



AGO Region VI Convention June 22-25, 1997

Performing Artists

The Appleton Boychoir
David Heller • Joel Martinson
Hector Olivera • Wolfgang Rubsam
Pamela Ruiters-Feenstra
John Schwandt • Norma Stevingson
John Chappell Stowe
Lawrence University Brass Ensemble

Workshop Topics

Career Concerns • Children's Choirs
Financial Planning • Handbells
Hymn Accompanying
Mastering Technique
New Organ Publications
Organ Master Classes
Psalmody • Using All Gifts

Workshop Leaders

Norma Aamodt-Nelson
Bruce Bengtson • Dakota Road
Delbert Disselhorst • Linda Duckett
Jeanne Julseth Heinrich
Carolyn Jennings • Connie Kilmark
Pamela Parkinson • Naomi Rowley

Speakers

Rev. John McFadden
Rev. Paul Westermeyer

Convention Headquarters

Paper Valley Hotel and Conference Center
333 West College Ave. Appleton, WI 54911
Phone: 800-242-3499

Linda M. Mast, Convention Registrar
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DEAR UNCLE MAX

I truly enjoy reading the questions people ask you regarding organ and organ playing. . . . I play an old tracker . . . am a non-degreed organist . . . a retired public school teacher . . . degrees in the field of education . . . studied organ for some years. My question is: Why do large churches expect or require organists to play very difficult selections, and why do they require an organist to possess a degree in music? I play shorter classics by Bach, Gounod, Franck, Handel, etc. . . . Most people in the congregation like to chat, so it seems that the prelude is not so important as either the selection or how well it is played. I wonder if others feel this way?

E.W., Anderson, Ind.

I am reversing the order of your questions. Undoubtedly, others feel the way you do regarding the importance of the preludes where the congregation chat. (Most do, I confess to occasionally succumbing to the sin.) First, try a tactical approach by asking your minister to insert a note in the bulletin that the service begins with the organ prelude, or, that the rights of others to enter the church to pray need to be respected. You and your minister will find just the right words for your congregation. When young and brash I used to build the organ up until a roar of gossip could be heard, then suddenly a subito. Trying to embarrass a congregation into submission is poor; better try education. If you give up feeling the preludes are important, you will be dead artistically in short order; keep your own values and your own pride in your work—it will communicate. You are playing good composers; stick with them.

Difficult selections in large churches: I don't know that difficulty is so much the goal as effectiveness of what is done. It may well be that the difficulty is associated with the higher wages larger churches pay or as justification for an expensive large instrument. Most organists set their own level of difficulty for the music. If you can't play it, don't!

I am not in any way an absolute fan of degrees. Were I to serve on a search committee for a new organist, church or otherwise, degrees earned would be of passing interest only. I would want to know what the person can do. A good many of my favorite organists do not have advanced degrees, or even baccalaureates. Boy, can they play. Students pursue advanced degrees for any number of reasons, in honesty most will tell you to qualify for jobs at a certain level, or to get higher pay, or to have more time to practice before being absorbed in the work market. If a church or school has a very large number of applicants, the holding of degrees is a con-

venient way of eliminating some candidates without much thought when the committee has no other handle on how to evaluate applicants. I could be fired for saying that, but retirement is coming regardless.

This letter came to Anthony Baglivi who forwarded it to me for a response:

Dear Sir:

I am writing to express my disappointment in the disappearance of "Getting Through Sunday Morning" articles in THE AMERICAN ORGANIST. As an organist who does not have a large music store in my community, I found this column to be invaluable in finding new music to buy.

This summer I presented a regional convention workshop based on music I purchased as a result of those articles. It is disappointing to see that both the RCCO and AGO talk about their organizations being for all organists, regardless of their abilities, and then we receive a magazine geared for professional organists.

It would be most helpful for us "non-professional organists" to have articles on organ and choral music we can use as well as on what constitutes a basic music library.

D.H., Nova Scotia, Canada

I am sure the substance of your request was carefully noted by Mr. Baglivi before he handed on your letter. I am going to address the idea of a basic organ library. I am more than aware that this will satisfy almost no one, but it is a good exercise to undertake from time to time. In some ways it ties in with the question above about teaching and relates to what do you suggest when the basic organ instruction book is gone through. In a general way, I much prefer to collect complete works by individual composers; nonetheless, I am going to name a couple of collections that may prove useful. In some ways, an assumption behind what I suggest is that you might want to play a very broad range of the repertoire. Certainly, if you can still get your hands on David Johnson's *Organ Teachers' Guide*, published by Augsburg, you will find listings of graded material that may also help. Check your denominational publication to see if it publishes a "companion" to your hymnal for a list of chorale preludes based on the tunes used. A copy of Corliss Arnold's *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey*, published by Scarecrow Press, is an indispensable tool for finding "what's out there." If you find something by a composer you like, you can locate what else he has written.

My experience with collections of organ music is that if you like to play one piece in four, you are lucky and have got

your money's worth. Still, try these:

1. Herman Keller's *Eighty Chorale Preludes*, Peters edition. A mixed bag of shortish works for various seasons. Pedal and non-pedal.

2. Carl Pfatteicher and Archibald T. Davison's wonderfully named *The Church Organist's Golden Treasury*. Three volumes. Try one to see if it suits your need.

3. Almost any of the shorter volumes in the Oxford University series from "Old English Organ Music for Manuals" to "Modern Organ Music." Other publishers are pulling out similar series now.

4. *The Complete Organist, Book One, One Hundred Pieces from Across the Centuries*. Published by Kevin Mayhew. There are a lot of good things in this book, some transcriptions, some abridgements not well indicated, etc. But for the price, you do get your money's worth. If you are looking to jump-start an organ library, you can't do better. The Foreword says, "Nothing here to cause a raised eyebrow in those possessing a moderate technique, but plenty to charm the ear." More questionable is, "In keeping with modern editorial practice the text of *The Complete Organist* is generally uncluttered with manual and registration suggestions. . . . [It] makes . . . reading the music easier." Hmmm. True, but suggestions are helpful. Slow movements of Mendelssohn, easier Bach, Karg-Elert, Handel, Brahms, Guilmant, Parry, Rheinberger. Good stuff.

5. E. Power Biggs's *Treasury of Early Organ Music* and *Treasury of Shorter Organ Classics* still give joy.

6. For the money, no organist can get more value than is found in the Dover Publications Inc. reprints: three volumes of Bach, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Couperin Masses, Franck, Froberger, Liszt, Pachelbel, Sweelinck, and Widor. You may need good eyes, and you may come to prefer different editions, but these are classic reprints costing about what it takes to take a friend to the movies.

7. Above all, any church organist needs a copy of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* (can be a Dover, see above). I especially like the excellent notes in Robert Clark and John Peterson's edition for Concordia—no impossible page turns; smart editing!

8. French organists die unfulfilled until they have written their *Vingt-Quatre Pièces*. Try those of Jean Langlais and Louis Vierne.

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Standing in **RIEGER-KLOSS** Factory Erecting Room - left foreground: Matt Bechteler, President, Euro Musik Corporation; standing - in back of four-manual tracker action console for Trinity Lutheran Church, Roselle, Illinois, left to right: **RIEGER-KLOSS** Tonal Director, Boris Micek; Merrill N. Davis III, Director/Consultant, Euro Musik; and Svatopluck Rucka, CEO, **RIEGER-KLOSS** - together with representatives of **RIEGER-KLOSS** craftspeople and executive staff. Three-Manual Organ with two consoles (tracker and electric) and Cross in facade is for delivery to South Korea; large French inspired concert hall organ - partially visible at far right - is for Ostrava, Czech Republic.

9. Max Drischner's *Choralvorspiele für Dorfororganisten* are craftsmanlike, straightforward, and satisfying.

10. Last, of the thousands of chorale preludes by Flor Peeters, I like to have in reach either his *Thirty-five Miniatures* or his *Sixty Short Pieces* for those occasions when the minister, already late, trips and breaks his leg on the backstairs.

I applaud your doing a workshop at the regional convention. Reading sessions are great at the chapel level! What about a show-and-tell, where everyone brings five of their favorite new anthems and organ music—pass them around and play snippets to sug-

gest style and character. You will come away enriched, entertained, and instructed.

Music exhibits at regional and national conventions are a wonderful way to explore new music. Check out those companies that have really extensive exhibits, thick catalogs, and an 800 number; generally they can help you locate those items that baffle your local music store and frustrate you both. (You might just get a discount thrown in!)

MAX MILLER, FAGO

Send questions to Dear Uncle Max, AGO National Headquarters, 475 Riverside Dr., Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115.