

MUSIC, SHE WROTE: A MINI-SERIES ON ORGAN COMPOSITIONS BY WOMEN

Frances Nobert, DMA

Volumes

The following volumes are readily available and contain works that may be used either in sacred services or in concert. These compositions are accessible both to the performer and to the listener.

Emma Lou Diemer. *Seasonal Psalms for Organ, Volumes I and II.* The Sacred Music Press, 70/1258 S and 70/1259 S, 1999. Foreword: “The two volumes *of Seasonal Psalms for Organ* contain original compositions that are free interpretations of Psalm verses. The Psalms were chosen from the lectionary for the major festival days and seasons of the Church Year. Some of the settings are based on hymns and chorales that are commonly associated with those days. The organ registrations serve as guidelines, and they should be creatively changed to suit differing instruments. There are instances where synthesized MIDI sounds can be effectively employed.”

Jeanne Demessieux. *Twelve Choral Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes for Organ.* Summy- Birchard Music, exclusively distributed by Warner Bros. Publications, 15800 N. W. 48th Avenue, Miami, FL 33014, ISBN 0-87487-603-6, 1995. This collection has been referred to as the Catholic version of the organ booklet of our century. The mostly two- or three-page compositions are appropriate for preludes, postludes or communion music. The longest work, variations on “O Filii,” would also be effective in concert. For Christmas one might learn “Adeste Fideles,” a charming setting in the style of a musette. With a pedal tone almost entirely throughout, this arrangement could be practiced on the piano.

Allen Orton Gibbs. *Complete Organ Music*, ed. Thomas Gibbs, Jr. and Carson Cooman. Zimbel Press #80101238. (*Theme with Variations: I wonder as I wander; In the Bleak Midwinter: A Prelude on the Tune Cranham; Toccata on Divinum mysterium; Scriptural Prelude [Acts 17:27]; Scriptural Prelude and Fugue [Mark 14:32]; Reflection on an Old Hebrew Prayer [Va' ani S' filosi]; Reading from Isaiah: Four Short Pieces for Organ and Reader; Fantasia [II Chronicles 7:1, 2]; Gloria in excelsis Deo; Prelude on Quempastores; Music for a Sunday Morning [Psalm 122:1, Prayer, Psalm 117]*). The volume also contains a biography, notes on the compositions, organ specifications and registrations for each work. The moderately easy to moderately difficult compositions range in length from two to nine pages and would be appropriate for church, synagogue or concert.

James W. Kosnik, ed. *Laudate! Volume 4.* Concordia Publishing House. Of the thirty-nine settings in this volume, fourteen are by Emma Lou Diemer, Mary Beth Bennett and Janet Linker. The preludes, interludes and postludes are based on some of the most

popular hymnody found in *Worship III* and in *Gather*, two Catholic hymnals. James Kosnik states in his foreword that his "...hope is that this series of organ pieces written by gifted composers will assist the parish organist in selecting organ music which will encourage people to pick up their hymnals and unite their voices in sacred congregational song."

Rachel Laurin. *Douze Courtes Pièces pour orgue (Twelve Short Pieces for organ), Op. 43.* Wayne Leupold Editions WL600070. (*Cantilène, Toccatina, Intermezzo, Fugue "Bouclée" ["Loop" Fugue], Moto Perpetuo, Trumpet Tune, Invocation, Fugue "Circulaire" ["Circular" Fugue], Choral et Variations, Rondo, Fugue "Carée" ["Square" Fugue], Fugue "Triangulaire" ["Triangle" Fugue]*). The one- to three-page compositions are for manuals-only or with very minimal pedal. Laurin indicates registrations in French and in English. These moderately easy works would be charming as individual selections or as a group on a recital.

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 set, since each variation is convincing as a freestanding composition. The work may serve as a voluntary at a wedding or other service, or may be performed in concert.

The Marilyn Mason Music Library, Volume 2: A Collection of Commissioned Works for Organ. MorningStar MSM 10-991. (There are also works by Edmund Haines, Robert M. Speed and Jon Spong.)

a) Alice Jordan: *Two Pieces for Organ Duet. Quiet Rest (based on St. Columbia)* is a lovely setting featuring the Celeste 8' and a solo stop. The melody in triple meter shifts between the two players and between the treble and the bass registers. *Celebration (based on Judas Maccabaeus and Sicilian Mariners)* is a jubilant romp with various transformations of the melodies that begin forte and roar to the end with full organ.

b) Janet Linker's *Variations on Greensleeves* covers a wide variety of styles and moods as she presents the theme and three settings of the melody. *Variation 1* is based on several ground basses that appear during the minor-major-minor tonal scheme. The work begins quietly and builds to forte at the end. The constant quarter-note pulse lends a propelling drive throughout. The indication of "Joyfully and lilting" aptly fits *Variation 2* with the triple meter, the recurring staccato pedal pattern and the suggested flute registrations. *Variation 3: Meditation* features the Celeste 8' with a soft solo stop and shifting meters throughout. *Variation 4: Finale*'s homophony with creative harmony and key changes brings the work to a forceful, forte conclusion.

c) Carol Muehlig's seven-page *Prelude on Hyfrydol* begins quietly with the melody in a minor key and builds to full organ to close majestically in the relative major. The fairly easy composition would be a stirring opening for a worship service.

June Nixon. *100 Interludes.* Kevin Mayhew, 2002. This volume is for manuals only and contains one-or two-page interludes in ten major and minor keys. The moderately easy

compositions could be used as a bridge between an anthem and a hymn, as a short offertory or as a brief work during communion.

Emily Maxson Porter. Celebrations of Praise: Seven Chorale Preludes for Organ.

Calfaria Music 99-101. (*Ebenezer, Hanover, Lobe den Herren, Terra Patris, St. Denio, Schönster Herr Jesu* and *Royal Oak*) This delightful collection could be used for various parts of the service or for a concert. Several of the works are rhythmically “catchy” with poly meters or shifting meters.

Emily Maxson Porter. Five Hymn Preludes for Fall. MorningStar MSM 10-713. (*Dix, Kirken den er et Gammelt Hus, Last uns erfreuen, Lobe den Herren, and Nun danket all*). Except for the lengthy, quiet *For the Beauty of the Earth*, these rousing works would be suitable for either an opening or a closing voluntary. The hymn tune appears once in each setting and has stirring accompaniments. Three of the compositions call for Trompette en chamade to bring out a fanfare or a tenor melody. Porter indicates registrations throughout.

Emily Maxson Porter. For All the Faithful: Six New Organ Settings (For All the Faithful Women; He Leadeth Me: Oh, Blessed Thought; My Hope is Built on Nothing Less; Thine is the Glory; Weary of All trumpeting; and Mothering God, You Gave me Birth) (Augsburg Fortress 11-11081.) Because many of the melodies are either unfamiliar or too concert-like, *He Leadeth Me* might be the most useful for church services. Porter’s subdued but colorful five-page setting would be an excellent opening voluntary.

Emily Maxson Porter. Three Quiet Hymn Settings. MorningStar MSM 10-864. (*Beautiful Savior, Children of the Heavenly Father, and When Peace, Like a River*). Each of these three- to four-page compositions would be lovely for a voluntary or for communion music. The unadorned melody appears either in the soprano or the tenor. Registration suggestions occur throughout.

Florence Beatrice Price. Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volumes 1-4, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions. Each volume contains a biographical sketch by Rae Linda Brown, a list of organ compositions, a discussion of registrations, and information on the works in the collection. The first and third volumes include critical notes on editorial additions and corrections. There is also an extensive historical section on Florence Price and the organ, including specifications for 10 (Volume I) or 13 (Volume 3) instruments. The second and fourth volumes explain the editorial procedures and cite the organs Price knew in Chicago. Specific comments on the compositions appear below.

Florence Beatrice Price. Suite No. 1 for Organ from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume I*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 19. *Fantasy* opens with a flourish that recurs often in the movement, modulates to the dominant in the middle, and closes in the tonic. A wide variety of thematic ideas occur, some lyric, some virtuosic or dramatic. The clever *Fughetta* is brief yet technically demanding. The lovely *Air* is an andante filled with rich chromatic harmonization. *Toccato* is in rondo form and is typical of the perpetual motion toccata developed in the late Romantic era.

Florence Beatrice Price. *Short Organ Works* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 2*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 24. These nine relatively easy pieces vary in length from two to six pages and are mostly in ternary form. As is frequently the case in Price's compositions, some have melodies that recall spirituals or folk tunes. The works are very accessible to an audience, whether in a church, a concert hall or a theater.

Florence Beatrice Price. *Variations on "Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells"* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 3*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 26. This work is the only one Price composed as an organ arrangement of a spiritual besides *Steal Away to Jesus*. There are 15 variations that may be performed in their entirety or selectively. There are many opportunities for colorful registrations.

Florence Beatrice Price. *First Sonata for Organ* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 4*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 29. As a student, Price performed Guilman's *Sonata in D Minor* on a program honoring the composer during his visit to The New England Conservatory. His work seems to have served as Price's model for *First Sonata*, as both compositions have the same keys, tempos, registrations, thematic relationships and many other details. Unlike her other large works for organ, she does not attempt to incorporate African-American musical elements.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky: *Organ Music, Volumes I: Solo Organ*, ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 600031. The first volume contains one of Sandresky's best-known works, *L'homme armé Organ Mass* of six movements. Each section is short, with the longest being the *Credo* of 4:30 minutes. Therefore, selected movements or the entire work may be used as a prelude or in concert. The *Gloria* works well as a postlude. Also in **Volume I** are *Toccata on Veni Creator Spiritus*, *Wedding March*, *Jubilate Deo* and several chorale preludes. *Wedding March* is excellent for an academic procession, a bridal party entry or a postlude.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Organ Music, Volume II: Solo Organ*. Ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 600032. This second volume contains eight works, three of which are appropriate for Advent or Christmas: *Angelus ad Virginem* (a short piece based on a traditional 14th-century melody), *Sleepers, Wake* (a lovely, two-page sicilienne in G major) and *Variations on Morning Star* (an 11-page composition based on the well-known Moravian hymn). The six variations would make a very effective voluntary or a concert work. Also appropriate for concert would be *Sonata No. 1 for Organ on the painting "Spring Turning" by Grant Wood*. This lengthy sonata was commissioned in 1993 by the Reynolda House Museum of American Art upon the acquisition of this painting and upon the restoration of the Reynolda House Organ.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Organ Music, Volume IV: Five Sacred Dances for Solo Organ*, ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 600127. Rickey D. Johnson commissioned the dances for Dr. Donald L. Armitage and the dedication of the Létourneau/Casavant organ at Augsburg Lutheran Church in Winston-Salem, North

Carolina. They were premiered by Dr. Armitage and were danced for the first time by Moving Liturgy in Wait Chapel at Wake Forest. The final movement was inspired by a sermon of the Rev'd Virginia Herring at the dedication of the organ at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem. The dances are based on Biblical texts describing movement, and the works are composed to suggest these motions. Some of the texts are slightly modified from the King James Version and the New Revised Standard Version. The compositions range in length from one and a half to ten pages, with a difficulty factor of moderate to demanding. *Dance III* has constant pedal leaps while *Dance V* uses double pedal throughout the A section of the da capo dance.

Ethel Smyth. *Chorale Preludes for Organ*. Vivace Press VIV 311. In these short works, Smyth fuses major compositional techniques of Brahms and Bach into her own personal style. She knew Bach's organ chorales well and probably was aware of Brahms works for the instrument. Her preludes are longer than the Brahms' organ works, use the pedal more extensively, and contain a four-voice texture. The volume includes settings of *Du, O schönes Welgebäude, Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott, Erschienen ist der herrlich' Tag*, two settings of *O Gott, du frommer Gott*, and a prelude and fugue on *O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid*. Preceding each composition are suggestions for registration, some history about the chorale and its text, and an analysis of Smyth's setting.

Elizabeth Stirling. *Romantic Pieces for Organ*, ed. Barbara Harbach. Vivace Press VIV 324. This volume 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. A notable exception is *Maestoso in D Minor*, which is in the style of Alexandre Guilmant with its more complex form, pedal virtuosity, modulations, combination of melodic materials, and the variation of returning melodic areas. *Air with Variations* is the volume's final work with two variations in common time, one in a lilting compound meter and the other a shortened version of the theme in the chordal coda.

Elizabeth Stirling. *Six Pedal Fugues* (of which five are based on English psalm tunes), ed. Barbara Owen. McAfee Music Publication, Belwin-Mills Publishing DM 247, (same contents as *Six Fugues for Organ on English Psalm Tunes*, published by Vivace Press, except that the title for *Nun freut euch* is given as *Es ist Gewisshlich*). The informative preface includes the specifications of Stirling's organ of St. Andrew's, Undershaft, as it stood between 1858 and 1887.

Ersébet Szönyi. *Six Pieces for Organ*. Editio Musica, Budapest Z. 2773, Theodore Presser, distributor. Szönyi's compositions are delightful with great contrasts of style, color and dynamics. Numbers III-V (*Schwebende Harmonien, Fugato, and Intermezzo*) are brief pieces with little or no pedal and would therefore work well on smaller instruments. Number II (*Wiegenlied*) is a lovely, one-page lullaby with leaps of fifths on the main beats in the pedal. There is a gentle, quiet eighth-note melody in the right hand and a sometimes syncopated left-hand accompaniment. Number I (*Praeambulum*) is a fine concert opener in the Doran mode. It is an ABA' form with a quieter fugato in the middle

and a possible right-hand reed passage for the final five measures. Number VI (*Tänzerische Weise*) is a six-page dance with shifting meters and color contrasts between the hands. It would be a fine recital piece either alone or in combination with other works from the volume.

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