

# Study Guide for the AGO Service Playing Test

American Guild of Organists  
Committee on Professional Certification



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## PREFACE

One of the stated purposes of the American Guild of Organists is “To improve the proficiency of organists and conductors.” To foster this improvement, as well as to recognize it, the Guild provides opportunity for evaluation, by examination, of attainment in organ playing, choral directing, and the theory and general knowledge of music, granting certificates to those who pass these examinations at specified levels of achievement.

Your purchase of this Study Guide is proof of your interest in the Service Playing Test, and therefore of your interest in personal growth and professional development. While it is perhaps true that these things may be accomplished without the taking of examinations, it may also be true that this growth may remain largely unperceived by those who hear you regularly, just as the parent does not notice the steady growth of a child day by day. The successful completion of an examination and the resulting certificate is not only cause for personal satisfaction, but evidence of your personal and professional growth to colleagues, employers, and congregations.

All of the Guild’s certification examinations are demanding at their respective levels. A comment frequently heard from candidates goes something like this: “Even if I don’t pass the exam on the first try, I will have learned a great deal and increased my skills just by undertaking the challenge.” Depending on training and experience, many who take these examinations are successful on their first try; others may take longer. For the latter, it is important to remember that the primary goals of exam study and preparation are stimulation and self-improvement, not discouragement. While the earning of a Guild certificate is an appropriate reward, the real prize is becoming better at what you do, and therefore, because of the time and effort invested in the process, both successful and unsuccessful candidates alike are winners.

By preparing for the Service Playing Test, you are helping raise not only your own standards, but those of the church or synagogue you represent, and as we continue to do this collectively, of congregations throughout the country. Congratulations for joining this worthy cause!

# INTRODUCTION

## I. ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE

The Service Playing Test represents the first level of achievement among the various certification examinations administered by the American Guild of Organists. This is not meant to imply that the Service Playing Test is simple: at its own level it is just as demanding as the more difficult examinations are at their levels.

The first word of advice, therefore, is: do not underestimate the test. The Service Playing Test is designed to challenge the candidate and to demonstrate a level of skill and musicianship equal to the task of playing all the musical parts of a worship service in such a way as will enhance worship, rather than distract from it.

The second word of advice is: Do not overestimate your own ability and preparedness as you approach the test. Certain skills and challenges which you will encounter on the test may not be part of your usual service-playing experience; your level of competence may be sufficient to elicit warm compliments from your congregation but may fall short of equipping you adequately for the test.

This Study Guide is intended as an aid to your study and preparation, not a guarantee that you will successfully pass the test. It will attempt to be your “coach,” suggesting ways to approach the various disciplines, encouraging your progress, and teaching you some of the fine points of the game. But at game time, out on the field, as it were, the responsibility for doing well rests with you.

The 2009 revision of the Service Playing Test Study Guide was created to incorporate changes and repertoire additions to the test since 1998. Thus, this study guide includes material relative to the following test items: Organ Repertoire, Transposition, Hymn Playing, Psalm Accompaniment, and Sightreading. In some of these areas, it includes helpful articles which have appeared in *The American Organist*, and offers suggestions for further study. The current Study Guide is based on the work of Lester H. Groom, AAGO, the author of the first Service Playing Test Study Guide in 1985. Much of his text has been retained, and the AGO Professional Certification Committee wishes to acknowledge with thanks the value of his continuing contribution to this present work. Thanks also to Kevin Walters, FAGO, Paul Skevington, and Alan Hommerding for their contributions, and to David Shuler, FAGO, former Director of the Professional Certification Committee, Joyce Shupe Kull, FAGO, ChM, Elaine Dykstra, CAGO, and Jonathan B. Hall, FAGO, ChM.

## II. ABOUT THE TEST

Unlike all other AGO certification examinations, whose dates are fixed, the Service Playing Test may be taken at any time between October 1 and March 31, as long as application has been made at least one month in advance of the chosen test date.

Application forms and the test Manual of Procedure may be obtained from National Headquarters after all membership dues have been paid.

The Service Playing Test may be taken at any chapter. No local examiners are involved. The test is proctored by a duly appointed chapter member, recorded on audio tape or CD and forwarded to AGO Headquarters for grading by national examiners. The recording must be unedited, uncut, without breaks, representing the entire exam process, including any pauses or extraneous noises. Tracks may not be added. *Edited files may be rejected.*

Each examiner is familiar with this Study Guide. The performer is thus assured that each examiner listens not necessarily for his or her own preferred interpretation, registration or technique, but for generally accepted style and registrational appropriateness. In addition, examiners accept CORRECT NOTES AND RHYTHMS as only the beginning, beyond which are considered evidence of thoughtful preparation, musical cohesiveness, and clarity of musical intent.

The test proceeds item by item according to the requirements, with the proctor announcing each section on the recording and serving as page-turner if one is desired.

## III. ABOUT PREPARATION

Preparation for any Guild examination is a long-term process. Don't wait until the last month or two to begin practicing for the test, expecting to pass it; the ideal time to begin preparation is as soon as the requirements are published, annually, in the July issue of *The American Organist*. Think about this: if you could pass the test easily, it would not represent such a significant accomplishment. In order for the test to have meaning and stature, it is designed to make you reach a bit. Do not approach it lightly!

The possibility that test requirements might change from year to year makes it unwise to begin preparing during one academic year for a test during the following year. However, if study is begun in the late summer, a test date early the next spring,

within the same academic year, would be extremely reasonable.

While you may arrange to take the Service Playing Test at an organ with which you are familiar, the Manual of Procedure suggests that the test be given on a pipe organ, for the sake of authenticity in the performance of the literature. Thus, if you normally play an electronic instrument, it would be best to schedule the test on a nearby pipe organ, if one is available. And for best results, you should plan to schedule a considerable amount of practice time on the test instrument, taking into account the following considerations:

1. Keyboard touch (particularly if the test instrument is a mechanical action “tracker” organ).
2. Bench height. Be prepared to furnish wooden bench blocks if added height is needed.
3. Console layout. Disposition of manual keyboards and placement of stops and combination pistons can differ widely between instruments.
4. Pedal keyboard configuration. How many keys are in the pedalboard? Is it flat, straight, concave, radiating?
5. Distance of the console from the sound-source. (The sound delay resulting from distant pipes can be very disconcerting to one who is accustomed to the immediacy of sound emanating from nearby pipes or speakers!)
6. Room acoustics. Different acoustical environments call for adjustments in tempo, touch, and articulation.

#### IV. USE OF THIS GUIDE

This Study Guide is intended as an educational resource. But it can offer only guidelines: models, procedures, and suggestions for the kinds of study and practice which the individual candidate must develop for him- or herself. Moreover, the Study Guide does not stand by itself: the candidate should also obtain from Headquarters a copy of the current year’s examination requirements, and become thoroughly familiar with them.

Finally, this Study Guide can be used in a variety of ways: as an aid to individual preparation; as a resource for small-group study sessions; as a text for courses organized by local Guild chapters, college music departments, or Guild Student Groups; and as a resource on which single-topic chapter programs or classes may be based, whether or not these lead to preparation for the examinations.



## CHAPTER 1: EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Effective practice is not so much a matter of time spent, as it is the way in which that time is utilized. Efficient use of practice time greatly magnifies what one can accomplish within a given time period. Here are first some general ideas about practice time, followed by specific suggestions for developing an efficient and effective approach to practicing. Most of these ideas are not new, and are probably known to many of us. Still, because it is so easy to forget or overlook them, they are presented here in the form of a checklist. In your playing you may find that when something fails to fall into place, even after a reasonable amount of time and effort has been spent on it, the problem may be due to faulty practice habits. Work at developing and maintaining good habits, and review the checklist periodically to see if your practice routine is on track.

### I. GENERAL IDEAS

1. Practice regularly. A smaller amount of practice time every day is preferable to large bursts of practice two or three times a week, or worse, at irregular intervals. You can depend on the fact that a portion of what is learned today will be forgotten by tomorrow and must be reviewed and reinforced. After an interval of two or three days, it may have to be relearned entirely. So for best results, practice every day, and even at the same time of day, if possible. Practice is most effective when it is a regular part of one's daily routine.

2. Practice on different organs whenever possible. Adapting to the feel, sound, and acoustical environments of a variety of instruments helps to condition us so that minor differences no longer distract or disturb us.

3. Free the mind of other matters, in order to maximize concentration. A good idea is to keep a pad of paper at the console, and to jot down those mental memos, such as "Don't forget to call Mr. Blank this afternoon," or "I must pick up an anniversary present on the way home." When the memo has been transferred to the pad, the mind is once more free to concentrate. If you are practicing at home, turn off the telephone; if you have your phone with you, turn it off; if practicing at church, arrange to have the secretary take messages for you rather than disturb you at the console.

4. In the latter stages of preparation, practice with a page-turner, or, better yet, with several different page-turners. Some tend to turn early, some late. Some are extremely uneasy, constantly afraid that they might forget to turn, turn at the wrong time, or drop the music. You, the performer, must be prepared against all eventualities. It is wise to memorize a measure or two on either side of a page turn, so that you need never

be uneasy about what a page-turner may do.

5. Record your practice sessions. Two reasons: (1) It is amazing how much distraction can be generated just by the knowledge that a recorder is running, preserving, for better or for worse, everything you do! For some people, a recording device is more inhibiting than a room full of listeners. (2) Few of us are really able to listen objectively to ourselves when we play, but playback does help us to face the truth and to hear ourselves as others hear us. Every uneven tempo, every brushed key or missed accidental, every otherwise-overlooked flaw becomes readily apparent. And identifying one's errors is the first step in correcting them. The recording device is a valuable tool of our trade.

6. Perform your prepared repertoire in services and for friends whenever possible. As your proficiency increases, use the other disciplines required by the test in your services also. Transpose a hymn a half- or whole-step up or down. In other words, make the test requirements as much a part of your normal world as possible, and the test itself will become a mere reflection of that world. The more routine these things become, the less trauma you will experience when you encounter them on the test.

## II. ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE

1. Psychology: Since our extremities are controlled, consciously or subconsciously by the mind, good practice involves first a conditioning or training of the mind, after which the fingers and feet obey the mind's commands. It is *imperative* to realize that 99 percent of effective practice is an adventure in practical psychology, particularly in the matters of forming habits, making corrections, and in the use of the subconscious mind.

Habits: The forming of good habits and the breaking of bad ones are a discipline of the mind. We must continually analyze our performance during practice sessions, seeking to develop each correct procedure into a habit, and to keep errors from becoming habitual. Organ playing involves so many factors which compete for one's attention that the mind is not capable of caring for all of them at once. Thus good practice involves the early relegation of certain functions to habit, so that attention can be given to other functions.

Corrections: There is a psychological approach to the correction of mistakes. It involves self-analysis to determine the cause of the error, after which a synthesis of a possible cure is formulated.

The Subconscious Mind: The subconscious plays an important part in the learning process, and can be put to use during hours and moments when the conscious mind is occupied with other matters. In this way the benefits of productive practice periods are stretched far beyond the allotted console hours. The process is simple: If a problem is attacked vigorously with much repetition, it is drilled into the subconscious mind as well as the conscious mind, and work at it continues long after the conscious mind has turned it off. A day or two later we find the difficulty has been solved. But bear in mind that it was the initial diligence when attacking the problem which enabled the subconscious mind to take over; simply willing the problem to the subconscious mind, wherever that may be, is not enough. This concept, however, is not simply a dream; it has been experienced and confirmed by practicing psychologists. It works!

2. Accuracy: The person who plays the organ and is heard again and again “faking” through difficult sections, or playing rhythms without counting, or using makeshift fingerings, soon is recognized as lacking in training and discipline by examiners, if not even by congregations! On the other hand, the good organist is characterized by meticulous rhythm, note-accuracy, and good manual and pedal technique. Musicianship and professionalism involve not only talent, but also the willingness to work out details with great accuracy. No wrong notes or rhythmic errors can be blamed on the composer! Therefore, in order to realize the composer’s intent, a superior degree of accuracy is an absolute requirement. (Few among us achieve absolute, 100% accuracy, but that must always be our goal; to strive for less is to achieve much, much less!)

3. Interpretation: This is the living and vital part of music, without which music could be (and, in fact, has been) produced by machine or computer. In each performance, even by the same individual, interpretation is shaded by environment, mental climate, physical condition, audience responsiveness, and other factors. This underscores the essential unreality of CDs and other recorded performances: no matter how flawless the rendition, no matter how artistic the interpretation, the “canned” performance is always the same—a human impossibility!

Registration: Registrations must be chosen carefully to be in character, or all other interpretive considerations become more difficult. While some freedom of registration is desirable, FOR AGO CERTIFICATION TESTS IT IS ADVISABLE TO KEEP REGISTRATION AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE, and when a good registration is developed, it should be adhered to.

Expression: The word “expression,” in one sense, means the employment of the

expression pedal, if the instrument has one. Controlled use of the swell pedal is appropriate in the playing of 19th and 20th-century music. But it is important to remember that earlier composers, including Bach, had no such device, and yet performed musically and convincingly. Thus, use of expression pedals is frowned upon in the performance of music of the eighteenth century and earlier. But in a larger sense, in this repertoire, as indeed in all repertoire, expressiveness is not achieved by mechanical means; it comes from within the performer, and is communicated by such subtle means as articulation, rhythmic stresses, accents, and rubato, where this is appropriate.

4. Organization: Each aspect of the examination should be a part of your practice routine. Work out a weekly schedule, including test items S-1 through S-10. If item S-1 and S-2 are emphasized one day, work just a bit at S-3 through S-9, and leave off S-10. The following day, review S-1 and S-2, emphasize S-10 which was omitted yesterday, and work a bit on the remaining items. The next day, review S-10, emphasize S-3 and S-4, etc. In this way, each day one item will be omitted and one will be given more time, but in a six-day rotation, everything will have been emphasized at least once and practiced to some extent four more times. Keep the schedule flexible, for it is likely that sooner or later you will devote an entire period to one nasty problem which needs your full attention, and if a solution is within sight, it's best to put the schedule on hold while you work things out.

### III. PRACTICE CHECKLIST

- Slow practice. Unfamiliar or difficult passages must be practiced slowly at first; proceed with caution and concentration. When habits are built at a slow tempo, the speed may later be gradually increased. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to quick learning is fast playing in the early stages.

- Soft practice. Use soft, gentle stops in the early stages of practice, and when working out technical matters, for two important reasons: (1) Loud tones tend to impair concentration over time because they are tiring. (2) When the registration resembles the sound of a finished performance, it tempts us to "go on" with the pretense of a finished performance, making it more difficult to face reality and stop to work things out. Even the soft registration ought to be varied occasionally to refresh the ear. Save the full registration until the notes are learned and it is time to work out stop changes and interpretation.

- Fingering and Pedaling. If fingerings and pedalings are marked, follow them strictly. If a change is desired from indicated markings, white out the originals and pencil in the changes—we must use what we see and see what we use. If no fin-

gerings or pedalings are given in the score, it is essential to work some out and write them in, preferably with a colored pencil, which is seen more clearly against a black and white page. Try to discover the most natural fingering (or pedaling) which will allow each passage to be played correctly. Write in only the important finger numbers; the more numbers you include, the fewer you see! Never neglect this important task; the little extra time it takes is more than made up for in increased learning speed achieved by playing with consistent fingering and pedaling.

- Reference Marks. Make reference marks to indicate difficult or problematic passages, and work on these passages first when starting to practice. Peak concentration comes early on in a practice session, and the easier passages may be practiced later, when fatigue begins to set in.
- Small Sections. Do not practice an entire piece straight through; frequent repetition of one small section at a time results in faster learning overall.
- Solving Coordination Problems. When the mind is unable to cope with three or four simultaneous difficulties, it is usually best to break up the music into smaller component problems. Often the difficulty is one of coordination between left hand and pedal. Try left hand alone, pedal alone, then the two together. Not until these are working should the right hand be added. In other cases it may be best to practice right hand and pedal alone, or hands together without pedal, or all together very slowly. The important thing here is to isolate the difficulties and deal with them one by one.
- Attitude Regarding Mistakes. An error made once is a mistake. Made twice, it is a habit in the making. By the third time it is a habit which needs to be broken. Therefore, not a single error can be overlooked. Furthermore, a hesitation or even an insecure feeling must be counted as an error. For, had there not been a hesitation, there most likely would have been a mistake! It is necessary to realize and admit this, otherwise the danger spot in question may never be properly dealt with, and may cause problems at test-time.
- Freeze! When something goes terribly wrong, don't recoil from the keyboard in horror! Keep the keys depressed until you can find where the error is occurring; then you will know what to fix.
- The Four Mental Steps of Correcting Errors. (1) Admit there was an error. It isn't enough to say, "Oh, I didn't mean that; I'll try to remember not to do that next time." Chances are you will not remember. Admit the mistake, and stop to fix it. (2) Figure out what went wrong and why. Analyze the cause of the error. Was it faulty

fingering? Lack of concentration? Misconception of direction or reach? Carelessness? You need to know what caused the error in order to correct it. (3) Develop a cure. Depending on what went wrong, the cure may be a known and standard sort of procedure. Or it may involve inventing an exercise or drill to strengthen a technical weakness in fingers or feet. (4) Put the cure into effect, repeating it several times. Then make a run at the passage from a few measures back to be sure that the correction sticks.

## CHAPTER TWO

ITEMS S-1, S-7, S-10: PREPARED REPERTOIRE (30 points)

### I. GENERAL PREPARATION

Making Selections: From year to year the lists of repertoire in the Service Playing Test requirements may change slightly, but repertoire will remain consistent in terms of difficulty level and stylistic variety. In making your selection from the current list, two criteria may be helpful:

#### A. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Choose repertoire which may be useful to you later, in your church, teaching, or recital activity.
2. Choose repertoire which can be practiced on your instrument without adaptation; for instance, if your pedalboard goes up to high F, avoid pieces which use high G.
3. Choose works which appeal to you personally, which you feel you would enjoy playing, which would represent real progress to you. This includes your comfort level with technique and style, of course.

Remember also that the real value of the Service Playing Test is to aid in your musical development, so that it is much more to the point to learn new pieces, rather than to recycle old ones you already know. Incidentally, it may be more difficult to unlearn bad habits that have crept into familiar pieces than to learn new ones correctly from the first note!

#### B. AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS:

1. As mentioned, choose repertoire you are likely to enjoy: it is easier to communicate to a listener through your music when you yourself are enthusiastic. But remember that your own enjoyment of a composition grows as you become more familiar with it, so give a new piece some time before passing judgment on it.
2. Take into account both the room and the organ to be used on the test, choosing repertoire which will sound appropriate in that place. You would hope, for instance, not to have to play a very expressive 19th-century composition on a tracker organ with no

enclosed divisions.

**LEARN ABOUT YOUR SELECTIONS.** As you begin practicing the music, try to learn everything you can about it and its composer. The following are some suggestions to help you play an intelligent and meaningful performance.

1. Read the composer's biography, noting the historical period to which the composer belongs (baroque, romantic, modern, etc.). Learn the composer's dates and nationality, as well as the names of other composers of the same period, and major geopolitical events of that time.

2. Listen to other pieces by the same composer, including works for media other than organ, such as orchestral, instrumental, vocal, and choral works. One gains valuable insights into Brahms's organ music, for example, by carefully listening to his symphonies, piano works, and the *German Requiem*.

## II. TECHNICAL PREPARATION

**NUMBER ALL MEASURES,** beginning with the first complete measure, for general reference purposes.

**WORK OUT FINGERINGS AND PEDALINGS.** Mark in only the essential fingerings and pedalings, rather than every note. Strive to discover fingerings which employ, as much as possible, normal five-finger positions. As you work these out, pencil them in lightly at first. If they seem to work well, darken them, or (as suggested earlier) make them more visible with colored pencil. But if, after several attempts, your fingerings still feel awkward or unreliable, reconsider what you have done, and make further changes as necessary. As a rule, one should aim for the simplest, most natural fingering. Fingerings which are intricate or complex may show great ingenuity, but are ultimately counter-productive if simpler ones can be found which work as well.

One final note in this regard: no two people have exactly the same hands and feet. Composers and editors tend to include fingerings which work with their own hands, and pedal indications according to their own pedal technique. If what is printed in the music is not right for you, *change it*. There is no merit in using someone else's fingering unless it works.

**ACCIDENTALS** can be tricky. Pay careful attention to every accidental as you encounter it, and in the early learning process, quickly scan the rest of the measure to



see if that note recurs, in which case the accidental must be repeated until the next bar line. Don't be reluctant to pencil in the correct accidentals whenever there is the likelihood that failure to do so will result in a playing error.

**RHYTHM.** Be rigorous in your pursuit of rhythmic accuracy. Don't guess at complex patterns; figure them out carefully. An example of a rhythmic figure which is almost always played incorrectly is the opening of Bach's Toccata in D Minor, BWV 565:

Ex. 1.



Most of the time, we hear an accent on the G beginning the downward run, and another one on the C#, tapering off onto the D. But a closer analysis of the notation yields some surprises. If this half-measure is broken down into sixteenth-note units, it will be found that the metrical accents occur on the first rest and on the E, with a final accent on D. This produces a logical (and delightful) rhythmic structure. It is all too easy to play something the way we think we have always heard it; nevertheless, the extra work of counting it out often yields pleasant surprises!

**TEMPO.** Make certain that your chosen tempo is appropriate to the composition. Guard against rushing, which is often a result of nervousness or insecurity. Keep the tempo steady. A metronome can be of great help while practicing. Employ rubato carefully, even sparingly, when appropriate: done to excess, it can be perceived as unevenness.

Look ahead to the most complex, difficult, or most rapidly moving portion of the work. Decide on the appropriate speed for that passage, and transfer that tempo back to the beginning. You should also consider the unit of value—the smallest regularly occurring note value—and key your tempo to it. This is especially good advice when playing fugues and other works whose opening measures appear deceptively simple.

### III. INTERPRETIVE PREPARATION

“Develop... your musical imagination. Think and hear each sound as expressive and unforced. Think and hear infinitely varied, living, breathing phrases. Think and hear how all the parts, individual tones and entire phrases, flow together in a long line to produce... the whole.” (Corliss Arnold)

Think of a one or two-word adjective which describes your feelings about the work you are playing. Such words as “angry,” “peaceful,” “powerful,” etc. are useful. Even more helpful are words like “delicate,” “tidy,” “massive,” “savage,” “ethereal,” and so on. Consider this example: for Bach’s great G-Minor Fugue, BWV 542, the word “magnificent,” while accurate, seems both overused and insufficient. Perhaps “immense” gives a better sense of the size of the piece, but a word like “lofty” best conveys the work’s intent. Allow yourself time to think about conceptual matters like these, and you are far more apt to shape a performance which communicates something meaningful to your listener beyond the notes on the printed page.

### IV. PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Phrasing, articulation, the treatment of ornaments, and observance of certain performance-related customs and traditions all belong to the realm of performance practice, and thus have some bearing on both the technical and interpretive aspects of one’s playing. With today’s concern for “authentic” performance, more emphasis than ever is being placed on performing in ways which convey the composer’s original intent and/or manner of performance, insofar as that can be determined. In the study of pre-romantic music, this concern has led to the building of mechanical-action and classically voiced organs, to a rethinking of tempo and rhythm, a fresh approach to ornamentation, and even a study of ancient fingerings. A baroque or pre-baroque piece learned twenty years ago probably needs to be restudied in the light of contemporary scholarship before performing it on an AGO examination.

For a concise guide to German baroque performance practice, read the introductory section of the Concordia edition of Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein*, edited by Robert Clark and John David Peterson (1984). Matters of registration, ornamentation, articulation, rhetoric, and expression are all addressed in an accurate and readable way.

Likewise, Peter Hurford’s fine book, *Making Music at the Organ* (Oxford, 1995 ed.) contains an excellent summary of basic performance practice considerations for music of the French classic and German baroque.

Early French, English, and Italian (as well as German) keyboard practices are described in greater detail in the book *Keyboard Interpretation*, by Howard Ferguson (Oxford, 1975).

In addition, articles on performance practice have appeared, and will continue to appear, in the pages of *The American Organist*.

## V. SELECTED EXAMPLES FROM THE TEST REPERTOIRE

This section of the chapter focuses on representative selections from the Service Playing Test Repertoire. A glance at the test requirements will reveal that the pieces chosen for inclusion here in no way cover the entire range of choices. And it should not be inferred that these pieces are somehow the preferred choices from among the test's repertoire options. Rather, these pieces were selected because they raise a variety of technical and interpretive issues which need to be effectively addressed by any candidate seeking to earn a Service Playing Certificate. It goes without saying that there are countless ways to interpret any piece of music, and one should not simply imitate what one hears on a recording. Nonetheless, it is hoped that recorded examples will serve as a starting point for the candidate's own creative engagement.

### FROM REPERTOIRE GROUP A:

1. Johann Sebastian Bach: from *Orgelbüchlein*. The *Orgelbüchlein* ("Little Organ Book") is a collection of 46 short organ chorales composed around 1717. Apparently Bach planned a collection of 165 such pieces, but never completed the set. Whatever their intended purpose—liturgy, teaching, or both--the *Orgelbüchlein* settings are rich in content and expression despite their small scale.

The *Orgelbüchlein* settings have several traits in common. One is their *brevity*: Bach allots only a small page (or at most two) to each, inking in the name of the choral ahead of time. (There are pages that are blank except for the planned title). Hence, brevity is a deliberate ground rule. Also, the pieces are *soprano-dominated*, with the melody uppermost. Another trait is *variety of style and texture*. Still another is negative: there are *no* examples of the phrase-by-phrase treatment so typical of Buxtehude and others, the melody accompanied by *Vorimitation* (the accompaniment crafted from the melody, and introducing it ahead of the solo line).

Let's look at *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten*. BWV 642. In this piece, the material centers on three distinct ideas: (1) the chorale melody, prominently presented without elaboration in the highest voice, (2) a primarily stepwise figure in the inner parts which

is essentially rhythmic in character, based on a recurrent pattern of sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and (3) a more angular pedal line, which occasionally employs some of the same rhythmic motives of the alto and tenor parts. Although a variety of approaches to this work are possible—from quiet reflection to unrestrained exuberance—all depend upon a clean and articulate handling of the rhythmic figures in the lower voices. Whatever registration is employed, the piece is to be played on one manual. Try using a manual plenum (Principals 8', 4', 2', and Mixture), with pedal to balance. (A 16' or 8' pedal reed might have been added also.) Note the consistently clear articulation in the lower voices, as well as the way in which the rhythmic figures are organized into distinct groupings. As mentioned, other interpretations of this work are possible; these may imply a more gentle approach to registration. Note that in both this piece and the next, fermatas are used simply to mark the ends of phrases in the chorale melody; they in no way imply holding or stopping-points.

2. Johann Sebastian Bach: *Wenn wir in Höchsten Nöten sein*, BWV 641 from *Orgelbüchlein*. This is a lovely example of a florid organ chorale: the *cantus firmus* (chorale melody) is presented in the topmost voice, highly ornamented and elaborated, over a fairly simple accompaniment in the lower three parts. A great deal of sensitivity is required for an effective performance of this work: the solo melody, on a separate manual, ought to sound free and improvisatory, while the left hand and pedal remain rhythmically steady and secure. The right hand plays a combination of flutes at 8', 4', 2 2/3', and 2' over an 8' flute in the left hand, with flutes 16' and 8' in the pedal. Choose your right-hand solo combination carefully, lest it become too strident when the melody ascends above the staff. Keep in mind, too, that the right-hand ornaments (trills, mordents, etc.) are expressive gestures, and should be kept fluid and flexible, never formulaic, nor snappy, nor rigidly measured.

3. Johann Sebastian Bach (attr.): *Fugue in F Major* from *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*. Tradition ascribes this work to Bach, along with the rest of the “eight little preludes and fugues,” though it is almost certainly the work of one of his students (either Johann Ludwig Krebs or his father Ludwig Tobias). As with all fugues, one should play this piece in a straightforward fashion, with an articulate touch. Be especially careful of the trill-like sixteenth notes in the theme: to avoid rushing, try detaching the notes slightly, while “leaning” on the strong beats a bit to help clarify the underlying pulse. As always, a metronome is your best friend. And remember that any phrasing or articulation which is applied to the subject ought to be employed consistently throughout. One registration might be a light, clear principal chorus of 8', 4', 2', and mixture; any similar combination will work as well, provided clarity is uppermost.

4. Dietrich Buxtehude: chorale preludes. Buxtehude wrote approximately 70 compositions based on chorale tunes, either chorale preludes or chorale fantasias. A few tunes are used more than once. A typical Buxtehude chorale prelude might begin with the accompaniment, suggesting out the cantus before the solo voice enters. As mentioned above, this technique is called *Vortimitation* (or fore-imitation). Think of it as “setting the stage” or “pre-inforcing” the melody. Generally, the melody is then presented in an ornamented form. A good example is *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (also known as the “Passion Chorale”). This piece would be an excellent choice, on account of its usefulness as well as its sheer beauty.

In other cases, Buxtehude takes a more direct approach, attacking the melody directly and only later introducing fore-imitation. Examples of this include *Ein feste Burg* and *Komm, heiliger Geist*. Here, again, the melody is highly ornamented. (Notice, in the latter piece, how the surging upward scale of the opening is balanced by the one at the very end!)

It’s not uncommon to put all of these preludes into one bucket called “ornamented chorale.” However, it’s important to be aware of precisely how Buxtehude organizes the piece, and presents the tune.

In still other cases, Buxtehude composes something akin to a choral fantasia: the melody is part of a rich concerted texture rather than as an ornamented cantus firmus.

An example of this last type is *Von Gott will ich nicht lassen*, BuxWV 221. This piece should be played with a slightly detached touch as is appropriate for music of this period. This can sometimes be difficult to employ consistently within a single line as well as throughout all the parts. If it is a new technique for you, practice all the lines separately before attempting to play all the parts together. Registration can be kept to principals at 8’, 4’ and 2’ pitches with appropriate support from the pedal or it can be registered on a larger scale. Of more importance is a tempo and sharp pedal registration that allows the motivic materials to come through.

#### FROM REPERTOIRE GROUP B:

5. Felix Mendelssohn: Adagio from Sonata in F Minor, Op. 65, No. 1.

Felix Mendelssohn composed six sonatas for organ, though they do not precisely follow the conventions of sonata form. He also wrote a set of three preludes and fugues, opus 37, which are varied in style and of great musical integrity. Strive for a clear legato here, and pay particular attention to the phrase marks in the score—they are the composer’s own, and Mendelssohn took great care in notating his intentions precisely in this regard. In this movement, much of the music for the hands is written in a texture of four or more voices; this can make a consistent legato difficult to achieve. Therefore, work out fingerings carefully, and be alert to the possibility of reassigning inner parts to one hand or the other. (Indeed, some editions offer

suggestions as to where this technique can be employed effectively.) For registration, select two gentle manual sounds (one on each keyboard) which have similar volume but different timbres, and simply follow the composer's instructions regarding manual changes. You might try an 8' flute drawn on one manual, and an 8' Salicional on the other, with a pedal of soft flutes at 16' and 8'.

6. Louis Vierne: *Berceuse from Vingt-quatre pièces en style libre*. The *Twenty-four Pieces in Free Style*, opus 31, were composed in 1913. (His Fourth Symphony, opus 32, came the following year.) These were written so as to be playable on either the pipe organ or the harmonium, a type of reed organ which enjoyed great popularity in Europe during the late 19th and early 20th century. Inasmuch as the harmonium had no pedalboard (the player's feet were kept busy pumping the bellows), harmonium music was scored for manuals only. Nevertheless, when these pieces are played on the organ, the composer's manual and pedal instructions should be followed. Thus, in *Berceuse* (Lullaby), the pedal part comes and goes. Notice, too, that the manual and pedal indications follow the usual French custom: letters like "G" (for *Grand Orgue*) and "R" (for *Récit*), standing alone, indicate uncoupled manual divisions, while adjacent letters show the manuals coupled. For example, "G.R." means that the *Récit* (Swell) is to be coupled to the *Grand Orgue* (Great). In the *Berceuse*, then, the Swell to Great coupler is to be removed for measures 29-36, and then re-engaged. Vierne also provides explicit registration and tempo directions; follow these, and strive for a very fluid legato throughout.

7. Marcel Dupré: *You will sing of the glory of the angels from Dans la Gloire des Invalides*. This is one of eleven pieces that were part of the dedicatory service for the Beuchet-Debierre organ at St. Louis des Invalides in Paris in December 1957. At the dedication ceremony, the presiding Cardinal intoned eleven separate invocations in Latin restating the mission of the new organ. Dupré followed each invocation with an improvisation based upon the meaning of the verset. Most of the pieces are less than 2 ½ minutes in length and they range in difficulty from moderately easy to hard. This collection is available in print thanks to the reconstruction work of Dr. David A. Stech. With the exception of a few measures in the middle of the piece, it is all played on the swell registered with an 8' string and string celeste. Pedal registration is indicated as soft flues 16' and 8' and swell to pedal 8'. Use of the pedal coupler depends on the particular needs of each particular organ, so use this advisedly. Measures 18 through 25 employ an 8' flute on the great. Should you have difficulty keeping the texture very legato once the solo voice has entered, playing the solo line an octave lower will allow the right hand to play a few notes of the upper left hand part that is on the swell while also playing the solo line. This technique is not difficult but will require a bit of practice to do it smoothly. The only other caution regards the phrasing of the opening four

measures, noting those few instances where the notes are ties, not slurs.

#### FROM REPERTOIRE GROUP C:

8. Gerald Near: *O sacrum convivium* from Saint Augustine's Organbook. American composer Gerald Near (b. 1942) has written several books of fine organ pieces based on Gregorian melodies; the title of this collection honors the Denver church to which it is dedicated. *O sacrum convivium* is a quiet communion piece meant to be played on Swell strings, with phrases of the tune soloed out on an 8' flute (with Swell coupled to it). Note that the soloed-out portions of the tune are enclosed in brackets, even though no specific instructions like "Gt." or "Solo" appear in the score. The piece should be played the way plainsong is sung—with a great deal of fluidity and a slight "give and take" in the rhythm. Avoid metronomic rigidity! But as you play, be aware of the way eighth-notes are arranged into groups of 2, 3, or 4 notes. In some places (such as in measures 9 and 10), the eighth-notes are simultaneously grouped differently in each hand: all this subtlety should be conveyed, while at the same time a singing legato must be maintained within each phrase.

9. Jean Langlais: *Pasticcio* from Organ Book. A *pasticcio* (French *pastiche*) is generally defined as a work assembled from various disparate elements, as in a medley, hodgepodge, or potpourri. Here the composer combines the staccato chords of the beginning with later legato melodies based on pitches for the names Jacqueline and Giuseppe. The ten pieces of the *Organ Book* were a wedding gift for the marriage of Jacqueline Marchal and Giuseppe Englert. Langlais' *Pasticcio* is an exciting piece to play and hear. The work requires lots of vigor and rhythmic vitality for successful performance. Observe the staccato indication, but try not to let the notes become so short as to sound "clipped." The occasional legato line must be scrupulously observed to provide contrast to all the staccato "chatter." Try for a registration as near as you can get to Langlais' suggestion—if you don't have a Swell Vox Humana, try substituting an 8' Oboe, Schalmey, or Krumhorn. No doubt Langlais conceived this work for performance in a large, resonant building: in our smaller, acoustically drier American churches, a brisker tempo may be more effective. Still, one must guard against excessive speed, lest it become reckless. Animation and excitement can be conveyed as much by clarity and precision as by sheer velocity.

10. Wayne L. Wold Trio on *People, Look East* from Light One Candle: Advent Organ Collection. This collection of three pieces for advent is named for the opening piece "Light one candle to watch for Messiah." The third piece in the set is based on "Wake, Awake". All three pieces begin with an intonation that introduces the piece in some manner, but what follows in each case uses a different format. "Light one candle"

is the basis for a prelude, fugue and variation, three pieces that can be used individually. "Wake, awake" is a suite consisting of a prelude, pastorale and finale. Other than its intonation, "People, look east" is a single trio. Please note that the exam requirement is for the Trio alone, no intonation. American composer Wayne Wold (b. 1954) has created a delightful piece, making much use of the opening eight notes of the tune. This pattern begins in the pedal in varying octaves and degrees of the key. While the pedal line is not particularly difficult, it does take some effort to play the first three notes of the opening pattern so that they are each heard distinctly and that they are even. Markings are present for the eighth-note phrases and it would be to your advantage to take the time to mark all similar places with that phrasing so there will be consistency across the piece. Registrations are indicated and are quite successful. Should your organ not have a 1 1/3' stop, hopefully there will be a 1 3/5'. If not, choose something that contrasts well with the 8' and 2' registration of the upper line. On the last page where the keyboards are alternating, be particularly careful that each new measure begins with clean, simultaneous attacks of the two parts and of the pedal when it enters.

Carson Cooman: *Toccata only* from *Toccata, Aria, and Finale* (2018). Carson Cooman is a young composer who already boasts a very large opus list, and his creativity, so far from slowing down, is really hitting its stride! His three-movement *Toccata, Aria, and Finale*, published in 2018, is well worth getting acquainted with. Incisive and modern, it is also very accessible to audiences, projects a coherent sense of form, and above all is filled with a positive energy that not all "modern music" can show for itself.

To learn the *Toccata*, practice the ostinato pattern in the left hand until it is absolutely secure. (It is a simple pattern, but very easily displaced when other tasks are added!) Add the right-hand pattern and, eventually, the big chords. The piece contains numerous shifts in meter, which must be extremely clear and confident in order to project the form of the piece. Keep the eighth note equal across all of these transitions and you will succeed.



## TWO ADDITIONAL SERVICE PLAYING TEST PIECES

Kathleen Thomerson, FAGO, CHM

**Dans la Gloire des Invalides (Marcel Dupré, 1886-1971).** These eleven versets were improvised by Dupré as part of the dedication service of the Beuchet-Debierre organ at the church of St. Louis des Invalides in Paris on December 8, 1957. A recording made of the service was issued on LP by Erato, with this portion listed as “Onze Versets Improvisés en réponse aux invocations de Son Eminence, Maurice Feltin.” Ten invocations were intoned by His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Feltin, interspersed with improvised responses by Dupré. After a concluding prayer, the improvisations concluded with a Toccata.

The vinyl disc, Erato LDE 3082, has not been available since the 1960s. David A. Stech of the music faculty of the University of Alaska Fairbanks reconstructed Dupré’s improvisations and they were published by Wayne Leupold Editions in 2004 (reviewed in TAO March 2006). Dr. Stech is now Emeritus Professor of Music at UAF, having taught there from 1972 to 2007.

“In the Glory of the Invalides” was added to the Service Playing 2009 repertoire list in October 2008 as an alternate for Dupré’s *Sixteen Chorales (Le Tombeau de Titelouze)*, and replaces the *Chorales* in the 2010 repertoire list. Any one of the eleven sections may be chosen by the candidates. A CD is now available of Dupré’s original performance, so questions about tempi and registration are easily answered. Haydn House ([www.HaydnHouse.com](http://www.HaydnHouse.com)), P. O. Box 608, Dennis, MA 02638, makes private transfers to CD for backup only, and lists the 1957 Organ Dedication Service, St. Louis des Invalides, for \$12 on page 2 of their Organ Loft Collection. The disc also has organist Bernard Gavoty playing Vierne, Franck and Balbastre works (review by Rollin Smith, March 2009 TAO).

Verset V, “You will sing of the glory of the angels”, Most of the versets are two or three pages long. Even though the organ being dedicated was 3 manuals and 61 stops, most of the pieces can be played on one or two manuals. Registration indications are given by Dr. Stech. The chanted invocation should be omitted when a verset is played for the test. For those who are wondering about the “invalides” in the title, the historic complex of buildings houses military pensioners. The Hôtel National des

Invalides was founded in 1671 by King Louis XIV to provide a place for disabled or impoverished war veterans. The Church Saint-Louis was added as an annex to the complex in 1679. Residents were required to attend daily mass there. The church is connected directly with the royal chapel, the Dôme des Invalides. Napoleon Bonaparte's tomb is in this chapel, along with those of famous French military leaders and war heroes. At the 1957 concert, Bernard Gavoty and a brass ensemble also played Vierne's "Marche Triomphale pour le Centenaire de Napoleon."

**Trio on People, Look East (Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954).** Dr. Wold is Associate Professor of Music and College Organist at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and was born in Minnesota. Besançon is the third section of his "Light One Candle: An Advent Organ Collection", published in 1996 by Augsburg Fortress. The other hymntune settings are on Tif in Veldele and Wachet Auf.

The trio on the hymntune Besançon. This 3-page trio is preceded by a 1-page "Intonation on *People, Look East*," which should not be played for the test. The suggested registration is 8' and 2' stops in the right hand, 8', 4', and 1 1/3' in the left hand, with 8' Flute and 4' Principal in the pedal. Tempo is Allegretto, lively and playful. Articulation groups are indicated with slurs and staccato marks, and when followed will reflect the playful character. Be sure to play F# in m. 5, top line, p. 26. No registration changes are needed during the trio, but the last page has frequent back and forth manual changes. Since the music repeats a motif at the changes, it's only necessary to read every other measure. Keeping your eyes glued to the music might be risky in this passage. The Trio on *People, Look East* has been added to Group C of the Service Playing Requirements (July 2009 TAO). Dans la Gloire des Invalides is in Group B. The three pieces chosen from Groups A, B, and C are no longer played together at the beginning of the test as S1, but will be played in the order chosen by the candidate, at the position of S1 (Prelude), S7 (Offertory) and S10 (Postlude).

## CHAPTER THREE

### ITEM S-2: HYMN TRANSPOSITION (10 points)

#### I. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSPOSITION

Many candidates for the Service Playing Certificate, approaching the test, seem to fear transposition more than any of the other items. This is not surprising. Most of us are taught, from our earliest music lessons, to play exactly what we read. Thus, we may experience anxiety and even panic when asked to play something in a key different from that in which we see it written.

Fear not! Transposition approached systematically and logically, can be learned rather quickly. Using the method illustrated here, it is not unusual for a student to transpose, for the very first time, a complete hymn, even to a remote key, within fifteen or twenty minutes. This is done slowly and hesitatingly, of course, but, like any skill, speed and smoothness will develop with practice.

The transpositions you will do for the Service Playing Test will be based on a hymn of your choosing from the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*. This booklet is available free of charge from AGO National Headquarters. If you do not already own it, send for it NOW! But even if you do not own it yet, you may begin practicing transposition with some simple hymns from your own church hymnal. Easy tunes like DUKE STREET, HAMBURG, HYMN TO JOY, and TALLIS' CANON are a good place to start.

According to the Service Playing Test requirements, you are to select one hymn from the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*, and to perform two transpositions of this hymn, not more than a major second in either direction. This means that you will need to prepare four different possible transpositions of the hymn: one half step up, one whole step up, one half step down, and one whole step down. (The use of pedals is optional.) At the test, the proctor will choose and announce the keys in which you are to play the hymn. However, this is not transposition at sight. If you have prepared your transpositions carefully, and practiced them thoroughly, there is absolutely no reason why you should not do well on this portion of the test.

The technique we shall use in our approach to transposition is based on interval recognition. As soon as possible after the principles of this method are understood, you should proceed from well-known hymns to unfamiliar hymns. This will prevent you from transposing by ear, and not by method. In the act of transposition, of course, the ear plays an essential role, but train yourself to transpose by method, and not by guess.

As was already mentioned, this technique is based on reading musical intervals. Before beginning, let's review intervals, both horizontal (melodic) and vertical (harmonic). Here are some intervals; can you name them quickly? If not, you'll need to review your knowledge of intervals before proceeding.

**Ex. 2**



Answers: (a) Major 2nd, (b) Perfect 5th, (c) Minor 6th, (d) Augmented 4th or tritone, (e) Major 7th, (f) Major 3rd, (g) Minor 7th.

Although the method of transposition to be presented here is based on interval recognition, other skills you may already possess can prove helpful as well. For instance, if you are skilled at harmonic recognition, you may be able to spot significant harmonies (like II<sup>6</sup> or V<sup>7</sup> chords) in the original key, and then quickly relocate these same functions in the new key. Likewise, if you have good keyboard facility, your fingers may be able to locate a chord in the new key by “feel” as you read in the old key. But the interval system of transposition also works well by itself, and is a reliable method for most people.

## II. A METHOD FOR TRANSPOSITION, DEMONSTRATED

Let us illustrate the process involved in transposing by interval, using the hymntune AVE VIRGO VIRGINUM (“Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain”). This hymn is found at #1 in the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*; at this point it will be helpful for the reader to obtain his or her copy of the booklet and refer to the hymn being discussed throughout the next few pages.

A. First, locate the interval of transposition:

The hymntune AVE VIRGO VIRGINUM, as it appears at #1 in the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*, is in the key of F Major. Let us transpose it into the key of G Major. This is one whole step upward.

B. Orient your thinking to the key signature of the new key:

The “old” key of F Major has one flat. In the new key of G, the flat is gone, and

an F# is added.

C. Locate the first chord in the new key by interval (see Ex. 3):

First, move the soprano F up a whole step to G.

Next, move the alto C up a whole step to D.

Then, move the tenor up a whole step from A to B.

You may have noticed that in the original key, the bass note of this chord (F) is an octave below the soprano note. Translating this vertical octave into the new key will quickly yield a G in the bass of the new opening chord.

Place your fingers on the new chord, and strike the keys simultaneously.

Ex. 3



Ex. 4



D. Proceed slowly, transposing chord by chord. In each case, be sure not to sound any notes of a chord until all fingers are in place. Then strike each chord cleanly. This will prevent the clumsy “trial and error” method of transposition by ear. Locate notes in each new chord in this order:

1. Look for common tones between adjacent chords. In this hymn, the alto note of the first and second chords is the same as the soprano note of the third chord. (See Ex. 4)  
4) In fact, this same note is repeated again in the tenor of the sixth and seventh chords.

2. Find voices (soprano, alto, tenor, or bass) where notes move by the smallest horizontal intervals. Between the fifth and sixth chords of this hymn, the soprano moves one scale step up. In the new key, this means it moves from G to A.

3. In each new chord look for any vertical doubling. The second chord of the second measure has an octave between tenor and bass. Because the bass note of that second chord doubles the tenor note an octave below, and we already know what the tenor is (D), because it is the same pitch that the alto played four times in the first measure, the bass will also be a D one octave lower.

4. Transpose the remaining notes in measures one and two by interval. The

tenor and bass move down by step between the second and third chords. The tenor is a whole step, but the bass is a half step. Don't forget that the new key signature has an F#. Now, are you ready? Move your fingers to the new chord, and play it cleanly.

5. Follow the same procedure as you move from chord to chord through the hymn. Soon you will be able to spot easy melodic (horizontal) interval movements, and the doublings very quickly. Sometimes a voice will skip a wider, more difficult interval between chords; in that case, it's often easier to transpose by observing how the note in question fits into the vertical structure of the chord.

E. Work on only one phrase of the hymn until it is learned before going on.

F. Only one accidental occurs in this hymn. It is in the alto of measure 12. Accidentals are easy to deal with: you need not think about the sharps or flats in the new key. First, mentally transpose the diatonic (unaltered) note into the new key, and then, if the accidental is a sharp, raise the transposed note a half step; if the accidental is a flat, lower it a half step. Be alert to the fact that naturals may go either way, depending on the key signature. Here, the B-natural in line 3 becomes a C# in the new key. The B-natural cancelled the B-flat of the original key, so it was raising the note by a half step.

G. After you have finished the entire hymn, transposing it one whole step upward, repeat it several times before moving to another transposition. Then try it (perhaps on another day) in E Major (4 sharps). (For the fourth transposition, you may simply and successfully transpose this hymn into the key of F# by mentally changing the key signature to 6 sharps and reading the notes exactly as they appear. Watch out for those accidentals, though! The B-natural in measure 12 becomes a B#.)

H. After you have practiced this hymn in the required keys, try it in some more remote keys. You will discover that this method of transposition by interval works equally well in all keys, and except for remembering the key signature of the new key, there is no difference in the process from one key to the next.

I. Difficulties often arise between staves—when your eye must jump from one staff to the next on the page. To avoid this, try to see the last chord of the previous staff as though it were imprinted before the first chord on the new staff. If all else fails, find the first chord on the new staff the same way you located the first chord of the hymn, by intervals from the original key. Remember, this will not be a problem on the test, for there you will be dealing only with prepared and practiced material.

J. From the earliest stages, make a serious effort at playing your transpositions continu-

ously and musically. Keep a steady pulse, even if it is a slow one at first. If you make an error, resist the urge to stop, and try to regain your bearings as you go on. On the Service Playing Test, steadiness and continuity count for a lot, so practice your transpositions until you can play them confidently at an appropriate hymn-singing tempo.

K. The more proficient you become at transposition, the more opportunities you will find to employ this useful skill. Hymn transposition is only the beginning. Solo and anthem accompaniments can often be transposed to great advantage. Organ pieces, especially those used as hymn preludes, often need to be transposed into the keys of the hymns which they precede. The possibilities are limitless, but the key here, as elsewhere, is careful, deliberate, systematic practice. Invest your time and effort wisely, and you will reap rich musical rewards.

## CHAPTER FOUR

ITEMS S-5 and S-9: HYMN-PLAYING (10 points each - 20 points total)

### I. INTRODUCTION TO HYMN-PLAYING

Just as in item S-2, the hymn for transposition, the hymn-playing portion of the Service Playing Test requires the use of the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*. The candidate is to select any two hymns from the booklet, except the one chosen for transposition, and to play “two stanzas of each as if leading a large, enthusiastic congregation. Use of pedals for at least one stanza is mandatory. Some contrast in the presentation of the two stanzas is expected, as is sensitivity to the text” (from the Service Playing Test Requirements). No musical introduction to the hymns is required on the test.

Good hymn-playing is identified by certain qualities and characteristics which are absent from poor hymn-playing, namely:

1. Accuracy. This should go without saying, but what passes for accuracy in hymn-playing heard in many church services demonstrates the need to say it again and again. All notes in the manual and pedal parts must be correct, as should all the rhythms.

2. Steady tempo. There is no place for *tempo rubato* in hymn-playing. A steady, metrical pulse is the organist’s only means of holding things together, so *ritardandi* are to be avoided at all costs, until the end of the final stanza. A *ritard* at any other point compels the singing congregation to slow down, after which it can be very difficult to get things moving again.

3. A clean touch which is both legato-sounding and articulate. Overly choppy playing contradicts the essentially vocal nature of a hymntune, while excessive “gooey” legato provides insufficient rhythmic drive to lead hymn singing effectively. In real life, the ideal hymn-playing touch will vary from organ to organ, from room to room, even from hymn to hymn. It must be sufficiently legato to be musically supportive, and articulate enough to convey a sense of rhythmic vitality and direction.

4. A clear sense of leadership. The commonly-held notion of an organist “accompanying” a singing congregation is entirely wrong: it implies that the congregation is doing the leading, and that the organist is just “following along.” Were this the case, the results would be musically catastrophic – imagine a congregation of, say, 300 singers, each trying to sing at his or her own tempo, maybe even in his or her own key! Of



course, the reality is just the opposite: it is the organist who does the leading, and, to a large degree, the better the leadership, the better the singing. Thus the organist, be he or she ever so gentle a person elsewhere in life, must “assume command” at the console, and lead the hymn singing decisively, with consistency, and with clarity of purpose. This is not to say that he or she should pay no attention to the singers; in fact, the opposite is true. The singing congregation is looking to the organist for leadership and direction on every hymn; it is the responsibility of the organist to provide it.

5. Inspiration. Whether you realize it or not, you communicate with your congregation through your hymn-playing. If your approach to hymn-playing is insecure, indifferent, or careless, the congregation will respond accordingly, and the singing will likewise suffer. But, if you can convey an attitude of confidence, enthusiasm and excitement about a hymn, this too is contagious! In some ways, hymns are the most uniquely difficult things to perform musically. They are written to be sung by unrehearsed non-musicians. Hymns are extremely concise and repetitive: in no other musical form is so much exact musical repetition considered normal. Hymns are written as vocal music, and as such, to a greater or lesser degree, must be adapted for performance on the organ. And yet, what a wonderful challenge it is to bring this tiny musical form to life! In the hands of an inspired organist, a good hymn text can convey an entire universe of meaning. It is this kind of enthusiasm and inspired playing for which the examiners are listening.

6. Creativity. There are many ways to make hymn playing more than just a repetitive exercise lasting three or four stanzas. The organist may employ any of a number of creative techniques to enhance the musical interest of the accompaniment. Some of these techniques will be discussed below. This type of creativity is what the examiners hope to hear in the second stanza of each hymn on the Service Playing Test.

## II. A SUGGESTED METHOD FOR HYMN PRACTICE

The method for practicing hymns described in this section is certainly not the only one possible; indeed, in hymn playing, perhaps more than in most other aspects of our profession, the organist has to find his or her own way. This is especially true when it comes to the playing of folk-style. Since folk hymnody requires a completely different approach in preparation and performance, the following remarks apply more directly to hymnody in traditional style. The matter of adapting folk hymn to the organ is addressed later in this chapter in Alan Hommerding’s article from the November 2008 issue of *The American Organist*.

A. Play the bass line (the lowest notes of the hymn) in the pedal alone. These bass notes

should not be doubled in the left hand during the actual playing of the hymn: doing so serves no musical purpose, since manual-to-pedal couplers make the playing of these notes by the hands redundant. Moreover, doubling the bass notes in the manual makes unnecessary work for the left hand, cluttering and complicating the fingering, and making legato difficult. EXCEPTION: When a stanza of the hymn is to be played without pedal, then of course the hands will play the bass part as well.

It is acknowledged that for many who have played hymns for years without formal study, perhaps having learned to play them first on the piano, omitting the bass line from the left hand can be a most difficult challenge. But learning to do so is a task worth the effort, since, once achieved, it actually makes hymn much easier to play.

B. Play the tenor line in the left hand; play the soprano line in the right hand. The alto line is normally divided between the right and left hands, depending on which is (1) nearer or (2) less busy at the moment. Example 5 shows a possible disposition of parts for the hymntune ABBOT'S LEIGH, No. 2 in the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*.

Ex. 5

The musical score for Example 5 is presented in three staves. The top staff (Soprano) uses a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The middle and bottom staves (Tenor and Alto) use bass clefs and a 3/4 time signature. The music consists of eight measures. Fingering numbers are placed above and below notes to indicate fingerings. Performance markings include accents (v) and up-bow/air (u) symbols. The first line ends with 'etc.'.

C. The treatment of repeated notes in hymns deserves some special attention. What to do with repeated notes varies with their location in the music, the type of hymn, its tempo, the acoustics, the congregation and so on. But, for the most part, the principle is much the same as that for treatment of repeated notes in other organ literature. That is, when repetitions involve quarter notes and notes of lesser duration, the first note's value is halved, and a half-value rest is inserted in between the notes. (See Example 6.) Longer notes preceding a repeated note are treated as though they are dotted-quarter notes. (See Example 7.)

### Ex. 6



### Ex. 7



1. At first, to learn this principle thoroughly, apply it to every repeated note in all voices. This will produce a somewhat unmusical result in many hymns, but will help in the development of complete independence and coordination of fingers and feet. From Example 8 it will be seen that whenever a note repeats, it is lifted, even when the repetition is in a different voice (unless the soprano melody would be broken, as in m. 1 to 2).

### Ex. 8 (REGENT SQUARE, No. 6 in *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*)



2. When the repeated-note principle has been mastered, exceptions may be made, and sometimes extensively, if the music's effect is thereby enhanced. For instance, in a hymn like No. 1, "Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain," repeated notes involve all voices in the opening bar. To avoid choppiness, it might be best to tie some of the repeated notes in the lower voices. Leave the melody detached, however, so that the congregation can follow it easily. Similarly, ties are called for in hymn No. 7, "O Day of God, Draw Nigh" as regards the treatment of the soprano and alto in the first full measure. The soprano line must be kept intact and legato preserved. Refer again to hymn No. 6, specifically the Refrain. The bass line may need ties in order to avoid choppiness when articulating the chords in the three upper parts. In any case, hymns which involve long notes in the bass line may benefit by having those notes broken up by the addition of rests. A rest at the end of a bar will create an accent on the downbeat of the next bar. Likewise, rests in other places may produce a syncopated effect useful in certain musical styles.

D. Registration for congregational hymn singing is basic. The heart of it is the principal chorus, that is, principals at 8', 4' and 2' pitches. On a gentle, devotional-type hymn, the

2' may be omitted, but the 4' must always be present to support the singing. In a more powerful or festive hymn, the mixture may be added to the chorus. When possible, utilize exposed pipework as the basis for your hymn registrations; unenclosed pipes provide more effective leadership by virtue of the immediacy and sense of presence they project. If the principal chorus seems thin or unsubstantial, feel free to "warm it up" by the addition of flutes from the Great or the Swell, as long as clarity is not sacrificed. For final stanzas of big hymns, a clear reed (such as an oboe or trumpet) may be added, along with a light 16' manual stop. Register the pedal to balance the manual stops, and employ manual to pedal couplers as needed.

Avoid the use of celestes and tremolo in hymn playing; these tend to muddy the texture, as well as distort pitch and pulse. Exercise discretion regarding the swell pedal: generally, avoid its use for expressive purposes, but employ it occasionally to change the timbre of the ensemble (as when the Swell is opened to make the Swell reeds more prominent).

E. Tempo is one of the most critical elements of good hymn playing. No single tempo is right for every hymn or every situation, but tempos which are either too fast or too slow are to be avoided. A hymn which is rushed leaves the congregation breathless, and prevents the message of its text from being grasped by the singers. And a tempo which is too slow will deflate the hymn, robbing it of meaning and of direction. A hymn's ideal tempo depends on many factors: the age and makeup of the congregation, the time of day, acoustical environment, the nature of the hymn itself, its function in the service, the nature of the organ, the weather, and so on. But perhaps the most important consideration is the hymn's text. The hymn must be played at such a pace that the meaning and message of the poetry is delivered with maximum effectiveness. This means that the tempo should be slow enough for the words to be articulated and understood by the singers, yet fast enough to project direction, vitality and continuity of thought. Perhaps the best way to determine the ideal tempo of a hymn is to sing it yourself, first without accompaniment, and next, as you play. As you sing, try to keep the meaning of the words in the forefront of your mind: if you find this difficult at your chosen tempo, you may need to adjust the pace. At the same time, consider the musical characteristics of the hymn. What is it like? A march? A folksong? A lullaby? A dance? A prayer? Hymn-tunes come from a broad variety of musical sources, and each type of music must be approached differently. In short, consider both text and tune as you plan your hymn tempos, and aim for a musically and poetically satisfying result.

F. An important question to consider is this: how long should the final note of each stanza be held, and how does one manage the space between stanzas so that each new verse gets off to a good start? There is no single answer to this question, but

here are two principles which ought to guide one's thinking and practice: (1) the duration of the last note of a stanza is not as critical as the duration of the silence after it. A congregation will naturally breathe during the silence following the last note of a verse. If that silence is not long enough, the congregation will not be prepared to start the new verse cleanly. If the silence lasts too long, uncertainty and confusion will result. In either case, the singing will suffer. *Generally speaking, the duration of silence following the last note of each verse will equal one metrical pulse* (i.e., a quarter note in 4/4 time, a half note in 2/2 time, etc.). This gives the congregation a chance to take a deep breath, and also serves as a preparatory beat to the start of the new verse. This leads us to the second principle: (2) the space between verses should be perceived as metrical. In other words, the rhythmic pulse of the hymn should continue through the space between the stanzas. Normally, the final note of a verse is lengthened by a pulse or two (or three). This is then followed by a beat of silence, with the new verse starting strictly in time. So don't stop counting when you reach the end of each stanza! It is important to work out beforehand exactly how long you intend the final note to last, to be rhythmically precise in your execution, and to treat the endings of all stanzas, except perhaps the last, in exactly the same way.

### III. CREATIVE HYMN-PLAYING TECHNIQUES

There are many ways in which an organist can vary the accompaniment to a hymntune, stanza by stanza. Inasmuch as the Service Playing Test requires some degree of contrast between the two stanzas of each hymn in items S-5 and S-9, it may prove helpful to enumerate some of these techniques.

But first, let it be said that there are two aspects of a hymn which should never be altered from stanza to stanza: a hymn's melody, for one, should not be tampered with. And, once a hymn has begun, its tempo should not be allowed to change from stanza to stanza. Practically all the other aspects of a hymn's performance at the organ can be modified: registration, texture, phrasing, articulation and harmonization are all features which may be altered for the purposes of variety and of highlighting the hymn's text.

A. REGISTRATION CHANGES. Perhaps the simplest way to achieve contrast is by changing the registration during the course of the hymn. It seems natural to want to add the Swell reeds for a bigger sound on stanza 2 of a hymn of praise like No. 2, ABBOT'S LEIGH, "Lord, You Give the Great Commission." But don't fall into the trap of doing this automatically! Not every hymn has a second stanza which requires a reed chorus! In fact, the second stanza of a hymn like "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (No. 14 in the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*) seems to require an even gentler registration than its first stanza. In choosing your registrations, therefore, as well as whatever other variation techniques you might employ, always consider the needs of the text first and foremost.

It is the meaning and sense of the words which, ideally, should be illustrated by one's manner of playing.

B. PHRASING. The use of variety in one's approach to phrasing is a helpful way to clarify the poetic meaning of a hymn. Attention to the punctuation of a hymn's text will often reveal places where different phrasing is needed from stanza to stanza. (As an example, refer to hymn No. 16, "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life" and compare the difference in phrasing in the last line. The first stanza would need a phrase break at the comma in the second measure, while the second stanza would have no break at this measure.) When this is the case, the organist should phrase the music *as it should be sung*, that is, the music should breathe when the text permits, and should carry through when a breath is not called for.

C. ARTICULATION. Sometimes the meaning of a hymn stanza can be enhanced through a change of articulation. A more detached style yields a more animated result, while a more legato touch produces a gentler effect. Consider, for instance, the hymn, "People, Look East." A basically legato touch may be fine for stanza 1. The words of stanza 2, however, "Angels announce, with shouts of mirth..." seem to call for a more detached, repeated-note style to give a fanfare-like quality to the music in support of the text. Sometimes, good results can be obtained by a judicious use of simultaneous legato and non-legato touches in different voices for a phrase or two (usually the melody remains legato so as to be clearly heard).

D. TEXTURE. A simple way to effect a change of texture in a hymn is to play a stanza in full or in part, without pedals. This is perfectly acceptable, as long as the resulting lighter sound is congruent with the meaning of the text. (The Service Playing Test requires at least one full stanza of each hymn in items S-5 and S-9 to be played with pedals.) Other textural variations are possible however, depending on the musical needs of the text. Chords can be "filled out" with added notes for a weightier, more majestic effect on some hymns of praise. Or, for more intimate effects, the four-part SATB harmonization might be reduced to a manuals-only, three- or even two-voice texture for part or all of a verse. Reducing the number of voices in this way is a useful technique, but one which should be prepared carefully, so that the essential harmonies remain clear and proper voice-leading is retained. A particularly dramatic effect can be obtained by presenting the opening notes of a "big" stanza in octaves, without harmony; this is a useful way to signal the start of an alternate harmonization.

E. SOLOING OUT THE MELODY. A tried-and-true method of emphasizing a hymn's melody is to solo it out on a separate manual. All that is needed is a strong solo stop or combination on one manual and softer accompanimental stops on a secondary manual.

The pedal is given a soft 16' (& 8') line, with perhaps the softer manual coupled to the pedal. The right hand plays the melody on the solo manual, the left hand plays both alto and tenor voices in the accompaniment, with the bass assigned to the pedal. This type of treatment works best when the melody is fairly flowing, and the alto and tenor lines are manageable. The tune ROEDER, No. 3 "God of the Sparrow," is an example of a hymn-tune which accommodates this technique successfully; while the wide spacing between the alto and tenor parts of ABBOT'S LEIGH, No. 2, make application of this technique more difficult.

F. REHARMONIZATION. Finally, a hymn's harmonization itself may be altered. There are plenty of published alternate hymn harmonizations available, and any of these may be used to accompany hymns stanzas in items S-5 and S-9. Should you elect to use a published harmonization, however, you must check it carefully against the music in the *Examination Hymn Booklet*. Many hymntunes exist with melodic and rhythmic variants, so make sure that your hymntune is consistent from stanza to stanza.

If you desire to create your own reharmonization, here are some ideas on how you might go about it:

- 1) Try playing all four voices of the hymn in the manuals, and add a "pedal-point" for all or part of a stanza. A pedal-point is a sustained note in the bass, most often the tonic (do) or dominant (sol) note in the key. If tonic, it is frequently best to move to the dominant for the final V-I cadence. If dominant, it must also move to the tonic at the last chord. The dissonances created above a static bass line can either be beautiful or disconcerting – use your ear to judge when to move off the pedal-point, and be prepared to quit it completely when necessary.

- 2) Experiment with rearranging the voice parts. Sometimes, especially on hymn-tunes with fairly stepwise movement and limited range, it is possible to create "instant descants" by rearranging the notes on the page. Try transposing the alto part up an octave so that it sits above the soprano. This produces a satisfactory effect in a hymn like No. 10, "Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor." Another technique (not for the faint of heart!) is to switch the soprano and tenor parts, so that the melody is now in the tenor range, and the tenor part sits on top, transposed an octave higher. This technique requires considerable practice, but can produce attractive results, especially if the melody, now in the tenor range, is soloed out on a separate manual.

- 3) Try adding non-harmonic tones to the hymnal harmonization. Gerre Hancock in his hymn-improvisation workshops, speaks of "filling in the thirds," that is, adding stepwise passing tones (usually eighth-notes) in each voice wherever there is a leap of a

melodic third. A close look at most harmonizations will reveal many places where this technique can be employed, though it is probably best used sparingly, if at all, on the melody line itself. Similarly, the addition of suspensions can be a useful technique in the crafting of reharmonizations.

4) Finally, if you wish to compose a completely new harmonization, it may be helpful to remember that in traditional triadic (three-note) harmony, if a melody note is not a non-harmonic tone of some sort (like a suspension, passing-tone, etc.), it may be harmonized as the root, third or fifth of a chord. To put this another way: a C in the melody may be thought of as the root of a C Major chord (or C Minor chord!) or it may be the third of an A Minor chord or the fifth of an F Major or F Minor chord. So even before introducing the possibility of using dominant 7th chords, chromatic harmony or non-harmonic tones, the harmonic possibilities in each melody are endless. Not all these possibilities are useful or appropriate, but there is certainly enough to work with!

Another way to approach reharmonization is to consider the function of each chord within a key, and to substitute secondary chords for primary ones. For instance, the ii chord substitutes nicely for the IV, and the vi chord fills in well for the tonic, especially where deceptive cadences are the result. Moreover, first-inversion chords function equally well as their root-position parents, and often yield a smoother bass line. In general, one should try to keep the bass and soprano lines moving in different directions as much as possible.

All of this is pretty technical, but the moral is this: don't be afraid to experiment a little and free yourself from the printed page. Try to use a variety of the techniques described above – the most interesting harmonizations do exactly that. Let your ear and your sense of musicianship guide you as you work to create something grammatically correct, musically satisfying and stylistically consistent. Above all, the music you play should somehow enrich a hymn and its text, and encourage people to sing (not discourage them!). Once you are satisfied with your hymntune harmonization, copy it out and play it for someone. Better yet, use it at church; if it's successful there, play it on the test!

#### IV. HYMNS IN FOLK STYLE (“SING OF THE LORD’S GOODNESS”)

The 2013 edition of the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet* includes a folk/gospel-style hymn, “Sing of the Lord’s Goodness,” which may be selected by candidates as one of their choices for item S-5. Inasmuch as this style requires a different approach to performance on the organ, we have chosen to reprint, on the following pages, Jonathan



Hehn's fine article on this subject, which appeared in the Winter 2014 issue of *The Hymn*. The article gives helpful and detailed suggestions on how to adapt the hymn's pianistic accompaniment to the organ.

# HYMN PERFORMANCE

## *Nuts and Bolts, Part I*

JONATHAN HEHN

This article is the first in a series exploring the nuts and bolts of performing hymns with particular stylistic attributes, especially from the perspective of an organist or pianist. The hymns chosen for examination are intended to serve as representative examples; hopefully the solutions presented to the performance challenges in the given example can be applied to others of the same type. “Sing of the Lord’s goodness,” which was written by Ernest Sands around 1981, exemplifies songs in which 1) the melody is not (or not entirely) present in the published keyboard accompaniment, 2) the melody and accompaniment are often not homorhythmic, and 3) the text and tune were written by one person or in close collaboration between two people. There are many songs from the latter half of the twentieth century exhibiting these attributes, especially from what Michael Hawn calls “Roman Catholic liturgical renewal hymnody.”<sup>1</sup> Common examples include “Amén, el cuerpo de Cristo” (Schiafone), “Be not afraid” (Dufford), “You are mine” (Haas), “Hail Mary, gentle woman” (Landry), and “In Christ alone” (Getty/Townsend). A great number of songs from the Praise and Worship movement, or what Hawn calls Pentecostal songs, also exhibit these attributes.

This series should be prefaced by saying that there is no substitute for actively teaching hymn repertoire to your congregation. No amount of skilled leadership in the moment can help congregational singing as well as direct teaching beforehand. Taking time to teach songs that are likely to be difficult for an unrehearsed congregation is a good gesture of hospitality for those who may not otherwise feel confident singing. Additionally, teaching moments provide a chance to explain the intentionality of song choice, to highlight theological themes, and to deepen the congregation’s understanding of a particular musical or textual idiom.

### *“Sing of the Lord’s goodness”*

“Sing of the Lord’s goodness” first began appearing in hymnals in the early 1990s, and has more recently appeared in The Church of Scotland’s *Church Hymnary, 4th Edition* (2005) and Abingdon Press’s collection *Worship & Song* (2011). It also appears in a number of hymnals intended for Roman Catholic congregations published by GIA and Oregon Catholic Press. Dean

McIntyre, Director of Music Resources for the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Discipleship, has written a hymn study for “Sing of the Lord’s goodness” which provides a thorough introduction to both the text and the music of the song. It can be found at <http://www.gbod.org/resource/sing-of-the-lords-goodness>.

Because this song has a skilled single author-composer, there are virtually no performance problems resulting from structural or stylistic discrepancies between text and tune. The musical phrases are very rhythmically and structurally consistent, so the melody is easy to sing and to play. The phrases of the text also correspond neatly to the musical structure and are delineated by punctuation marks.<sup>2</sup> In order for a cantor or keyboard player to effectively highlight the text, s/he need simply breathe at each punctuation mark.

### *Two models of performance*

There are two models of song performance commonly practiced in North American churches today, and each of these can function well to lead a congregation in “Sing of the Lord’s goodness” and songs of similar style. However, these two models also require a fundamentally different approach.

The first model utilizes a cantor and keyboard (or ensemble) to lead the singing. The ancient office of cantor regained prominence in several denominational traditions after the Second Vatican Council, and for that reason, much of the hymnody composed following the directives of Vatican II, (that is, those hymns within Hawn’s Roman Catholic liturgical renewal hymnody stream), assumes that the cantor is the primary leader of song. In this first model, the organ, piano, or instrumentalists are present as accompanimental forces, not leading forces. In that sense, a cantor’s role is similar to the song leader or precentor once commonly found in Protestant churches. When performing “Sing of the Lord’s goodness” according to this first model, the keyboard or ensemble should play the accompaniment as written and allow the cantor to carry the melody. An advantage of this model is that a cantor can lead both melody and text. Also, nothing is better suited for leading congregational singing than another human voice. One danger in this model, on the other hand, is that musical clarity is more difficult to achieve when coordinating both singers and instrumentalists, especially if the keyboard player is accustomed to exerting strong leadership. Another danger lies in the use of amplification, which must be used with great sensitivity and restraint. Its misuse, even by a skilled cantor, may actually discourage vibrant congregational singing.<sup>3</sup>

The second model of song performance utilizes leadership from the keyboard alone. This model is one familiar to most twentieth-century Protestants as normative for

# SING OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS

VERSES (♩ = ca. 152)

Em Bm7 Em Bm7 Em

Melody

1. Sing of the Lord's good-ness, Fa-ther of all wis-dom, come to him  
 2. Pow-er he has wield-ed, hon-or is his gar-ment, ris-en from  
 3. Cour-age in our dark-ness, com-fort in our sor-row, Spir-it of  
 4. Praise him with your sing-ing, praise him with the trump-et, praise God with

Keyboard

*sim.*

D G Bm7 Em Bm7 Em Bm7

1. and bless his name. \_\_\_\_\_ Mer-cy he has shown us, his love is for-ev-er,  
 2. the snares of death. \_\_\_\_\_ His word he has spo-ken, one bread he has bro-ken,  
 3. our God most high; \_\_\_\_\_ so-lace for the wea-ry, par-don for the sin-ner,  
 4. the lute and harp; \_\_\_\_\_ praise him with the cym-bals, praise him with your danc-ing,

Am7 Bm7 Em REFRAIN Am7 D

1. faith-ful to the end of days. \_\_\_\_\_ Come, then, all you na-tions,  
 2. new life he now gives to all. \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. splen-dor of the liv-ing God. \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. praise God till the end of days. \_\_\_\_\_

Text: Ernest Sands, b. 1949.

Music: Ernest Sands; keyboard acc. by Paul Inwood, b. 1947.

Text and music © 1981, 1984, 1986, Ernest Sands. Published by OCP. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Gmaj7                      Am7 G/B    Am                      B7                      Em                      E7

sing of your Lord's good - ness, mel - o - dies of praise and thanks to God.

Am7                      D                      Gmaj7                      Am7 G/B    Am                      Bm7

Ring out the Lord's glo - ry, praise him with your mu - sic, wor-ship him and bless his

Em                      Bm7	1-3 Em                      Bm7    D.C.	Final Em                      Bm7                      Em
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name. \_\_\_\_\_

leading congregational singing. Unlike the first model, this second model requires the keyboardist to play both the melody and accompanying voices, a feat more easily achieved with the organ than the piano. When leading "Sing of the Lord's goodness," an organist should plan to play the melody (top staff) on one manual with accompanying voices (bottom two staves) on another. One common registration scheme uses a strong yet responsive reed stop for the melody which is reinforced by a chorus of flutes and/or mutations from the same manual. The accompanying voices should be strong as well, but of a more simple timbre. Principals and/or flutes at eight- and four-foot pitch are often sufficient. The texture of this particular hymn does not necessarily call for an independent pedal registration; oftentimes the texture is clearer if one simply draws sixteen-foot pitches in the pedal and couples the accompanying manual down. One should also avoid drawing pitches in the accompanying manual which speak higher than the solo voice. For instance, if the melody manual is registered with eight- and four-foot pitches only, avoid using a two-foot pitch in the accompanying manual. Doing so can cause confusion because it causes the accompanying voices to sound higher than the melody.

A pianist can create a clear and supportive accompanimental texture for "Sing of the Lord's goodness" within this second model of performance through the use of octave doublings. During the verses, the left hand alone can play both of the bottom staves by using the rhythmic pattern suggested in this example, taken from *Church Hymnary, 4th Edition*:

The right hand, then, is free to play the melody in octaves in order to reinforce it. During the refrain, a different scheme is needed, in which the right hand still plays the top staff (melody) in octaves, but also takes the notes of the middle staff with the right hand, playing them in the octave between the upper and lower notes of the melody. A simpler and less technically demanding solution for the refrain is to simply play it as notated.

### Playing the Introduction


Some editions of this song contain a brief, two-measure introduction before the first verse. Others, such as the example shown here, put brackets around the bars suggested for the introduction. When leading this song according to the first model (with a cantor), playing the

two-bar introduction as written may be sufficient. This is especially true when the song has been taught beforehand, and when the cantor is clearly visible to the congregation. When leading the song according to the second model, however (keyboard only), one needs to take a different approach so that the congregation has an adequate cue for when to enter. The key to playing any song introduction from the keyboard is to breathe immediately preceding the entrance of the congregation. When using the bracketed measures suggested in the given example as an introduction, it is much more effective to eliminate the chord on beat 5 of the second measure, and to allow all the voices to breathe together. A very slight *ritardando* helps reinforce that cue to sing. The introduction can work with or without the melody being played. However, an organist should avoid playing the melody on a solo registration until it is time for the congregation to sing. A pianist should likewise avoid playing the melody in octaves until the congregation enters. The combination of a well-timed breath, slight *ritardando*, and the entrance of the melody on a strong registration will help the congregation begin with gusto.

### Tempo and Articulation<sup>4</sup>

A fairly fast tempo is generally appropriate in order to maintain the rhythmic drive of "Sing of the Lord's goodness," perhaps somewhere between 120 and 140 beats per minute. The speed given in the example, 152 beats per minute, is a bit unwieldy. When leading this song from a keyboard, especially the organ, the articulation should be detached (*leggiero*, but not *staccato*). If the song is being led by a cantor or ensemble with a rhythm section, a more detached articulation may not be necessary.

### Conclusion

There are many moving parts to consider when leading congregational song. Hopefully these nuts and bolts will help you hold them all together the next time you play a song like "Sing of the Lord's goodness." In the next part of this series, we'll examine how to approach songs written in the form of a lead sheet. 

<sup>1</sup> Michael Hawn, "Streams of song: An overview of congregational song in the twenty-first century," *THE HYMN* 61.1 (Winter 2010), 16-26.

<sup>2</sup> The text's short, non-rhyming phrases remind one of the parallelisms found in biblical Psalms. There are in fact many phrases of the text directly appropriated from the Psalms, including verses from Psalms 92, 100, 103, 147, and 150.

<sup>3</sup> John Bell, in his book *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song* (GIA, 2000), discusses how microphones have strong cultural associations with concert performances, in which the audience (read *congregation*) is expected to observe rather than participate.

<sup>4</sup> Tempo and articulation will depend somewhat on the room in which this song is being sung, as well as the cultural context and properties of the instruments being used.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ITEM S-3: PSALM ACCOMPANIMENT (10 points)

Item S-3 on the Service Playing Test presents the candidate with four psalms in various styles; of these, the candidate is to select one and play two verses of its accompaniment as it would be performed in a service of worship. The four psalm choices appear in the *2013 Revised Edition AGO Examination Hymn Booklet* in the following order:

No. 20 – Psalm 100 – an Anglican chant setting by Jonathan Battishill

No. 21 – Psalm 22 – a responsorial setting by Michel Guimont

No. 22 – Psalm 47 – a responsorial setting by Edward Eicker

No. 23 – Psalm 33/34 – a responsorial setting by Richard Proulx and  
Joseph Gelineau

For satisfactory performance on the Service Playing Test, a singer is required when the Battishill, Guimont or Proulx/Gelineau psalm-settings are selected. (Consult the *Service Playing Test Manual of Procedure* for details on how this part of the test will be administered, if a singer is required.) The Eicker psalm, however, requires no singer.

Detailed guidelines for the preparation of these psalm accompaniments have already been published in *The American Organist*. Therefore, here again, we are reprinting these articles within this Study Guide, confident of their continuing value to candidates. The first article, by Kevin Walters, FAGO, focuses on the Anglican chant (adapted for the Battishill Psalm 100), and the second, by Paul Skevington, deals with the Gelineau Psalm.

#### PSALM ACCOMPANIMENT FOR THE SERVICE PLAYING TEST

Kevin Walters, FAGO

The increasingly widespread use of sung psalmody, particularly in weekly Protestant worship, is one of the most gratifying consequences of the modern liturgical movement. Although it was virtually the exclusive province of the Episcopal Church for centuries, Anglican chant now appears with increasing frequency in many other denominations, and several types of responsorial psalmody are commonly found as well. This significant trend is reflected by the inclusion of a ten-point question in the Service Playing Test which requires candidates to demonstrate basic competence in the fundamental elements of chant and psalm accompaniment. The following comments should

guide candidates who may be somewhat unfamiliar with this aspect of service music.

## I. Anglican Chant: Psalm 100 – Jonathan Battishill

Anglican chant has its origins in mid-seventeenth-century efforts to make simple harmonizations of Gregorian psalm tones. The Gregorian connection disappeared over time, although the structure into which it evolved has remained essentially unchanged. The musical shape of the chant closely resembles the prose of psalm texts. Each chant is comprised of ten chords (twenty for a double chant) unequally divided into seven (or fourteen) bars of three and four. The first part is called the recitation and is followed by a mediant cadence of three chords corresponding to the colon or (\*) in the text. This is followed by a second reciting chord and a final cadence comprised of five chords.

The expression “principles of good chanting” is a well-worn cliché which, however, should not be allowed to diminish its genuine importance. The “summary of the law” can be stated very simply and succinctly:

“...in the chanting itself the right sense and sound of the words should govern the tempo, rhythm and phrasing of the music. In fact, the music by itself has no tempo or fixed rhythm. The use of whole notes and half notes is conventional and arbitrary: quarters and eighths would do as well, since the idea is simply to use a longer note to indicate the recitation and a shorter one for the inflection [i.e., cadential progression].” (from *The Oxford American Psalter* by Ray Francis Brown. New York, Oxford University Press, copyright 1949 by Ray F. Brown; renewed 1976 by Andrew Brown and Stuart Brown)

The author of that passage, Ray Brown, was the distinguished organist at General Theological Seminary in New York City a generation ago. *The Oxford American Psalter* is his enduring legacy of a lifetime of work in this field, and the detailed (but eminently readable) introduction and appendix are worthy of careful study in preparation for this portion of the test or for anyone wishing to improve their service playing skills. The introduction to *The Anglican Chant Psalter* or to the service music section of *The Hymnal 1982* can also be useful for this purpose.

Here are a few directions and caveats, for organists and singers, related to the given example:

1. The concept of speech-rhythm must be adhered to strictly and observed throughout the chant. Anglican chant is “intoned speech.” Accents, when they occur, must be the natural stresses of intelligent reading.

2. There must be no break between the recitation and the cadence, neither should the last word or syllable of the recitation be sustained, even slightly, before proceeding to the next bar.

3. Do not stress a weak syllable, at the beginning or end of a line:

“O be joyful in the Lord...” or “...presence with a song.”

4. There should be a *very slight* pause at periods – i.e. the second double bar (or second and fourth in the case of a double chant). The pause should be just long enough for the singer(s) to breathe before continuing.

5. Avoid all rhythmic anomalies such as an *accelerando* or *ritardando*. The recitation for the second half of verse one contains no fewer than eleven syllables. Caution your singer to avoid any inclination to speed up or to slow down in the middle of the recitation.

6. Anything even vaguely resembling dotted rhythm is totally antithetical to this idiom. Triplets, however, are entirely correct.

7. It is occasionally desirable to sustain through the double bar if the second half of a verse begins with the word and. If your singer is able to do so, this would be effective in verse 4, with a slight *crescendo* on the last note of the preceding cadence.

Finally, remember that Anglican chant is not intrinsically congregational music. Do not play a chant as you would a hymn. Registration should be 8' and 4' foundation stops in the manuals without mutations or mixtures, coupled to a soft 16' in the pedals. Bear in mind that Anglican chant has its roots in the Gregorian psalm tones and should be played and sung in keeping with the spirit of that style.



## Gelineau Psalm 33/34 (No. 23)

The musical settings of the Gelineau Psalms are simple once the overall organization and pattern are understood. However, because many details are implied, the novice organist and singer will need more information than what is written in the score.

The music consists of two parts, the antiphon (or refrain) and the stanzas (or verses) of the psalm. The organist introduces the psalm by playing the antiphon, which is repeated with the cantor and then played a third time with the assembly. The first two repetitions require a mezzo-piano registration, 8' flute or 8' and 4' flutes. The third time with the assembly should be on a fuller forte registration, though without reeds or big mixtures. The verses of the psalm with the solo cantor would return to the softer registration. The refrain is repeated after each stanza, and the setting concludes with the antiphon after the third stanza.

The final measure of the antiphon should have a breath before the repeat. This is best accomplished by making the fourth beat of the measure a rest, so that the alto would be a quarter-note, and the other voices dotted half- notes.

In the stanzas, the notes in parentheses are for the organ only, and the other notes are for the singer to follow. Though the common delivery is with a solo voice (and this is the way it is done for the exam), the music is written so that an SATB choir could conceivably sing throughout. In the first, fifth, ninth and 13th measures of the stanzas, the organist plays on the downbeat, while the singer comes in later. However, note that these measures are all of the same length as other measures of the stanzas. In other words, there is not an extra quarter note in the first measure.

The Gelineau tone is structured so that each measure receives one tactus or beat, and it is up to the singer to place the syllables in that measure within that tactus. Following are some detailed examples of the second and third stanzas.

The organ sounds alone in the first measure of stanza two. The cantor sings four quarter-notes on "Glo-ri-fy the." The next measure "Lord with" allows for some options. It could be rendered as simply two half-notes, or it could be a dotted half-note on "Lord" and a quarter-note on "with." The latter makes more sense, as one would want the emphasis on "Lord." The same options need to be considered on "praise his" and "set me" in this stanza.

In the third stanza, measures three, seven and 11 each have three syllables. Several options exist for “him and be,” “not be a” and “called; the Lord.” A half note followed by two quarter notes is one option, and the best for measure 11 because of the punctuation. However, the singer could choose to sing a triplet in measures three and seven. Careful reflection of these nuances will assist in giving full and meaningful expression to the text.

At the end of each stanza, a breath is needed before the refrain is sung. In this particular psalm setting, it is best to add an extra measure, which would consist of a half-note tied to the final written note and a half-note rest. While the length of this extra measure needs to be exactly one tactus, the tied note and rest could be adjusted depending on the acoustics of the room.

The final consideration is the relationship of the antiphon to the verses. This always must be proportional. In Psalm 33/34, the half-note of the refrain is equal to a whole measure of the psalm verse.

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## 23. Psalm 33/34

A singer is required for the performance of this psalm on the Service Playing Certificate Test.  
The organist and singer should prepare appropriately, being aware that  
the test requires the performance of **only two verses**.

Richard Proulx

Taste and see the good - ness of the Lord.

Joseph Gelineau

Gelineau Tone

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7 / 33 (119)

(Mode: Te. Tonic: A)

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips;  
2. Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name.  
3. Look towards him and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed.

1. in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad.  
2. I sought the Lord and he answered me; from all my terrors he set me free.  
3. This poor man called; the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress.

## CHAPTER SIX

ITEMS S4 AND S6: ANTHEM ACCOMPANIMENTS (20 points)  
(Article by Kevin Walters, FAGO; repertoire section ed. Jonathan  
B. Hall, FAGO, ChM, 2018)

The current requirements for the Service Playing Test include a choice of two out of five anthems listed for the anthem accompaniment portion. Two of these, “Awake the harp” from *The Creation* by Franz Joseph Haydn, and “How lovely are the messengers” from *St. Paul* by Felix Mendelssohn, require the candidate to adapt a keyboard version that has been condensed from an orchestral score. Organists are routinely confronted with accompaniments not written for the organ and the idiomatic adaptation of these pieces is seldom easy.

A thorough discussion of this topic cannot be attempted here; rather a few general comments, with particular thought for the practical aspects of the test, should guide prospective candidates as they accommodate their ideas to the resources at hand.

*Approach the accompaniment as if it had been written for the organ.* Do not slavishly adhere to the somewhat narrow view that since the accompaniment was written for orchestra an attempt must be made to replicate orchestral colors and sonorities. Ultimately, the accompaniment must sound convincingly organistic. If you consult a full score, do so only for guidance and not with a thought to converting orchestral trombones into Swell reeds, for instance.

*You are creating an arrangement of an arrangement.* There is no need to feel strictly obligated to play every note exactly as it appears on the page. The editor has made various subjective decisions about what should be included and what could be omitted; within certain reasonable limits you may do likewise in order to achieve a musical result.

*Use upperwork sparingly.* Think of the orchestra (especially in the 18th century) almost as an “eight foot” instrument. On most modern organs there will rarely be a need for any stop above a 4' Principal. Mixtures and high reeds, never! (N.B. This is not a universal comment, please—I'm referring just to these two SPT anthems!) Some upperwork may be necessary on older instruments for the sake of clarity. Remember: octave doubling in an orchestral texture has an entirely different and far more subtle effect than on an organ; if you must use a 2' stop, it should be of small scale on a secondary manual.

*Give careful thought to articulation.* “Sludge legato” is an all-too-common peculiarity of many organists, and it is anathema to effective accompaniment. Similarly, rapid scalewise or arpeggiated passages must be played cleanly, taking special care to avoid sustaining broken chords except when this occurs in both hands (Haydn, see bars 9, 42-43). Violin articulation cannot be duplicated on the organ but it can be imitated!

*Be rhythmic!* All singers, whether amateur or professional, depend on the accompanist to give support not only to intonation but also to rhythm. Nothing is more enervating than a lethargic accompaniment, mechanically played. (This is particularly crucial when the organist is also the director.) The most egregious single factor contributing to “leaden rhythm” is heavy pedal played with too much legato. Keep the pedal line slightly detached to maintain a buoyant and well-defined pulse.

*Remember to phrase!* Stravinsky’s apposite observation, “...the monster never breathes!,” was directed at our instrument, but it clearly must be taken very much to heart by all organists. Think vocally. Strive to make the organ sing!

Now we can direct our attention to a few items that require specific comment.

**“How lovely are the messengers” (Felix Mendelssohn).** Although Mendelssohn was a fine organist, I doubt whether he ever imagined that excerpts from his oratorios would be played on the organ. H. Clough-Leigher knew that they would be and has created a version with which it is difficult to find fault. Soft 8’ foundation stops are best suited to the opening, an increase being made at figure A. The long diminuendo that begins in bar 37 requires careful preparation: in bar 36, I suggest taking the eighth-note thirds in the left hand on a secondary manual; the right hand can go over in the next bar or on the last beat of bar 39. This will make a smooth preparation for closing the swell as you approach figure B. Do not react dramatically to the crescendo indications in the next section or to the *f molto* in bar 55; the left hand should be slightly prominent in bar 37, and if that passage is taken on the Great, both hands should then return to the Swell or Choir in bar 58, with a return to the original registration at figure C. An important caveat: several pitches have more than one stem, indicating multiple time values (i.e., RH in bar 2, LH in bar 6, etc.). If these are overlooked, their obvious omission will likely be detected by the examiners. A final thought regarding tempo: place more importance on *con moto* than on *Andante*. Sluggish tempos in Mendelssohn’s oratorios cause them to assume a listless Victorian piety that quickly wears thin.

## **Additional Anthems**

**“Adam Lay in Bondage”** from *Two Marian Carols*, Conrad Susa. A modern and challenging setting of the medieval text so popular at Lessons and Carols. The organ part must be both rhythmically precise and yet not predominate over the choir. Practice the syncopations in particular.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ITEM S-8: SIGHT-READING (10 points)

The sight-reading question follows the Offertory repertoire on the Service Playing Test. It is the only item on the test in which the candidate does not select the music him- or herself, and prepare it beforehand. As the test requirements make clear, a candidate's grade on this section of the test will be based on his or her ability to maintain a steady tempo while performing notes and rhythms accurately. Shortly before the test date, the test's sight-reading passage is sent from AGO Headquarters to the local Chapter Dean or Examination Coordinator. The passage is not shown to the candidate until the moment of the test itself, whereupon the candidate is permitted 60 seconds to scan the passage before playing it. The passage is printed on two staves, and typically includes some chromaticism, changes of texture, and a moderate degree of rhythmic complexity. The use of pedals is optional.

Sight-reading is a very important component of the work of a church musician. What follows are some suggested methods for improving sight-reading skills, as well as some considerations that may aid a candidate preparing for this portion of the test. Also included is a sample sight-reading passage from an actual Service Playing Test.

#### I. LEARNING TO SIGHT-READ

It has been said that sight-reading cannot be taught. And it is true, most good sight-readers would admit that they learned the skill as the need arose. Musicians who teach themselves most quickly to sight-read are those who are called to do it frequently, especially in performance situations. Any organist who serves a church or synagogue will recognize the truth of this, and will confirm the value of being able to sight-read well. Here are some step-by-step guidelines to help give order and direction to your sight-reading practice.

A. Make sight-reading a part of your regular practice routine. Start with the hymnal. Choose a hymn with a sturdy tempo and four-part (SATB) chorale texture. (A hymntune such as STUTTGART is a good place to begin.)

1. At the outset, understand that in sight-reading, you may not stop or slow down for any reason whatsoever. Sight-reading must be performance-oriented from the start; if you permit yourself the luxuries of slowing down to accommodate difficult passages or back-tracking to correct errors, you will not learn to sight read effectively.

As one highly respected teacher put it: “If you make a mistake, keep going. If you make two or three mistakes, keep going. If it gets so bad that it comes completely apart, play only the melody until you can get back on track, but keep going.”

2. To help yourself keep going, pretend, as you practice, that you are playing the hymn for a large singing congregation. You dare not slow down (or break down) with a congregation following you!

3. Begin to play, and KEEP GOING! Struggle, if necessary, through the first stanza, just as you would have to do with a live congregation if an unplanned hymn had been announced from the pulpit! At the end of stanza 1, go straight into stanza 2, then 3, 4, and so on. You will find that with each repetition, some little things will improve; a note missed in the second line will mend itself, an accidental missed in the tenor will be corrected, and some way each play-through will effect some improvement, until you finally reach the end of the hymn.

4. Now, and only now, do you dismiss your imaginary congregation. Go back to the beginning of the hymn and try it once more, at a slow pace, noting and correcting any last things that never did go right during the sight-reading. Work out fingerings and pedalings in passages that eluded you through the play-throughs. Then, once more, play the hymn through at singing tempo, so it feels learned. By following this systematic approach on a daily basis, it is not unusual to become proficient at sight-reading hymns in a matter of weeks.

B. Inasmuch as the sight-reading question on the Service Playing Test encompasses music which is more complex than simple congregational hymns, the next step is to move up to a higher level of difficulty. Work your way through the hymnal, and don't shy away from hymns in non-traditional styles or arrangements. Obtain a copy of Bach's 371 Chorale harmonizations, and sight-read your way through these—some are quite involved and make for good practice.

C. Although the Service Playing Test sight-reading question is printed on two staves rather than three, and the use of pedals is optional, it is wise to practice sight-reading trios at the organ, since (1) the skills developed thereby will make reading on two staves seem easier by comparison, and (2) gaining proficiency in the use of the pedalboard in your sight-reading gives you a greater degree of freedom in dealing with the test question. You may find, for example, that the given test passage may actually be easier to play with pedals than without; if your practice does not prepare you for this, you may find yourself at something of a disadvantage.



The playing of trios can be quite challenging, of course—even more so the sight-reading of trios. But, when you are ready (i.e., when you are comfortable sight-reading hymns and Bach chorales), it is time to move on to some simpler trios. Here are some suggestions, although similar pieces by other composers may be found in the catalogs of other publishers and in various organ method books:

Trios for Organ, Vols. I and II, Richard Hudson (Wayne Leupold Editions)  
Ten Hymn Preludes in Trio Style, Sets 1 and 2, David S. Harris (Warner Bros.)

Whereas, when learning trios as organ literature, we usually practice each line separately, combining the parts gradually (hands together, RH and pedal, LH and pedal, and so on) when practicing sight-reading, it is essential to read and play everything together. The aim here is to comprehend and play all the parts simultaneously, with accuracy of notes and rhythms, at a steady tempo. This may prove to be a struggle at first, but it is well worth the effort.

D. Finally, expand your sight-reading horizons even further. Borrow some unfamiliar anthems from your choir library, and sight-read the accompaniments. Sight-read your way through a collection of 17th- and 18th-century chorale preludes, or through some toccatas and canzonas of Frescobaldi. The bi-monthly journal, The Organist's Companion (Warner Bros.) is filled with good sight-reading material on two and three staves. Use music from your own collection which you haven't played yet—besides sharpening your sight-reading skills, you'll be acquainting yourself with the repertoire.

## II. THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN SIGHT-READING

A. Carefully observe key and time signatures before beginning.

B. Set a tempo and hold to it strictly. On the Service Playing Test, take note of the tempo indication and follow it.

C. Do not hesitate, stop, or slow down for any reason, no matter how strongly you are tempted: avoiding a mistake in this manner is tantamount to making one. Likewise, one must never stop to make a correction: not only is it too late to fix an error once it is committed, stopping serves only to draw attention to the problem!

## III. SAMPLE SIGHT-READING TEST

The following passage of music is an actual sight-reading question from a recent Service Playing Test. It is included here to give a general idea of the level of difficulty which

may be encountered on the test. While every test is different, this particular example can be considered representative in terms of its length, chromaticism, and overall rhythmic and textural complexity.

As was already mentioned, on the test a candidate is given 60 seconds to scan the sight-reading passage. During that time, the candidate should mentally “play through” the passage, taking note of spots which might prove troublesome. Attention should be given to accidentals, especially those repeated within a measure. Similarly, the candidate should be alert to potential pitfalls in the rhythm of the passage. For instance, in this example the opening quarter-notes might easily be played incorrectly as eighths. Dotted rhythms are almost always a feature of sight-reading passages on the test: these should be handled with precision. The key to playing rhythms accurately, here and everywhere, is simple: count carefully and steadily as you play.

Apart from his or her sight-reading practice habits in the weeks and months leading up to the test, a candidate’s chances of success on this portion of the Service Playing Test depend largely on his or her ability to make efficient use of the 60-second interval before the playing of the passage. The paragraph above has pinpointed several specific musical features to which a candidate should be alert. Just as important, and perhaps more so, is the candidate’s mental attitude during this portion of the test. When first presented with the sight-reading passage, resist the urge to panic! Remain CALM, and scan the music CAREFULLY. Remain CONFIDENT in your ability to sight-read: if you have been diligent in your practice regimen, there will be nothing here which you cannot handle. When instructed by the proctor to begin playing, remain CALM, CAREFUL, and CONFIDENT.

In fact, that last sentence applies well to the entire Service Playing Test. Prepare thoroughly, practice diligently, and approach the whole test CALMLY, CAREFULLY, and CONFIDENTLY. Once again, congratulations on your interest in the AGO’s certification program, and best wishes to you as you prepare to take the test.

SERVICE PLAYING CERTIFICATE

SIGHT-READING TEST

Maestoso

The musical score consists of three systems of piano music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system is in C major, 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of 'Maestoso'. The second system is in C major, with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) in the second measure. The third system is in D major, with a key signature change to two sharps (F# and C#) in the first measure. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, single notes, and a triplet in the third system.

## APPENDIX:

### NOTES ON THE HYMNS, PSALMS, AND ANTHEMS A. HYMNS

(from the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*)

EHB #2. "Lord, You Give the Great Commission" (ABBOT'S LEIGH). Both verses utilize a full registration. Verse one involves only a secondary reed and verse two uses a larger reed and a more open swell box. The harmonization shows how much richer the sound can be with the simple addition of passing tones within the written lines. There are minimal changes in the harmonic structure, just enough to add some spice to the sound.

EHB #18. "O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken?" (HERZLIEB-STER JESU). Because of the penitential nature of this Lenten hymn, the registration is modified accordingly. Verse two illustrates one method of varying the verses by soloing the melody on a separate manual. In the example here, the melody is played an octave lower than written, using a trumpet to cut through the upper harmonies. The right hand plays the original alto and tenor lines with the two parts inverted so that the tenor line is above the alto part.

B. PSALMS (from the *AGO Examination Hymn Booklet*).

EHB #22. All Peoples, Clap Your Hands, Psalm 47 (Edward Eicker). This psalm uses two dynamic levels: a forte for the antiphon or refrain, and a mezzo-piano for the verses. Do not worry about making a significant difference between the first two back-to-back singings of the antiphon. Consider only a change from the Great to Pedal, which might be added and subtracted in the rests between the verses and antiphon. The registration chosen eschews brilliance, but the piece and its strong, extroverted spirit can sustain brilliance if desired. Perform the piece with an eye to strong rhythmic profile, and follow the composer's advice to articulate well. There is some modal harmony, so be careful with the accidentals.

#14, EHB #23. Psalm 33/34 (Joseph Gelineau). A baritone sings this psalm. Because the responsorial nature of this psalm implies that a congregation is singing the refrain after its initial introduction, the organ seems to overpower the soloist. In a church setting, it would need to be registered in this manner to provide adequate support for the congregation. For the verses, a simple 8' flute accompanies the cantor.

#15, EHB #20. Psalm 100 (Jonathan Battishill). Again, a baritone sings this psalm. As Anglican chant does not ordinarily involve responsorial singing, this Psalm is registered in accordance with a congregational accompaniment for both verses. The organist plays the complete musical setting for an introduction, allowing the congregation to hear the shape of the melodic line.

### C. ANTHEM ACCOMPANIMENTS

Samuel Sebastian Wesley: “Thou Wilt Keep Him In Perfect Peace”. This anthem is surprisingly subtle, with tempo and registration changes throughout that clarify its architecture. The basic serenity of the piece, emphasized by a legato touch, is leavened at times by greater excitement and the occasional articulation. On this organ— a 1922 Skinner/1948 Aeolian-Skinner/1957 Austin — there is plenty of eight-foot tone to give warmth and some firmness, and the Swell 4' Principal answers well for the registration usually printed in the score. Be careful about dynamics, and make sure to practice all movements of the expression pedal(s) with great care.

Felix Mendelssohn: “How Lovely Are the Messengers”. A smooth, yet clear legato is maintained here. There are two basic registrations: the softer sections are played on 8' and 4' stops, with the addition of a 2' for the louder passages.

