

Caroline wrote, "after 3rd movement E. had to go up on platform & whole Orch. & nos. of audience stood up—Wonderful scene." It's hard to picture that scene today. Who would give the "first clap" after the first movement? One concert musician wrote that she liked it when a few uninitiated people started to clap between movements because it meant there was someone new there.

I read an interesting article by Henry Fogel in the online *Arts Journal* <[http://www.artsjournal.com/onthe-record/2007/03/the\\_applause\\_issue.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/onthe-record/2007/03/the_applause_issue.html)>. (That's where I got the quote from Elgar's wife.) The article ended with a lengthy set of blogging responses. One was from a woman named Ashley, who had taken her ten-year-old son to a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. She wrote,

Everyone had their nose so far up in the air that they could barely see my son walking in front of them—the last straw was when several people on the lower level began applauding so my son followed suit and the people around us were FREAKING OUT, making rude comments, and shushing them . . . my son and I felt like idiots (and I hadn't even clapped). We will NEVER attend again . . . I have enough stress in my life—I don't need to be made to feel like a 2nd class citizen and a complete idiot while trying to enjoy some culture with my son . . .

Are we alienating our future public by trying to prove how much we know? After all, you really show that you know the piece well if you dare applaud loudly the second a piece is finished. Conversely, when you're hearing a world premiere performance, are you going to be the first to applaud? The audience sits nervously, glancing around, clappers poised, not daring to budge until the conductor asks the orchestra to stand . . .

Concert pianist Emmanuel Ax is challenging tradition. He has written in his website blog <[www.emmanuelax.wordpress.com/2008](http://www.emmanuelax.wordpress.com/2008)>: "All of us love applause, and so we should—it means that the listener LIKES us! So we should welcome applause whenever it comes. And

yet, we seem to have set up some very arcane rules as to when it is actually OK to applaud." I was made aware of this "Ax of evil" in an article by Sam Allis in *The Boston Sunday Globe*, January 16, 2009, "Make a joyful noise; Classical audiences should loosen up and applaud at will." He begins, "Manny Ax is my new hero." (This is a local joke on Manny Ramirez, of late the left fielder of the Boston Red Sox, and an extraordinary hitter, who is perhaps best known for his arrogance and poor attitude on the field.)

In his article, Sam Allis cites Mark Volpe, distinguished general manager of the Boston Symphony Orchestra:

Mark Volpe . . . agrees that there is a snobbism attached to the vow of silence, and stands firmly with Ax on the applause issue. Volpe also recognizes that an orchestra's goal, particularly in these brutal economic times, must be to expand the classical audience, not terrify newcomers out of the hall.

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### They loved me in Milan, they loved me in New York

There may be no more formal concert venue in America than the Metropolitan Opera of New York. If you think it takes a lot of money to run a symphony orchestra or a pipe organ, consider the Met. It has a symphony orchestra plus a chorus, a battery of high-end singers, a dance company, countless stagehands, designers, choreographers, storage facilities, transportation departments, and lighting technicians. The patrons of the Met are assumed to be the wealthy and elite. But—the Met offers 15-dollar seats, admittedly not very close to the stage, and if you hear something you like you can applaud. In fact, it's customary for the audience to applaud vigorously after a well-sung aria.

On Monday, April 21, 2008, a singer sang an encore of an aria during a Met performance for the first time since 1994. Tenor Juan Diego Flórez was singing the role of Tonio in Donizetti's romp, *La Fille du Régiment* (*The Daughter of*

*the Regiment*). The highpoint of this role is the aria, *Ah! mes amis*, in which Tonio shares that he has joined the regiment as a soldier because of his love for Marie (the title role), sung magnificently and hilariously by Natalie Dessay. (We saw the production on HD simulcast the following Saturday, and I've got to tell you, she's a virtuoso with a steam iron, an absolute laugh-riot. Plus, she can sing.)

The tenor's aria includes nine high Cs, eight of which are reached by octave leaps, *allegro*. Luciano Pavarotti's fame was established in large part by this aria, earning him the sobriquet, *King of the High Cs*. (Aaargh!) Two days after the encore, Robert Siegel of National Public Radio interviewed Peter Gelb, the innovative general manager of the Metropolitan Opera on *All Things Considered*. Mr. Gelb told us that Juan Diego Flórez had recently sung an encore of that aria at La Scala in Milan, and when the tenor arrived in New York for rehearsals with the Met, Mr. Gelb asked him if he would like to plan for an encore if the audience response warranted one. Mr. Gelb has a box seat in the Metropolitan Opera House with a hotline to the stage manager. Forty-five seconds into the roar of applause following the aria, Mr. Gelb made the call, the stage manager pressed a button to turn on a light on conductor James Levine's music stand, the conductor and the singer made eye contact, and they were off to the races.

Siegel asked if, now that the ice has been broken again, more singers would be invited to sing encores. Gelb's response, "We should only have that problem."

You can hear Siegel's eight-minute interview of Peter Gelb, including the high Cs, on <[www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89884693](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89884693)>.

Why can't we do that at an organ recital? If people like the music, let 'em roar! In fact, plan your programs and present your performances so they feel invited. You'd rather have them come back, even if they don't know the difference between the Prelude and the Fugue. (Are there really such people?) ■



with it, I have probably learned more from the experiences of my students and from my own experience in helping them with their church work.

Second, I especially love hymns as pieces of music. They resonate, as I think anyone's favorite music often does, with strong early memories: of time spent as a schoolboy in England, when we sang hymns in assembly every morning; of a couple of years spent as a boy soprano in the choir of Trinity Church on the Green in New Haven in the late 1960s; of travels through Europe, especially Germany, where I looked in on many church services for the purpose of hearing the music. This early exposure was fairly eclectic, and so is my own taste in hymns.

The playing of hymns in church—that is, when you as organist are accompanying people who are singing the hymns but who are there for the whole experience of the church service—is one of the (for me) rather few performance situations in which someone other than the performer has a legitimate interest in questions of what the playing is like, even, in fact, a right to help determine what the performance is like. A listener at a concert might prefer that a piece be louder, softer, faster, slower, registered differently, phrased differently, etc. That is fine: that listener's perspective might constitute interesting feedback for the performer. If the performer genuinely finds that feedback useful, then he or she should take it into account next time. On the other hand, the performer has every right indeed to ignore that listener's perspective, and the listener has every right not to come to the next concert! However, in church the pastor, members of the choir, members of the congregation, members of the music committee, perhaps even visitors, all have the right to care about how the hymns are played and to try to influence that playing.

(Bach was involved in a famous conflict about his hymn-playing style, in which he was criticized by the authorities for harmonizations that were too dissonant and too rhythmically complex for members of the congregation to follow. Although we all quite rightly venerate Bach, I myself would not like to try to sing to the few surviving hymn accompaniments from his pen. They are indeed dissonant, in a way that undermines the strong harmonic drive of the chorales, and there are virtuoso flourishes interrupting the rhythmic momentum not just between verses, but between phrases! Bach also got into conflict with church authorities because he wanted to choose the hymns himself, and the clergy wanted to do so.)

It is difficult to predict in any general

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### Notes

1. *American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000
2. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Applause>> (mea maxima culpa)
3. <<http://news.steelers.com/catalog/TerribleStuff/>>

## On Teaching

by Gavin Black

### Playing hymns, part 1

This month and next I want to share a few thoughts about hymns and the teaching of hymn playing. There are a few special factors that influence my thinking about hymns and how to learn and teach them. First, I have been a church organist for a smaller proportion of my career than many colleagues—for about six years all together, less than many of my students and many or most readers of this column. I have engaged in the act of accompanying a congregation in singing a hymn probably about eleven- or twelve-hundred times. Many organists have done ten times that much. Although I believe that I have learned a lot about hymn playing from my own experience



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learned, then putting it all together is not only easy but more-or-less automatic. If this stage does not feel easy, then the student should revisit the previous two steps and/or slow the tempo down.

Once a student has worked on a number of hymns this way—six, eight, ten maybe—he or she will be able to learn the next hymn noticeably more quickly. First, this procedure itself will start to take less and less time. Then it will no longer be necessary: the student will be able to learn new hymns simply by reading through them slowly enough, with all the parts, and working them up to tempo gradually. Trying to do that prematurely—that is, without having taken enough hymns apart and worked on them in the way described here—will derail the learning process, but the process should in due course make itself obsolete.

Next month I will discuss various other aspects of hymn playing: rhythm, articulation, repeated notes, registration, accompanying part-singing, accompanying unison singing, “soloing out” lines, and more. ■

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## Music for Voices and organ

by James McCray

### The road to Pentecost

Because the road is rough and long,  
Shall we despise the skylark's song?  
Emily Bronte (1820–49)  
*Years of Life*

In 2009, the culmination of the 50 days after Easter called Pentecost occurs on May 31, which in many churches will signal the end of the official church

choir season. While not all groups stop singing regularly during the summer months, many members have a more casual approach to attendance, and the quality of the choir is often lessened. In many churches there is a complete summer break, and soloists provide special music. Clearly, the volunteer choir has earned some relief from their weekly duties. They have forfeited the opportunity to worship with their families throughout the year, which is especially difficult during holidays such as Christmas.

Today it is common for the choir to return on a few selected Sundays from June to August, and to sing some of the favorite general anthems from the past year. In these cases the choir gathers for a brief rehearsal prior to the service to “dust off” these settings that are generically inserted into summer services.

The end of the church choir season is further complicated by the fact that in the U.S., Memorial Day will be commemorated on May 25, a week before Pentecost, and that usually means that people are gone for the three-day holiday weekend. Yet national recognitions are a part of the church culture; May 10 is Mother's Day, and while that may not need musical consideration in the service, choir members may be diverted from their weekly chores on that Sunday. Other conflicting events in May are school graduations; though not scheduled during church services, there are many adjunct parts of graduation that may occur during rehearsal times. Finally, spring weather can be an intoxicating obstruction to attendance at rehearsals and Sunday commitments.

Choir directors are entering a period when attendance in their groups is challenged. The “Merry Month of May” may not be so for church choir directors. While it is hoped that the end of the church choir season will be a great climax, my experience has found it to be a disappointing fizzle. Looking ahead to Pentecost (a birthday of the church through the arrival of the Holy Spirit), directors may want to choose music that is appropriate yet simple. To that end, the reviews below may be a lifeline.

**Pentecost Sequence, Richard Proulx. Two-part mixed, handbells, and percussion, GIA Publications, Inc., G-4578, \$1.00 (E).**

Twelve bells are used, and they only play open fifths/fourths in sustained notes. The percussion is a small drum that has limited use to add to the basic pulse. There are ten short verses in various combinations (SA, SA/TB, TB). Very easy music that has a hollow, open medieval sound—this haunting music closes with a quiet Amen.

**Living Spirit, Holy Fire, Lori True. SA/TB, C instrument, keyboard, and assembly, GIA Publications, Inc., G-7146, \$1.60 (E).**

The back cover has separate music for the C instrument and a reproducible part for the congregation. There are four verses with three in unison; the fourth verse has an added harmony part in treble clef that could be sung by the men and altos; it is optional and consists of a counter-melody on the Latin text “Veni Sancte Spiritus.” Very easy music for choir and keyboard.

**Come, Holy Ghost, Jody W. Lindh. SATB, piano with optional handbells and bass, Abingdon Press (Theodore Presser 712-40249), No. 034523, \$1.25 (M-).**

Handbells have very limited use, playing only a three-part chord occasionally; the music for the bass merely doubles some of the piano part, so neither is really needed. Almost all the music is in unison or two parts, with the four-part texture used only in a short section. The text is by Charles Wesley. The accompaniment has flowing eighth-notes that offer contrast to the simple melody.

**Come Down, O Love Divine, Mark Burrows. Unison treble (optional two-part) and piano, Abingdon Press, 0687051754, \$1.40 (E).**

The translated words are from the 15th century. Two of the four verses have an optional part. The sweet, legato music is tuneful and gently flows above a busy left-hand accompaniment of arpeggios. For choirs with limited men, this might be an alternative to that end-of-year disappearance of singers, since it is easy enough for just a few women.

**Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Alice Jordan. Mixed choir in unison and organ, Randall M. Egan Publisher, #EC-342, \$1.60 (E).**

Using a St. Augustine text, this is a sophisticated unison setting. There are some chromatic passages and an interesting accompaniment. It is slow and expressive with lots of freedom. Alternate options for men or women to sing selected phrases in dramatic rubato statements add to the interest. Highly recommended as an easy work for Pentecost or Communion.

**Catch the Vision! Share the Glory!, Richard Jeffrey. SATB, keyboard, and optional flute, Logia of Concordia Press, 98-3702, \$1.75 (M-).**

The obbligato flute has solo-like passages, usually while the choir is holding long notes or between choral phrases. After a short instrumental introduction, there are two unison verses to the same music; then, following a modulation, the choir is in four parts for the last two verses. The flute part is on the back cover separately. This is comfortable music that has good style.

**Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart, Richard Lakey. SSAATB unaccompanied, Paraclete Press, PPM 0311, \$1.60 (M+).**

This quiet setting is syllabic with quarter-note pulsations that slowly evolve into changing chords. The women sing divisi much of time, with only momentary divisi in the men's music. The warm harmonies gently paint the George Croly text.

**Spirit, Come, Jim Lucas. SAB and piano, Thomas House Publications, 0340104, \$1.95 (M).**

Although the front cover says SATB and the heading on the inside says SAT,

this is really a work for SAB since the men's part is in the bass clef and generally in the middle of their range. The piano part is rhythmic yet slow. The first section is a choral unison that is sung twice and flows into the other sections that are in three parts. The work is very sectional with many diverse ideas, but it is very singable, with the accompaniment more difficult than the music for the choir. The 14-page work has many repeated passages.

**Send Forth Your Spirit, Marty Haugen. Unison, assembly, keyboard, guitar with treble and bass C instruments, GIA Publications, G-6939, \$1.60 (E).**

Based on Psalm 104, this easy work has six verses with a refrain that is sung with the assembly; there are an additional six verses if needed. The instrumental parts and assembly part for reproduction are included at the end of the choral score. Haugen also provides an optional accompaniment if the music is to be sung as a canon. Very easy music.

## Book Reviews

**The Registration of J. S. Bach's Organ Works, Quentin Faulkner. Wayne Leupold Editions WL800029; <www.wayneleupold.com>.**

The registration of Bach's organ works has exercised a fascination for many decades, with many different solutions being proposed—very few of which, in the light of ongoing research, can be validated by historically authenticated documents. Forkel's comment that Bach combined the stops in a most individual manner offers no practical help and cannot be regarded as a prescription for anything goes.

A brief preface reminds us that although Bach left registration indications in several of his works, he left no comprehensive treatment of this subject. It discusses the two main periods of Bach's composition of organ music—at the beginning of his professional career and in his later Leipzig years—and the fact that in the intervening years there were immense changes in both organ building and musical styles. Recent research by Siegbert Rampe and Ibo Ortgies into the function of the organist in this period suggests that written-down compositions were intended primarily to provide models for improvisation and played on pedal clavichord. Only in the later 18th century did auditions allow the performance of a previously composed work.

The two chapters of part A of this book contain comments from Bach himself and specifications of a few instruments, including Halle Cathedral of 1851, showing how conservative middle German organbuilding remained in the century after Bach's death. By far the largest, and most important, part of the book is the three chapters in part B. Chapter III gives sources providing general principles of registration or comments thereon by Andreas Werckmeister (1687/98), Friedrich Niedt and Johann Mattheson (1706/10 and 1721), Johann Adolph Scheibe (1739), and Jacob Adlung (1768). Werckmeister's *Orgelprobe* was probably known to Bach, and the source material considered here would have reflected ideas current in the preceding generation. Scheibe was a Bach pupil who dared to criticize his teacher's music! He is best considered as a proponent of the new galant style, and mentions that improvised preludes and fugues tended to be played on the full organ. The short excerpts from pp. 482–506 of Adlung's *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelährtheit* of 1758 and the much longer excerpt from his other work, the *Musica mechanica organoedi*, started 1720–30 but unfinished at the time of his death in 1762, gain vital credibility through the editorial role of Agricola, a Bach pupil who even added a set of footnotes invoking Bach as a support.

Chapter IV, which covers almost half of the book, provides us with no fewer than nine detailed considerations of in-