

Music, She Wrote: Organ Compositions by Women

Part Four: Wedding Music

by Dr. Frances Nobert, South Coast District Convener

Asterisks (*) indicate compositions from *Music by Women before 1800: Music for Weddings, Joyous Ceremonies and Special Occasions, with Optional Descants for Trumpet, Violin, Flute, or Oboe* (instrumental parts included). Ars Femina. The thirty-page volume contains fifteen works, most of which are two pages long. In addition to the composers listed below, there are pieces by Harriet Abrams, Elise Müller, Chiara Margherita Cozzolani and Sophie von Braunschweig. Brief composer biographies appear at the beginning of the collection.

Preludes

Jennifer Bate. *Cantilena* from *Four Reflections*. Novello 01 0223. The three-page composition features a haunting melody which alternates between hands and is accompanied by a simple but effective harmony.

Roberta Bitgood. *God Himself Is With Us* from *The Roberta Bitgood Organ Album*. H. W. Gray GB00675. This jaunty chorale prelude emulates the style of J. S. Bach with a walking eighth-note bass in the left hand, a recurring sixteenth-note motive in the right hand and a conservative harmonic style. The chorale phrases appear in the pedal and are separated by brief manual interludes.

Emma Lou Diemer. *O Waly, Waly (Though I May Speak)* from *Eight Hymn Preludes for Organ*. Augsburg Fortress 11-10349. Diemer has set this popular tune with a six-measure introduction before each of the three verses. The melody occurs on a solo stop for two verses and then joins the other voices on the String Celestes for the concluding stanza.

*Louise Duval. *Menuets I et II*. Duval's five-act ballet, *Les Genies, ou les caractères de L'Amour* is the source for this delightful and sprightly set of minuets. *Menuet I* is in G Major followed by *Menuet II* in the parallel minor.

Nancy Plummer Faxon. *Adagio* from *Miniature Suite* from *The Boston Organ Book*, commissioned by the American Guild of Organists for the fortieth National Convention in Boston, 1990. E. C. Schirmer, The harmony and registration of this short, reflective *Adagio* are conceived in the Romantic style.

Alice Jordan. *O Perfect Love* from *The Organist's Companion, Volume 10, Number 5, August, 1988*, ed. Wayne Leupold. McAfee Music, a division of Belwin Mills. The short work on Barnby's familiar melody, *Sandringham*, may also be played during the lighting of the unity candle.

Janet Linker. *Variations on "O Waly, Waly"* (*The Gift of Love* or *When Love is Found*). Concordia Publishing House 97-6796. Linker's settings are from one to four pages long and include a variety of styles, tempi and colorful registrations. J. S. Bach's *Wachet auf* motif appears in Variation IV, while a gentle, swinging blues occurs in Variation VI. It is possible to play one or more of this delightful set, since each variation is convincing as a free-standing composition.

Elizabeth Stirling. *Moderato (in G Major)* from *Romantic Pieces for Organ*, ed. Barbara Harbach. Vivace Press VIV 324. *Moderato* is representative of this volume, which consists mostly of slow movements in ABA form, often with a coda. There are indications for registration, dynamics, metronome

markings, swell box dynamics, a few articulations, and the Romantic style of using appoggiaturas and suspensions to heighten the melodic line.

*Elizabeth Turner. *Air*. Because Turner's musical education was acquired in a milieu dominated by George Frideric Handel, this lovely, two-page composition is typical of many of the period's slower works. The ornamented melody is supported by simple left-hand harmonies and by constant pulsing quarter notes in the pedal.

Processionals

*Louise Duval. *Air de Zerbin*. Duval's very brief composition would work well as a trumpet voluntary for one or two bridal attendants in a small venue.

*Elisabeth Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (1666-1729). *Air de Violon*, *Air of the Athenians* and *The Trumpet*. These compositions, especially *The Trumpet*, are perfect substitutes for the commonly performed tunes by Clark and Purcell.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Wedding March* from *Margaret Vardell Sandresky Organ Music, Volume I for Solo Organ*, ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold WL 600031. This rousing five-page, chordal and majestic work moves through a variety of keys. It may be played in its entirety or shortened as needed. *Volume I* is an excellent collection that includes *L'homme armé Organ Mass*, several chorale preludes and a few free compositions.

Recessionals

Elfrieda Andrée. *Finale* from *Organ Symphony No. 1 in B Minor*. Stainer & Bell. *Finale* comes from Andrée's most famous work, which displays the broad and grand themes that would mark the great organ symphonies of a few years later by French composers Charles Marie Widor and Louis Vierne.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. *Prelude for Organ*. Vivace Press VIV 304. Hensel composed this grand six-page, F-Major, homophonic prelude for her wedding processional.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. *Prelude for Organ in G Major* from *Organ Works in G major*, ed. Calvert Johnson. Vivace Press VIV 329. Hensel penned the five-page composition the night before her wedding, because the promised work from her brother Felix did not arrive. The style, which Hensel describes as conservative, is stately with an opening section featuring massive chords and alternations between manuals. A fugato appears in measure fourteen and alternates with the opening material before a series of slow, diminished chords closes the work.

Benna Moe. *Finale pomposo festivo* from *Koncert-Suite för Orgel*. eriks K631. This third and final movement is a four-page, full-organ, chordal composition in ABA form. At least two manuals are required for the middle section, which contains an eighth-note accompanying passage in the left hand.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Wedding March*. See Processionals.