

a practical resource
for Lutheran
church musicians

in tempo

ALCM

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In Tempo, or Not?

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by Nancy Raabe

the notes are under our fingers. The rhythms are mastered. But what should our tempo be?

Tempo is arguably the most overlooked aspect of music, probably because it is the least well understood. Pitch results from sound waves generated by the vibration of a certain length of string or column of air. Rhythm consists of patterns of sound by which pitches are organized. But what is tempo?

Basic resources tell us that tempo is “the rate at which a piece is played” or “the speed or pace of a given piece.” We know that that tempos can vary according to external factors such as the instrument used and the size and acoustics of the hall. One needs to factor in occasion as well as ability. A good rule of thumb is to set your tempo no faster than the speed at which you can play the most difficult measure.

Music is a glorious gift of God that unfolds in time... a narrative formed by the composer and viewed through our interpretive lens.

We would never dream of purposely playing wrong notes or rhythms, but the choice of tempo is left completely to the performer. On the surface we don’t have much to go by. Tempo indications allow for wide variances, and metronome marks (Beethoven’s for example) may not always represent the composer’s intentions. (And never choose a tempo simply because “that’s the way it’s always played.”) How, then, can we discern what the best tempo for a piece should be?

Definition and discernment

Music is a glorious gift of God that unfolds in time. How the per-



Welcome to *In Tempo*!

To complement our fine journal **CrossAccent**, we are delighted to be able to bring you this new semi-annual publication focusing on ideas and resources for the practice of church music. Each year the winter issue will concentrate on Lent and Easter, and the summer issue will look toward fall festivals, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.

The desire for such a resource was expressed by many of you in a publications survey ALCM carried out a few years ago and reinforced in the survey conducted last fall. So really it is your idea—but we also want to hear your voices! All ALCM members are invited to contribute, whether through a short essay on a practical topic of interest to other church musicians, a reflection on a recent recording of sacred music or that for use in worship, or thoughts on the self-care and spiritual well-being of the parish musician. Please send ideas to me at InTempo@alcm.org. Comments or letters regarding this issue or the resource as a whole can be directed to that address as well.

In our inaugural issue we warmly welcome *Kevin Hildebrand* and his recurring column on seasonal resources and worship planning, “Through the Church the Song Goes On.” Other contributors include three former ALCM regional presidents: *Linda Kempke* (Region 1), *Donald Armitage* (Region 2), and *Bruce Bengtson* (Region 3), along with *Tom Leeseberg-Lange*, ALCM’s administrator for many years and also a former editor of *CrossAccent*. Dear St. Cecilia is rejoining the world of print as well. Not bad for our first time out!

Blessings to all as we approach the season of Lent,

Nancy Raabe, editor

former controls that element of time determines whether listeners become engaged. Do we find ourselves swept up in the compelling musical narrative? Are we vaguely aware that substance is being sacrificed on the altar of technique? Or do we find ourselves bored, standing idly by while we wait for it all to end?

Conductor David Epstein once observed that conducting is far more than a matter of following the score’s directions. Instead, he said, “it’s almost like having molten clay in your hands, and you’ve got to sustain the piece, shape its phrases, and carry on the underlying motion that is unique to every piece.”

Tempo is key to this sustaining and shaping. Far more important than being the rate at which notes occur, tempo is what takes place between the notes. This where the music happens. Control of music’s element of time governs how one note leads to the next, how one phrase opens onto the next, and so on across the span of a work. It affects our perception of whether the music has anything say, how well it is said, and whether we are stirred deeply (each in our own way) by participating in the process of disclosure.

How, then, do we decide what the best general tempo for a given piece should be?

First, discern to the best of your ability what the music is trying to express and what its larger purpose is. Then place your understanding into the dimension of time. What subtle adjustments of tempo will clarify the music’s shape and project its deepest truths? Imagine a great actor reading a Shakespearian monologue. Dynamics and articulation play a part, but it is by harnessing tempo’s great expressive power—

Tempo is far more than the rate at which the notes occur. It is what takes place between the notes. Tempo is where the music happens.

the actor might call it pacing—that a work’s most profound truths may be absorbed and understood.

Strategies for hymn-playing

We can’t apply nuances of tempo to hymns, for we have our congregation to consider. But we can choose our tempos intelligently in a way that allows each hymn to live and breathe.

Ponder the inner nature of the tune apart from the text. What is its true character? Perhaps you hear it as a yearning ballad such as *SLANE* or a rustic dance like *KINGSFOLD*. Or perhaps you imagine it as procession of heraldic trumpets and fluttering banners, such as *SALZBURG*, or as an outburst of childlike joy on the order of *BACHOFEN* (“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It,” LSB 594).

Next, factor in the text. The tune *GETHESEMANE*, inconsequential on its own, assumes the character of a compelling dirge in “Go To Dark Gethsemane” (ELW 347, LSB 436, CW 104) and “Chief of Sinners Though I Be” (ELW 609, LSB 611). The text to which *SHADES MOUNTAIN* is sung (“There in God’s Garden,” ELW 342) infuses the tune with a sense of awe and timelessness, which is best conveyed through a tempo of ♩ = 88-92, as opposed to the more perfunctory ♩ = 112 (or ♩ = 66) than one often hears. The tune *MARTYRDOM* may have started out as a simple Scottish folk song, but when joined to “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed” (ELW 337, LSB 437, CW 129) it assumes a mantle of mourning.

A matter of survival

Tempo can spell life or death for a hymn. At a ponderous tempo your congregation may not survive all six stanzas of “Thy Strong Word” (ELW 511, LSB 578, CW 280) or even the four of “Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow” (ELW 327), both set to EBENEZER. Instead of a life-draining tempo such as $\text{♩} = 80$, try making the whole note the unit of beat. The effect is spectacular: We find ourselves carried aloft by text’s great proclamation instead of becoming entangled in seemingly endless chains of heavy triplets.

This same matter of life and death applies to hymns that consist largely of a succession of smaller note values. This tempts us to focus on that foreground level, a recipe for tempos that are too slow. A good example is “Thine the Amen” (ELW 826, LSB 680) with its preponderance of eighth notes. With a tempo of around $\text{♩} = 66$ may strike you as majestic, but it gets in the way of the organic progression of larger phrases across the span of the hymn. Let the music to flow at $\text{♩} = 40$, and we are able to experience its exquisitely sculpted rising and falling lines and the artful way they enhance the text’s poetic images.

Many of these suggestions may seem like relatively small adjustments. Put them into practice, though, and they can make all difference in whether and how our faith is strengthened by what we sing. ●

Nancy Raabe is editor of *In Tempo* and an Associate in Ministry at Luther Memorial Church in Madison, focusing on ministries for women and seniors.

Dear St. Cecilia

Ron Koch



“Dear St. Cecilia,” previously published in ALCM’s *Grace Notes*, is back in print by popular demand. Pastor Ron Koch, the “Dear Abby” of the Lutheran church music world, is the voice behind St. Cecilia, and he welcomes your questions and concerns. You can reach Ron at st.cecilia@alcm.org or by snail mail to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 1735 Hecker Pass Highway, Gilroy, CA 95020. Phone calls are also welcome at (408) 842-2713. If the writer wishes, his/her identity may remain anonymous.

Music for the Masses

Dear St. Cecilia,

I am a new choir director at Faith Lutheran Church, NJ. We have many old SATB and SAA octavos that we no longer use. Can you recommend an organization for donating music?

Thank you, Becky Majewski

Dear Becky,

Thanks for writing Dear St. Cecilia. You raise a good question about old music. I’m sure there are many filing cabinets in many churches filled with unused music. When our church musician came here over 20 years ago, she was very busy sorting through un-filed stacks of old stuff. From time to time we go through the music together and decide if something is worth keeping or not. Mostly we base our decisions on the quality of the music, not the age. We have found some real gems in the old collection. And some things we’d never use.

While I know of no organization that accepts music you no longer use, I might suggest a high school

with a choir, maybe a community college, or perhaps another community church that could evaluate the music for their purposes.

Meanwhile, may I suggest that church choirs keep some of the music they no longer use? There yet may be a purpose for having it around. Without a choir to sing it, or without the usual complement of SATB singers, some music can be adapted for singing by a soloist. Often the accompaniment can carry the harmony, so why not use the music to enhance and enrich the congregation’s song. Some settings are call-response style, and perhaps the congregation can be the “choir as congregation” and sing the response phrase.

Thanks for writing, and blessing on your new ministry.

St. Cecilia

P.S. Do you have other suggestions for donating/sharing worthwhile music that your choir no longer sings? Send an email to InTempo@alcm.org. We’ll include your suggestions in a future In Tempo issue.

Lord, Have Mercy: Singing the Kyrie in the Season of Lent

all too often a quest for variety in the liturgy leads worship leaders in a multitude of directions and toward a multitude of resources. Although many good resources (and some not-so-good!) abound from various publishers, scholars, and organizations, and although the church's composers continue to provide new and creative compositions in the church's ever-expanding tradition, it behooves us to remember that there are often resources right under our noses in the church's hymnals that often go unused. Where's the variety, you ask? It's already in the church's liturgy!

From time to time it can be useful to substitute an alternate setting of one of part of the liturgy in the communion service. This could be a different musical setting of the same text, a paraphrase of the text, a through-composed setting, a version to be sung with leader and congregation, something for congregation alone, a setting for choir or vocal ensemble.

This practice is nothing novel. In many ways, it follows Martin Luther's lead of using vernacular hymn paraphrases for the ordinaries in the liturgy in Luther's *Deutsche Messe* (1526). Indeed, for generations thousands of German-speaking American Lutherans worshipped according to this model. In our own day this is outlined as Divine Service Setting Five in *Lutheran Service Book*, as well as being hinted at in

Setting Five in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, where "All Glory Be to God on High" is used as the *Gloria in excelsis*.

Options for Lent: Kyrie! God Father

Perhaps Lent would be an ideal season to use a hymn paraphrase of the Kyrie. Since the *Gloria in excelsis* is omitted during Lent, the seemingly longer setting of "Kyrie! God Father" could more easily be used in this season. If this hymn is unknown in your parish, it will require some careful planning and teaching. At the very least, a choir, ensemble, or cantor can sing this. Or, to provide this rich text to the congregation, it could even be used as a responsive reading, perhaps as

part of the prayers at your mid-week Lenten worship, such as:

- L** Kyrie, God Father in heaven above
- C** You abound in gracious love
- L** Hear our cry and grant our supplication
- C** Eleison, eleison.

A further idea would be to have the choir or cantor sing the hymn, with the congregation singing only the repetitive "Eleison, eleison" text at the end of each section.

An excellent new choir-only version of this chorale by Paul Bouman is available from tempo 1° press either as a single copy

Hymn Paraphrases of Liturgical Ordinaries

No matter what setting or hymnal your parish uses, it can be beneficial to occasionally use one of these historic hymns as a metrical paraphrase of its corresponding part of the Divine Service:

Liturgy	Hymn	ELW	LSB	CW
Kyrie	Kyrie! God Father	ELW 409	LSB 942	CW 266
Gloria	All Glory Be to God on High	ELW 410	LSB 947	CW 263
Creed	We All Believe in One True God	ELW 411	LSB 954	CW 271
Sanctus	Isaiah in a Vision/ Isaiah, Mighty Seer	ELW 868	LSB 960	CW 267
Agnus Dei	Lamb of God, Pure and (Sinless/Holy)	ELW 357	LSB 434	CW 268
Nunc Dimittis	In Peace and Joy I Now Depart	ELW 440	LSB 938	CW 269

There are resources right under our noses in the church's hymnals that often go unused.

octavo or in the larger collection *12 Anthems for Mixed Voices* (www.tempolpress.com).

Your Heart, O God, is Grieved

Of course, these six chorales are not the only liturgical paraphrases that could be sung in the liturgy. Another option for the Kyrie is the hymn “Your Heart, O God, is Grieved” (ELW 602, LSB 945). This hymn begins with a Kyrie bid, followed by a prose verse which expands the prayer expressed in the initial line. The melody of the verses is almost entirely stepwise, making it easier for many congregations to learn.

Russian Orthodox Kyrie

An even easier idea is the Russian Orthodox Kyrie found at ELW S155 and LSB 944. Even congregations that balk at foreign languages may be willing to sing three words they probably already know (Kyrie/Christe, eleison). If that’s still a stretch, both books provide the text in English also. *See figure 1.*

A performance option would be to have a choir or three soloists sing the first verse, then have the congregation sing verses 2 and 3. If a mixed choir is leading the singing and you can have three-part women and three-part men’s voices, this rich texture can be very satisfying.

Further ideas: Plainsong and Taizé

Both LSB and ELW provide other resources for singing the Kyrie. Even congregations that use other worship books could borrow an

Figure 1.

Lord, Have Mercy

1, 3 Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.
 2 Chris - te e - lei - son. Chris - te e - lei - son.
 1, 3 Lord, . . . have mer - cy. Lord, . . . have mer - cy.
 2 Christ, . . . have mer - cy. Christ, . . . have mer - cy.

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.
 Chris - te e - lei - son.
 Lord, . . . have mer - cy.
 Christ, . . . have mer - cy.

Music: Russian Orthodox traditional

Figure 2.

Kyrie

Leader Assembly
 Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.
 Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.
 Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Music: Plainsong

idea from these books and use as a choir-only option. For example, the Kyrie setting at ELW 156 could easily be sung between sections of a choir or vocal ensemble or between leader and assembly with minimal rehearsal. Accompanying this with a couple of handbells (G and D) may provide some basic harmonic support. *See figure 2.*

LSB 943 provides a Kyrie setting from the Taizé tradition. In this example, the congregation (or choir) sings the “Kyrie, Kyrie eleison” refrain in alternation with the cantor or liturgist singing the familiar Kyrie bids from Divine Service Setting One / Holy

Communion Setting One (“In peace let us pray to the Lord...”).

Kyrie in Daily Prayer

Exploring this variety in the musical settings of the Kyrie is not limited to the communion service. Parishes that pray Matins, Vespers, morning prayer, and evening prayer can also explore these options in the Kyrie in these prayer offices in place of the standard Kyrie that is provided in the hymnal. ●

Kevin Hildebrand is a widely published composer and Kantor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



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The Care and Feeding of the Church Musician

by Donald Armitage

Reprinted from "Tips for the Twenty-Fifth," April, 2011, found in the members area of alcm.org.

as you read this, we are approaching one of the busiest times of the year for the church musician. Schedules are relentless and expectations—our own and others’—are high. We practice, plan, rehearse, write, compose, prepare documents, go to meetings, lead worship, and in so doing help lead our congregations in their worship. We respond to the guidance of our pastors and committees, tend to the pastoral needs of our musi-

cians, contract with instrumentalists, prepare scores, tune the reeds, move chairs, herd children, carry handbells and tables. Our energy is never to flag, our sense of humor never to wane, and we never show frustration.

Though written a little tongue-in-cheek, the above is not far off the mark for most of us. And my point is: how do we musicians care for ourselves and keep ourselves fit for the stresses of our work? The demands on us are physical, emotional, and spiritual. What follows are items that seem obvious when you read them, but are nonetheless important as we maintain our own health.

Physical Health

- Have a regular day off and *take it!!*
- Exercise regularly. This can be as simple as walking every day or a more elaborate workout regimen at a gym or Y.
- Develop healthy eating habits.
- Drink in moderation.
- Keep your weight under control.
- Get enough sleep.
- Get a massage from time to time.
- Have regular physical exams.

Emotional Health

Try to keep yourself from working in a vacuum.

Have a friend you trust (probably not a spouse or significant other) with whom you can meet regularly and with whom you can share issues of your work. This person can be a sounding board for you—and you for him/her—to the benefit of you both.

Meet occasionally with your colleagues from other churches. There need be no agenda to these informal gatherings—just the chance to talk together to share ideas, accomplishments, problems, etc. We all face the same basic issues, and often new ideas and solutions to conflicts can be found at such meetings.

If active guilds or associations of church musicians exist in your area, attend their meetings. Again, these are opportunities for ideas and experiences to be shared among colleagues.

Keep your work from consuming you.

If you have a spouse or significant other, give that person the time and energy deserved for the commitment to your relationship he/she has made.

Do something outside your profession: build Habitat houses, volunteer at a shelter ministry, tutor children, be a Big Brother or Big Sister, coach Little League, or be a Scout leader.

Have a hobby.

Get away from your work—physically away—for a day every couple of weeks. Go to the mountains, walk on the beach, visit a state park, go to a vineyard for a wine tasting, shop, visit craft centers, museums or galleries.

Go to movies.

Read books (not about your work!).

Spiritual Health

- Work with your personnel committee so you can have a half day a week (not your regular “day off”) for the enrichment of your own spiritual life.
- From time to time go on a spiritual retreat. There are retreat centers across the country; find one and go for several days. In my own experience my time was best used when I had a spiritual director at the retreat.
- Attend a Bible study weekly.
- Have a few minutes of uninterrupted quiet time every day.
- Ask a Jesuit priest to help you work through the Ignatius Loyola prayer discipline. This will be a good way to develop a regular discipline of Bible reading and prayer.

You, your staff, your singers, and all the other members of your parish are on a spiritual journey.

How do we musicians care for ourselves and keep ourselves fit for the stresses of our work?

The demands on us are physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Though each person is at a different place in their trek, your job is to help them in this journey by giving them language and opportunity for their praise, their laments, and their thanksgivings. Make sure you don't forget about this as you exercise your passion for your art. At the end of the day, helping to nurture the folks and their relationship to their God is the most important work you do. Keep yourself healthy so you can do that work well. ●

Donald Armitage is a former Cantor (retired) of Augsburg Lutheran Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



Members of the Lutheran Youth Choir International in a joint concert with the Gospel Choir of St. Anna Lutheran Church in Eisenach, Germany in 2013.

The **Lutheran Youth Choir International**, a national ecumenical touring choir for high school youth founded in 2005, invites young people entering grade 9 through graduating grade 12 to participate in its third biennial *Festival of American Vocal Music* in Mansfeld, Germany, July 25-August 4, 2015.

Students from throughout the United States will join German students for ten days to live in a real German castle; to rehearse and perform a variety of American sacred vocal music in Berlin, Leipzig, Wittenberg, and other German cities; and to tour important sites in the lives of Luther and Bach.

A registration fee of \$3,500 includes round-trip airfare to Germany, all instruction, music, entrance fees, housing and most meals. All participants in the festival are eligible

to apply for two scholarships through the choir's new Double Scholarship Program. Parents are also welcome to travel with the choir on a parallel tour program offered through Travelex.

Application deadline for the 2015 Festival is April 1. For further information and application materials, go to www.lutheranyouthchoir.org.

Succeeding With Small Choirs

by Linda Kempke

as choirs in many congregations diminish in size, choir directors are called to use their imagination and creativity. Even if you have a group of fewer than 10, there are many great options.

One of the most important things to stress is that the hymnal is your greatest resource for small choirs. There are many ways to use it for this purpose. One is to sing hymns in unison, perhaps creat-

If you go to reformedworship.org and search the phrase “the joy of singing in canon,” you’ll find a two-part article with a long list of hymns that work in canon, along with instructions on when the second voice should enter.

ing your own free accompaniments or using one that already exists. Unison is not a bad word! Actually it is more challenging than people think. Every

variance in pitch in unison singing stands out. If you have a choir of six (or less) singing in unison, they had better be on top of what they are doing. As Carl Schalk states – two or more people can be a choir!

The dangers lie mostly in diction. If singers are not shaping vowels in the same way, or if they are singing final consonants at the wrong time, or if they are cutting off late, individual voices will stand out. It takes a lot of work to sing well in unison. You can spend just as much time on a unison piece as on one sung in parts.

Unison singing can even work well on big occasions. For example, if you don’t have many singers at your late service on Christmas Eve, singing “Before the Marvel of This Night” in unison is very effective, perhaps with a soloist on one verse. (Octavo

and separate instrumental parts available from Augsburg Fortress.)

Another great way to utilize the hymnal for small choirs is to sing hymns in canon.

Hymns that work well in canon include:

- “How Firm a Foundation” (LSB 728, ELW 796, CW 416)
- “Come, Let Us Eat” (LSB 626, ELW 491)
- “The King of Love My Shepherd Is” (LSB 709, ELW 502, CW 375)
- “In dulci jubilo”
- “Have No Fear, Little Flock” (LSB 735, ELW 764, CW 442)
- “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night” (LSB 883, ELW 565, CW 592)

You can get a lot of ideas for canonic hymns from the two books by Donald Busarow: *Hymns in Canon* and *Thirty More Accompaniments for Hymns in Canon* (published by Augsburg Fortress but both out of print). Another good resource is *Two-Part Canons on Classic Hymns and Chorales*, sets 1, 2, and 3, by Carl Schalk (Concordia Publishing House, also out of print).

You can create two parts using the hymnal by having one voice part sing the hymn tune and the other the matching descant from the book *Vocal Descants for the Church Year* (Augsburg Fortress). Another idea is to use a hymn that has good four-part writing. Have one voice part sing the tune and other part sing the tenor line up an octave. That’s your descant!

Creating an anthem from the hymnal using your small choir is also a great way to introduce

unfamiliar hymns to your congregation. If you can’t come up with your own free accompaniments, save octavos from publishers’ reading sessions. You can borrow introductions and ideas from these. I always say that a good teacher is a great thief. For more festive hymns of the day I often draw on concertato settings.

Of course, there are also many good collections available to meet your need. The Global Song series by Bread for the Journey (Augsburg Fortress) makes for lovely anthems. So do the Crown Choir Books and the Church Choir Books (both Concordia Publishing House), which have plenty of unison settings, although some are not easy.

You can liven up your unison hymn for choir by adding percussion. For example, temple bells work very well punctuating ending phrases on “Arise, My Soul, Arise” (ELW 827, CW 244).

Using hymns in alternation is also an interesting way to create your own anthem. For Reformation, alternate “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word” (LSB 655, ELW 517, CW 203) with “Listen, God is Calling” (LSB 833, ELW 513), or “A Mighty Fortress” with “Built on a Rock.” “Dearest Jesus, At Your Word” (LSB 592, ELW 520, CW 295) and “Jesus, We Are Gathered” (ELW 529) makes another interesting alternation. In all these just be sure there is a relationship of key and pulse between the two hymns, and make the transition from one to the other in a way that cues the congregation. ●

Linda Kempke is Cantor at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Brooklyn, Ohio.

Lent and Easter Choral Music

LENT

J. K. Hirten

Be Merciful, O Lord

Cantor/U and 3-part treble, organ, congregation

GIA G-3318

I've used this for Ash Wednesday from time to time—choirs with more women than men will find it useful.

Healey Willan

Behold the Lamb of God

Minimal SATB or SB, organ
Concordia 98-1509

Intense and effective. Much unison work. My teen choir has sung it in two parts(sop/ten) at the end. The organ doubles all the voices.

Bernhard Lewkovitch

Christus factus est

SATB

Wilhelm Hansen nr. 327

A very effective setting of this text—my choir has grown to love the piece. “Modern” music of the 1950s with effective harmonies and fine voice-leading.

Trond Kverno

Corpus Christi Carol

SATB (some divisi)

Norsk Musikforlag N.M.O. 9665

An unusual text—gratefully in English! A powerful setting that rewards some work.

McNeil Robinson

Improperium (You Have Abandoned Me)

U or 2-part, organ

Theodore Presser 312-41301

My teen choir has sung this. Effective in Latin or English, and delivered on sustained lines.

Percy Whitlock

Jesu, Grant Me This, I Pray

SATB

Oxford A.115

A good anthem for the First Sunday in Lent—temptation in the wilderness.

Martin How

Lenten Litany

Baritone solo/U and

upper voice group

Boosey & Hawkes OCUB6080

Martin How writes pieces for any number of voicings—useful for large or small choirs.

Richard Proulx

We Adore You, O Christ

SATB

Paraclete Press 09836

This piece is in the spirit of the Eastern Church—the choir does not so much preach as worship. I first heard this at the ALCM biennial conference in Kansas City in 2001.

EASTER

Joel Martinson

Christ Is Arisen

SATB, brass quintet, timpani, congregation, organ (originally written for choir, congregation, and two organs)
Kessler Park Press

Based on “Christians, to the Paschal Victim” (VICTIMAE PASCHALI LAUDES) and “Christ is Arisen” (CHRIST IST ERSTANDEN). I commissioned this for the Easter gospel procession, in which we traditionally alternate the chant and the chorale. My intent was to have a Lutheran version of the masses for choir and two organs by Widor and Vierne. The published version makes it possible for more churches to use it—the brass replacing one of the organ parts.

David Hurd

Easter Antiphon

SATB, organ, opt. brass

GIA G-2782

If your choir is used to singing the psalms, this setting of Psalm 118 will practically roll off their tongues. The antiphon is quite grand, especially when the optional brass parts are used. I've sometimes included children and youth on the antiphon.

James Macmillan

The Lamb Has Come for Us from the House of David

SATB, organ

Boosey & Hawkes

A rich text from St. Ephrem—a Bible study in itself! I've used it on Good Shepherd Sunday.

McNeil Robinson

Spice She Brought and Sweet Perfume

SATB, opt. sop solo, organ

Theodore Presser 312-41437

A dramatic, tuneful setting of the Easter story that places performer and listener in the midst of the story.

[Bruce Bengtson is Director of Music at Luther Memorial Church in Madison, Wisconsin.](#)

Orgelbüchlein, J.S. Bach

Dana Robinson • Arsis CD 173
(2010). Available through Canticle
Distributing (MorningStar).

Ullrich Böhme • Querstand/
Believe Digital (2005). Available
as a digital download from
eMusic, a subscription music
service (www.emusic.com).

by Tom Leeseberg-Lange

the title page of the autograph
score reads in an English
translation:

*In which a beginning organist is
given guidance in the many ways of
performing a chorale and, in addi-
tion, in qualifying himself in the
study of the pedal, since in the herein
contained chorales, the pedal is treat-
ed entirely obbligato.*

[Dedicated]:

*In honor of the Supreme God alone,
[To] others, [that they] from this
might teach themselves*

Author

*Johann Sebast. Bach,
Capellmeister to his Serene Highness
the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen*

Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* is liturgical
organ music as close to perfection
as any we will ever hear in
Lutheran worship and capable of
being interpreted reasonably even
in churches of modest means.
These 46 miniatures (two versions
of *Liebster Jesu* share a number)
encapsulate a supreme effort fus-
ing compositional, theological,
and pedagogical intent to express
and illuminate each chorale text.
Nearly all were composed
between 1708 and 1717, Bach's
early 20s to early 30s.

Today there are very nearly as
many complete recordings of this



treasured collection as there are
pieces in it. Still, there will always
be room for new interpretations
and performer/instrument pair-
ings. Both of these new-century
versions are highly worthy of your
consideration.

The surprise is the disc by Dana
Robinson, associate professor of
organ at the University of Illinois.
He offers a strikingly elegant and
energetic interpretation of this
liturgical masterpiece.

Curiously, Dr. Robinson is not a
high-profile name despite having
been a past first-prize winner of
the Arthur Poister competition
and teacher of 2006 NYACOP
first-prize winner Scott
Montgomery. After reading his
intriguing bio on the university
web site (www.music.illinois.edu/faculty/dana-robinson) and hear-
ing his interpretations, I decided
to call him and find out who he
was and what he was trying to
accomplish.

A happy convergence

Robinson described this project
as a happy convergence of organ
builder John Brombaugh, produc-
er Robert Schuneman (until his
recent retirement the owner and
guiding light of ECS and Arsis, its
record label), and himself as per-
former. Robinson's playing is mas-
terfully confident and mature,
demonstrating a deep under-
standing of each setting. The
musical lines are clean. Tempi
are definitely on the faster side but
almost never sound rushed to my
ear. If the maxim of matching the
singing tempo for the chorale to
the tempo of the cantus firmus in
the chorale prelude is upheld,
then Robinson's choices are defi-
nitely on target. I initially had one
issue with a single interpretation
(see below), but otherwise this
recording allowed me to reflect
on the chorales and absorb Bach
without the interpretation intrud-
ing. Robinson told me that in
agreeing to perform on the

much-lauded, modestly-sized Brombaugh (II/31), opus 22 at Christ Church Episcopal in Tacoma, Washington, he was in effect accepting the discipline of a limited disposition. And yet, because of its astute design, this possible limitation is never discernible. This is a standout recording and the accompanying booklet, which includes the registrations for each piece, is a valuable bonus.

Of course, tastes vary, as do personalities, interpretations, instruments, acoustics, and recording techniques. So no single recording of something as important as the “Little Organ Book” could or should be considered definitive.

The new “Bach organ”

Ullrich Böhme, current organist at the most famous Lutheran church in the world, offers a robust recording as well. By now most church musicians know that Bach’s official duties never included playing the organ at St. Thomas. (Check the church’s website to learn the names of the two little-known organists who occupied the organ bench during Bach’s tenure as cantor.) But there’s still considerable appeal in hearing the new “Bach organ” (IV/61) built by Gerald Woehl and installed in St. Thomas back in 2000, played by the brilliant organist who knows it best. Several of Böhme’s Orgelbüchlein readings are available on YouTube if you want to preview his approach and style.

Released in 2005, the Böhme disc is no longer listed in the Querstand catalog, so obtaining this as a download will probably require signing up for at least a minimal subscription with eMusic. I have been a member of eMusic for nine years and it offers access to a wealth of European labels and a rich repertoire of music

No single recording of something as important as the “Little Organ Book” could or should be considered definitive.

from the baroque Lutheran tradition, among innumerable others periods and styles, especially alt-rock—don’t let that deter you. The price is quite attractive as well. Most digital downloads are available for \$5.99 per disc!

Other than its placement in St. Thomas, Leipzig, what makes the Woehl instrument a “Bach organ”? In their encyclopedic 2006 reference work, *Die Orgeln J.S. Bachs: Ein Handbuch* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt), co-authors Christoph Wolff and Markus Zepf cite the Georg Christoph Stertzing organ (1707) in St. George’s, Eisenach (where J. S. was baptized) as the source for its disposition, as prepared by his cousin Johann Christoph Bach. They also tell us that the organ built by Bach’s contemporary Johann Scheibe for St. Paul’s in Leipzig (1720) was the model for the Woehl case design. (The Scheibe organ was replaced in the 1800s and the church was blown up in 1968 by the East German communist regime after escaping major damage in WWII.)

In 2012, *The Organs of J.S. Bach: A Handbook* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), an English translation of the afore-mentioned book by Lynn Edwards Butler, was published. It incorporates new research, especially English-language scholarship, corrections, and new color photos.

A question of tempo

Returning to the Robinson and Böhme recordings, I had only one quibble, and that was with the tempos employed for the magnificent chorale “O Mensch bewein dein Sünde gross.” Robinson’s version times out at

approximately 4:17 and Böhme’s at 4:20. (These reflect actual playing time, not the track listing time in which silence is often added to the end of the performance.) Of the dozen-plus versions in my library these are the fastest. But I was surprised to find that Helmut Walcha’s time clocks in at a mere 4:36 (his second recorded version of Bach’s organ works was my introduction to the Orgelbüchlein more than 40 years ago, and was a benchmark recording for me). I prefer, or maybe it’s more accurate to say that I’m conditioned to preferring, a length of at least five minutes for this sober Lenten chorale.

However, in my phone conversation with Robinson, he explained that with so much rich detail packed into this sublime setting, there’s a real danger of losing the pulse if played too slowly.

Some recordings of this piece run as slow as 6:49. Even Marcel Dupré, who “introduced” the Orgelbüchlein to the extremely “wary-of-anything-Germanic” French after WWI, played it in the sedate time of 6:39.

Perhaps unconsciously we have learned to think of the Orgelbüchlein as a beautiful collection of “stand-alone” pieces, which is certainly viable. Yet Bach’s intention was that it be used for “preluding,” to be followed by the singing of the chorale. Again, if we compare the natural singing tempo of the melody with the tempo these two artists employ in their respective renderings of the chorale prelude, they appear to make a strong case for the quickness with which they play this piece.

When was the last time you treated your congregation, or ennobled yourself, by playing selections from the Orgelbüchlein? ●



in tempo

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