

# Music, She Wrote: Organ Compositions by Women

## Part Eight: Concert Repertoire

by Frances Nobert, South Coast District Convener

Elfrida Andrée. *Organ Symphony No. 1 in B minor*. Reimers, Ed. Nr. 101224. This symphony is her most famous work. It represents not only the first organ symphony written by a woman, but also displaying the broad and grand themes that would mark the great organ symphonies of French composers Charles Marie Widor and Louis Vierne a few years later.

Caterina Assandra. *Ave verum corpus* from *Organ Music by Women Composers before 1800*, ed. Calvert Johnson. Vivace Press VIV 303. Since the easy, four-page composition may be played only on a Principal 8', it would work on any size organ, especially because there is no pedal.

Elsa Barraine. *Prélude et Fugue (Fugue sur un chant de guerre Isrélite)*. Durand 11, 600. *Prélude* displays a great sensibility to the orchestral sound colors of the organ. A cantabile main theme moves through variations, leads to a great crescendo and then fades out. The subject of the fugue is a Jewish chant, the refrain of which is "Our Father, Our King." It is sung as a prayer on the ten days of repentance between the Jewish New Year's Day and Yom Kippur. Barraine develops the chant melody with every possible contrapuntal fugal device and with ever changing harmonies. As in the *Prélude*, there is an increase in volume and intensity and then a diminishing to the end. Both compositions conclude in the major key.

Jennifer Bate. *Introduction and Variations on an Old French Carol (Picardy)*. Novello 01 0176 01. Bate has created an introduction and five variations on this well-known melody. A variety of styles, tempi and volumes occur before the full-blown fugue appears in the final variation. The work roars to a close as the tuba states the last phrase of the melody. Bate provides registration suggestions throughout. The entire composition or portions thereof would be appropriate in concert.

Mary Beth Bennett. *Partita on "Veni, Creator Spiritus."* Augsburg Fortress 11-10588. Bennett's eight-page composition consists of a recitative, chorale, bicinium, aria, hocket, pedal cadenza and toccata. Of medium difficulty, the variations would be an interesting recital piece.

Roberta Bitgood. *Chorale Prelude on "God Himself Is with Us"* from *The Roberta Bitgood Album*. H.W. Gray 6B00675. The composition emulates the style of J. S. Bach with a walking eighth-note bass in the left hand, a recurring sixteenth-note motive in the right hand and a conservative harmonic style. The chorale phrases are heard in the pedal, separated by brief manual interludes.

Roberta Bitgood. *On an Ancient Alleluia* from *The Roberta Bitgood Album* H.W. Gray Co. 6B00675. The composition opens with a melody from a 16th-century manuscript that a friend discovered in a shop near Notre Dame in Paris. As the volume increases, a new chordal pattern appears in the right hand against a second melody in the left hand. The work concludes with a *ff* toccata with part of the original melody in augmentation in the pedal.

Edith Borroff. *Prelude in Dorian*. Randall M. Egan EO92-107. This five-page work is in ABA form with a fugal middle section. The lilting three beats to the measure combine with romantic harmonies to create a lovely composition. The coda crescendos to the end as it joins the beginning of the fugal subject and the melody of the outer sections.

Pamela Decker. *Nightsong and Ostinato Dances*. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 700017. This continuous work consists of a gentle, mysterious song followed by three multisectional dances. The sections are unified and developed with ostinato figures and subtly related motives that transform and evolve as they weave into new rhythmic patterns and harmonic progressions. The harmonic language is based on non-tonal modes having nine or ten notes per octave.

Pamela Decker. *Tango Toccata on a Theme by Melchior Vulpius*. Wayne Leupold Editions (also available in *Bridging the Centuries; The San Diego Organ Anthology*, published by World Library Publications, a division of J.S. Paluch Co.). The composition was commissioned for the 2001 Convention of Region IX of the American Guild of Organists. After a brief chordal introduction with full organ, the piece breaks forth into a toccata with the melody in the pedal. The theme then appears twice more quietly in the right hand with a lush, chromatic accompaniment. A tango introduces an ever increasingly active accompaniment which leads to the *fff* toccata with chords in the the manuals and the melody in the pedal. The eleven-page composition would be an excellent closing number.

Jeanne Demessieux. *Prélude et Fugue en ut (Prelude and Fugue in C Major)*. Durand S.A. 13974. The prelude features singing melodic lines, rhythmic intricacy and constant quintuplet motion. The lilting, bitonal fugue is in compound time with cross rhythms, unexpected rests and a modal feeling with the raised fourth scale step. Both the prelude and the fugue call for unusual registrations which would probably require a large, romantic instrument.

Jeanne Demessieux. *Six Études pour Orgue*. Editions Musicales Alphonse Leduc AL 27 868. These compositions are among the most technically demanding in the organ repertoire. Marcel Dupré states in the preface that "...like the Etudes of high virtuosity of the piano repertoire...they fulfill a double purpose: that of making the student progress to their level and that of permitting the accomplished artist to preserve and maintain acquired technical qualities." (Translation by David Pizarro.) The studies address alternating toes, alternating thirds in the hands and in the feet, sixths, alternating chords, repeated notes, and octaves in the hands and in the feet..

Jeanne Demessieux. *Te Deum pour Orgue, op. 11*. Durand S.A. Editions Musicales D.& F. 13.877. When composing the work, Demessieux had in mind the organ at The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York City. The composition is reminiscent of Charles Tournemire's *Te Deum*. It consists of three sections, Moderato, Andante, and Allegro, and paraphrases three sections of the Ambrosian *Te Deum* hymn.

Jeanne Demessieux. "O Filii" from *Twelve Choral Preludes on Gregorian Chant Themes for Organ*. Summy-Birchard ISBN 0-87487-603-6. This is one of the shorter, easier Demessieux compositions one might prepare for concert. The melody appears in unison in the left hand and then is varied rhythmically, harmonically and melodically. The indicated registrations are effective, but a romantic organ is necessary for a successful rendition.

Emma Lou Diemer. *Eight Chorale Preludes*. Augsburg Fortress 11-10349. The entire volume is worthy of consideration, but one might consider the following three works for contrast in mood, style and registration. *Many and Great, O God, Are Thy Things (Lacquiparle)* is based on a Native American melody. An ostinato recurs throughout. *The Lone Wild Bird (Prospect)* employs a Southern Folk tune. After a haunting flute introduction the melody appears in the string celestes. *Wherever I May Wander(New England)* displays the composer's delightful sense of humor with cheerful flute sounds in the accompaniment and in the melody. The remaining compositions are described under Part Two (Volumes).

Marie-Bernadette Dufourcet-Hakim. *Alba*. H. T. Fitzsimons company F0640. This is a very difficult tour de force work based on Matthew 28: 1 ("After the sabbeth, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb..."). There are large chords, many accidentals, shifting meters and leaping pedal passages during the thirteen-page composition.

Ruth Watson Henderson. *Chromatic Partita*. The moderately difficult composition opens with a chorale with a feeling of C minor. Variations I and II are in 5/8 with a jaunty tempo. Variation II resembles a quiet arioso with a slow tempo and an ornamented melody. Variations IV and V are spirited settings in

compound time . Variation VI provides a slow, quiet respite on the strings before Variation VII features full organ with arpeggios switching between two manuals. The partita ends with a toccata with chords in both hands.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. *Prelude for Organ*. Vivace Press VIV 304. Hensel composed this grand six-page, F-Major, homophonic prelude for her wedding processional.

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel. *Prelude for Organ in G Major* from *Organ Works in G major*, ed. Calvert Johnson. Vivace Press VIV 329. Hensel penned the five-page composition the night before her wedding, because the promised work from her brother Felix did not arrive. The style, which Hensel describes as conservative, is stately with an opening section featuring massive chords and alternations between manuals. A fugato appears in measure fourteen and alternates with the opening material before a series of slow, diminished chords closes the work.

Sr. Leonore Jenny. *Doppelfuge in h für Orgel (Double Fugue in B minor for Organ)*. Furore Verlag 320. Jenny's first fugal subject and countersubject are typical of 20th-century quartal harmony with many leaps of fourths and fifths. The second subject is more linear with a continuation of the syncopation from the opening fugue. The first fugue explores the keys of b, e and c# while the second subject begins in c#, moves to b and c# and ends with the tonic key. The final twenty measures combine the two subjects as the composition builds to a *ff* close. Jenny provides registration recommendations throughout.

Joyce Jones. *Pedal Variations on "When the Roll is Called up Yonder"* from *The Music of Joyce Jones*. Rosenhaus Enterprises. Jones writes that this piece "... would be fun to play for a church concert or to demonstrate the use of the pedals for a children's choir or church school." There are four variations in different rhythms and tempi with double pedal abounding.

Elisabeth Claude Jacquet de La Guerre. *The Trumpet* from *Music by Women before 1800: Music for Weddings, Joyous Ceremonies and Special Occasions*, Ars Femina. *The Trumpet* is a short composition, similar in style to the tunes of Henry Purcell and others of the time. A solo stop (or instrument) presents the melody, which later becomes part of the texture of the full organ.

Libby Larsen. *My Home in Glory* and *Tambourines* from *Aspects of Glory*. E. C. Schirmer 4679. This relatively difficult three-movement work was commissioned by the American Guild of Organists for the 1990 national convention in Boston. The last two movements evoke the style of spirituals, with the second cast in a rather plaintive, blues-tinged mold and the final movement in a very lively style with lots of meter shifts and syncopations.

Janet Linker. *Variations on "How Firm a Foundation."* Concordia Publishing House 97-6586. Linker uses the key of Ab Major for *Hymn, Pastorale, Trumpet Tune, Chorale, Duo, Trio, Allegro, Reverie* and *Finale*. Registrations are noted throughout. Each moderately easy variation could stand alone or be combined with one or more others.

Janet Linker. *Variations on "All Hail the Power."* Concordia Publishing House 97-6856. *Fanfare, Adagio, Gigue* and *Meditation* are one to three pages long and are in the key of F Major. Linker indicates that the first might serve as an introduction to the congregational hymn. *Scherzo, Toccata, Air, Trumpet Tune, Cantilena* and *Finale* move to G Major. Linker gives registrations throughout. All of the moderately easy variations could stand on their own and thus function well as a group or as individual compositions.

Ester Mägi. *Dialog: Prelude with Choral*. Eres Estonia Edition 1928. This composition conveys Mägi's dramatically intense, folk-inspired tonal tapestry. The composition consists of two alternating ideas: one with mostly soft, flowing eighth notes in compound time, the other with a homophonic chorale of varying dynamic levels in simple time.

Margaret Meier. *Romantic Passacaglia on a Twelve-Tone Theme*. Available from the composer. The passacaglia brings together elements of baroque, romantic and contemporary styles. The theme, a twelve-tone row and its inversion, began life as an a cappella vocalise, was later set for orchestra and was finally transformed into an organ composition. Some of the eighteen organ variations adhere to strict twelve-tone technique, while others support the theme with lush tonality.

Benna Moe. *Finale pomposo festivo* from *Koncert-Suite för Orgel*. eriks K631. This third and final movement is a four-page, full-organ, chordal composition in ABA form. At least two manuals are required for the middle section, which contains an eighth-note accompanying passage in the left hand.

Orpha Ochse. *Chaconne*. Avant Music. *Chaconne* was intended as the middle movement of *Sonata in E for Organ*. It is a quiet set of variations on a chord progression in f minor.

Emily Maxson Porter. *Celebrations of Praise: Seven Chorale Preludes for Organ* (*Ebenezer, Hanover, Lobe den Herren, Terra Patris, St. Denio, Schönster Herr Jesu* and *Royal Oak*). Calfaria Music 99-101. This is a delightful collection with several works which are rhythmically catchy with polymeters or shifting meters.

Emily Maxson Porter. *Partita on "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"* (*Lauda Anima*). MorningStar MSM 10-714. The composition includes *Fanfare* ("Praise, my soul, the King of heaven..."), *Dance* ("Praise him for his grace and favor..."), *Pastorale* ("Tenderly he shields and spares us...") and *Jubilation* ("Angels help us to adore him..."). The only quiet movement, *Pastorale* creates a swiny feeling with shifts between two and three beats per measure. The melody enters subtly following an extended introduction or rather lengthy interludes. *Dance* and *Jubilation* are joyful, perpetual motion pieces in the manuals, with the melody appearing in the pedal. *Fanfare* is a stately opening with the melody rhythmically presented on the right hand on a Trompette en chamade. Full organ opens the movement and accompanies the reed tune until the end.

Florence Beatrice Price. *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volumes 1-4*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions. Each volume contains a biographical sketch by Rae Linda Brown, a list of organ compositions, a discussion of registrations and information on the works in the collection. The first and third volumes include critical notes on editorial additions and corrections as well as an extensive historical section on Florence Price and the organ, including specifications for ten (Volume 1) or thirteen (Volume 3) instruments. The second and fourth volumes explain the editorial procedures and cite the organs Price knew in Chicago. Specific comments on the compositions appear below.

Florence Beatrice Price. *Suite No. 1 for Organ* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 1*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 19. *Fantasy* opens with a flourish which recurs often in the movement. The piece modulates to the dominant in the middle and closes in the tonic. A wide variety of thematic ideas occur, some lyric, some virtuosic or dramatic. The clever *Fughetta* is brief yet technically demanding. The lovely *Air* is an andante filled with rich chromatic harmonization. *Toccato* is in rondo form and is typical of the perpetual motion toccata developed in the late romantic era.

Florence Beatrice Price. *Short Organ Works* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 2*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 24. These nine relatively easy pieces vary in length from two to six pages and are mostly in ternary form. As is frequently the case in Price's compositions, some have melodies that recall Negro spirituals or folk tunes. The works are very accessible to an audience, whether in a church, a concert hall or a theater.

Florence Price. *In Quiet Mood*. Galaxy Music Corporation G. M. 1822-4, New York (also in *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 2*, ed. Calvert Johnson, ClarNan Editions).

Florence Beatrice Price. *Variations on "Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells"* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 3*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 26. The work is from Price's spiritual-based compositions, many of which were for voice and piano. It is the only one she composed as an organ arrangement of a spiritual besides *Steal Away to Jesus*. The melody is basically pentatonic, like

many African-American folk songs and spirituals. The harmonic idiom is strongly influenced by jazz. There are fifteen variations, which may all be performed or selections therefrom. There are many opportunities for colorful registrations.

Florence Beatrice Price. *First Sonata for Organ* from *Music of Florence Beatrice Price, Volume 4*, ed. Calvert Johnson. ClarNan Editions, CN 29. Price performed Guilmant's *Sonata in D Minor* during his visit to The New England Conservatory. His work seems to have served as Price's model for *First Sonata*, as both compositions have the same keys, tempos, registrations, thematic relationships and many other details. Unlike her other large works for organ, she does not attempt to incorporate African-American musical elements.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *L'homme armé Organ Mass* from *Organ Music, Volume I*. Wayne Leupold WL-600031. *L'homme armé Organ Mass* is a six-movement work based on a 15th-century secular melody that was frequently used as a tenor of polyphonic Masses.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Organ Music, Volume II: Solo Organ*, ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 600032. This second volume contains eight works, two of which would be substantial concert pieces. *Variations on Morning Star* is an eleven-page composition based on the well-known Moravian hymn. *Sonata No. 1 for Organ on the painting "Spring Turning" by Grant Wood* was commissioned by the Reynolda House Museum of American Art upon the acquisition of this painting and upon the restoration of the Reynolda House Organ, April 25, 1993.

Margaret Vardell Sandresky. *Organ Music, Volume IV: Five Sacred Dances for Solo Organ*, ed. Virginia L. Haisten. Wayne Leupold Editions WL 600127. Rickey D. Johnson commissioned the dances for Dr. Donald L. Armitage and the dedication of the Létourneau/Casavant organ at Augsburg Lutheran Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. They were premiered by Dr. Armitage and were danced for the first time by Moving Liturgy in Wait Chapel at Wake Forest. The final movement was inspired by a sermon of the Rev. Virginia Herring at the dedication of the organ at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem. The dances are based on Biblical texts describing movement, and the works are composed to suggest these motions. Some of the texts are slightly modified from the accepted editions of the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version. The compositions range in length from one and a half to ten pages, with a difficulty factor of moderate to demanding. III has constant pedal leaps while IV uses double pedal throughout the A section of the da capo dance.

Clara Schumann. *Prelude and Fugue in G minor, op. 16, no. 1*, edited by Joachim Dorfmüller, Furore-Edition 122. Opus 16 contains three preludes and fugues for piano composed in 1845, the same year Robert Schumann produced six fugues on B-A-C-H for organ. The contrapuntal practices of J. S. Bach and the harmonic influences of Felix Mendelssohn are evident in this opus. The lyrical romantic-style prelude stands in strong contrast to the baroque rhythmical drive of the fugue.

Clara Schumann. *Prelude and Fugue in D minor, op. 16, no. 3*, ed. Barbara Harbach. Vivace Press, VIV 305. (See *op. 16* above.) Although the work was originally for piano, it is aptly suited for organ with the chordal prelude and with the fugue, which has pedal points and a characteristic fugal theme.

Jeanne Shaffer. *Partita on "Schmücke Dich" (Deck Thyself, My Soul, with Gladness)*. Company Press. Available from the composer. The variations are based on Johann Crüger's well-known melody of 1649. Although the complete hymn has nine verses, Jeanne Shaffer chose to set four to achieve musical contrast and to complement the text. The work was composed in 1970 at the request of Sam Batt Owens, who premiered it at St. George's Episcopal Church in Nashville that year.

Julia Smith. *Prelude in D Flat*. Mowbray Music Publishers MM-108. Theodore Presser, distributor. The lush, four-page work requires a romantic-style instrument with strings, flutes and an effectively programmed crescendo pedal. The form is ABA with an eight-measure coda. The center section features many duplets against triplets in C# minor. The composition would be a beautiful, soft contrast to fuller works on a program.

Elizabeth Stirling. *Maestoso in D Minor* from *Romantic Pieces for Organ*, ed. Barbara Harbach. Vivace Press VIV 324. *Maestoso in D Minor* is in the style of Alexandre Guilmant with its more complex form,

pedal virtuosity, modulations, combination of melodic materials and the variation of returning melodic areas. It would be an excellent work for a venue with a visible console, since there is much pedal work.

Erzsébet Szönyi. ***Six Pieces for Organ***. Editio Musica, Budapest, Z. 2773. Theodore Presser, distributor. Szönyi's compositions are delightful with great contrasts of style, color and dynamics. Numbers III-V (*Schwebende Harmonien*, *Fugato* and *Intermezzo*) are brief pieces with little or no pedal and would therefore work well on smaller instruments. II (*Wiegenlied*) is a lovely, one-page lullaby with leaps of fifths on the main beats in the pedal. There is a gentle, quiet eighth-note melody in the right hand and a sometimes syncopated left-hand accompaniment. I (*Praeambulum*) is a fine concert opener in the Dorian mode. It is in ABA' form with a quieter fugato in the middle and a possible right-hand reed passage for the final five measures. VI (*Tänzerische Weise*) is a six-page dance with shifting meters and color contrasts between the hands. It would be a fine recital piece either alone or in combination with other works from the volume.

Germaine Tailleferre. *Nocturne* from ***The New Organ Album II***, Universal Edition, UE (Warner), 17480. *Nocturne* is a transcription of a movement from *Serenade en la mineur* for wind instruments. The piece, whose very simplicity makes it so moving, was arranged by Thomas Daniel Schlee in collaboration with the composer.