

and what they meant. We travel great distances to hear music played on the instruments and in the acoustics known by the composers. (I've written before about how Widor's "Toccata" doesn't sound the same at the First Congregational Church—you name the town—as it does in Saint-Sulpice.)

Ten years ago, I restored a beautiful organ built in 1868 by E. & G. G. Hook of Boston. It was informative to find the pencil marks of the original builder—they had very hard pencil leads, and they got them very sharp—as they gave insight into how precisely they worked. It was sometimes hard to see their marks under modern workshop lighting—I wondered how they did it without fluorescent tubes overhead. During this restoration project, the organ was 129 years old.

Keep the flame alive

Shortly before he died, Marcel Dupré wrote down a lot of his personal and musical memories in a simple book entitled *Recollections*, published by Belwin-Mills. In the author's preface, Dupré writes that he had for years ignored requests that he write his memoirs, but that on the occasion of his eighty-fourth birthday he received so many encouragements that he acquiesced. It's a simple small book, a quick and delightful read, and today there are two copies available at Amazon.com. Dupré tells stories of encounters with Saint-Saëns, Fauré, and Guilmant, among others, and of course a great deal about his teacher and advocate, Charles-Marie Widor. While these are no more than the jotted-down memories of an old man, they are of immense historical value to us.

Here's my confession. During all the time I spent with Sidney Eaton and Jason McKown, I never wrote anything down. I remember they each had special phrases they liked to use, and particular stories they told over and over. I remember that Sid liked eating peaches, particularly because he once offered me one that was so rotten I couldn't imagine eating it. While I know I ate dozens of workday lunches with Jason, I can't remember anything about what he liked to eat, or what he might have said about what Mr. Skinner liked to eat. I should have a couple notebooks full of direct recollections of Mr. Skinner and I don't. That could have filled a whole lot of monthly columns.

I hope that this confession in writing will spur me to take advantage of the next time I realize I'm with someone who forms a meaningful link to the past. And I hope you will not miss opportunities as I have. Are you close to a former teacher who's a generation older than you? I bet that teacher has memories of his teacher, of the installation of an important organ, of an earlier generation's opinions about musical matters. Give a gift to those who follow you. Get it written down. Or get it on tape. There are any number of pocket-sized recording gadgets available now. Invite the *maître* to lunch, turn on the machine, and reap an historical document that will excite and inspire future generations.

On Teaching

by Gavin Black

Pedal playing, part IV: real music

As stated in earlier columns, I am convinced that everyone works better when working on something that is of interest to them and, as much as possible, fun. Part of the point of the approach to pedal learning that I have outlined in the last three columns is to make every step of the process seem natural and comfortable, and also engrossing. The latter is achieved in part by allowing the student to grapple with—and indeed make decisions about—issues of posture, leg position, foot position, and so on. (Any task is likely to be more interesting if it involves thinking and making judgments rather than just implementing things that someone else tells you to do.) At the same time, the exercises that I have suggested are meant to have enough me-

lodious interest so that most students will find them at least not too boring.

However, it is certainly true that the sooner a student can begin working with pedal material that is musically rewarding, the more satisfying the experience of working on pedal playing will be, and, for most students, the sooner real results will flow. The autonomy in thinking about technical and logistic aspects of pedal playing that a student gains by approaching the early stages of study as outlined in the three previous columns should enable that student to figure out how to practice any existing pedal part systematically enough to use it as the next step in learning to play the pedals. It doesn't matter whether such a pedal part was written as an exercise, as a pedal solo, or as part of a bigger texture. It also doesn't matter how easy or hard—how "beginner" or "advanced"—it is, as long as it is approached in a manner that is a logical extension of the way that the earlier exercises were approached—and as long as it is practiced enough, and practiced carefully enough. This column is devoted primarily to examples of this process.

The piece known as Bach's *Pedalexercitium*, BWV 598, is a 33-measure incomplete pedal solo, probably written as an exercise, and probably written by J. S. Bach. (The sources are sketchy and not entirely clear.) In any case, it is an exercise that follows an interesting technical path, and it is a catchy piece that people

Example 1



Example 2



almost always enjoy. The piece begins as shown in Example 1 and continues for 18 measures in unbroken sixteenth notes. After that it switches to eighths, then a mix of eighths and sixteenths. All of the sixteenth-note passages are written in such a way that the two feet are clearly meant to alternate. Each foot thus moves at the pace of an eighth note. During eighth-note passages one foot often, though not always, plays two or more notes in a row. There is no place in the piece where one foot has to move any faster than the speed of an eighth note. For the first several measures, each foot is asked to move almost entirely by step or over the interval of a third. The left foot is first asked to move over the interval of a fourth going from measure three to measure four, and then again going from measure six to measure seven. The first larger intervals than that—a major seventh, then an augmented octave (!)—occur in measures 11 through

15, introduced at first with the notes of arrival being adjacent to the note just played by the other foot. The point is that, viewed through the lens of "one foot at a time," the exercise introduces intervals carefully and systematically. (In fact, an even more detailed analysis reveals subtleties such as first introducing a new interval with the note of arrival being an easy-to-find flat and then extending it to a harder-to-find natural.)

The eighth-note pattern that begins in measure 19 (see Example 2) invites the left foot to take on the challenge of a descending major seventh, but also offers the opportunity to practice it over and over, ten times in a row! The right foot is given intrinsically easier intervals, but less chance to repeat them. (Obviously one can and should repeat, i.e., practice, the whole thing, but I think that it is interesting that the composer has built in repetitions of the harder material.)

The last several measures are the most

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Example 3



mixed, both rhythmically and as to intervals, and are also the most difficult, so that the whole piece is set up almost as a graded course in pedal playing. Measures 27 and 28, for example, contain elements of three earlier sections of the piece, and the most diverse collection of (one foot at a time) intervals yet.

A new element is introduced very near the end with the passage in Example 3 (pedaling by GB). With the pedaling that I have suggested, this is a remarkably smooth-feeling exercise in passing one foot over the other.

The pedal solos near the beginning of Bach's *Toccat and Fugue in F Major*, BWV 540, are well designed to use as pedal exercises. The right foot moves by the following number of steps in the first few measures of the first solo, beginning at measure 55:

1-3-2-1-3-2-1-3-2-1-3-2-1-2-3-1-2-3-1-3-5-1-4-5-1-4-5-1-3-4-

(where 1 means a repeated note, 2 moving one step, 3 moving two steps, etc.)

The pattern for the left foot in the same measures is:

3-4-1-4-5-1-2-3-1-3-4-1-2-1-1-2-1-1-2-2-1-2-1-1-2-1-1-2-3-5-

That is, both feet move primarily over very short intervals. Incidentally, the interval pattern for both feet together—that is, what the listener hears—for this passage is:

2-2-4-6-3-2-2-2-5-7-3-2-2-2-3-5-3-2-2-2-4-6-3-2-2-2-3-4-4-2-2-2-3-4-4-2-2-2-3-5-6-2-2-2-3-6-6-2-2-2-3-6-6-2-2-2-3-5-6

There are plenty of 2's and 3's, but many larger intervals as well.

Another pedal passage in which looking at each foot by itself simplifies things quite a lot is this excerpt from the Buxtehude *Praeludium in e minor* (see Example 4). This line seems to be all over the place, and is sometimes considered to be difficult enough or awkward enough that it is assumed that it cannot really be a pedal line. (Often we do not know for sure which notes in Buxtehude's music are meant to be played by the feet.) However, after the first interval in the left foot, each foot moves by no interval greater than a third, and the two feet follow similar patterns to each other. Looked at this way it is actually rather easy to learn.

Each of these examples can and should be practiced the same way. First the student should—probably with the help of the teacher—make choices about which

Example 4



foot should play which note. (In these examples, those choices are not very complicated—almost obvious.) Second, the student should practice each foot separately, as slowly as necessary to make it seem easy. This should be done without looking at the feet, using the approach to monitoring and correcting wrong notes that has been outlined in the last few months' columns. Each foot should be practiced more than the student or teacher thinks is necessary. If the part for each foot is practiced enough that it really becomes second nature, then the act of putting the two feet together, which is of course the next step, will be smooth, easy, and natural, like ripe fruit falling from the tree. This is the most sound, solid way to learn a given piece or passage, and it is, most especially, the best way to use a given passage as a stepping stone towards mastery of the pedal keyboard.

The famous Widor *Toccat* is another example of a pedal line that seems almost to have been written to demonstrate the advantages of considering the feet separately in learning pedal lines. When the pedal enters in measure 9, the interval between the first two notes is two octaves. The interval sequence for the first several notes of the pedal line is as follows:

15-14-14-13-13-14-14-15-15

However, the sequence for the right foot is all 2's, and for the left foot it is all 1's. This same situation, or something like it, prevails for most of the piece. When the main theme appears in octaves in measure 50, it draws our attention to the close relationship between the practice of analyzing pedal parts through separate feet and the art of double-pedaling. In fact, conceptually, double-pedaling is nothing unusual, difficult, or intimidating if you are already accustomed to keeping track of each foot separately. There are circumstances in which the need for each foot to play its own line while the other foot is also playing a line might affect pedaling choices, in particular as to use of heel, or might affect choices or possibilities as to articulation. In Widor's own recording of his *Toccat*, the articulation of the octaves from measure 50 to measure 61 is ever so slightly, and very consistently, detached. If he was using heel, it was apparently not to achieve a full legato, but rather because that is

what he found easier or more natural as a way of dealing with the logistics of playing the notes. (Widor was 88 years old when he made this recording, and it is often speculated that his age may have caused him to play the piece more slowly than he would actually have wanted it played. His tempo in the recording is approximately 94 quarter notes per minute. There is no reason to think that his age would have caused him to change his pedaling choices or his articulation.)

With this column I will leave pedal playing for a while. Next month's column will be about the teaching of registration. I will return to pedal playing in a later column, in particular to discuss heel playing in great detail, with thoughts about when in the process of learning to introduce heel playing, about its history and its implications for interpretation, and with beginning heel exercises.

A special note: Following up on Paul Jordan's three fascinating articles about Helmut Walcha, which recently appeared in THE DIAPASON, I have posted on the Princeton Early Keyboard Center website a rare and interesting recording made in late 1927. The Choir of St. Thomas Leipzig performs the Bach motet excerpt *Dir, Dir Jehovah* under the direction of Karl Straube. The recording begins with a brief improvised chorale prelude played by Walcha, who was 19 years old and still a student at the time. This is of course by far the earliest recorded example of his playing, and one of the very few recordings of his improvisation. You can hear it by following the link at <www.pekc.org>.

Gavin Black is the director of the Princeton Early Keyboard Center in Princeton, New Jersey. He is at work on a pedal-playing method that will probably be available in the fall of 2008. He welcomes feedback by e-mail at <gavinblack@mail.com>. Expanded versions of these columns with references and links, along with downloadable PDFs of these and other pedal exercises, can be found at <http://www.pekc.org>.

THE DIAPASON'S 2008 Resource Directory was mailed with the January issue. Additional copies of the Directory are available for \$5 each. For information: 847/391-1045; <jbutera@sgcmail.com>.

Music for Voices and Organ

by James McCray

An early Easter

The Christian church has designated Sunday in various ways. It is the day of resurrection, when the boundaries of time and space were shattered by Christ's rising from the dead. Each Sunday (therefore) is a little Easter.

—Paul Westermeyer
The Church Musician

As mentioned in last month's column, Easter in 2008 bursts forth on March 23; thus, an early Easter is filled with challenges for the church choir director. The rehearsals for Palm Sunday/Holy Week and the exit of choir members after Easter both arrive sooner than usual.

Here in the north, our Easter lilies may be adorned with a late snow! By the time you read this column, choir directors should have chosen and distributed the music, hired the extra instrumentalists, and begun rehearsals for Holy Week. Writing this on the first week of December to meet publication deadlines gives this author a cold chill.

Some church choirs find their year book-ended by a September Rally Sunday and Pentecost. So this early Easter results in a very early Pentecost, which adds to the dilemma of retaining a full choir of singers. The year tends to wind down quickly after Easter for volunteer singers, so Easter's March arrival results in a Pentecost date of May 11. Historically, the 50 days of Easter constitute the oldest season of the church year, corresponding to the Jewish "feast of Pentecost [Shavuot], which is the holy feast of seven weeks, from the Feast of the Unleavened Bread to the Feast of First Fruits." Directors should anticipate the probable loss of some singers in April and May as spring finally takes hold. If choirs take a summer hiatus, this is all the more reason to bring them together at least once a month during the summer to enjoy the music and social fun that links them as a church choir.

It should be remembered that before the fourth century, the great celebration of redemption was not split into Good Friday and Easter Day, but instead on the eve of Easter there was a celebration of the Christian Pasch, a representation of the whole drama of salvation. Today, Holy Week has an abundance of musical responsibilities for most church choirs, so post-Easter is often seen as a time of "rest," vocal and otherwise.

Directors need to hope for a result similar to that wonderful story regard-

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