

INTERPRETING THE AGO COLLEAGUE CERTIFICATION REQUIRED COMPOSITIONS

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GROUP A

J.S. BACH: Chorale Prelude, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 645 (any edition)

This is not only the best known, but the most loved, of the Schübler Chorales. This set consists of six organ transcriptions of cantata movements made by Bach himself. With that in mind, it is instructive to listen to the orchestral version as well as to examine the orchestral score. One will find very few differences in the slurs, but will note immediately the number of small ornaments which were added. The differences in dynamics need not concern us. Ornamentation and its range of possibilities we will discuss as we come to it in the music. For registration, one needs to choose an appropriate solo stop for the cantus firmus—by preference, a Trumpet. If not available, one might try thickening an Oboe with an Octave 4'. In any event we need a combination to symbolize the "Wake, awake" or "Zion hears" idea. The cantata movement sets the second stanza of the chorale, "Zion hört die Wachter singen." Lacking an adequate solo reed, one might of necessity substitute a Principal on the Great, with accompaniment and pedal in good balance. For the right hand (henceforth RH), it is best to use an 8', 4', 2', if not overly bright (taking the "Dextra 8 fuss" marking to indicate the foundation pitch), and if one must couple to the Pedal, do so. The whole should be performed as a rather stately march or procession—not pushed. With this in mind, please number the bars of your score consecutively—first ending as bars 21 and 22, second ending as bar 23.

Bar 1: The RH should articulate carefully—think orchestrally. The pickup notes require *detaché* for accentuation. In general, the pedal part is a walking bass. The repeated notes at the beginning require enough lift for a strong feeling of pulsing, but not as detached as if you were articulating a fugal subject!

Bar 7: The ornament here needs to be played quickly. This applies to analogous situations, as in bar 8, beat three, and bar 10, beat two.

Bar 8: The slide forward on the second half of beat four (in some editions) should begin on the C below, moving scalewise to the E^b (C-D-E^b). Do this quickly in the eighth-note time allotted.

Bar 9: As you will not know who your examiners may be, it is probably advisable to be rather strict about differentiating the trill here from the shorter ornament in bar 10, but do observe that the repetition of bar 10 is marked differently from the same passage in bar 29. In the orchestral score, bar 10 also is marked as a trill. There are a number of ambiguities of this sort. Think about them, but best to play it safe! The following example is a proposed solution.

Ex. 1



Bar 11: The displacement of the 6-4 chord to beat two is best emphasized by a staccato treatment of the eighth notes, manual and pedal, on beat one. This holds in bar 30, as well as in bar 43, where the 6-4 chord is placed on beat four—staccato eighths to prepare it.

Bar 18: See Example 2 for a realization. By analogy the LH trills in bars 21, 23, 32, 35, 47 and 50 may all be performed similarly, if you choose. The trill in bar 37 may also be played this way, but twice as long and including the termination. I feel that they can be played as shorter trills if you like. Advantages come from the shorter treatment in that, with the exception of bar 18, the remaining trills have an eighth upbeat in the RH part which does not want to be obscured. These are your choices. Whatever you do, play them with some sense of freedom.

Ex. 2



Bar 20: By playing this ornament short (approximately as a 16th), one emphasizes the "wake-up" symbolism, though equal eighths are possible.

Bar 27: The slide may be reinserted on the fourth beat, second half,

to make this bar match bar 8. Similarly in bar 31, the appoggiatura on the downbeat of bar 12 (the A natural) may be reintroduced.

It is possible to articulate the bass line occasionally for some accents—this will be largely a matter of taste. Good recordings of this work are not lacking.

J.S. BACH: Fugue in G Major, BWV 576 (any edition)

Peter Williams believes the melodic beauty and charm of the theme make it credible as a work of J.S. Bach. To be sure, we have charm here and a work to enjoy. You may wish to consult Peter Williams's *The Organ Music of J.S. Bach*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980), for his discussion of the authenticity of this work. An analysis is given there as well.

It is clearly a theme-oriented work, so our first concern will be to decide on an articulation pattern which will best bring out the character of the theme and be a sustainable articulation throughout. The requirements imposed by the repeated notes certainly seem to indicate at least a gentle non-legato touch—one that will bring out the accented beats (see Ex. 3 for a suggestion).

Ex. 3



You will be safer to begin the trill in bar 3 on the upper note, concluding it with a termination going down to G and back to A at the end (see Ex. 4 for a suggested execution).

Ex. 4



The exact number of repercussions in the trill is not too important—it will have the best effect if you begin slightly slower and increase in speed. Use your ear to get what you want. The trill on beat four of bar 6 may be treated similarly within its time constraints.

Bars 9 and 10: Do some separations as in Ex. 5.

Ex. 5



Bar 12: Note the passing note in the pickup of the subject. Set this off a bit after the first G on beat two by a sufficient lift to mark the entry.

Bar 17: Keep the pedal articulating the subject as at the start; alternate toes where possible.

Bar 20: Take the whole third beat of the alto in the left hand, as well as the alto C# on beat two of bar 21.

Bar 33 and 34: see Ex. 6 for hand divisions.

Ex. 6



Bar 51ff: Make all the eighth notes slightly broken, so that there is no slurring from a weak to a strong beat. This will keep the passage more vertical and moving forward (see Ex. 7).

Ex. 7



Bar 78: This clearly calls for a ritard for emphasis—note the fullness of the chord on beat three.

Bars 90 and 91: Some sort of free cadenza figuration appears to be called for. If you do it well, the examiners may love you, but use your judgment. Just a bit of freedom in getting started again in bar 92 is a good idea.

Bar 94: A short trill is called for on beat two. A pretty good feeling of a close on beat three is good; then, perhaps, some relaxation from the pickup to bar 95 to the end.

Registration for this fugue should not be too full. Perhaps up to mixtures on a secondary manual with Pedal to match, coupled or otherwise balanced.

While any edition is allowed, note must be taken of some of the variant readings. Principal differences will be seen by comparing the Widor-Schweitzer edition with the Peters. This Fugue is not yet included in the *Neue Bach Ausgabe*, and the Schweitzer edition, with few exceptions, is the same as the Bach *Gesellschaft*. It will be necessary to state which edition you are playing from, or that you have made a conflation yourself.

The differences are these:

Bar 8, beat 2, second eighth: Peters gives a D, Schweitzer a B—B is better, for then the alto dissonance is prepared.

Bar 16, beat 4: the parenthetical A[#] gives a less ambiguous tonal reading.

Bar 21: see Ex. 8—not too significant a choice.

Ex. 8



Bar 23: Schweitzer gives a whole note tied to bar 24 in the alto part.

Bar 32: Schweitzer gives a parenthetical D[#] in the soprano at the end of beat three.

Bar 39: Schweitzer omits the tenor part until bar 40, the second half of beat three. This does get rid of the rather awkward corresponding octaves between alto and tenor. It also removes the grumble of the low register. Schweitzer does the same thing in bars 58 and 59, omitting the low tenor until the second half of beat three in bar 59, picking the tenor up on the E. To be sure this is clear, see Ex. 9. Where the facts of the matter lie, I am not sure; however, I am sure that Schweitzer's reading gives a more gracious effect.

Ex. 9



Except for the above tenor omissions, the Bach *Gesellschaft* reads as Schweitzer's edition.

Bar 49: Schweitzer ties the last quarter note in the tenor into bar 50.

Bar 54 and 55: Schweitzer gives some optional tenor notes of no musical consequence.

Bar 78, beat three: Before the rest, Schweitzer gives a B in the bass, making a first inversion, rather than a root position. This makes better musical sense.

Bar 94: A short trill is called for on beat two before the cadence on G.

That's the menu, and the range of options. You are free to choose any, none, or all.

GROUP B

LÜBECK: Partita on Nun lasst uns Gott dem Herren, verses 4–6 (Peters 4437)

Here we are not given a choice of editions, but the one by Herman Keller is specified. The English preface gives you about as much information on Lübeck as *The New Grove* dictionary and you will want to read it. The German Vorwort includes the specifications of the large instruments Lübeck had to play on during his mature life. They may be taken as a springboard for your thoughts on registration. Taken as a whole, the partita tends to seem inconclusive, and for that reason the editor has suggested adding a chorale harmonization as a verse seven. The printing of the partita included in the Pfatteicher/Davison *The Church Organist's Golden Treasury* reverses the order for verses five and six, presumably on the assumption that the big soprano eighth-note line is more climactic than the soloed LH line. Inasmuch as the set appears to be incomplete and some freedom may thus be permissible, there is merit in doing this—but not for the exam.

The tempo marking given by Keller for verse 4, joyous as it may be, seems to me about one third too fast. I would think somewhere between 80 and 84 for the half note will give better results—besides, of course, being less hazardous to play. The text of the chorale is definitely cheery:

Now let us God be blessing,
His honor e'er confessing;
His love he's ever showing,
On us His gifts bestowing.

Measure numbers are marked. We begin at bar 75. The *figura corta* is a prominent figure in this variation. See Ex. 10 for a suggested performance.

Ex. 10



All the notes bracketed may be thought of as *detaché*, while in bar 76 the vertical strokes indicate a very slight lift for clarity of accentuation. Proceeding in this way throughout the variation should give a good reading. Keller's markings in bars 80 and 81 are almost unavoidable. The echo passages will be played most easily if you know them pretty well from memory. It is helpful to get the eye on the next keyboard before the hands land there! A slight ritard at bar 100—the final bar of this variation—is not only good musically, but helps the LH with a not too comfortable hand position. In bar 88, beginning on beat three, you may find it easier to take the tenor part in the RH through the echo passages.

For registration, try a basic 8', 4', 2' ensemble on the Rp, and an echo on the Ow of 8' and 2'. If this seems not to be enough, up the scale to include a smallish mixture on the Rp and add a 4' on the Ow. As Keller comments on the bottom of page 48, the dynamic markings are relative. Too large a contrast will give an unpleasant hiccupping effect you don't need.

Verse 5 has a simple enough musical scheme—a big flowing line in the RH and separated chords in the LH. Ex. 11 shows how the LH and Pedal may be played. One always wants to emphasize the downbeat here.

Ex. 11



Caution—don't phrase so that the organ "grunts"; use your good sense and listen. In general, the RH may be allowed to run its course. If the organ articulates well, some small clearing, as indicated in Ex. 10, bar 76, will much improve the line. Do it subtly—when obvious, it is overdone. Arpeggio figurations, such as those on the last beat of bar 108 and the last two beats of bars 110 and 111, may be taken more broken. Other occurrences need similar treatment; make a fair ritard on the final arpeggio in bar 122. A full Great sound up to and including the mixture will bring this line forth. You may, if it works well, include a reed. It goes without saying that one should, from the very outset, decide what fingering is to be used. Overmark, rather than undermark.

Verse 6: It is possible to use the same registration as in verse 5; a manual reversal may take care of your needs. In any case, the same general approach is useful and helps to unify the variations into a greater whole. LH figures such as bar 126 (see Ex. 12) need breaking and separation for clarity. All the things that have been said in the preceding variations apply here.



RHEINBERGER: Cantilena, from Sonata No. 11, Op. 148 (any edition)

We have just finished celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Rheinberger, 1835–1901. His trios and fuguetas once served as staples in the training of young organists. A prolific organ composer, he wrote over 100 compositions for organ, including 20 sonatas. Besides being an excellent contrapuntist and composer, he was also famous as a teacher of composition. The Cantilena is the most anthologized and well known of his works; and with this, we shift gears in our approach to understanding. It is well to take a moment to look at the overall harmonic plan, as harmony is so important to Romantic composers.

Bars 1–4: With a basically descending bass line, we move from the tonic F to the dominant—note the chromatics which precede the V7.

Bars 5–8 lead us to A minor by a rising line in the bass.

Bars 9–12 lead us again to the V7 on C. In bar 12, note how the V7 is prepared by its secondary dominant with a lowered fifth.

Bars 13–14: The tonic minor leads us to D-flat, the lowered sixth degree.

Bars 15–18 once again lead us to the dominant C: and here, with rather a jump, we land on

Bar 19: A-flat as a brief tonal center for a six-bar phrase, then returning to V7.

Bars 25–30: Another six-bar phrase, which starts with two bars of recapitulation from the beginning.

Bars 31–36: A brief dominant pedal-point C stabilizes the key. Note how the pedal part emphasizes this by the inclusion of rests, at just the point where you feel you have had enough continuous bass.

Bars 37–40: Back on the tonic F, moving through E-flat, D-flat, downward to the dominant. The bass line is repeated in bars 39–40.

Bars 41–44: Tonic pedal, nice lush harmonies in the accompaniment.

It is well to note how carefully the melodic climaxes are placed. In bars 10 and 11, we move upward to a high A and B^b. In bars 22 and 23, we move from the A^b to the B^b. Bar 30 pushes higher to the high C; and finally, in bar 40, we reach a D^b before a graceful curve downward.

A good reed is best for a solo stop—perhaps an Oboe, with or without a tremulant, with flutes 8' and 4' in the LH and Pedal to match, though distinct enough to carry the rhythmic momentum. The Pedal octaves need to be rather portamento, though broken. Some flexibility of rhythm is required at the major cadences as well as at the melodic climaxes. To achieve a smoother LH part, it is well to use the solo manual just above the LH; and one may want to thumb down at a number of spots such as the upper G (bar one, beat two) and the upper F (bar two, beat four). This is certainly mandatory at bar 12 unless one releases the tenor G. You will find the places where this seems necessary to you. In bar 43, in some editions, the last B^b of the soprano is tied over, and the suspension and resolution left in the RH. Other editions double the B^b, and leave this in the LH.

GROUP C

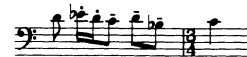
SCHROEDER: No. 6 from Sechs kleine Präludien und Intermezzi (Schott)

Schroeder's works for the organ are perhaps better known to Americans than those of many other contemporary Germans. This set of short preludes and intermezzos provides a good introduction to his style, and has been justly popular. The Poco vivace is a pleasure to play and hear.

The A section, marked fortissimo, will require a full organ sound, probably without reeds. While the B section, beginning in the middle of bar 17, is marked piano, the drop in volume ought not to be too much of a contrast.

Getting a comfortable fingering for bars 1–12 is of prime importance. The easiest way is to divide the running thirds between the hands and, when triads occur, to take two voices in the RH. It may be a good thing to allow a slight "clear"—hands off the keyboard momentarily—after the longer values, before resuming the sixteenths: for instance, after the dotted eighth in bar 3, the eighth in bar 5, and the tied quarter in bar 6. Break the pedal octaves slightly. After the chords in bar 12, a slight lift before bar 13 will help to clear the air. Similarly for bars 41 and 42.

Note the nice anticipation in the right hand of bars 14 and 16 of the motif to be developed in the B section. Both in bars 14 and 16, the sixteenth on the beat are best taken a bit staccato, enlivening the rhythm. Having done it here, we are prepared for what happens in bars 17 and 18, where a similar treatment is helpful (see Ex. 13).



The parallel fifths in the manual part of bar 15 could be phrased as in Ex. 14. Slightly easier to play and stronger than a legato.

Ex. 14



When LH returns to Manual I in bar 22, keep the large intervals slightly broken for this heroic theme.

Some freedom in how you handle bar 28 ought to be allowed for this "false start" on the subtonic. Then in bar 29 we get the real return. If you have small hands, or are otherwise uncomfortable with the leap between the final chords, it is easy enough to take one more note in the LH (see Ex. 15).

Ex. 15



PINKHAM: "And all the bells rang out the good news," No. 7 from Versets for Small Organ (E.C. Schirmer); or in The AGO 90th Anniversary Anthology of American Music, published by Oxford University Press

Daniel Pinkham has done so much to enrich organ repertoire, not only with solo works, but with many for organ and instruments. The 1990 National Convention in Boston, Mass., features much of his music as a tribute.

From an interpretative standpoint there is really not a lot to say, as Pinkham has given you all the markings and indications you need. Full registration, most likely without reeds. I would employ a good deal of upper work to give as much jangle of bells as possible, while the pedal may well be coupled, if it won't stand alone, to a secondary manual without mixtures. The pedal point on C need not confuse the issue with as many overtones as the upper parts require. In view of the rhythmic drive generated, careful handling of the ritenuto in bar 24 to bring a firm conclusion is required. *Achtung!*

Rather than write about interpretation as such, perhaps I can be indulged in an aside about some aspects of the composition which might go unnoticed. To my knowledge this is the only organ composition which exploits change-ringing techniques. The LH part uses only four pitches. To see how the changes are made, let us assign a numerical value to each: C=1, D=2, F#=3, G=4. The number of possible arrangements of these four numbers is obtained by multiplying them thus: 1 x 2 x 3 x 4, or 24 possible permutations. The composition uses them all, then cadences in bar 25. While I won't work the set out in its entirety, I will go halfway to show you how it works. If interested, you can complete the graph.

1st bar	1 2 3 4 =	C, D, F#, G	1 changes places with 2, and 3 with 4, to give
2nd bar	2 1 4 3 =	D, C, G, F#	inner two, 1 and 4 change places to give
3rd bar	2 4 1 3		procedure continues as before
4th bar	4 2 3 1		
5th bar	4 3 2 1		
6th bar	3 4 1 2		
7th bar	3 1 4 2		
8th bar	1 3 2 4		
9th bar	1 3 4 2		here only the second two numbers reverse, and we start again. Notice the movement of #1 from front to back. A neat set!

Like a three-layer cake, we have the pedal point on the bottom, like a low bourdon bell, the changes in the middle, and a descant on the top. The descant has a generally restricted range from C to G, which dips down to an A below and finally ascends to a B above. F# is used as a leading tone, i.e., the modality alternates between C Lydian and C major. In the middle of bar 19 we get a suggested return to the opening bar. This motif again is the basis for the coda, from beat two of bar 23 on.

CONCLUSION: We hope that these observations and suggestions will help in the understanding and interpretation of the repertoire, and we wish you well in your endeavor.