

## Organ Music by Libby Larsen

Before Winter (1982) for Baritone and Organ

Sonata in One Movement on "Kalenda Maya" (1986), E.C.

Schirmer from *The AGO 90th Anniversary Anthology of American Organ Music*

Fantasy on Slane (© 1989) for Flute and Organ, E.C. Schirmer

Aspects of Glory (1990, © 1997), E.C. Schirmer

Prelude—Blessed Be the Tie That Binds (1996)

Veni, Creator Spiritus (© 1997), Oxford University Press  
from *A New Liturgical Year*, John Ferguson, editor. Augsburg Fortress

### NOTES

1. Julie Ann Sadie, *Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, ed. Julie Ann Sadie and Rhian Samuel (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 266–68.

2. Charles Fowler, "Three Musical Creators. Aaron Copland, Duke Ellington, Libby Larsen," *Music! Its Role and Importance in Our Lives* (New York: Glencoe/MacMillan McGraw Hill, 1994), Chapter 18.

3. James R. Briscoe, "How it Thrills Us," *Contemporary Anthology of Music by Women* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996).

4. Sophie Fuller, "Libby Larsen," *Pandora's Guide to Women Composers* (San Francisco, Calif.: Pandora Press, 1995).

5. Arthur Mampel, *Silk over Wood*, ed. Bruce Carlson (London, Toronto, Chicago: International Theological and Philosophical Press, 1981).

6. Much of the information included in this article came from personal interviews with the composer in April 1999.

7. Libby Larsen, *Aspects of Glory* (Boston: E.C. Schirmer Music Company, 1997), Composer's Note.

8. *A New Liturgical Year*, ed. John Ferguson (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997).

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**Marilyn Biery**, DMA, AAGO, is co-choir director and organist at the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul, Minn. She holds degrees in organ performance from Northwestern University and the University of Minnesota. She serves the Guild as director of the National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance, and as Region VI Coordinator for Professional Development. Her music/texts are published by OCP, GIA, MorningStar, and Alliance Publications.

## Dear Uncle Max

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

The following questions were asked by POE and POE+ students.

*How do I know which fingering to use—connected or separated?*

Any connected fingering, as such, can be separated, so we must be asking about touch, degree of separation, or legato. In spite of the importance of the question, it needs to be asked with reference to a specific piece of music, composer, and time frame in which he/she worked, a specific acoustical environment, or the specific way a particular organ is voiced and how it responds to touch differentiations. This is not an abstract but a concrete question.

If you are dealing with early music, you may want to adventure into patterns of fingerings in use when the composer lived and wrote. One good beginning might be Sandra Soderlund's *Organ Technique: An Historical Approach* (Hinshaw Music, 2nd ed., 1986). A recording of the examples may also be obtained. If you wish to clarify your playing in reverberant settings as opposed to dry, dead ones, you will want to experiment a great deal, try things, and examine the results. Listen to others, use a tape recorder on yourself, and ask questions. You'll find your own answers as your experiences accumulate.

*In some editions of Bach chorales, how do you know whether to play on one or two manuals?*

We will need to distinguish between Bach chorales, such as are found in the cantatas, etc., where they are originally written in (generally) four-part harmony and meant to be sung with instrumental accompaniment. We would not expect to find an indication for whether it should be one or two manuals in such a reduction for keyboard use. However, if you can make it lie for the hands for two manuals, want to solo the melody, and can do it without harming the voice leading, more power to you. Even that, though, should probably be considered exceptional.

The second situation, that of organ arrangements of the chorales, such as in chorale preludes, is more likely what you have in mind. You will need to know some minimal Italian/German for some editions—three and a half minutes of work!

"a 2 Clav. e Pedale"—for two keyboards with pedal

"Canto fermo in Tenore"—melody in the tenor, this from "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme," where "Dextra 8 Fuss" (foot), tells us the upper part is to be an 8' for the right hand and "Sinistra 8 Fuss," the left. Those are the indications for the first Schübler chorale. The second has, like the first, Italian and German mixed, calling for "a 2 Clav. e Pedale" and over the soprano line, "1. Clav. 8 Fuss," and bass line, "2. Clav. 16 Fuss" plus "Ped. 4 Fuss."

When an indication is given for the two manuals, which two manuals may not be indicated. The voice where the

melody is to sound (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) is often given. If no indication is given at all, assume for one keyboard.

*If an organ does not have a good reed stop, what can you do to play music that requires a reed stop or should you skip that repertoire?*

On reading your question a clear vision of a masterclass with Catharine Crozier came to mind where someone asked a similar question. She pretty much acted out her answer. With a large pile of music on the bench at the right, up went a new piece on the music rack; after reading the registrations, which called for a tierce on the Swell, down went the finger over the drawknobs. No tierce—away went the piece. Next, a corneopean was called for; another search, no luck, away went the piece. Several more repetitions of the same. Finally, with little left, what to do; close the organ and sadly go home? Most often there is something one can do that is musically satisfactory, though not exactly the same as what may be called for. Even music written for organ and another instrument will often give you an option: violin, flute, or oboe; or, French horn or trombone. All the composers I have known, unless we get really bizarre, would prefer to have their compositions performed with slightly different colors than left on the shelf unheard.

If I specifically wanted a reed color and lacked it, I would first go for some combination with off-unisons, a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ' or 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' with at least 8' and 4' support; this is a fairly classic trade-off. Lacking the mutations, aim for any combination in

which the part scored for the reed is slightly more prominent, but keeping colors contrasted between solo and accompaniment, such as Swell Flutes 8' and 4' and Great Principal (Open Diapason) 8'. A solo color based on a gamma could also be good, anything with markedly differing overtones. Don't overlook the differentiation a wonderfully warm, wavery wobble of a tremolo can bring to two otherwise similar colors.

If, however, the reed is called to be played with other stops on one keyboard, you might try 8' and 4' Principals; this is still not too bright but bright enough to come closer to the richness of the reed stop overtones.

One American organ company, way back in the first third of the 20th century, built a lot of imitation reed stops. Some were quite interesting and successful. These were developed especially for remote communities where the visits of adequate tuners and maintenance men might be rare. I remember with surprise a wonderful saxophone stop in Minneapolis, which I had expected to be dreadful. I also recall in upper New York State another larger instrument with imitation Swell reeds 16', 8', and 4', plus Great Chorus Reeds, which were stimulating to the scalp as

nothing has been since. Wonder if they are still there? Whatever you do, if you can make it musical and convincing, do it and enjoy it; others will.

*How do you know when to couple the manuals to the pedal and when not to couple them?*

Generally the bass line needs to be invited into the musical dance as an equal partner. Provided this is done, it may matter little whether the Pedal division is coupled or not. To achieve this balance successfully without coupling requires a good Pedal division. In the mid-20th century, very often on large organs the Pedal division was about twice the size of any other division. Expensive. Space-consuming. Practical? Sometimes. Some builders borrow a great many stops from the manuals with separate tabs for the Pedal division. Judiciously done, this is useful; if overdone, a clattering effect is felt on the console, so that if you have a Swell Fagott 16', it may be useful with its own knob on the Pedal division, but very often it simply gets pulled twice, as if that made it more telling in effect.

Your question forces me to think about what I would rather do without conscious thought, like breathing or walking. I found that I had not a partic-

ularly formulated, rational scheme. Just for interest, I went through the *Vingt-quatre Pièces en style libre* of Louis Vierne. A total of four compositions start without a clear indication of coupling the manuals to the pedal when the piece starts; couplers are required later on in each case. In accompanying a choir, I would certainly couple, so that when I changed stops to stay in proper relation to what the choir was singing, I wouldn't have to make two adjustments in manual and pedal stops each time. Some organs have an Off/On for pedal combinations that work on the manual piston buttons. Clever organists seem to use them successfully; personally, I would like to glue them in the Off position and sell what's left for ivory.

If you have a well-matched plenum between the pedal and manuals you can often skip coupling. If the Pedal is carrying the cantus firmus chorale melody, you may, again, well want a special color without coupling. If the composer indicates no coupling, don't couple if you can meet his intentions. In short, about 96% of the time, consider yourself as using one pedal coupler or another on most organs. If all you have is a Bourdon 16', go for 99%! Without the coupler, it's a hoot.

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#### GREAT ORGAN

(Manual II: expressive except for Façade voices)  
16' Violonprestant (façade)  
8' Principal (façade)  
8' Bourdon  
8' Flute harmonique  
8' Violoncelle (ext.)  
4' Octave  
4' Spillflute  
2 2/3' Quinte  
2' Superoctave  
2' Flute  
Vrks. Grand Chorus  
8' Trumpet  
Tremulant

#### POSITIV ORGAN

(Manual I: unenclosed)  
8' Principal (façade)  
8' Holzgedackt  
4' Octave  
4' Flute  
2' Principal  
1 1/3' Larigot  
1' Octave  
IVrks. Cymbel  
8' Cromorne  
Tremulant  
Zimbelstern  
16' Trompette-en-chamade (tc; GC)  
8' Trompette-en-chamade (GC)

#### SWELL ORGAN

(Manual III: expressive)  
16' Bourdonbass (ext.)  
8' Viola Pomposa  
8' Viola Celeste (CC)  
8' Chimney Flute  
8' + 8' Erzahler celestes IIrks.  
4' Prestant  
4' Spire Flute  
2 2/3' Nasard  
2' Principal  
1 1/3' Quinte  
Vrks. Mixture Minor  
II-IIIrks. Sesquialtera  
16' Basson  
8' Trompette  
8' Hautbois  
4' Clairon (II-IIIrks.)  
Tremulant

#### GRAND CHOIR ORGAN

(Manual IV: extensions of Pedal voices)  
16' Violonprestant (from Great)  
16' Bourdon (Subbass)  
8' Principal  
8' Bourdon  
8' Violoncelle (from Great)  
4' Octave  
4' Flute  
2' Superoctave  
IV-VIIIrks. Grand Fourniture  
16' Trompetenbass  
8' Trompette  
4' Klarine (ext.)  
16' Trompette-en-chamade (t.c.)  
8' Trompette-en-chamade  
Chimes

#### PEDAL ORGAN

(unenclosed)  
32' Contra Bourdon (ext.)  
16' Open Wood (from 1908 Estey Organ)  
16' Violonprestant (from Great)  
16' Subbass  
16' Bourdonbass (from Swell)  
10 2/3' Rohrquinte (from Swell)  
8' Octavebass (façade)  
8' Gedacktfloete (ext.)  
8' Chimney Flute (from Swell)  
4' Choralbass (ext.)  
IVrks. Mixture  
32' Contra Fagott (ext.)  
16' Trompetenbass  
16' Basson (from Swell)  
8' Trompette  
4' Klarine (ext.)  
8' Trompette-en-chamade  
4' Clairon-en-chamade (ext.)  
Chimes (from Grand Choir)

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