

Study Guide for AGO Colleague Certification

Committee on Professional Certification



American Guild of Organists
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260
New York, NY 10115
Phone: 212-870-2310 | Fax: 212-870-2163
Email: info@agohq.org | Web site: www.agohq.org

Copyright © 2017 American Guild of Organists

From the President

Founded as an educational organization in 1896, the American Guild of Organists (AGO) is chartered under the Board of Regents of the State of New York. AGO certification has long been regarded widely as an assurance of musical skill and understanding. One of the five levels of certification, the Colleague of American Guild of Organists certification (CAGO) is awarded upon successful passage of the Colleague Examination, which is offered twice annually, in the autumn and the spring.

We are delighted that you have decided to prepare for certification as a Colleague of the American Guild of Organists. We have developed these Study Guidelines to assist you in that preparation, either privately, with a small study group, or with a teacher. The individual chapters of this manual relate respectively to each section of the CAGO Examination. Because the skill addressed within each chapter is distinct rather than building sequentially, all chapters may be studied simultaneously, moving slowly and with patient repetition to develop facility in all suggested exercises. Well-prepared musicians can attain these levels of expertise by purposeful application; no well-trained musician need fear these tests, which measure knowledge and ability by national standards of excellence.

Dr. Charles S. Brown, FAGO, ChM, the first National Councillor for Education, prepared the earliest editions of the Guidelines. Several sections of that 1981-1982 edition are incorporated into this present booklet because of their continuing appropriate qualities and usefulness.

The following three paragraphs from the 1981-1982 edition are worth repeating here:

The Guidelines are an experimental venture.... In every part, the examination candidates should understand that these are only guidelines, that they only offer models, procedures, and suggestions for the kinds of study and practice which [each] candidate must develop [individually].

Nor do the Guidelines stand alone. Candidates should procure from the National Office of the Guild copies of past examinations as well as requirements for the incoming tests. Other materials, especially articles from The American Organist, are cited in the course of the Guidelines....

The Guidelines can be used in a variety of ways: as a study guide for individual preparation; as a resource for small-group study sessions, where two-five persons meet ... in a cooperative study program; as a resource packet or text for courses organized by local Guild chapters or college music departments; and as a resource on which single-topic chapter programs or study courses may be based, whether or not these lead to preparations for the examinations.

The American Guild of Organists wishes you the great joy of success as you accomplish the skills which are detailed in these Guidelines.

John Walker, FAGO, DMA
December 2015

How to Use This Book

This book is not a “walkthrough” of the CAGO examination; it is not something to be pored over and then dutifully given back on an exam. The examination does not quiz you on points made or factoids announced in these pages. Nor does this study guide contain tips, tricks, tidbits, or ways around the system. We offer you something better and more enduring.

The best way to prepare for a Guild exam is to *commit* to it, to master what is required, to “see and raise” the exam so you bring to it, not only yourself, but a new and altogether more skillful self. Experience shows that it’s easy not to change, but also unfulfilling. It’s hard, and incredibly fulfilling, to set a goal and meet it. May this study guide set you firmly on the path of meeting the high goal of achieving Guild certification.

Jonathan B. Hall, FAGO, ChM, DM
Director, Committee on Professional Certification
Editor
December, 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Introduction		
Chapter 1	Repertoire (exam item C1)	1
Chapter 2	Accompaniment of Chorus and Vocal Solo (exam items C2 and 3)	2
Chapter 3	Hymn Playing (exam item C4)	4
Chapter 4	Sight-Reading (exam item C5)	6
Chapter 5	Harmonization (exam item C6)	8
Chapter 6	Transposition (exam item C7)	13
Chapter 7	Improvisation (exam item C8 a, b, or c)	20
Bibliography		26
Appendix		34

Carlton T. Russell, "An Organist's Introduction to Service Playing,"
Music/The AGO-RCCO Magazine, October 1977.

I. REPERTOIRE (exam item C1)

The prescribed repertoire for the exams is published in the July edition of *The American Organist*, and is usually retained for two years. Articles to aid in preparation of this repertoire may be found in many issues throughout the year. Your goals should include the following:

1. To perform the music with authority, communicating to the listener your understanding of and involvement with the music.
2. To choose a registration, tempo, and articulation which are appropriate to the style and expressive content of the piece.
3. To develop, as a result of the examination process, your own learning approach and musical voice.

LEARNING A PIECE OF MUSIC: SOME IDEAS

1. Always listen, first to what the music says to you, then for the effect you wish your listeners to experience. Recordings may help.
2. Familiarize yourself with the background of the work.
3. Analyze the piece, understanding its purpose, form, style, rhythmic patterns, melodic content, harmonic progressions, texture, and the use of contrapuntal techniques and other devices. Get the “big picture” of its form and its emotional import.
4. Develop the technical security to play the piece as you wish: exact rhythmic control, fingering and pedaling, and an overall comfort level. A satisfying performance depends on placing the fingers and feet effortlessly on the proper keys and listening for the sounds to begin and end at the proper time, yielding both accuracy and expression. A consistent practice routine will help.
5. Give (almost) free rein to your imagination. Think and hear each sound as expressive and unforced. Strive for living, breathing phrases. Make the individual parts flow together to produce a musical whole.

6. In an age of free online public-domain scores, learn to proofread, and learn how to evaluate your sources.

II. ACCOMPANIMENT OF CHORUS AND VOCAL SOLO (exam items C2 and C3)

You are asked to play the accompaniment to a choral piece, and to a vocal solo, on the organ. Your goals should include:

1. To *suggest* (not carbon-copy) the effect of an orchestra; so that the accompaniment is an equal and worthy partner of the imagined chorus or soloist. Or, to suggest the effect of a piano or other keyboard at the organ, to the same standard.
2. To bring color shading through registration and dynamics, including the use of the expression pedal or, more subtly, control of touch. Remember that touch at the organ is about timing, not force.
3. To maintain control of tempo. Flexibility of tempo will probably relate mainly to the shaping of phrases and especially cadences. This is largely a matter of the period and style of the piece.

HOW TO PRACTICE A CHORAL/VOCAL ARRANGEMENT: SOME IDEAS

The ideas mentioned in “Learning a Piece of Music: Some Ideas” in the Repertoire section apply here as well.

If you are practicing a choral work with a composed organ part—not an arrangement—you must add to your standard organ-bench work a sensitivity to the choral or solo phrases, especially the need for singers to breathe. (Don’t you play the solo repertoire like that?) Often an organist will practice a vocal piece very conscientiously, only to find that the singer or choir is simply not comfortable. You may hear a complaint about “rigidity” or “stiffness.” There is a subtle art to the yielding of time and to breathing with the human voice. Consider taking voice lessons if you have not.

Listen to art songs and opera. Spending time as a studio accompanist will teach you that the metronome is not always the final word. Music is always a communal effort, even for a soloist.

But for a true arrangement or reduction of an orchestral or chamber work

for a single keyboard player, or is itself a piano or generic “keyboard” work, the following ideas may help.

1. Study the original score, the vocal-piano score if possible, and recordings.
2. Listen to a recording while following the score. Play along on a silent keyboard.
3. Compare the score to the version you plan to use. Mark the following:
 - a.) any markings which are in the original, but not in your copy; conversely, any editorial markings *not* in the original. These added markings may or may not be good. Again: evaluate your sources.
 - b.) original timbres: what is played by strings, winds, brass, wind, etc. These need not (indeed cannot) be slavishly replicated, but their spirit may inform your choices. Add any important element which was deleted by an editor. Make note of any alteration of the original material in range, note values, etc.
 - c.) your own adaptations to the organ (while remaining faithful to the *effect* of the original). Mark pedal notes, remembering that the effect of the string bass, sounding an octave lower than the cello, is achieved by simply drawing a 16'. (In other words: don't play in octaves!)
 - d.) registrations: *keep them simple*. A few stops—well chosen, added, and subtracted—will suggest orchestration better than a monotonous plenum, all-eights-all-the-time, or ingenious schemes which carry a high risk of mistakes.
 - e.) any interpretive details from a favorite performance.

For a piano or keyboard piece that must be played at the organ, the above applies in a different way.

Play the piece at the piano to get the big picture, then start adapting. As

the organ has no damper pedal, arpeggiations may be impractical; how would you suggest these? Octaves may have to be weeded out. Large skips of the hands may be impractical. A sensitive transfer of the piano to the organ is a real accomplishment. Do not hesitate to edit the letter in order to honor the spirit.

III. HYMN PLAYING (exam item C4)

The glowing heart of an organist's vocation is hymn playing. This art requires lifelong cultivation, and one is never done learning. There are different schools of thought about how to play hymns. Your overriding goal should be the intelligent, clear rendition of a hymn so that it is faithful to its text and internal spirit, can be easily sung by an untrained congregation, and displays good taste and sense in registration, tempo, articulation, and overall style.

Another way to state these goals:

1. To "sing" the introduction so engagingly that everyone will *want* to follow you. The foundation of this is rhythmic and melodic *clarity*.
2. To continue to lead with the same qualities, varied by stanza as necessary to sustain momentum and interest, to preserve the sense of worship, and better express the text.

PRACTICING HYMNS: GETTING STARTED

1. Read the text, start to finish, out loud if possible. Let it speak to you through its vocabulary, imagery, and theology. Notice shifts in mood from stanza to stanza.
2. Sing both stanzas (for the CAGO exam at least!), in a strong and clear voice, as you would wish to hear a worshiper sing. Underline each word whose meaning you wish to stress. Mark where the congregation should take a breath, notice the dynamic rise and fall of the phrases, and determine the kind and degree of vocal articulation, whether smooth or bouncing, or something in between.
3. Play it so that the organ sings in the same way you have. You might wish to play the melody alone at first, then add the rest. You

should then consider phrasing, articulation, tempo, and registration.

4. The end result should not be an exercise but an experience. Remember the Latin motto: *summa ars est celare artem*, the height of art is to conceal art.

--From this point, you are referred to any of the many recognized books and resources that deal with hymn playing. There are so many approaches, explained and illustrated so expertly, that we will not attempt to distill their ideas, or arbitrate their merits, here.

FURTHER IDEAS ON HYMN PREPARATION

You could choose two hymns you already know and like, or you could start fresh. You also might choose contrasting hymns, though this is not required.

As in the rest of the exam, your examiners will bring their own perspectives, but will be open-minded to yours too. While some departure from the given notes is fine, especially in the introduction, any such departure should be done convincingly and artistically, with preparation and purpose. Obviously, this does not include the melody, which (at least in the two stanzas themselves) should be kept inviolate.

The essential qualities of *all* good hymn playing include:

1. A sense of the text, both its overall character and local contrasts, if any.
2. A vital pulse: not just keeping a steady tempo but having momentum and clear, convincing rhythmic organization, as well as appropriate articulation and flexibility where appropriate.
3. A strong sense of line which carries through the phrases, especially the long notes.

4. Some kind of rhythmical connection between the introduction and stanza one, between the stanzas, and between the last stanza and the “Amen,” if any. Sometimes this may involve adding a rhythmically appropriate number of beats. It will always involve a breath, so the congregation can inhale and get ready. It is virtually never correct to plow straight into the next stanza right on the beat, without a break.
5. Appropriate touch and registration: neither too monotonously loud or soft, detached or gluey, and always in such a way that serves a singing congregation. Within that broad guideline there is enormous interpretive freedom.
6. An introduction and/or free harmonization (original or published) which connects text, music, and organist, as part of a coherent whole and not as a solo.
7. Deep and abiding empathy for the congregation, choir, organ, music, and moment.

IV. SIGHT-READING, HARMONIZATION, TRANSPOSITION AND IMPROVISATION (exam items C5, C6, C7 and C8)

Sight-reading and harmonization—and transposition and improvisation—are more closely related than one might suppose. All of them depend more on *synthetic* reasoning than *analytic*. In other words, they are about *building up*, not *breaking down*. For many people, these skills are mysteries—almost supernatural gifts. Yet they are not; rather, they are the products of a different *perspective*, a different *approach*; and they can be taught and learned.

Also, all of these skills require you to get your “nose out of the book” and play with authority and assurance, drawing on your own musicianship in real time and *wielding* the pipe organ in all its spatial, multicolored glory.

Many experienced teachers throw up their hands when asked about imparting these skills. If pressed, they will say that some of their students seem to be able to “just look at a piece of music and *scoop* the information off the page.” Improvisation (which, if based on a given theme, also involves “scooping information off a page,” then *staying* off the page) is similarly a cause for wonder.

Sight Reading

To become a better sight-reader, think of painting a picture, not of performing a chemical analysis. Don't analyze, *synthesize*. Look quickly at all the initial parameters:

- clef
- key signature
- key: is this the major or relative minor of the signature? (How can you tell?)
- time signature
- upbeat or downbeat?
- anything that catches the eye: syncopation, a cluster of quick notes, rests, chromaticism, leaps, etc.

With practice, these parameters can be "scanned in" in a matter of a few seconds, and the "big picture" begins to paint itself in the mind.

The next building block is to quickly identify the scale degree of the first pitch (normally, *do* or *sol*, 1 or 5). Mentally sing the first few notes. Quickly take in the outline of texture: are there traveling thirds or tenths in the left hand and pedal? Full chords? Counterpoint, canon? Tonality? Modality? Spend the remaining prep time scanning the hardest moment in the piece, as you see it. Then back away, relax, and *play*. Don't expect a finished performance down to the smallest detail.

You may find that a quick inventory like this, with a little mental practice, may ground you in the musical space of the piece, and relax you, while giving you the "big picture" and a clear path to success.

To practice sight-reading, set the metronome so slowly that mistakes are literally impossible; don't fear an extremely slow beat (even 60 to the *sixteenth* note, if really necessary). This is neither punishment nor put-down; it is clear-headed *strategy*.

Once you have "scanned in" the basic parameters of the piece, try to read through it without errors and without stopping. This may be hard at first.

Up to a point, despite the usual advice that "you can't ever, *ever* stop, no matter what," yes, you *can*, and maybe you should. If you fall apart, go back to the beginning and try again. As sight-reading is essentially a shortened learning curve, you can work on shortening yours, starting wherever you find yourself.

While “never, ever stop” is idealistic, it may not always work in practice. At worst, its forbidding tone may prevent you from trying. Make progress as best you can, and increase metronome speed so slowly that it never *quite* overcomes your boredom. The golden rule: “let tempo catch up to you.” The Latin motto is *festina lente*: make haste slowly.

Practice with basic piano repertoire, including works like Czerny’s *Practical Method for Beginners*, opus 599. For organ works, there are Pachelbel’s fugues on the Magnificat, Italian versets, simple pieces by any number of contemporary writers, unfamiliar chorales, or anything you feel comfortable with.

A few further ideas:

To control time, remember that you always have more time than you think you do. If you subdivide your time, it feels like twice as much.

Allow your eye to keep moving ahead.

Consider “verticalizing” the score; quickly reading from top to bottom, or bottom to top. A consistent habit of scanning will build confidence.

Think slower, not faster; breathe more deeply, not more shallowly; don’t zero in, zoom out; don’t follow, lead.

Harmonization

Harmonization is the act of seeing the harmonic possibilities of either a melody or a bass line—those two governors of tonality—and supplying what is missing to make a complete, usually four-part, musical product.

You may have a head start on harmonization if you are familiar with “lead sheets” or “charts”—abbreviated scores providing only words, tune, and guitar- or jazz-style chord symbols. Some practice with these may build musical presence of mind!

On a classical note, rules of thumb are often given in harmony classes and basic texts. So a root in the bass suggests a third in the soprano and vice versa. If playing a first-inversion chord, avoid placing the third in the soprano as well. More broadly, never double a leading tone (unless vii is proceeding to iii!). Never move all four parts in the same direction (unless to the same harmony). Do not approach fifths or octaves improperly. Avoid tritones or augmented seconds in

the melody. Resolve tritones correctly. All dissonances must be prepared in the same voice, and resolved downward by step or half-step.

These rules—which you may already know—are the basis of good four-part hymn writing and inform the work of all of the great composers you admire. While there are many subtle exceptions to the rules, and while we live in a post-tonal world, you will be asked only to stay in the safe confines of tonal practice.

Practice Hints for Harmonization

Melody notes, which move stepwise at the rate of one pulse of the harmonic rhythm, usually should have a change of harmony on each adjacent beat.

Melodies which leap often suggest one harmony which would have both notes as chord tones.

Dotted half- or whole-notes should generally have some movement in at least one lower voice, rather than to have all voices stop at the same time.

Learn to change harmonies easily under the same note. Be able to consider the melody note as the root, third, fifth, or seventh of a chord.

It may help to note the following points before beginning.

1. Key and related keys.
2. Cadence points or points of rest.
3. Plausible modulations.
4. Non-harmonic tones (e.g., passing tones) which are not to be harmonized.
5. The general harmonic rhythm (frequency of harmony changes).
6. Places for structural chords (I-IV-V).
7. Sequences: each element of the sequence should be voiced similarly.

8. Range of melody: find where the melodic contour hits high and low points, so that the harmony parts will not be crowded or spread too far apart.
9. Places which benefit from movement in lower parts when the melody note remains static.

Harmonization of Plainchant

Plainchant, or Gregorian chant, presents a unique situation, as its conception is entirely monophonic. No one harmonic agenda is indigenous to it. There are several schools of thought regarding the appropriate harmonization of this superlative repertoire.

One school of thought emphasizes the diatonic possibilities natural to the mode in question, with little if any use of tritone or other dissonance. A knowledge of each mode, its scale, its dominant (which is not always scale degree 5), and its characteristic “flavor” is necessary here. It is not necessary to change harmonies on every note, or even frequently; it may be possible to hold a bass note under successive harmonies. The third need not be present in every chord, though good style would try to keep a consistent harmonic profile: do not richly harmonize a tune, only to leave a few notes with open fifths. (The converse also holds.) What might seem piquant or surprising to you might simply jangle the listener.

Other ideas include harmonization according to the practice of the 16th century, with the possibility of counterpoint and some deference to tonicization. Still others permit harmonization according to romantic or modern ideas. As the original repertoire is not harmonized at all, it is always essential to keep the melody uppermost and all accompaniment judicious. You are technically crashing the party, so be as unobtrusive as possible.

A stance of doctrinal rigidity regarding the “correct” notes of each mode is not helpful; from an early age the introduction of “ficta” and a tendency for leading-tone resolution begins to take hold. So for a Dorian melody (modes I or II), scale degree 6 may occur either raised or flat. One might even entertain the idea of a true V-i resolution, depending on the context. The *Christus Factus Est* is in mode V (authentic Lydian), but scale degree 4 is found both flat and natural. Study this

piece and ask yourself why. These realities should attune us to the subtlety within the apparent simplicity.

For an better-known example, look at the popular Christmas tune GREENSLEEVES. In your edition, is the first occurrence of scale degree 6 (the fifth note and its parallel in the next phrase) low or high? Is there a leading tone at the end of the first phrase (“on Mary’s lap is sleeping”)? Is there *any* edition, anywhere in the world, that refuses to raise both 6 and 7 at the final cadence? There is a great deal of variety in the treatment of this carol, but nobody questions the final ti-do cadence. In real life, the Dorian mode is flexible, accommodating different forms of 6 and 7. Don’t turn modal theory into a Procrustean bed; remember that it’s still *music*.

It is important to remember that the dominant gives decisive color to each mode. The tonic is properly called the “final,” and is often little more than the necessary last note. The mode is usually best identified by its last note; and by its statistically prevalent note, which “dominates” and hence is called “dominant.”

In music school, we are usually taught that some modes “sound minor” and others “sound major” — this has to do with the quality of the third degree. However, the placement of the dominant may be more determinative. In Mode III, for example, sometimes called “authentic Phrygian,” while there is a minor third and a flatted second degree, the dominant is scale degree 6 (flatted, a minor sixth above the final—say, C above E or B \flat above D). This imparts a decidedly “major” feel to this mode. Play the *Passion Chorale*, first without accompaniment. This melody is in Mode III, authentic Phrygian, though it is almost always now harmonized as if it were major and ended on scale degree 3. In the same modal category is found the famous *Pange, lingua gloriosi* of Holy Thursday. It too is authentic Phrygian but “sounds major with an ending on *mi*.” Actually, both end on *do*! (The Phrygian scale in solfège is *do ra me fa sol le te do*.)

Pange, lingua is more easily seen in its true modal identity than the *Passion Chorale*, partly from its tendency to hover around the distinctive lower notes of the scale—and partly because it is less famously harmonized.

Incidentally, the dominant of this mode is on 6 instead of 5 because 5 would create a tritone with 2 (think of E Phrygian, with scale degrees 2 and 5 as F and B). To avoid the prominent implied tritone, the dominant is raised to 6.

Also, remember that a mode is not only a key or a scale. It is frequently also a collection of vocal gestures, a “bag of tricks,” a “big song” from which the “little songs” are fashioned. A good case study is the tract literature: all tracts are in Mode II or Mode VIII, and each individual tract within each sub-set contains melodic features in common with the others. Plainchant is originally improvised repertoire from an oral culture; much of what we have today amounts to “written-down improvisations” that have become fixed and definitive, perhaps with the advent of diastematic notation.

This situation confers both freedom and responsibility on the organist, and demands the cultivation of taste.

Here are a few ideas for the harmonization of the first phrase of “Te Joseph Celebrent,” found in the *Liber Usualis*. They run the gamut from extremely simple—little more than a drone—to a note-for-note setting. Use these to stimulate your own creative engagement with this important repertoire.

The first example shows a simple harmonization. The right hand (treble clef) plays a single melodic line with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The left hand (bass clef) provides a drone accompaniment consisting of a series of sustained chords, primarily triads, that follow the harmonic structure of the melody.

The second example shows a more developed harmonization. The right hand continues with the melodic line, but now includes some phrasing slurs. The left hand accompaniment is more varied, using a mix of chords and single notes to support the melody.

The third example shows a note-for-note setting. Both the right and left hands play individual notes for each note of the melody, creating a more complex and detailed harmonic texture.

Transposition

Transposition is the act of playing a piece with all of its melodic and harmonic material intact—every interval, every relationship—but in a different key from the one seen on the page.

Remember that many organs do not possess “magic buttons”! Transposition remains immediately relevant and is a hallmark of the professional. This musical “feat” may be accomplished several ways. One way is to imagine different clefs—in particular, the movable C clef, which, though oft maligned, is still part of our notation system. So if you mentally replace the treble clef with the alto clef, everything goes up a step. Replace with the tenor and everything goes downward. Adjust accidentals accordingly.

Another approach is not by clefs, but by spatial and harmonic sense. Sensing the distances of the intervals, the place of each note in the harmonic scheme, practicing what Alec Wyton called “hand-shapes,” one can also develop a motor sense of transposition. A similar method involves careful noting of the intervals between various voices, and replicating them. Also, a fluent knowledge of harmony—equal comfort in all keys—is vital. This is not something that one can simply conceptualize mentally; it must be in the fingers.

The way to success is practice. You could take a stack of anthems and mark them at random: up a half, down a half, up a whole, down a whole. Then, play them, taking your own pot luck. Have fun!

Another method: Practice playing familiar hymns up or down only a half-step to the easiest key change: from D down to Db, or F up to F#. Here one needs to change only the key signature; the notes’ alphabetical names remain the same. Before beginning to play, note that the “hand-shape” is different. Remind yourself of the new key signature. Spell it out to yourself, out loud: “The sharps become naturals,” or “The naturals become flats.” Sometimes you can visualize that all of the accidentalized notes will be one pitch, thus: “The G-sharps all become A-sharps.” It often helps to say these things out loud, to impress those new key relationships on your mind, until it becomes second nature.

Another method: Try playing a simple hymn—say, TALLIS’ CANON—in the circle of fifths. Start in the usual key of G, then play it, as slowly as you need, in D, A, E, B, F#, and the like till you finish with C. Move on to OLD HUNDREDDRE, RHOSYMEDRE, NICAIA, and then farther afield. Again, speed is not a priority; certainly not right away.

Here is a practical example. The hymn tune STUTTGART begins very tonally, with classic voice-leading. As the second half begins, there is some chromaticism—to the key areas of vi and V—and then we return to the home key. Take the first half of the tune (it is given here in the key of G, from a public-domain hymnal published in 1911), and play it through all of the transpositions given below, in the circle of fifths, to exercise one’s harmonic sense. Note that several enharmonically-equivalent settings are given; pay close attention to these, and note the differences between F-sharp and G-flat.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for the hymn tune STUTTGART. Each staff represents a different transposition of the first half of the tune. The first staff is in G major (one sharp). The second staff is in D major (two sharps). The third staff is in A major (three sharps). Each staff consists of a treble and bass clef with a grand staff brace. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The first half of the tune is shown in each staff, ending with a double bar line.

First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The treble staff contains a melodic line with quarter and eighth notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with the same key signature and time signature. The melodic line in the treble staff shows further development of the initial motif.

Third system of musical notation, maintaining the key signature and time signature. The texture remains consistent with the previous systems.

Fourth system of musical notation, continuing the melodic and harmonic progression.

Fifth system of musical notation, where the key signature changes to three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and the time signature remains 4/4. The melodic line in the treble staff begins with a new motif.

Sixth system of musical notation, continuing the piece in the new key signature and time signature.

First system of musical notation, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords: B-flat major, A-flat major, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, and B-flat major.

Second system of musical notation, identical to the first system. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords: B-flat major, A-flat major, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, and B-flat major.

Third system of musical notation, identical to the first system. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords: B-flat major, A-flat major, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, and B-flat major.

Fourth system of musical notation, identical to the first system. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords: B-flat major, A-flat major, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, and B-flat major.

Fifth system of musical notation, identical to the first system. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords: B-flat major, A-flat major, G major, F major, E major, D major, C major, and B-flat major.

Now, let's take the second half of the hymn, where the harmony moves farther afield. Here, let's go up by half steps, to exercise the spatial sense.

The image displays five systems of piano accompaniment for a hymn, each system consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature changes by one half step in each successive system, moving from G major to A major, then B major, C major, D major, and finally E major. The time signature is 4/4. The right hand plays chords in the upper register, while the left hand plays chords in the lower register, with some melodic movement in the bass line. The progression of chords across the systems is as follows:

- System 1 (G major): G4, B4, D5, G4; G3, B2, D3, G2.
- System 2 (A major): A4, C#5, E5, A4; A2, C#2, E2, A1.
- System 3 (B major): B4, D#5, F#5, B4; B2, D#2, F#2, B1.
- System 4 (C major): C4, E4, G4, C4; C3, E2, G2, C2.
- System 5 (E major): E4, G#4, B4, E4; E2, G#2, B2, E1.

First system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is C major. The right hand plays a sequence of chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3, C3-E3-G3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: C4, E4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Second system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The right hand plays a sequence of chords: D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: D4, F#4, A4, G#4, F#4, E4, D4.

Third system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The right hand plays a sequence of chords: Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: Bb4, Db4, F4, Eb4, Db4, Bb4, Bb4.

Fourth system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is E major (one sharp). The right hand plays a sequence of chords: E4-G#4-B4, E4-G#4-B4, E4-G#4-B4, E4-G#4-B4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: E3-G#3-B3, E3-G#3-B3, E3-G#3-B3, E3-G#3-B3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: E4, G#4, B4, A#4, G#4, F#4, E4.

Fifth system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The right hand plays a sequence of chords: Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4, Bb4-Db4-F4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3, Bb3-Db3-F3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: Bb4, Db4, F4, Eb4, Db4, Bb4, Bb4.

Sixth system of a piano score in 4/4 time. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The right hand plays a sequence of chords: D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4, D4-F#4-A4. The left hand plays a sequence of chords: D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3, D3-F#3-A3. The bass line in the left hand has a melodic line: D4, F#4, A4, G#4, F#4, E4, D4.

Please note that the above procedures—by fifths and by chromatics—could be reversed, or applied in different situations; either model can work for you; the key is to understand a harmony, and its physical realizations, in all keys equally. (Try the same idea, but go backwards in the circle of fifths, or downwards chromatically.)

If you work through the above with a slow metronome, and get comfortable with all of these, you can use any other hymns you choose, of any length and difficulty, as subsequent exercises. (What would you do with an unusual hymn like GENEVA, which cycles between the minor and its parallel major? Or ST. MICHAEL, with its more dissonant approaches to remoter key areas?)

However you choose to proceed, work steadily, regularly, and intensively. Shorter sessions may benefit you more than “all-nighters.” Do not settle for merely conceptual mastery. This skill is not about “getting the idea,” but rather making sure your fingers have gotten the idea!

Practicing the Hanon exercises (as the book prescribes!) in every key will also help tremendously. Always return to basic piano exercises in the circle of fifths. Repetition is the mother of fluency.

Improvisation

Think of improvisation as a game. Allow your mind to “respond” to the “call” of the theme. Think of creating a meal from surprise ingredients, like one of the TV cooking shows so popular right now.

The Guild gives you three choices with this exam item. The first is harmonically based: you are given two phrases with required modulations. As long as you have a sense of good voice-leading and modulation, you can succeed.

The second choice, an improvisation on a short motif, allows you more melodic creativity.

The third choice asks that you improvise a modulatory bridge between two hymns from the Examination Hymn Booklet. These hymns will be chosen for you. You must think creatively about themes, tempi, meters, keys, and craft a short, convincing bridge between the two hymns. You could use a common melodic motif, or a prevailing rhythm, or anything else.

Improvisation is an act of musical creativity performed *improvisa* (Latin: *unprovided for*). The choices you are offered favor tonality, but you are not altogether bound by the “old rules,” especially in option C. Admittedly, following modulatory schemes and improvising on a theme (choices A and B) imply traditional voice-leading. However, neither modality nor advanced harmonies are at all discouraged, as long as they are done well.

The CAGO improvisation questions for Spring 2015 were:

C8.a. Improvise two clearly defined phrases, each about 4 measures long. First phrase: Begin in E-flat major and modulate to C major. Second phrase: Begin in C major and modulate to D minor.

For choice one, two possible solutions are given below.

A musical score for two parts: 'man' and 'ped'. The 'man' part is in the treble clef, and the 'ped' part is in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The 'man' part consists of a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The 'ped' part consists of a bass line of eighth and quarter notes.

A musical score for two parts: 'man' and 'ped'. The 'man' part is in the treble clef, and the 'ped' part is in the bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (D major), and the time signature is 3/4. The 'man' part consists of a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The 'ped' part consists of a bass line of eighth and quarter notes.

This solution features a lyrical right-hand melody with a gently rocking left-hand accompaniment. Notice that the melody in the second half starts just like that of the first, except it starts a whole step higher. The opening *sol-fa-mi* figure has re-appeared as *do-ti-la*. But the similarity is unmistakable, and gives coherence to the music. Coherence is what sets improvisation apart from “noodling.” Also note that measures three and seven are melodically very similar, though again not simply transposed. The “pizzicato” bass line rounds out the picture of a little piece of chamber music.

A musical score for an organ part in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand plays a melody of quarter and eighth notes. The left hand plays a bass line of quarter and eighth notes.

A musical score for an organ part in 4/4 time, key of D major. The right hand plays a melody of quarter and eighth notes. The left hand plays a bass line of quarter and eighth notes.

Here, a hymnlike solution, entirely different from the first one but equally valid. The two phrases are distinct from one another, but have enough in common—

like stepwise motion in the first halves—to speak to one another. Note the two deceptive resolutions in the second half: G7 to A minor, and C7 to D minor—small, local echoes that add to the impression of coherence.

For choice 2: some examining bodies, such as Trinity College London, speak of the theme for an improvisation as a “stimulus.” That’s a great term. Let the idea *stimulate* you! What, for example, might you make out of this simple idea:



To such a straightforward question, why not give a straightforward answer? Let’s answer the triadic quarter notes and descending tetrachord with some of our own:



Note that the descending notes are moved to the middle, so the answer isn’t mere parroting. Also, we’ve tonicized the key of V, C major, and have four bars to get to a final cadence in F. We now have a balanced phrase, one which could be diagrammed A-A¹. (Remember: a phrase is the shortest musical idea that contains a cadence. We have ended our phrase with a half cadence, in the dominant of the home key. It’s probably stretching the point to call this a full-blown modulation.)

Here is one approach to a solution. The style is basic, but the music “works.”

The image shows a musical score for organ, consisting of three staves. The top staff is labeled 'man' and contains a melodic line in treble clef. The middle staff is labeled 'ped' and contains a bass line in bass clef. The bottom staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) containing a piano accompaniment. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two systems of four measures each. The first system shows a melodic line starting on G4, moving up to B4, then down to G4, and finally to E4. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving bass lines. The second system continues the melodic line, ending with a cadence on G4. The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line in the final measures, including a rapid eighth-note run.

A little energy is provided at the end with an unexpected plagal cadence, colored with some diatonic dissonance—the E added to the F chord, and the G added to the B-flat. Notice that the final measure descends, balancing the ascending gesture in measure 4. Also, the left hand gets a turn at rapid movement at the end, and the right hand accompanies.

Our solution is simple and unimposing; many an organist can improvise a more interesting piece of music. Not all of the voice leading is consistent, the harmonies are conventional to almost *too* conventional, and some rules are probably broken. Nor is the style transcended; the “answer” is as “sing-songy” as the “question” had been. You can probably pencil in some improvements! Furthermore, your solution will be longer. But this little piece is also internally coherent and even has a few splashes of color. The sense of motion builds; the second half has more eighth notes than the first. (Does it allude to a Christmas carol? Possibly; allusion is not plagiarism.)

Bear in mind that the improvisation question asks for two eight-bar phrases; the above illustration has only two. By “eight-bar phrase” you may understand a parallel phrase-group containing two cadences, making an overall structure of 4-4-4-4. How would you proceed from the double bars above? One solution might

be to move to the relative minor, with some variation of the opening quarter-note idea to develop it further.

Think of the last time you were in a really interesting conversation. People didn't all talk about different things all at once, or at cross purposes. There was a thread, whatever the topic was. Improvisation can likewise be seen as a test of your ability to listen to a musical question, and give a sociable answer. And it's your answer; and your friend—the Guild—is interested in what you have to say.

Choice 3: Several hymnals, especially those with evangelical affiliation, provide attractive bridges and modulations between two hymns. One such is *The Celebration Hymnal*, published in 1997 by Word Music.

There are many ways to link between two hymns. The best bridges are concise, building on such elements as melodic similarities; a salient rhythm in the second hymn; continuity of key; or even the introduction of new material, unique to the bridge. A clever improviser can take two very contrasting hymns and introduce the discontinuities in the bridge. In the hymnal mentioned above, the link is often thematic, building on textual references. This is another possibility, but the musical bridge may be more difficult to construct.

Here is a possible bridge between HYFRYDOL and NICAEA.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a bridge between the hymns HYFRYDOL and NICAEA. The first system is labeled 'manual' and 'pedal'. The manual part consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a 3/4 time signature. The melody in the treble clef starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The bass clef part is mostly rests, with some chords in the final measures. The pedal part is a single bass clef staff with a 3/4 time signature, featuring a simple bass line of quarter notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. The second system is labeled 'man' and 'ped'. The manual part has a treble clef staff with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The melody starts with a quarter note D5, followed by quarter notes E5, F5, and G5. The bass clef part has a bass clef staff with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two sharps, with a bass line of quarter notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5. The pedal part has a bass clef staff with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of two sharps, with a bass line of quarter notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5.

There are two needs here: to change meter, and to change key, and not necessarily in that order. This solution first echoes a bit of HYFRYDOL, then expands the gesture logically, easing us into common time. The key change is set up rather easily, as F and D share a chromatic relationship, as well as a relationship via D minor. Finally, the last two measures echo, very subtly, the original tune, though now transformed into a convincing introduction into NICAEA.

Good luck!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REPERTOIRE

- Dart, Thurston. *The Interpretation of Music*. Harper and Row, 1954, rev. 1963.
- Davis, Roger E. *The Organists' Manual*. W. W. Norton, 1985.
- Donington, Robert. *Baroque Music: Style and Performance*. W. W. Norton, 1982.
- Douglass, Fenner. *The Language of the Classical French Organ: A Musical Tradition Before 1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.
- Gleason, Harold. *Method of Organ Playing, Eighth Edition*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1995.
- Goode, Jack C. *Pipe Organ Registration*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964. (Excellent, out of print; includes rare information on early twentieth-century American composers.)
- Hilty, Everett J. *Principles of Organ Playing*. Pruett, 1971. (See especially Units IX and X.)
- Hurford, Peter. *Making Music on the Organ*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Marshall, Robert L. *The Music of Johann Sebastian Bach: The Sources, the Style, The Significance*. Schirmer Books, 1989.
- Ochse, Orpha. *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, rev. 2000.
- Ritchie, George H. and Stauffer, George B. *Organ Technique—Modern and Early*. Oxford University Press, 2000. (Especially see Chapter 7, "Service Playing," 345 ff. It also covers the basics of technique in all styles by era, including late-twentieth century ones.
- Soderlund, Sandra, *Organ Technique: An Historical Approach*. Hinshaw Music, 1980, 2nd ed. 1988.

Williams, Peter, *The Organ Music of J. S. Bach*. Cambridge University Press, 1980.

There are numerous articles pertaining to exam repertoire. One recent example:

Thomerson, Kathleen, "Repertoire for the AGO Colleague Exam," *The American Organist*, vol. 48 no. 4 (Jun. 2014), 42-43.

ACCOMPANIMENT OF CHORUS AND VOCAL SOLO

BOOKS

American Guild of Organists. *Study Guide for the AGO Service Playing Test*, 2009.
See "Chapter Six: Anthem Accompaniments."

Bach, C.P.E. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1949.

Buck, Dudley, *Choir Accompaniment*. Colfax: Wayne Leupold Editions.

Campbell John. *Accompaniment Adaptation Practicum*. American Guild of Organists, 1998. Includes CD (available at www.agohq.org)

Conway, Marmaduke P., *Church Organ Accompaniment*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Dickinson, Clarence. *The Technique and Art of Organ-Playing*. New York: H. W. Gray, 1922.

Ellingford, Herbert. *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ*. Colfax: Wayne Leupold Editions.

Gleason, *Method of Organ Playing*. See Part Six, "Adapting Piano Accompaniments."

Hilty, Everett J. *Principles of Organ-Playing*. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1971. P. 134 discusses the adaptation of pianistic styles to the organ.

Hurford, Peter. *Making Music on the Organ*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

ARTICLES

Enlow, David, "AGO Colleague Exam: Holst & Handel Transcription Accompaniments," *The American Organist*, vol. 48, no 4 (April 2014), 44.

Enlow, David, "Orchestral Reduction Accompaniments at the Organ," *The American Organist*, vol. 46 no 2 (Feb. 2012), 54-56.

Grinnell, Kenneth, FAGO, ChM, Colleague Exam 2012, vocal solo and Rheinberger, *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 10 (Sept. 2011), 70-73.

Hall, Jonathan B., FAGO, ChM, "Thou Wilt Keep Him In Perfect Peace: Approaches to Wesley's Most Popular Anthem." As "AGO Service Playing Accompaniment" feature, *The American Organist*, vol. 46, no. 8 (August 2012), 46.

Russell, Carlton, "An Organist's Introduction to Service Playing," *Music-AGO*, Oct. 1977, 52. (reprinted in this book)

Suitor, Lee, "Techniques for Accompanying," *Music-AGO*, December 1972, 28. Helpful on guidelines to registration. It contains good suggestions for adapting pianistic figurations and effects.

Willis, Andrew, "Continuo: The Art of Creative Collaboration," *The American Organist*, Aug. 2013, 2.

HYMN PLAYING

BOOKS

Anderson, Margaret S., *A Guide to Effective Hymn Playing*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1964.

Andrews, Mildred and Pauline Riddle. *Church Organ Method*. New York: Carl Fischer, 1973.

Burkhardt, Michael. *Creative Hymn Playing: Improvisation, Exercises, and Repertoire*. St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 2013.

Conway, Marmaduke P., *Church Organ Accompaniment*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Grace, Harvy, *The Complete Organist*. London: Richard Press, 1920. (See p. 94—

concerning tempo and breathing space, as well as style of free harmonization.)

Hancock, Gerre, *Hymn Playing and Improvisation*. 2 parts. (lecture-demonstration, Available through www.agohq.org.)

Heller, David, *Manual on Hymn Playing*. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1992.

Lovelace, Austin and William Rice, *Music and Worship in the Church*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1976.

Lovelace, Austin, *The Organist and Hymn Playing*. New York: Abingdon Press., 1962.

Rotermund, Donald, *Off the Page*. St. Louis: MorningStar Music, 2007. *Off the Page Two*. 2011. *On or Off the Page*, 2013.

Walter, Samuel. *Basic Principles of Service-Playing*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1963.

ARTICLES

Grinnell, Kenneth, FAGO, ChM, "It Don't Mean A Thing If You Can't Make 'Em Sing"/Leading Hymn Singing from the Organ: A Practical Checklist,}" *The American Organist*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Apr. 2006), 52-54.

MacDonald, Robert, "Hymn-Playing," *Music-AGO*, Apr 1978, 22.

SIGHT READING

Brantigan, Thomas, "The Metronome," *Music-AGO*, June 1977, 49.

Brantigan, Joseph and Thomas, "Stage Fright: Do We Teach our Students to Be Nervous?" *Music-AGO*, Nov. 1975, 34.

_____, "Stage Fright Revisited," *TAO*, July 1979, 20.

Gleason, Harold. *Method of Organ-Playing*. 8th edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1995. (Especially see p. 87.)

Hall, Jonathan B., FAGO, "Ten Tips on Sight Reading," *The American Organist*,

vol. 43, no. 3 (Mar. 2009), 84-85.

Johnson, David N. *Instruction Book for Beginning Organists*. Revised ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973. Especially see 26.

Sutton, Francis W. *Organ Tests for the ARCO*. London: Hinrichsen, 1963 (C. F. Peters, Nos. H-350a and H-350b). 2 Vols. Helpful preface by Gordon Phillips. It contains exercises in both organ-solo sight-reading and vocal-score reading (open score).

SIGHT READING AND REPERTOIRE PRACTIC MATERIALS:

Albrechtsberger, Johann Georg. *Six Trios*. Kalmus (Belwin-Mills).

Carl, William C. *Master-Studies for the Organ*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1907.

Keller, Hermann, ed. *Eighty Chorale Preludes of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. C. F. Peters.

Pachelbel, Johann. *Fugues on the Magnificat*. Dover, online, other editions available.

Reger, Max. *Six Trios*. Kalmus.

Rembt, Johann Ernst. *Fifty Four-Part Little Fugues*. 2 vols. Kalmus.

Rheinberger, Joseph. *Ten Trios*. Kalmus.

_____. *Twelve Fughettas*. 2 vols. Kalmus.

Trevor, C. H., ed. *A Concise School of Fugal Playing for the Organ*. London. Oxford University Press, 1964.

_____. *A Concise School of Trio Playing for the Organ*. London: Oxford University Press.

HARMONIZATION

Faulkner, Quentin, AAGO, "Common Practice Harmony at the Keyboard: Building a Foundation for Improvisation." *The American Organist*, July 2004, 57.

- Fleming, Michael P. M. *The Accompaniment of Plainsong*. Croydon: The Royal School of Church Music, 1963. 16 pp. (May be available online)
- Frackenpohl, Arthur. *Harmonization at the Piano*. Dubuque: William C. Brown, 1972; 6th ed. 1991.
- Hindemith, Paul. *A Concentrated Course in Traditional Harmony, Book II*. New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1943. June 1970 in paperback; most recent editions: August 2011 and Feb. 2014.
- Hunt, Reginald. *Harmony at the Keyboard*. Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Johnson, J. Barham. *Keyboard Harmony for Beginners*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947, C. 1968.
- Keller, Hermann. *Thoroughbass Method*. Transl. Carl Parrish. New York: W. W. Norton, 1965, with newer ed. 1990.
- Morris, R. O. *Figured Harmony at the Keyboard*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. 2 vols. New edition 1960.
- Ottman, Robert. *Elementary Harmony*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970. Ed. 1998; 5th ed. with CD.
- Peeters, Flor. *Méthode pratique pour l'accompagnement du chant grégorien/A Practical Method of Plain-chant Accompaniment*. Mechelen: H. Dessain, 1949. 99 pages. (May be available online.)
- Piston, Walter. *Harmony*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1962; C. 1978 ed., and most recently a 5th edition by Mark DeVoto, published by W. W. Norton, with a workbook by Arthur Jannery. The page numbers are different from those cited in these guidelines. However, the organization of the material is essentially the same and can be used in the same way as that in the 1962 edition.

TRANSPOSITION

Grinnell, Kenneth, FAGO, "Transposition: Not a Four-Letter Word," *The American Organist*, vol, 42, no. 5 (May 2008), 82-83.

MODULATION

Gehring, Philip, FAGO. "An Approach to the Colleagues Improvisation Question: The Modulating Bridge." *The American Organist*, vol. 39, no. 5 (May 2005), 72.

Gehring, Philip, FAGO updated article on hymn bridges in *The American Organist*, vol. 47, no.10 (Oct. 2013), 80 with correction in vol. 47, no. 11 (Nov. 2013), 44.

IMPROVISATION

BOOKS

Brillhart, Jeffrey, *Breaking Free (Organ Improvisation Through Twentieth-Century French Improvisation Techniques)*. Colfax: Wayne Leupold Publications, n.d.

Burkhardt, Michael, *Creative Hymn Playing: Improvisation, Exercises, and Repertoire*. St. Louis: MorningStar Music Publishers, 2013.

Hancock, Gerre, *Improvisation: How to Master the Art*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

ARTICLES

Brillhart, Jeffrey, "What's In a Song?", *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 8 (Aug. 2011), 50-51.

Lanning, Denise, FAGO, "Improvisation for the New (and not so new) Organist," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 2 (Feb 2011), 60-61.

Ruiter-Feenstra, Pamela, "Bach and the Art of Improvisation," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 10 (Sep. 2011), 40.

Ruiter-Feenstra, Pamela, "Improvisation Initiatives," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 1 (Jan 2011), 68-70.

Trenney, Tom, "Abracadabra: Discover the Magic of Improvisation," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 7 (Jul. 2011), 52-53.

Various contributors. "Learn to Improvise in 15 Minutes a Day," *The American*

Organist, Oct. 2001 – 2009, 2013-2014 by Leonardo Ciampa, entitled: "In the Moment: An Eye on Improvisation."

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

Enlow, David, "AGO Colleague Exam: Holst and Handel Transcription Accompaniments," *The American Organist*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Apr. 2014), 44.

Ferry, Tom, "Easy Two-Part Hymn Improvisations," *The American Organist* vol. 46, no. 11 (Nov. 2012), 46-47.

Grinnell, Kenneth, FAGO, ChM, "Colleague Exam 2012" (vocal solo and Rheinberger). *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 9 (Sept. 2011), 70-73.

Hall, Jonathan B., FAGO, ChM, "Colleague Exam 2012: Bach's BWV 537 and 647," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 10 (October 2011).

Kull, Joyce Shupe, FAGO, ChM, "Two Additional Service Playing Test Anthems," *The American Organist*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Apr. 2006), 104.

Leupold, Wayne, "Discover Improvisation!" *The American Organist*, vol. 46, no 3 (Mar. 2012), 50-53.

Neswick, Bruce, FAGO, FRSCM, "Creative Hymn Improvisation," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Apr. 2011), 86-87.

Rakich, Christa, "A Conversation with Tom Trenney," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Mar. 2011), 53.

Rakich, Christa, "Cozy Up to the Circle," Oct, 2011, 48. Heller, David, "An Interview with Gerre Hancock," *The American Organist*, vol. 45 no. 11 (Nov. 2011).

Ruiter-Feenstra, Pamela, "Develop Your Technique within a Group," *The American Organist*, vol. 45, no. 5 (May 2011).

Thomerson, Kathleen, FAGO, ChM, "Two Additional Service Playing Test Pieces." *The American Organist*, vol. 43, no. 10 (Oct. 2009), 42.

APPENDIX

The following article is reprinted with permission by *The American Organist*, from *MUSIC/THE AGO-RCCO MAGAZINE*, October 1977, pp. 52-57. It was a revision of the article "Service Playing" (*The American Organist*, April and May 1969). Carlton Russell at the time taught organ, harpsichord, and music history at Wheaton College, Norton, Mass., and, with his wife Lorna, was co-minister of music at Trinity Church, Wretham, Mass.

An Organist's Introduction to Service Playing

Carlton T. Russell

The word "introduction in the title is meant most literally. I do not pretend, in this small space, to supply the detail found in books on the subject of service playing, much less to attempt to substitute for a good teacher. Rather, I propose to identify what I take to be the basic questions the church organist should be asking, and to suggest both some paths to follow in seeking answers and some tools to acquire for the journey. C. T. R.

PLAYING THE ORGAN for a service of worship is a task unlike any other in musical performance. In no other setting is a musician called upon to fill at one time so many distinct roles: those of scholar, performer, liturgist, teacher, and, above all, worshiper. The organist is a scholar in his approach to and choice of music and style of playing; he is obviously a performer (and often, most creatively, an improviser, too), with a fluid technique; and he must understand intellectually and emotionally the liturgy of his church, in order to respond within it and to lead the response of others. The last two roles are less apparent; but the didactic effect of an understanding organist upon the other members of the congregation is undeniable, and he thus begins and ends as in some way the ideally sensitive worshiper.

Far from looking condescendingly upon the church organist, as fellow musicians have tended to do, we should appreciate the importance and the difficulty of his work. Many a fine concert player has stumbled when faced with the musical and emotional demands of the service, as non-virtuosic as these may be. And the hardest pill for many performers to swallow is that the church musician has achieved his ideal state only when he has become one with the atmosphere of worship, and thus—the polar opposite of the spotlighted recitalist—perfectly anonymous.

THE ORGANIST AS SCHOLAR: APPROACHING A PIECE OF MUSIC

Any experienced tennis player will tell you that most of the game is in the preparation: the physical conditioning, the mental alertness and the footwork which must precede the actual stroke. The same is true in good organ playing: the actual performance of the piece, like the tennis player's striking of the ball, is but frosting on the cake. Many organists place far too much emphasis on what I would call (with apologies to Joseph Fletcher) "situation performance," i.e., on the isolated act of putting down the keys on Sunday morning, without giving sufficient attention to the preparation, physical and intellectual, which makes the difference between a good performance and a bad one. In a word, we need to eliminate arbitrariness: the all-too-common random choice of a piece, the haphazard drawing of stops and the habitual "trying out" of the piece by stumbling through blindly from chord to chord.

To harness our talents and present a worthy offering to God from whom all things come, we must establish a method for approaching any piece of music. As in most areas of life, there is no one unvaryingly correct way to do this; but I suggest the following steps:

1. Be technically prepared. Do not try to play in the service music beyond your current technical grasp, using it rather for sight-reading practice. Be honest about your abilities, neither overconfident nor needlessly modest. One of the debilitating misconceptions which has kept church music standards low is that good music is by definition difficult. This is vastly untrue: and there is available today more fine and easy organ music than ever before.
2. Look carefully and critically at the printed page. Not everything in print is of equal validity, any more than anything printed anywhere is true simply because

it is printed. Do not turn off your mind just because you are dealing with music, even if it is your recreation—it can be that in a deeper sense.

If your piece is in a collection, determine what sort of collection that is (works of one composer, a one-nationality anthology, a collection of music from a single stylistic period, etc.). Then answer as best you can the following questions:

a) Who wrote the piece? When? For what instrument?

Not everything sold as organ music was originally so intended; much of it comprises transcriptions of pieces originally written for piano, orchestra, voice and piano, etc. After you have gained a bit of experience, the composer and the period (which you can usually find in any standard biographical dictionary such as *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, etc.) can tell you much about the style of the piece: what the basic sound(s) might be, what forms you can expect, whether the style demands some added ornamental notes, and so forth. If the piece is not originally composed for organ, then it is your responsibility to discover what its medium really was, usually by referring to a score of the original work.

b) Does the piece (whether transcription or not) have an editor?

If there is an editor, his name should be given, if only in the front of the book. Then you must decide how much of the material before you is from the composer, and how much from the editor (or arranger). I think it is safe to say that in any non French piece written before the 20th century specific stop indications (not the more general dynamic and manual-change markings of Mendelssohn, Brahms, etc.) are most likely from the editor (as are phrase markings prior to the 19th century), and are thus to be taken only as suggestions, more or less valid depending on the particular editor. Modern composers often indicate dynamics and types of stop, or at least their pitch levels; and French composers have traditionally given specific registrations, in the titles of their works or elsewhere, from the Baroque period on. Indications of this sort carry more weight than editors' markings, of course; but even they must be taken loosely, since no two organs are alike in intensity or tone color. Also, tempo and dynamic markings by the editor may co-exist with those of the composer. It is important to identify these, since the strict, unquestioning carrying out of inappropriate editor's indications can completely adulterate a composition. Any indication of stops or (in all but a

very few cases) dynamic levels in any Bach piece is editorial since Bach did not employ such indications; and of course, any instructions to use the swell shutters in a gradual *crescendo* or *diminuendo* in a Bach piece are quite out of place, since Bach did not have enclosed divisions at his disposal. If you should ultimately choose to alter a piece of any period with stylistic devices alien to its historical setting, at least come as close as possible to hearing the piece as its composer heard it, before making your alterations.

c) Is the piece free or based on preexistent material?

If the piece has a title such as *Nun Bitten wir den heiligen Geist* (We Now Entreat the Holy Ghost), *Adoro te devote* (Humbly I Adore Thee), *Diferencias sobre in Gallarda Milanese* (Variations on the Milanese Galliard) or *Variations on "Wondrous Love,"* then it is based on a preexistent German chorale, or a Latin hymn, or a 17th-century dance tune, or a shape-note hymn—to use these examples. If the piece does have a model of this sort, then you have only to familiarize yourself with the type and text (where possible) of this model, and you will have a rough clue to how to play the piece: you will know whether it is a joyous or contemplative or sorrowful work, or perhaps susceptible to several possible emotive interpretations. Naturally, this is not enough to guide your interpretation, since you must look at the piece before you as well as its (sometimes very different) model. But it is a start, and a necessary one.

If the piece is a free work (toccata, prelude, fugue, canzona, *ri cercare*, sonata, fantasia, passacaglia, ABA form, etc.), then you have for aids only your knowledge of the composer, the style of the period and the general type of organ envisioned. You must then decide from the nature of the piece itself how to play it.

d) What is the form of the piece?

Examine the entire composition before beginning to play, noting larger sections, with attention to key areas and signatures, chromatic alterations, repeats (literal or varied), places requiring or suggesting stop or manual changes, etc. Is the piece based primarily on the principle of continuity (as in a fugue or other imitative work) or that of contrast (as in a tripartite form with basically unrelated sections)? *Hear* and sight-sing important melodies and rhythms before playing them. While playing, too, never stop *listening*.

e) What is the texture of the piece?

Texture means at least two things: how many parts (voices) are there, i.e., is it a thin or thick texture? Are any parts more important than others, thus deserving to stand out in tone color and/or intensity? If the piece has one part obviously differentiated rhythmically and melodically from the others (whether a pre-existent melody or not), it may require or at least invite special treatment such as individual solo registration on a separate manual, a treatment which may or may not be indicated in your score. If, on the other hand, the texture is uniform (all parts move in the same rhythmic values, as in most hymns, or the same melody occurs in several parts, as in a fugue or imitative chorale prelude), then there is no need to single out any one of the similar parts—play them all on one manual, allowing for possible changes to another for subsidiary sections (episodes in a fugue, middle sections in tripartite forms, etc.).

f) Are there any potentially awkward passages for hands or feet?

If so, be wary of these, perhaps later singling them out for written-in fingering or pedaling. However, avoid writing in an excessive amount of fingerings and pedaling—it is all too easy to fall into reading numbers instead of hearing music!

g) How fast should the piece eventually go?

Perhaps nowhere in musical interpretation is dogmatism more rife than in matters of tempo. It is not harmful to work with a certain tempo ideal in mind, if that is in turn based on solid preliminary thinking. But do not let anyone, not even your teacher, legislate your tempi, except within the broadest limits. For these may well vary from situation to situation, and in any case will depend upon a complex of stylistic factors: texture (not too fast to hear all the voices, especially in contrapuntal music); rhythm (many notes of small value often means a slow tempo, so that they can be heard); harmony (complex harmonies need more time to be digested by the listener); registration (this must not be too loud or too indistinct for the tempo); your technique (never play faster than you can musically, which may mean postponing playing some pieces in service); and, by no means least, the overall mood of the piece. This last cannot be completely ascertained at any given time. You have to live with a composition, playing it many different times under different circumstances, and letting it become a part of you; only then can you begin to grasp its essential character, even if you have done all the necessary preliminary questioning. This is how music and its hearers are continually renewed, in the joy of re-creation.

3. Only after you have done all of this are you truly prepared to set fingers and feet to the keys—and to engage in a similar preparation of the liturgical music (hymns, canticles, etc.) of the service (an equally crucial task). Do not be alarmed if you find you have spent much of your practice time thinking!

During the technical preparation of the piece (during which the mind continues to work), make intelligent use of the time available to you in order to prepare a convincing performance.¹ Never let yourself become a machine. Many ostensibly technical problems (fingering, manual changing, touch, phrasing) can be solved by thinking them through. I do not wish to appear to underrate the physical aspects of playing. As in any physical activity, the condition and employment of the body are critical to good performance. You must practice regularly (piano and organ), and keep yourself physically fit. But the body functions only in conjunction with the mind and spirit—all are one. Where the spirit and mind are elevated to their proper place, we open the door to true renewal in service playing.

SELECTING MUSIC FOR THE SERVICE

You should neither overrate nor underrate the importance of the organ pieces which customarily open and close the service, and sometimes occur elsewhere, as during the offering or communion. A technically virtuosic performance of a difficult major work may embellish excitingly an atmosphere of worship; but a service is not a recital, and the solic playing of a more modest work may do the job just as well. If you remember that the prepared organ piece constitutes but a part of your duties and but a framework for the worship service, you will probably accord it an appropriate level on your scale of priorities. On the other hand, there is no justification for music or performance of poor quality. The organist who gives no thought to his prelude until he sleepily and arbitrarily picks up a cherished old-favorites volume just before the service makes a mockery both of music and of worship.

What should you play as a prelude, offertory, or postlude? It seems to me that an answer will come best through two considerations: what is liturgically appropriate, and what is musically worthwhile.

Liturgical appropriateness is a valid consideration in all Christian churches, even though some traditions lay less emphasis on the liturgical year than do others.

Here you should be aware not

only of the proper seasons of the Lord's time (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passiontide, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity) and of important saints' days, but of the organic and emotive spirit of the year and of the various parts of the ordinary service. A historic sequence often found in the latter is: Praise, Confession (and Absolution), Communion (or Instruction), and Dedication.

- 1) A large portion of the organ repertory is designed for a specific place in the year or in the service. In this category are many German chorale preludes (Bach, Buxtehude, Brahms, Reger, Pepping, etc.) and their counterparts in this country and elsewhere, as well as French and Italian and other pieces on Gregorian Chant melodies (Frescobaldi, de Grigny, Couperin, Langlais, etc.).
- 2) A second category of organ music is that written for no particular feast day, but rather for a special occasion. Organists are continually being asked what music to have at a wedding. Oddly to the layman, there is very little organ music specifically appropriate to weddings, and one here has usually to rely on free (non-chorale—or chant-based) music of an appropriate emotive character, unless there is to be a nuptial Mass or communion, which would invite music with that particular focus.
- 3) However, there is a great deal of fine music available for a funeral or memorial service. Many chorale preludes concern death, and are by no means lugubrious: Bach's two settings of *Wenn wir in hochsten Noten* and most of Brahms's eleven chorale preludes provide especially elevated material, and one can also draw upon music for Lent as well as countless free works of an appropriate nature.
- 4) The third and largest category includes not only free pieces (toccatas, preludes, fugues, etc.), but also those chorale and chant-oriented pieces which are suitable for general use through the entire year. In this area you as organist are more nearly on your own. You must decide for yourself the character of each piece and where it would best serve in a worship situation. Beyond certain elementary guidelines, there is much room for personal initiative, both in interpreting and evaluating music, and in choosing it for the service.

In addition to prelude and postlude, the organist is usually expected to provide music during the offering, and during communion when that occurs. There is a large amount of appropriate music for this latter; in fact, any contemplative cho-

rale or hymn-prelude, or even simply communion hymns from the hymnal—all can provide an atmosphere of mystery and humility. Unfortunately, there is little opportunity for such a meaningful contribution in the offertory: in most churches anything played at this time is destined to act as accompaniment for the (admittedly necessary) confusion of taking up the collection.

- 5) All you can do is play appropriate music (and this will depend upon the position of the offertory in the service) and ignore the clamor.

Having mentioned transcriptions above, I should like to add a further word here: for, after having identified a transcription, and traced its source (opera, string quartet, solo song, etc.) and its style, you must finally evaluate it as an individual composition in its two forms, without falling into popular simplistic judgments such as “All transcriptions are bad.” Some pieces do not transcribe well for the organ. This would apply, for technical reasons, to most piano music and also to many vocal pieces which need their texts for full effect. Some other works fall well under the fingers, and are nearly as idiomatically satisfying as organ pieces as they were originally, e.g., much Baroque music for small ensemble—some movements from “Purcell” voluntaries, Corelli sonatas, Handel suites and overtures, and even some Bach pieces, such as the famous “Air” from the *Third Orchestral Suite* (intriguingly known to most of us as the “Air for the G String”).

- 6) Still others fail, not because of technical differences of media, or because too many notes had to be left out or transferred an octave up or down, but simply because they were poor pieces to start with.

In addition to the application of the same standards of quality which one would apply to any other piece, there is in my mind one overriding consideration regarding transcriptions for organ: that is quite plainly that we do not need them. Unlike some other instruments, the organ has a rich and varied repertory from each important period of the last five centuries, much of it within the grasp of the average player.

What should you play? That which you have found liturgically appropriate and musically worthy carrying this out will require courage, patience and charity. It may involve the tactful, gradual alteration of some long-standing customs and tastes. On the other hand, it is almost certain to necessitate, from time to time, at least a temporary sacrifice of your highest aesthetic ideals in the service of a greater dictum, the loving edification of your neighbor. It is altogether possible to enhance and deepen your fellow worshipers’ glorification of God without having your musical standards become a barrier to true community, through a quiet,

persistent adherence to good and appropriate music as opposed to an advocacy which places aesthetic considerations ahead of human ones.

PLAYING HYMNS

One of the most critical functions of the church organist is to lead the rest of the congregation in the singing of hymns. This function is often taken for granted by players, especially those of advanced technical stature. Actually, it is not an easy thing to play hymns in a manner which will reflect the atmosphere of the text, and which will inspire enthusiastic congregational singing. There is a considerable problem of reading involved, since the average organist is called upon to play between three and five different hymns for each service. Players with weak pedal technique will find that the bass lines of hymns move constantly, and are by no means written with the limitations of the feet in mind! You must be able to follow not only the four musical voices but the text for each verse as well; and there are numerous additional issues of phrasing and articulation which must be met. In terms of the entire service, the hymns can set the psychological tone which makes the difference between intense and routine worship. In short, hymn playing calls the organist's whole musicianship to the organist's whole musicianship to the fore, and well deserves careful attention.

I should suggest answering three main questions in connection with each hymn; and as you become increasingly familiar with your instrument, your congregation and your church building, you will not need to answer these by the trial and error method. The questions concern registration (how loud and with what colors to play), tempo (how fast to play), and articulation (how much space to leave between notes and/or chords). There is no one universally right answer to these questions for any hymn, since conditions vary from church to church and from day to day. But no satisfactory answers are likely to come without a thorough understanding of the hymn text and setting.

Thus the first step in responsible hymn playing is not a groping play-through on just any stops handy. Rather, read the hymn text in its entirety, noting its place in the liturgical year, its general mood (with inner changes, if any), and its particular words. Then as in any sight-reading, come the musical considerations: note the key, including modulations and their introduced accidentals, the meter signature and the basic contrapuntal relationship between the outer parts (bass and soprano). Be aware of inner phrase goals in terms of the music (cadential chord progressions) and the text (does the text phrase with the music, or are

there overlappings?). Also note any especially awkward spots in the bass line, which you will presumably play on the pedals if you have them with enough independence of registration so that the hands can concentrate on the upper three parts, thus facilitating legato playing.

Once you have made these preliminary observations, you are ready to decide on a suitable registration. This should be strong enough and clear enough to lead but not to overwhelm the congregation; and the playing-through before the singing should be essentially of the same character as the remainder, in order to announce the hymn in its proper mood. I cannot legislate here, except to say that diapason tone is probably best for most hymn situations. The Great open diapason 8' and its (principal) 4' may be enough, supported by a Pedal 16' and 8' of similar character, with Great coupled to Pedal if the latter is weak in 8' tone. If, as is often the case in early 20th-century American organs, the Great 8' diapason is extremely loud and heavy, substitute an 8' flute (melodia) and possibly an 8' gamba. Or perhaps there will be a lighter 8' diapason on the Swell which can be coupled to the Great—rarely will the Swell alone be strong enough to support a congregation. To increase the brilliance as well as the intensity, add a 2' Great diapason if you have one, and then the Great mixture. If the text permits, it is sometimes exciting to build the hymn gradually, adding a stop before each verse (if you can do so without disrupting the rhythm), ending with the full diapason chorus plus the Great reed(s), with the other manual(s) coupled in if they add anything. This is especially appropriate for the opening and closing hymns of the normal service, with their atmospheres of praise and dedication, respectively.

Your hymn tempos may draw more comment than any other aspect of your service playing. How fast should the hymn go? This will vary from time to time, depending upon the hymn, the size of the congregation, the moisture content in the air, etc. The best way I know to ascertain a singable and appropriate tempo is to sing the piece through yourself (after having made the preliminary observations mentioned above); if you can carry phrases through so that they make musical and textual sense, without having to gasp for breath in odd places, then probably your tempo is at least not too slow. If you can manage the words (assume unfamiliarity), with some attention to their meaning as well as their mere articulation, then the tempo is probably not too fast. One cardinal principle: never alter your tempo once you have begun the hymn, even when the congregation lags behind you. There is nothing more devastating to the character of a hymn or to the confidence of the congregation than to have the organist constantly slowing down, as if somehow to wait for the singers. You may wish to increase your registration or exaggerate your phrasing (see below), but under no

circumstances change your tempo. Remember that in hymn playing, it is your function to lead, not to follow.

Even with a provisionally correct registration and tempo, the hymn experience can be a fiasco if the third aspect of the organist's work is poorly done, namely the phrasing. For the organ must actually "sing" the hymn, in some sense explaining the text to the congregation, the organist here again functioning as a scholar and teacher. Basically, articulate places in the text where the intelligent singer would take a natural breath or break. Normally this will be at the ends of inner phrases and sentences, as well as at the end of each verse. If the text carries over a musical phrase break (and there is no comma), you should carry over also on that verse, even if the people of the congregation, not thinking about the text they sing, take a breath. Not every comma in the text means a break in the music, though; the line "Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend" is a well-known example of a case in which meticulous observance of each comma with a break in the music would product a choppy, fussy effect. In cases of this sort, musical phrase considerations take precedence over textual ones.

In order to preserve the rhythmic life of the composition, do not take an indeterminate amount of time on the last chords of the verses, or in the space before the first chords. Whatever break you take before the return to the beginning should be in rhythm, and you must count or at least feel the pulses yourself. Often it is necessary to add an extra two or four beats, or even a whole measure (in cut time), in order to let the congregation get its breath. More often (in common time) it is enough simply to cut the final whole note to a dotted half, leaving a quarter rest. But the main thing is to do whatever you do in strict rhythm. Otherwise, the congregation cannot possibly predict how long your unwritten fermatas are going to be, and thus when to start singing again. This leads to flabby indefiniteness rather than the confidence necessary to good hymn singing.

Another aspect of phrasing which stands more or less independent of textual considerations is the articulation of repeated notes and chords. Since the basic purpose of hymn playing is to inspire and to lead good congregational singing, one strives for some effective combination of clarity of attack with an overall smoothness and forward movement. Further, since hymns are by nature choral music, the organist is freer to "arrange" his accompaniment than he is in the case of an organ piece *per se*. A satisfactory approach to at least begin with seems to be the one which allows the player to tie over common tones—except at phrase endings, of course—in the alto and tenor parts, and sometimes in the bass (if it

does not disrupt the pulse), but never in the soprano, where to tie would not be true to the syllabic declamation of the hymn text.

Naturally, you must avoid choppiness, especially in a dry acoustic. But you can play very smoothly and yet in an articulated fashion, if you listen carefully. And of course, you may need to use very detached articulation to lead a congregation which is too large for the organ, or one in a very reverberant edifice. It is useless to try to spell out this technique, as is often done, with written-in phrase marks or actual metrical rests. One must be more flexible than that.

In addition to the above basic guidelines, here are some secondary ideas. Especially if the hymn is relatively unfamiliar, you may wish to announce it either by playing the melody alone or in octaves, or with only the bass line as brought out on a stronger registration, playing the alto and tenor on a subsidiary manual and (naturally) the bass on the pedals. This last method can also be effective while the congregation is singing, especially if you have a powerful reed which will be audible above the full ensemble. This should be well practiced in advance, though, since some alto and tenor parts are awkward to play smoothly with the left hand and no help from the right.

Concerning texture, the usual four-part setting of most hymns is quite adequate for supporting many congregations, and is certainly always appropriate for the playing-through. But often, if the organ is inadequate, or is buried in chambers, or has dull colors, so that even the full organ is not enough to lead a church full of worshipers, you will wish to take further steps to enhance the effect of your playing. One easy method is to fill out the often open spacing of the four-part chords by doubling chord notes between the outer voices. This is not difficult; but be well aware of the harmonies and take care not to double carelessly (low-lying doubling of the third, for example). Remember that it is always more effective to fill in chords in the upper (soprano and alto) range than in the potentially muddy lower ranges. Another good way to brighten up a dull instrument is to employ the 16' inter-manual couplers (or a 16' manual stop) and play the manual parts an octave higher than written. This is a crude procedure, and would be unnecessary and inappropriate on an organ with proper voicing and upper work. But it is certainly justifiable in hymn leading on the typical early 20th-century orchestral American organ (which so many of us have to work with), with its overabundance of 8' stops, and little else. In this instance, the clumsiness of the approach seems somehow justified by that of the instrument.

There are other ways in which you can vary the printed version of the hymn; the extent to which you do this will depend upon your innate musicianship, your experience in pre-improvisational arranging, and hopefully the appropriateness of this variation to the service (does it really add or only confuse and draw attention to itself?). One of the easiest and most helpful things you can do to a hymn is to transpose it if it is written in a key likely to be uncomfortable for many of your congregation. Transposition is a mechanical skill, and if done by visually imagining the notes moved up or down the requisite distance (the most dependable method), can be acquired by anyone willing to practice it. Transposition down a step or half-step will probably be the most useful tool (unless you are using the Harvard University Hymn Book for a female congregation!); and it comes easiest if you observe not only the printed notes and chords but also the intervallic and voice-leading structure of the hymn. Above all, know your scales and chords in all major and minor keys.

Beyond this, you can decorate a festal service or lengthen a processional, or simply add drama to a closing hymn, by inserting interludes of various lengths. You can improvise them freely if you have the skill, but it is best to remain melodically, harmonically and rhythmically close to the hymn. If you do not feel confident in improvisation, you can still achieve a satisfactory effect of relief and climax by replaying the last phrase or two before the final verse, perhaps ending the previous sung verse on a deceptive cadence and/or moving to your interlude without a break in order not to confuse the singers. Also, it does not take too much skill to vary slightly the harmonies and/or texture for individual verses (playing the soprano against a running bass, or the soprano and tenor together, etc.); or you can use someone else's written-out free accompaniments, several collections of which are available. But whatever you do, consider carefully whether you can do it confidently and with the effect of elevating the service, not cheapening it by vain show.

Although few organists have the magnificent opportunities for creative accompaniment presented by the (admittedly bastardized) procedure of accompanying psalm and lectionary tones, a word should be said about playing the so-called Anglican Chant, a much more common type formerly found in liturgically oriented churches (Lutheran, Episcopalian, etc.), but more recently used with increasing frequency in the free churches as well. Although closely related to hymn playing, chant accompaniment presents some special problems. In the first place, the rhythmic values of the printed notes are not to be taken literally, but rather accommodate the rhythm and syllable length of the text lines. Secondly, there are many text lines of varying length for each line of music, these being

printed either separately from the music with a code for indicating underlay, or between the staff lines, thus showing the underlay more clearly, but greatly separating the soprano and alto parts from the tenor and bass.

Since the music of the chants is entirely supportive of the text, the organist must pay even closer attention to the text than in the regularly measured hymn. This means that you must either be able to read both text and music at once (not easy when they are so far apart), or you must in effect memorize the (simple) music and devote yourself totally to the text. In addition to the phrases called for at the ends of lines it will also be clearer for the congregation if you articulate (repeat notes or whole chords) shorter phrases on single chords (e.g., the recurrent phrase of the lesser Doxology, "As it was in the beginning, is now. . ."). As for the lengths of phrase breaks, not to mention the tempo of the chanting, these should be such that the chant becomes elevated speech, neither too fast for intelligibility nor too slow for naturalness. Furthermore, the mood of the text should make a difference: not all chants are effective at the same tempo. These matters must be worked out in advance, and organist and choir must take the lead.

ACCOMPANYING SOLOS AND ANTHEMS

If in playing prepared pieces and in hymn playing the organist is, respectively, solo performer and group leader, then vocal and instrumental solos and choral works require that he don still another personality, that of the accompanist. For this his psychological attitude and musical behavior must once again change. No longer is he the sole bearer of the artistic burden: now he must constantly listen, appraise and adjust in concert with his fellow performer(s). To be sure, some soloists will need (and fewer will request) advice from the organist, in which case the latter becomes something of a coach. And of course the combination organist-choirmaster has more control over the total situation than does the organist following someone else's direction.

As in the case of organ solo music, you have to decide first of all whether the organ part for a vocal or instrumental solo was originally written for the organ, or whether it is a transcription (of a piano part, as is most common, or of orchestral parts, also frequent). This is important because it determines whether or not you need feel obligated to play all the printed notes. This may sound like the advocacy of musical cheating: but there is absolutely no need for trying to play all the notes in a transcribed part, and in fact, it is often with more musical results that you leave some of them out.

How does one spot a transcription? If the editor has been careful, as too few are, he will tell you, indicating that the keyboard part has been transcribed for organ (from the orchestral score of a cantata from the piano part of a song, etc.). If the piece is from the period before 1750, chances are good that you will be playing either parts originally assigned to the orchestra (in a cantata or oratorio or orchestral piece) or a realization (i.e., filling up) of a figured bass, a form of musical shorthand common in the Baroque period. In the latter case, you should have no difficulty, since the upper parts will be presumably designed by the editor for the hands; you need only decide whether or not to use the pedals (sometimes easier, sometimes more difficult, depending on the writing, whether you have to conduct with one hand, etc.), and whether to use a separate stop there if you do (basically a good idea, in imitation of the typical Baroque bass stringed instrument—use 8' tone). If you are being asked to play obbligato parts originally assigned to violins, oboes, flutes, etc., as is the case in arias of Handel, Bach and other Baroque composers, then you may feel freer to leave out inner (harmonic “filler”) parts, relying on the outer parts to carry the important lines. This trio texture—here the voice often serves as the third independent part—is very common, indeed normative, especially in the late Baroque.

From 1750 to the present you will be faced only with transcriptions of orchestral or piano parts: this includes Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and their contemporaries, as well as the modern composers. For example, movements from masses will be orchestral, and thus permit the liberties mentioned above. As one moves into the late Baroque period, in fact, one enters an era of increasingly specific orchestration; and here it is a good idea to secure a full score and perhaps even a recording of the original oratorio or mass, in order that you might try to approximate the orchestral sounds—usually not shown in the typical piano-vocal score—in your registration. This is an opportunity to expand your knowledge of orchestration, too, one of many areas in which organists tend to be ignorant.

Perhaps most often you will be playing a piano part, and usually it will simply say “piano” at the beginning. But even if it says “organ,” you may have a thinly disguised piano part, as is true in the Schubert songs one often hears with organ. Piano parts, especially if unedited for organ, are frequently identifiable by pianistic devices: octaves, large chords, arpeggios and bass notes which need the damper pedal to sustain them. There is no reason to knock yourself out trying to play all of this as written. Omit most octaves, achieving the same effect by registering with 8' and 4' pitches and playing only the bottom notes. In very large chords, note where the doublings are and leave out less important notes which

are prohibitively difficult to reach or to play properly on the organ. Arpeggios, which produce a harp-like sound on the percussive, un-damped piano, can be ineffective on the organ even if you hold each tone through to the last. As for bass notes, play them with your feet (usually with a 16' stop included, to achieve the greater pitch range of the piano keyboard), and observe not so much the printed value of the notes as their sounded length if the damper pedal indications were followed.

For registration, rely on the basic classes of organ tone (see Footnote 1), keeping in mind that it is usually advisable to achieve some contrast of color between organ and soloist in cases where you are not otherwise bound by what you have discovered to be the original orchestral indications of the composer. In other words, it makes little sense to accompany a flute (or a flutey voice) on flutes, or a violin on strings, unless for special effect.

In the large area of interpretation, we must include articulation and balance. The first means that you should adjust your degree of legato to the soloist, either to imitate his phrasing (in imitative textures), or to contrast with it (as in the common Baroque texture of repeated chords beneath a sustained solo melody). The second means, among other things, that you must neither overpower nor under-support the soloist. Here you will need the help of a knowledgeable third person who is willing to listen from various parts of the sanctuary and give advice. Most organs are sufficiently higher than or distant from the player so that neither organist nor soloist can truly hear how things will sound from the congregation.

It is sad but true that you will almost never encounter a part actually written for organ, with your specific stops indicated, albeit that sometimes modern composers give general indications of pitch (8' and 4' tone, etc.) or tone color (diapasons, Great full, Swell reeds, etc.). And even if specific stops are suggested (and editors will often give such information, along with settings for the Hammond electronic), you cannot swallow them whole. Remember that no two organs are alike, and that there are almost as many different salicionalas as there are Swell divisions. Besides, unless the composer himself has given the indications (and composers are more careful about this than editors, as a rule), it is merely a matter of your musicality against that of the editor. And you are in the situation.

What has been said regarding solo accompaniment holds basically true for anthem work also, except that you are more likely to be playing from an actual organ part rather than a transcription. Most anthems published as such and composed in the later 19th or 20th centuries will be written specifically for church use

and thus for organ and choir performance. In this sense, choir accompaniments from these periods have a better chance of being easier or at least more idiomatic, and thus more gratifying to play. Furthermore, you will not normally be asked to transpose an anthem accompaniment, as you might well be asked to do with a solo.

If you are not the choir director, then you have to know your part well enough to play it, watch the director out of the corner of your eye, and listen to everything. If you are also the director, then you have no higher musical authority to obey, but you do have the often ticklish problems which come with trying to do at one time two distinct jobs—organ playing and choral conducting—which few persons can do well separately. I shall not attempt to discuss this hybrid type of musicianship, except to say that you will do well to develop section leaders in your choir so that you can keep both hands on the keys most of the time, giving with your head what few downbeats and cutoffs are necessary. Combined organ-choir positions do seem to encourage acrobatics: but surely most of it could be minimized. In any case, work out your “act” well in advance, so that you know what chords you must catch with one hand, where you must give an entrance, where you need to change registration or close the swell-box, and—the hardest task in music—how you are going to turn the page!

In rehearsal accompanying as well as in occasional service playing, you will be called upon to exercise one of the most necessary of musical skills, that of reading an open vocal score. Except for the most intricate of polyphonic textures (as in a five-voiced Bach fugal allegro, for example), you should be able to play all the vocal parts *without* relying upon the keyboard reduction frequently supplied. This is necessary in order that the choir can hear the entire piece in rehearsals while learning, and so that you can pick out individual parts for special attention. (This much, incidentally, should be done on the clear and percussive piano, not the organ.) Avoiding the reduction is not a mere technical stunt: often the voice leading is quite unclear in the reduction, and the text underlay is not even shown. Although it is often necessary to double voice parts on the organ in an actual service (if, say, the choir is small or uncertain) even in supposedly *a cappella* compositions, the organist should develop the ability to read open vocal score (involving, after all, no unusual clefs in most cases) as a crucial part of his musicianship more than as a preparation for performance *per se*.

THE ORGANIST: POSSIBILITIES AND PREREQUISITES

The organist has a world of possibilities open to him. No other musician has a more glorious instrument to play, or a more extensive and varied repertoire to explore. And, as a church musician, he has an opportunity not only to perform regularly and frequently, but to do so in the deeper context of worship. Who could ask for a more beautiful way to glorify God and edify one's neighbor?

In the area of aesthetic quality, the organist occupies a pivotal position. For, if his own technique and taste are developed and ever growing, his congregation will respect him and allow him to influence their own aesthetic lives in the context of a specific musical ministry to a unique religious community. Truly, the organist, responsible as he is for the major aesthetic content of the worship service, is a potential teacher and arbiter of taste.

It should be clear that I also envision the organist as a scholar, taking that term in its broadest sense. For he is ideally not merely a technically proficient performer, although he must work hard to achieve even this. In addition, he is a complete intellectual and emotional being, who thinks before as well as during the music, who informs himself concerning the necessary liturgical and musicological background of the music he approaches, and who has eliminated arbitrariness by developing a disciplined method of solving each new problem.

Philosopher Walter Kaufmann coins the term "humbition" to describe the last of his "four cardinal virtues," the neologism being a combination of "humility" and "ambition." I should suggest that the organist needs, along with his technical tools, something psychologically akin to Kaufmann's virtue, perhaps slightly altered to "humfidence." He is humble, because he realizes the smallness of his effort against the larger background of creation. And yet, if he is properly equipped, he has every reason to be confident, for he has been richly blessed in gift and position. With commitment, taste, technique and scholarship, the church organist needs only "humfidence" to step forward fully clad, an instrument by God's grace, of ongoing renewal.

FOOTNOTES

1. Avoid whimsical stop-fiddling. Know your instrument and the basic classes of organ tone (diapasons, flutes, reeds and strings), and plan your registrations carefully, keeping a good registration (in a notebook, if you wish) once you have found it. You can be open to new ideas without wasting a lot of time trying out stops and without losing your confidence in your registrational choices. Only in hymn playing (and in an occasional

- accompaniment) might you need to change stops without prior plan, if the organ is clearly too soft or too loud.
2. Many editions give English translations of at least titles, and many group pieces by liturgical season and subject. Among collections useful for this grouping are Riemenschneider's edition of Bach's *Orgelbuchlein* (*The Liturgical Year*, Ditson0Presser) *Orgelvorspiele zum evangelischen Kirchengesangbuch* (Merseburger0Peters). *The Parish Organist* (Vols. I-XII, Concordia), and *The Church Organist's Golden Treasury* (3 vols., Ditson0-Presser); the last is somewhat subjective in its grouping.
 3. Bach's *Wachet auf* (Sleepers, wake) is a good choice, albeit that the wedding concerned (in the original cantata movement of which this is an arrangement) is actually the mystical one between Christ and his church (see Matthew 25:1-13). His often-played *Bist du bei mir* (Be Thou But Near), though probably a personal expression for his wife, has a text with a strong death orientation.
 4. Funeral music can be joyous as well as contemplative, for Christ has triumphed over death. Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" (*Messiah*) was always played for memorial services in the Princeton University Chapel and (at Dean Gordon's insistence) not apologetically, but "as it ought to be played": triumphantly.
 5. In some churches a hymn is sung at this point, a happy solution to the problem, if one involving some logistics for the man trying to hold an open hymnal while reaching into his wallet! An anthem or solo here is even more wasted, words getting lost in the shuffle.
 6. Transcription was standard practice until the end of the Baroque period, some of the most convincing examples being Bach's organ transcriptions of Vivaldi concertos and his own cantata movements (as in the six chorale preludes published by Schubler, of which *Wachet auf* is one.)

Editorial Note from the Committee on Professional Certification

Earliest editions of this guide were prepared by Dr. Charles S. Brown, FAGO, ChM, the first National Councillor for Education of the American Guild of Organists. Much of his work informs the present edition.

In 1990, Dr. Max B. Miller revised the first edition, offering several new examples and additions, but retaining the bulk of the original.

Under the leadership of Kathleen Thomerson, FAGO, ChM, Sheryl L. Sebo laid the groundwork for the current revision. This was carried out by Dr. Jonathan B. Hall, FAGO, ChM, director of the Committee on Professional Certification, during 2015 and 2016. Harold Calhoun of the National Office rendered invaluable assistance with the production of this book.

We conclude with the vision of our founders, who sought:

To advance the cause of worthy religious music; to elevate the status of church musicians; and to increase their appreciation of their responsibilities, duties and opportunities.

To raise the efficiency of organists and choirmasters, by examinations to evaluate the training and the attainments of the candidates, in Practical Organ Playing, Choir-Training, and the Theory and General Knowledge of Music, and to grant certificates in Service Playing and the respective classes of membership (Fellow, Associate or Choirmaster) to candidates who pass these examinations.

(American Guild of Organists' original charter, paragraphs 1-2)