is good to see more of this music published and available to the public, after being unavailable for so many years. My hope is that more people will discover and perform these works. I will continue to do my part by introducing and promoting them in recitals and workshops.

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**Anthony Williams** is associate professor of music and university organist at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., where he teaches organ and courses in music history, including American music. He also serves as organist and choir director at First Presbyterian Church in Hendersonville, Tenn. From 1990 to 2005, he was a member of the music faculty at Dillard University in New Orleans, La. A native of Nashville, he holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, the University of Michigan, and the American Conservatory of Music.

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## CLEAR AS MUD: PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Robert Knupp

**A**S A COLLEGE organ teacher, I receive calls throughout the year from pastors and search committees looking for organists. This is especially true each August, when a new crop of organists arrives on campus, and churches attempt to lure the best students with promises of pipe organs, ample vacation time, paid singers, generous salaries, and boundless congregational support. Although students who have already had a church job understand the process, those who are just starting out might find this a daunting task and wonder, "How do I prepare for an interview? What questions should I ask?"

An interview is not simply a church committee asking you questions, hearing you play, or observing you conduct the choir. It is your opportunity to know if you will fit in at that church. Will your personality mesh with the pastor, music director, and other church staff? Were there uncomfortable pauses in the interview conversation that might indicate future interpersonal problems? Can you agree with most of the theology of that church? It is unrealistic to think that you can just make it work for money. At some point, personality issues or theological issues may arise, and you will need to find another position. If you think you can't work with the people at the church, wait for another opportunity. They deserve someone they can work with, just as you deserve to be with people you can work with.

A written contract is best, so ask for one (the AGO website has a model contract). This provides clear expectations of what is and is not included in the job. A few questions to ask include:

What will your salary be? (some churches are unable to match AGO salary guidelines). How many choral rehearsals a week are there? How many special services? How much vacation/continuing education days will you get? Are the start and end times of choral rehearsals and other special rehearsals announced in advance? (open-ended rehearsals can be more easily avoided if you know up front the end-time of each rehearsal). Will you be reimbursed for mileage if you are commuting from a long distance? How much extra compensation is there for funerals, weddings, special services? Do you have to find substitutes for funerals or weddings if you cannot play?

A professional working relationship can be formed if all of these issues are spelled out in writing during the interview process.

As far as the audition itself, most committees will want to hear a few pieces: an example of a prelude, postlude, of-

fertory, or something from the standard organ repertoire. You will also likely play a few hymns. A church that is blended may also expect choruses, and perhaps reading from a lead sheet. If the music selections that are expected at the church are outside of your comfort zone, don't take the job. You may also be asked to sight-read hymns or anthems. The ability to sight-read music well cannot be understated, so learn to do it! It is a skill that could make your tenure at the church smooth.

Keep in mind that while you may have heard grand 100-stop pipe organs in concert halls, and have taken lessons on a wonderful three-manual, 50-stop pipe organ, you are being hired to play what the congregation is used to hearing. It may be an outstanding pipe organ, or it could be an older organ that needs significant maintenance. It is fine to point out that the organ needs work in a positive manner, but calling for the immediate formation of a pipe organ committee may cause you to not be considered further. If you can't stand the instrument, don't take the job.

During the interview process, find out the musical expectations of the position: do you have enough training to handle the position now, or will you be given time to develop and grow into the position? It is not in your best interest to take a position where the musical demands are well above your current abilities and no provision is made for a development process. This could cause constant stress on the job and might lead to your being released from the position, or you submitting a letter of resignation. Perhaps a church would be willing to pay for lessons in order to improve your skills. I always recommend to churches that they can pay for a pianist who is a church member to take organ lessons!

In the end, the interview is a time for a church and a prospective organist to begin to build a relationship. The musical demands of a position differ with each church, and the interview gives you a chance to see if you are prepared to handle and grow into the position. Use the process to see if you are a good fit for them, and use your best judgment and discerning prayer to know if you are the person for the job!

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**Robert Knupp** is professor of organ at Mississippi College, where he teaches organ, organ classes, and music theory. His studio takes a yearly organ tour to locations such as Dallas, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., in order to experience a wide range of instruments. He is also the organist of Galloway United Methodist Church in Jackson.

## TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY

Kathy Vail

**L**IKE MOST aspiring young graduates, I had pretty definite ideas about what I did and did not want to do after graduation. I wasn't sure how I was going to use my hard-earned degree in organ, but I was reasonably certain I would recognize what that was when it was presented to me. Of one thing I was sure: I did not want to teach! Now, some 30 years later—surprise—not only am I teaching, but I love it. Being an organist draws concern from my former classmates as they ask, "Do you actually have students?"

Yes, I have six students who studied this past spring. Granted, they are not all organ majors who dream of making the organ their life's work. Some of these students just want to learn about this magnificent instrument and eventually serve in a church that still appreciates beautiful organ music. We organists seem to be passing through a time when churches are more interested in acquiring as much electronic equipment as possible, downsizing the choir

to a praise band, and delegating the organ to wedding and funeral use only. To those congregations I say, "You have no idea what you are missing!"

At William Carey University, we are fortunate to house the Clarence Dickinson Collection, which includes his books, art, and music. As a tribute to him, each year we host an organ festival and competition to encourage high-school and college organ students throughout the area. As an added incentive, we offer cash awards to students as they compete in various categories, and award them a custom-made medallion with Dickinson's picture engraved on one side. Not being put off by performance stress, my elective students have all participated in this competition over the years and have even made some money doing so. We also bring in a recitalist each year to inspire the students and to demonstrate what is possible on an instrument with so many buttons, pedals, and controls.

Several years ago, I invited Walt

Strony, a concert artist for Allen Organs, to play our recital. Since we were at a church with a new Allen, I knew he would show off this instrument to the fullest in an entertaining program that the average person would enjoy without having to understand a lot about music. I was not disappointed. Knowing the capabilities of the instrument, he used not only the organ stops, but also numerous MIDI sounds as he played a medley of tunes from Carmen and the Wilhousky arrangement of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" with one or two serious pieces scattered throughout. Now, you may raise an eyebrow and wonder why I am not exposing my students to all the great literature. Sometimes, we have to hook our students at their level of interest. They were so amazed at what an organ could do, that this program inspired them to work harder. That's when I slipped in the Bach, Franck, and Schumann that I knew they would enjoy working on as well.

This year, our recitalist was a young





Kathy Vail

man from Picayune, Miss., who was one of the first young people to play in our festival and win that much-coveted cash award. Patrick Scott has since finished a doctoral degree in organ performance from the University of Texas. He currently serves a church in North Carolina and performs throughout the United States as well. His program, traditional, yet not too heavy, showed the instrument through its full performance range. Scott loves improvisation, and he ended the program by improvising on the tunes "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and "The Church's One Foundation," amazing the audience by taking these unlikely paired tunes and creating entertaining and worshipful music.

I say all this to point out that, if we are going to draw students to the organ, we must whet their appetite and show them what the possibilities are with this instrument. I look forward to seeing how exposure to the organ influences the lives of our students and then watching where it takes them in their respective careers.

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**Kathy Vail**, a native of Clinton, Miss., graduated from Mississippi College in 1979 with a master of music degree in organ performance. She served for eight years as music associate at Harrisburg Baptist Church in Tupelo, Miss., before coming to Hattiesburg to serve as organist at First Baptist Church for 18 years. She is presently organist at First United Methodist Church in Laurel. Vail is associate professor of music at William Carey University, where she teaches piano, organ, and handbells, and accompanies the chorale as well as voice and instrumental students. She directs a vocal ensemble called Carpenter's Wood, which travels abroad and throughout the southern United States. She is active in the South Mississippi AGO Chapter and is national music advisor for Delta Omicron International Music Fraternity.

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE

Simon Berry

**E**ARLIER this year, the San Francisco AGO Chapter held a roundtable discussion aimed at providing networking, fellowship, and mutual support for chapter members. I presented some ideas on a situation every organist or choir trainer encounters: dealing with difficult situations and difficult people. Here are some strategies to help you in similar situations:

**Ensure that all your dealings are honest, clear, and fair.** Don't be tempted to trim the facts; don't be vague about expectations. If you are in doubt about the fairness of the situation, ask a trusted colleague for advice (in private) without revealing details. Understand that consultation in private is different from gossip; one is designed to help a situation, while the other inflames it.

**Examine your feelings toward the other person or people.** They are human beings and worthy of the respect that we all hope for and want. We can alter our feelings toward anything we like. It can be hard, and prejudices are not easy to overcome, but it is vital to treat everyone with respect.

**Keep a log of events and correspondence.** Include the date and time and a factual outline of what occurred. If you copy email or text messages into your log, include all relevant parts of the conversation. The log is an easy way to record how a behavior has repeated or developed over the course of time. Absence and tardiness are easy to track in this way; the employee will rarely have an accurate record of these. If you like, add opinion or reaction, but keep that separate from the facts. Don't forget to include the positive! If you share your log with an administrator or pastor, omit the comments and present just the facts. It is quite helpful to consider writing from three perspectives: what happened, how it made you feel/affected the program, and what you want as an outcome.

**Arrange to meet with the person/people involved.** Avoid the times before and after services and rehearsals and suggest instead a neutral time and neutral office space. Decide the length of the meeting



Simon Berry

and stick to it. Forty-five minutes is often enough; more than an hour is usually too much. When the end of the appointment is approaching, briefly summarize what has been said so far and what agreements have been made or suggested, and decide if a decision is possible. Do not allow a meeting to exceed the allotted time. Having a second meeting will usually provide a more satisfactory conclusion than extending the first one.

**Make notes about what you are going to present, and use these notes in a meeting.** This will remind you of the relevant points you want to raise and avoid problems associated with raised emotional levels when memory functions less well. If you feel yourself being blindsided by the person you're meeting with, refer to your notes. Bring the meeting back on course. Take a little time to check that you're raising the points and questions that you had planned. Take water with you, and offer some to the person you're meeting with. Only consult your cell phone if you need to retrieve information relevant to the meeting, and only after requesting permission. A sudden diversion from a tense conversation to a cell phone can be read

as very insulting. You may want to have a practice conversation with a family member or senior colleague so that you can be aware of the emotions that may arise and how your phraseology works on another person.

**Ask questions, listen carefully to the answers, and, if necessary, paraphrase the answer to show that you understand.** The phrase "Did I correctly understand you say . . . ?" can be very useful. Avoid raised voices and interruptions. If you find yourself interrupting, apologize! Using "I" phrases can be very helpful: "I think I heard you say that . . ." is far less confrontational than "You said . . ." In a difficult meeting, maintain a calm atmosphere while at the same time allowing the other person room to maneuver.

**If this is an employment situation and you need or want to terminate the employee, know the relevant state law before you begin.** Once you know it and have your supervisor's blessing on the termination, stick to the letter of the law. If, for instance, the law in your state requires that the final payment be made on termination, have a check ready to hand over on the spot.

**Maintain a calm and respectful manner.** Even basic traffic situations can provide an opportunity for practice: allowing someone to cut in front or take your parking space without responding negatively can be a good way to practice keeping your emotions in check.

My best wishes for your discussions with colleagues; it is deeply important that we act with honesty, clarity, and fairness; these alone are often sufficient to reach agreement in difficult situations.

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**Simon Berry** is dean of the San Francisco chapter and director of music and liturgy at St. Dominic's Catholic Church in San Francisco. He was recently appointed project consultant with Létourneau Pipe Organs. He is a native of Bristol, UK, and came to the United States in 1996. He studied at Bristol, the University of Warwick, and the Royal College of Music.

## BUILDING BRIDGES, NOT BARRIERS

Barbara W. Baker

**F**OR NEARLY 34 years, I have been the director of the Gospel Choir at Colesville United Methodist Church in Silver Spring, Md. We started with nine singers, only four of whom read music. In May 2014, we celebrated our 33rd anniversary with nearly 35 singers. We sing one Sunday a month, from September to June, and have a 90-minute rehearsal twice a month. Over the years, I have enjoyed working with many people of faith, who were not particularly good singers but had a heart for worship and were faithful to the church and the choir.

One of my roles as the Gospel Choir director is to provide a place for anyone in the church who wants to praise God through music making. My philosophy of recruitment is based on the knowledge that God made us all and commanded us to sing His praises. I strive to remove the barriers to singing in the choir, and to make my Gospel Choir user-friendly.

Many church members love to sing the songs of the church but may have had bad experiences in other choir settings or have little confidence in their abilities to sing well. If you can get a person to join your choir, you can teach them what they need to know to be a productive member of the choir. Everyone in my church is welcome to join the Gospel Choir, but singing auditions can be scary. Hence, my audition consists of two questions: Can you cook? If they say yes, they are automatically in the choir. If they say no, the second question is: Do you know where to buy good food? If they say yes, they have passed the audition.

Why are cooking and good food so important to my choir? No one talks about your voice in my choir, but we all know who makes the best pound cake, fried chicken, or banana pudding. We acknowledge that God gave each person their voice, and some have had training while others have not. Once they become

members, it is my job to help them improve. Sometimes, when singers have a difficult time matching pitch or have a strong desire to learn to be a better music reader, I work with them for 30 minutes before rehearsal. Often, individuals will come early for extra help in finding their voice, or just to have a chance to focus solely on learning their part. In addition to a bit of vocal coaching, I use these times to work on difficult passages that will be rehearsed during the rehearsal. It gives the struggling singer a leg up on the rehearsal, learning with singers experiencing some of the same problems.

I have discovered diamonds in the rough during these extra rehearsal sessions. I found one singer who had perfect pitch and loved to sing but never sang in a choir. One singer, who only sang five pitches on every song, discovered he had a three-octave range after coming for extra help. The beauty of one's voice is irrelevant to me as I re-



**Barbara Baker**

cruit new choir members. It is wonderful if the new member can match pitch and read music, but that is not a requirement for singing your heart out for your Lord! So, I don't make it a requirement to join my choir.

I strive to build strong emotional bonds between members of the choir, as well as loyalty to the church. I embrace opportunities for fellowship and companionship for each choir member. We share meals at every possible occasion, culminating in a choir potluck at the end of our choir year. That's why food is important. In addition, choir members have a chance to socialize in a relaxed setting, to get to know members from other sections, to build lasting ties with their fellow choir members, and to enjoy their fabulous cooking.

These are only a few suggestions for growing and nurturing a small church choir. I wish you happy planting, and hope you will reap the benefits of stepping out on faith to allow church members to experience the joy of singing in your choirs.

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**Barbara Baker** led choirs for 30 years at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Md., before her retirement in 2008. She has an extensive national and international career as a lecturer in gospel music, as well as guest conductor of national, regional, and state choirs. She has published octavos with Boosey & Hawkes, Oxford University Press, and has a choral series with Alliance Music Publications. She is an occasional substitute organist at her church.

## IN DEFENSE OF THE MIGHTY POSTLUDE

Kenneth Vigne

**W**HILE TRAINING to be an organist, I often wondered about the purpose of the postlude. After all, in many of the churches in which I've worked, the pastor leaves after the benediction. Having it as a sending song made it seem too much like a liturgical fire alarm, and having it be a performance made it seem unnecessary, in terms of worship. I made it a goal to find ways to convince the congregation to stay for the postlude—and had moderate success at each church I served. When I played my first service at Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minn., about a year ago, I was surprised when the congregation sat right back down after the benediction. My goal had somewhat disappointingly been achieved without me. Luckily, I've learned since that getting the congregation to stay after the benediction is only the first step in reclaiming the postlude as an important component of Sunday worship.

The issue with the postlude feeling separate from the service isn't specific to the postlude itself; it's an issue with *all* music in a church service. Church services, whether or not they follow a liturgy, follow a structure that may include a call to worship, readings, prayers, a sermon, an offering, a meal, and a benediction. Worship leaders carefully craft their sermons and select readings and hymn texts to agree thematically, but compatible hymn texts don't always have compatible hymn tunes. The only parts in the service that are chosen with musical consideration are the prelude, offering, postlude, hymn introductions, and improvisations. When carefully chosen, they can provide a narrative that helps each section of a service flow compellingly into the next. When they are not chosen carefully, they serve as little more than interludes and distractions.

When I was in school, I was taught two considerations for choosing music



Kenneth Vigne

for the postlude. First, the mood of the piece should match the overall mood of the service or the season. Second, chosen pieces should favor those from great composers to conserve the legacy upon

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*I weave motifs and melodies  
from the postlude into my hymn  
introductions and improvisations.*

which great church music is built. For example, I learned that a clever planning trick was to play a Bach prelude at the beginning of the service and then play its accompanying fugue for the postlude—to bring a sense of continuity to the service. That continuity, of course, is only felt if the listener is familiar with the piece and knows that the two halves belong together. Beyond that, the prelude and fugue do not intrinsically enhance the readings, hymns, or sermon. If I wanted to prove that the postlude was important, it had to hold a connection to the rest of the service; and because the two considerations I learned did not address this, I eventually abandoned them.

In an effort to craft a service narrative, I weave the motifs and melodies from the prelude and postlude into my hymn introductions and improvisations. I base my prelude and postlude on the hymns in a service, either by playing a chorale or playing a piece that incorporates similar motifs as one of the hymns. Whenever I can't find the perfect piece for the prelude, offering, or postlude, I compose or improvise what I'm looking for. When things go right, I am rewarded with people telling me that they heard the water gushing from the rock, or saw Jesus' robes turn a dazzling white. When things go exactly as planned, people tell me they felt worshipful from beginning to end, and that they have received revelations revealed through the music.

Not everything always works out well. Sometimes I fail spectacularly. I always take criticism with as much humility as I can muster, and keep on trying. In a way, the risk I take is itself my greatest reward. I don't always play spectacular pieces for the postlude at Lake of the Isles. Sometimes I'll play small pieces, if I feel they are a more fitting end to the service. Sometimes I'll play a melancholy piece as the postlude. The entire congregation still sits down expectantly to listen to the postlude after the benediction. I still haven't completely uncovered why—although I suspect it has to do with time and tradition—but I have reclaimed the postlude as an important part of Sunday worship.

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**Kenneth Vigne** earned a master of music degree in organ performance from the University of Oklahoma, where he studied with John Schwandt, and a bachelor of music degree in church music from St. Olaf College, where he studied with Catherine Rodland. He lives in Minneapolis, Minn., with his wife and two children.