The Anglican Anthem in England and America


From the President

Paul Ellison considers rites of passage and the start of the fall season, page 3.

A Year in Washington as the AAM Genre Hancock Fellow

George Fergus reflects on his Fellowship at Washington Cathedral, page 9.

Reviews

Erik Goldstrom on Iain Quinn’s monograph *The Organist In Victorian Literature*, page 12.

Jason Overall on some recent American anthem repertoire, page 15.

Brian Harlow on organ music by Mary Beth Bennett, Christina Harmon, and Gwyneth Walker, page 17.

Marjorie Johnston on a recording of Thomas Lloyd’s *Bonhoeffer*, page 18.

The 2018 Alamo AAM Conference in San Antonio

Ed Rieke offers a taste of next year’s Conference plans, page 20.

Filippa Duke

I. Origins: Terminology and the Emerging Role of the Anthem in Anglican Liturgy in the Sixteenth Century

When the term “anthem” (and its various spelling variations anteme, atime, antym, antheme, and anthephen) first appeared in the Middle Ages, it was considered to be synonymous with the “antiphon”: plainsong, sung before and after psalms and canticles in the Latin liturgies, whose text amplified the scriptures. While antiphons have played a role in Christian liturgies from the early centuries of the Church’s existence, they did not appear in English liturgies until around the eleventh century. The four Marian antiphons (*Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Ave Regina caelorum*, *Regina caeli laetare*, and *Salve Regina*) are of particular importance to the study of the anthem. Originally attached to psalms, they were later grouped together as votive antiphons performed at the end of the Daily Office of Compline. By the middle of the fourteenth century, English composers began setting these antiphons in polyphonic style, effectively making them predecessors of the early anthem.

It was not until after the Anglican Reformation that “anthem” began to refer to a genre often viewed as analogous to the Latin motet. The Reformation in England differed from other movements in Europe (such as those of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin) in that it was an act of the state, rather than one based predominantly upon doctrinal issues. In the years 1536-1540, Henry VIII compelled every monastery to surrender to the crown. Later, all secular (i.e. non-monastic) clergy were organized into colleges under the Chantries Acts of 1545. The Royal Injunction of 1548 brought two sweeping liturgical changes to the scene. In an effort to ward off “superstitious devotion to the saints,” the injunction forbade singing antiphons to the Blessed Virgin Mary or other saints. Furthermore, the injunction also mandated that the language of all texts be English, specifying that textual clarity was a prerequisite for performance during the Service.

From this time forward, the Latin motet was replaced with the “anthem” in the newly formed Church of England. While this genre shared many similarities with its Latin counterpart, it also was free of strictures placed upon the motet. The function and exact placement of these early anthems in the Office are not entirely known; few directions appeared in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. In practice, however, the anthem was commonly performed after the third collect or after the sermon at
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Dear Friends,

At the installation of the Board in July in Winchester, I found myself reflecting on the role rites of passage play in our lives and just how significant they can be if we allow them. AAM’s Board installation involves the Chaplain (a bishop) and any Past Presidents in attendance, making this a significant moment in the Association’s life each summer. The sense of continuity—of passing the baton, as it were—is very strong and this speaks powerfully to our membership. For me personally, it was a privilege to have one of our founding Presidents, Jim Litton, there amongst the august group of former Presidents involved in my installation. As an immigrant to the U.S., I have found myself contrasting how these important moments are handled both here and across the pond. While England may take the prize for state occasions, I find rites of passage in the U.S. are often more highly valued here than they are in the U.K. For example, when I was graduated from high school—the local grammar school in my case—there was nothing. My exam results arrived by mail, and, eventually, so did the appropriate certificates. But there was no ceremony. I didn't feel that I had left or had achieved anything, for there was no formal “goodbye” or rite of passage. Truth be told, I felt cheated. Sadly, I have seen hardly anyone from the Class of 1974 since, because official school reunions are far less common over there. I would love to reconnect with my high school class but suspect that it just isn’t going to happen. As is so often the case, the new country can teach the motherland a thing or two. Chorister transitions, beginnings of new ministries (for musicians as well as clergy), and other similar rites of passage in which we are all involved validate in a formal and public way important life events. Even if they seem to mean little to some of the participants in the moment, they are worth the effort and continue to acquire meaning and significance with the passage of time.

Where am I going with all this? Two rites of passage will be happening in the next few weeks. You may have noticed the lovely letter of greeting to AAM at our recent Winchester Conference from Francis Jackson, reproduced in the July/August issue of the Journal. He had hoped to join us there but alas, it was not to be. What many of you may not be aware of is that this most famous of living Anglican church musicians celebrates his 100th birthday on October 2 this year, a lifetime rite of passage few get to enjoy. I have it on good authority that he loves to receive cards and, if you feel so moved, please consider dropping one in the mail. His address is on the letter and you’ll recognize there a familiar name: East Acklam, the village in which he still resides, forever memorialized in his wonderful tune of the same name from the Hymnal 1982, at no. 424. Written in 1957, it was originally intended for the words “God that madest earth and heaven.” Yet it was not until it was paired with that wonderful harvest text specially written for it by F. Pratt Green in 1970, “For the fruits of his creation, thanks be to God,” that it received the wider currency it so richly deserved. On the occasion of this significant rite of passage, I send Francis every good wish on behalf of the Association.

Autumnal themes of harvest (so admirably captured in Pratt Green’s text), All Saintside, Thanksgiving, and Advent begin to appear on the horizon as summer draws to a close, and a new season of music-making begins—an annual rite of passage that’s here before we know it. The paradox of contemplating the fall with a mixture of excitement and trepidation—excitement for the music we will make and the hearts we will touch, yet understandably mingled with trepidation for not being quite ready for the return—is one that will ring true for many of us. I know it does for me. With that in mind, I share words of a sonnet by poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) in the hope that they will reaffirm our sense of excitement in what we are privileged to do in our collective ministries within our beloved Church as the season changes and our work begins afresh. Hopkins’ energy seems almost tangible—almostness, even—as he delights in this new season.

Hurrahing in Harvest

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty,
the stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks!
what lovely behavior
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift molded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Savior;
And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love’s greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his
world-wielding shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and
but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him
off under his feet.

With every good wish,

Paul Ellison
The Anglican Anthem in England and America
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Matthew or Evensong. Because the Office ended after the third collect, the early anthem was paraliturgical in function—an ornament to the liturgy.

Many Reformation parish churches did not have skilled choirs to sing parts, so the addition of anthems to the service was limited to larger parishes and cathedrals. Because the Catholic monasteries had been dissolved without firmly establishing Anglican cathedrals, the choirs of men and boys were essentially the same ensembles that had existed prior to the Reformation. They continued to sing in the chancel, seated facing one another and divided into two sides: the Dean’s side, known as the decani, and the Precentor’s side, known as the cantoris (usually north and south, respectively, although with exceptions), a uniquely English arrangement in use before the Reformation. Anglican cathedral music, consisting chiefly of services, anthems, and psalmody, was sung on behalf of the worshipping community composed of the dean, the canons, and the choir itself.

II. The Anthem in Subsequent English Usage:

1. The Tudor Anthem

Scholars believe the most extensive remaining sources of early Tudor anthems, the Wanley Partbooks, the Lumley Partbooks, and John Day’s Certaine Notes, were intended for parish or chapel choirs. Many of the composers were anonymous, but several are well known, including Thomas Causton, John Sheppard, John Mundy, Thomas Tallis, and Christopher Tye. The composers drew texts from metrical psalters, Cranmer’s Prayer Books (1549 and 1552), the Bible, and English primers. These anthems, or full anthems, were generally in four parts, for lower men’s voices. They featured both imitation and note-against-note counterpoint, with few examples of text-painting, ensuring that clarity of text was paramount. If an anthem incorporated polyphony, care was taken to adhere to the principle of setting one syllable to a note.

Often called the “father” of English church music, Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585) wrote music for both the Catholic and Anglican churches. He composed services as well as anthems, many of which are contrafacta. Tallis’s setting of If Ye Love Me, which drew its text from the Gospel of John, was written for four parts in a predominantly homophonic style to maximize textual clarity.

The development of the verse anthem, featuring solo voices alternating with passages for full choir, represented a new style of the genre that grew out of metrical psalms and solo songs with consort accompaniment. While the verse anthem may have emerged as early as the 1550s, substantial verse anthems were not composed until the 1560s and 1570s, when they quickly became the most popular type of anthem. This style solved several of the problems facing church choirs. They were often understaffed and felt the burden of preparing large quantities of music for a variety of liturgies. Furthermore, assigning the most complicated texts (the verses) to the soloists helped to ensure that Cranmer’s goal of textual clarity was met.

The earliest verse anthems were closely tied to the Chapel Royal, whose master of choristers was Richard Farrant (1525-1580). Founded in the eleventh century as a school to educate the monarch’s choristers and provide music for royal liturgies and social affairs at court, it was originally a group of trained organists, singers, and those vestry officers devoted to ministering to the spiritual needs of the monarch, moving wherever the monarch traveled. Various instrumental forces were employed to accompany the singers. While smaller churches might only accommodate organ and viols, the Chapel Royal often supplemented these forces with cornets and sackbuts.

Of the Tudor composers, William Byrd (ca. 1540-1623) composed the largest body of anthem literature and most clearly shows the sophisticated lineage of the Tudor anthem. A student of Tallis, Byrd was an organist, Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and composer. Like Tallis, his career spanned the transition from Catholicism to Anglicanism, with the resulting anthems encompassing both full and verse genres. Byrd’s Teach Me, O Lord is an early example of the verse anthem.

The next generation of anthem composers, including Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623), Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), and Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656), wrote anthems that were larger in scope in regard to both the size of the performing forces and length. Often scored for four to eight parts, some festival anthems boasted up to twelve parts. The harmonic palette was broadened, and more complex rhythms were used. Weelkes frequently incorporated madrigalisms into both verse and full anthems. Many of Gibbons’s anthems are in the verse style, with This is the Record of John representing the verse anthem and Almighty and Everlasting God demonstrating his mature full anthem style. Over ninety of Tomkins’ anthems are compiled in Musica Deo Sacra Ecclesiae Anglicanae, a collection published posthumously by his son Nathaniel in 1668. Tomkins was a virtuoso organist and incorporated technically demanding organ writing into the collection.

This flowering of musical activity did not separate into a stark prima prattica and secunda prattica (first and second practice), as was happening elsewhere in composition, possibly due to the composers’ proximity to one another. The style of composition grew seamlessly from master to pupil, from that of homophony to polyphony, with textual clarity always at the heart of the composition process. Because both full and verse anthems were used on a daily basis in liturgies, there was always a demand for newly-composed literature, and the genre flourished prior to the period of turmoil that would ensue.

2. The Restoration Anthem

From 1640 through 1660 England experienced a period of political upheaval and civil war, which included the execution of King Charles I, the rise of a Puritan parliament, and the ascension of Oliver Cromwell. This political situation, known
as the Commonwealth, had a profound impact upon the exercise of religion. Sung choral liturgies were abandoned, choirs dissolved, and clergy members were disenfranchised. The observance of religious festivals was prohibited in 1647 and, in 1652, the celebration of Christmas itself was forbidden in London. Consequently, all anthem composition was brought to a halt.

The Restoration in England began with Charles II’s return to London in 1660 from his exile in France; this was followed by his coronation in 1661, marking the end of Puritan religious rule and the return of Anglican liturgy. A revised form of the Elizabethan/Jacobean Prayer Book was published in 1662. Although the revisions had little impact on music, this edition marked the first time the anthem was officially recognized in the rubric. In Quires and Places where they sing here followeth the Anthem.4

However, the Restoration church faced great challenges. Organs needed to be rebuilt and cathedral services needed to be reinstated. Because there were few church musicians left from the period before the Commonwealth, both organists and conductors needed training. Music from before 1640 was still available, forming the bulk of the immediate Restoration repertoire until new music could be composed. Fragments were copied into choirbooks and entered into the general body of repertoire, effectively influencing the newest generation of composers. In addition, the fundamental change in music that had been sweeping across Europe reached Anglican Church music: dramatic monody with basso continuo began to be a part of the prevailing musical taste.

Under the leadership of Henry Cooke, Master of the Children, the Chapel Royal again led the way. Cooke (1616-1672) recruited and trained many of the best young singers in the country; they, in turn became the next generation of composers and church musicians. Pelham Humfrey, Michael Wise, John Blow, Thomas Tudway, and William Turner were among his choristers who established choirs, composed, played the organ, and ushered in a period of stable music making. Collectively, they became known as the St. James Group, named after the palace that was the current home of the Chapel Royal. Their sectional anthems began to include more triple-time signatures and made use of the skilled solo voices of the Chapel Royal.

Another important figure in this era was William Child (1606-1697), organist of the Chapel Royal before the Commonwealth period, who was reinstated after the Restoration. Together, Cooke, Child, and Matthew Locke began to write music in a new style, influenced by their Italian and French neighbors, that featured homophonic texture, tonality (rather than modality), and the alternation of verses and choruses. Restoration composers often included short “Hallelujah” sections at the closing of the anthems, a practice that was common both within and outside of England.5

During Charles II’s exile in Versailles, the palace of Louis XIV, he was exposed to Lully’s Vingt-quatre violons du Roi. After returning to England, he wanted a comparable group of strings in his chapel, and so a similar ensemble was formed. From 1662 through 1688, this group played symphonies and ritornellos between verses of anthems. In addition to strings, these orchestral anthems incorporated wind ensembles or other instruments that were present.

Henry Purcell (1659-1695) is an especially important figure during the Restoration period, sometimes called the “Purcellian” period. His anthems have often been described as symphony anthems, or cantata anthems, due to their sectional nature. While similar to the verse anthem, they are more extensive in scope, making use of the Chapel Royal’s instrumental forces to play ritornelli with complex vocal solos integrated into a cohesive work. Purcell also wrote full anthems for large choirs in both the current style as well as in the sixteenth-century polyphonic tradition.

After the rule of James II ended in 1688, the Chapel Royal’s influence began to decline. England witnessed a rising tide of secular music from the opera house and concert hall. While well-known for his vast oeuvre of operas, orchestral music, and cantatas, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) left a legacy of orchestral anthem literature comprising a set of eleven anthems written for the Duke of Chandos, four anthems written for the coronation of George II in 1727, and six other anthems for various occasions. Other eighteenth-century composers of anthem literature include William Croft, Maurice Greene, William Boyce, and Jeremiah Clarke. Greene (1696-1755), often regarded as the most influential figure in eighteenth-century cathedral music, wrote verse and full anthems, as did his successor at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, Boyce (1711-1779).

In addition to the cathedral and Chapel Royal traditions, a parallel movement, the parish tradition, yielded a simple style of anthem. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, parish
churches began to practice what became known as the “West Gallery Tradition.” Each Sunday, amateur musicians gathered together to provide music during the service, which became a source of social activity as much as a musical endeavor. Collections of choral music were published to aid in parish music-making. Playford’s Divine Companion inspired many other such collections of psalms, hymns, and anthems, often accompanied by descriptions of the rudiments of music-reading. William Tans’ur’s A Compleat Melody and William Knapp’s A Sett of New Psalms and Anthems offered anthems written in a simple style, often with three voices, that could easily be sung by parish choirs. These formulaic anthems usually concluded with a “Hallelujah” section, a practice carried over from early Restoration composers.

Another type of collection, music for the charity children, was composed of hymns, anthems, and psalms based on well-known hymn tunes. Most of the pieces in Martin Madan’s A New and Improved Edition of the Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes at the Chapel of the Lock Hospital are two-part treble hymns with a bass line for harmonic support. Although often uninspired, these practical pieces ensured that the anthem became a mainstay of the Anglican liturgy at the parish level.

3. The Late Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Century

From the late eighteenth century through much of the nineteenth century, the state of the English cathedral service declined. Both clergy and musicians were often appointed to positions based on family ties and favoritism, without regard for their abilities. Communion was celebrated infrequently, and services were perfunctory at best. Choirboys were uneducated and often mistreated. Much of the new music composed was formulaic or arranged from popular stage music with the haphazard substitution of Biblical texts for the original secular ones. Yet there were some skilled composers, too, including Jonathan Battishill, John Clarke-Whitfield, Benjamin Cooke, and William Crotch.

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, many felt that Anglican liturgy and music was in dire need of revival and the Oxford Movement, or Tractarian Movement, began in 1833 as an effort to reinstate lost traditions of liturgy and theology into the Church of England. Alongside this liturgical movement, a number of reformers appeared who sought to raise the level of cathedral music. John Jebb (1805–1886), a priest and scholar, wrote a series of three lectures in which he pleaded for reforms in the area of cathedral music. Likewise, Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876) launched a movement for the charity children, was composed of hymns, anthems, and psalms based on well-known hymn tunes. Most of the pieces in Martin Madan’s A New and Improved Edition of the Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes at the Chapel of the Lock Hospital are two-part treble hymns with a bass line for harmonic support. Although often uninspired, these practical pieces ensured that the anthem became a mainstay of the Anglican liturgy at the parish level.

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4. The Twentieth Century: the Modern English Anthem

Rather than be content with its West Gallery heritage, the parish tradition began to strive toward the elevated musical tradition of the cathedrals, and the anthem rose to a place of high art. English translations of Latin and Greek hymns that emerged from the Oxford movement, liturgical texts, and poetry offered improved sources of inspiration for composers. Hymns by the likes of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, which had grown in popularity and availability, were often set as hymn anthems. After an initial presentation of the tune, a harmonization followed, with perhaps a stanza with descant or some other variation concluding the piece.

The body of anthem literature from C. H. H. Parry (1848–1918) and Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) forms an enduring legacy. Many of Parry’s works feature extensive organ accompaniments and were conceived for large choirs. The boundaries of harmonic language were extended by including enriched triads and seventh chords, which were relatively new to the tonal language used in church music. I Was Glad, composed in 1902 for the coronation of King Edward VII, contains antiphonal choral writing as well as brass fanfares. Stanford, an Irishman, was concerned with the establishment of a national school of English composition, and taught at the Royal College of Music. Among his students were Charles Wood, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Herbert Howells. O For a Closer Walk with God shows a typical hymn-anthem treatment of the tune Caithness.

Another significant composer of anthems was Wood (1866–1926), Stanford’s successor at the Royal College of Music. His setting of Hail, Gladdening Light shows the influence of the Oxford Movement; the text is an English translation by Oxford reformer John Keble of an early Greek hymn, the Phos hilaron.

Vaughan Williams (1872–1956), a student of Wood, Parry, and Stanford, composed in nearly every twentieth-century secular genre. A self-proclaimed agnostic, he also turned his attention to sacred music, composing a Mass, several settings of service music, and anthem literature; he also edited The English Hymnal (1906). Vaughan Williams’s diatonic style and use of English folk melodies became an influential thread in the fabric of anthem composition. Modal diatonic harmony worked well as a fresh addition to the world of sacred music, which did not embrace the atonal nature of much of the other newly-composed classical music of the twentieth century. He also experimented with the notion of congregational singing as an element in anthem composition. Other English
Singing schools were established and staffed by traveling singing masters in an effort to educate colonists. It was in these schools, rather than churches, where the first performances of many anthems occurred.

The decade of the 1760s saw composers such as Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) and James Lyon (1735-1794) publish their anthem literature within collections of psalmody. Urants or a choice Collection of Psalm-Tunes, Anthems, and Hymns From the most Approv'd Authors, Lyon's early collection, contains the first anthem published in America in 1761. These early anthems were primarily based upon English anthems found in collections such as those by William Tans'ur that were supplied by English immigrants.9

Generally written for unaccompanied two- to four-part choirs with occasional solos, the pieces were sectional in nature, alternating portions of homophonic music with imitative polyphonic material, called “fuging tunes,” with texts drawn from biblical passages, hymns, and psalms.

The music-publishing scene of the New World is strongly identified with New England. William Billings (1746-1800), who took pride in being untrained in European music theory, wrote in a style that he felt was uniquely “American.” He composed forty-seven anthems and several collections of church music, including The New England Psalm Singer (1770) and The Continental Harmony (1794). Works of Isaac Watts and John Eddy were among Billings's frequent textual sources. In Easter Anthem, alternating textures and voicings shift rapidly, creating a highly sectional piece. Other early composers in the New England style included Daniel Read and Oliver Holden. In the past, many scholars have discounted this thread of early New England composition. Today scholars consider Billings’s work, and those by his contemporaries, a significant part of the development of an American idiom.

However, not all subscribed to the “American” style of composition. South Carolina emerged as a leader in importing European organs and organists to the colonies. Charleston was the site of printers such as Lewis Timothy, who published the first Wesley hymn book; it was also the location of St. Philip’s and St. Michael’s Anglican parishes. From 1737 until 1750, Charles Theodore Pachelbel (1690-1750), son of Johann Pachelbel, served as organist at St. Philip’s. In 1768, St. Michael’s purchased an organ built by Johann Snetzler—the same builder whose instrument was in use at Trinity Church, New York. These two parishes became the center of much of the Anglican church music performance and composition in colonial America. Rather than singing compositions in the New England style, it was English composers who were emulated and whose works were performed.

III. THE ANTHEM IN AMERICA

1. The Colonial Era

The first white settlers of New England were Puritans who disapproved of the perceived opulence of the liturgical and musical practices of the Church of England. In response, their worship contained little music other than psalm-singing. By the turn of the eighteenth century, services throughout the colonies employed the practice of “lining out,” wherein a songleader sang one phrase of a psalm, which the people would then repeat before going on to the next phrase.

The musical state of the colonies was generally quite poor. By the 1720s, psalm tunes were freely embellished and often served as the basis for rustic song tunes.7 Several religious and musical leaders, including Cotton Mather, wished to establish better musical practices and to encourage singing “by note” (reading music, or “regular singing”) as opposed to singing “by rote” (by ear). New psalm collections were published that included sections about the rudiments of music reading. Singing schools were established and staffed by traveling
Pietist German immigrants who settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Salem, North Carolina, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wrote anthem literature for voice and instruments. Jeremiah Dencke, a Moravian, wrote one of the first American anthems for organ and choir around 1765. Anthems by Christian Gregor, Johannes Herbst, and John Antes were influenced by German taste; their music was generally of higher quality and greater difficulty than works composed by their Anglo-American counterparts. While a small number of their anthems were later published in nineteenth-century collections, most were in use within Moravian communities and rarely became a part of the standard American anthem repertoire.

2. The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

During the nineteenth century, the main source of music for the American choir continued to be the English anthem, or English texts set to arrangements of operatic or orchestral repertoire. Two diverging lines of composition developed—an American style and a second style which was based upon English parish and cathedral practices. Anthems for the volunteer choir began to be published in collections or by subscriptions to choral magazines. One example, The Choir Leader, published by Edmund Lorenz, was modeled on similar publications by J. Alfred Novello in Great Britain; the aim of these subscriptions was to provide accessible music (however formulaic) for choirs of untrained singers.

Often called the “Father of Music Education,” Lowell Mason (1792-1872) emerged as a strong advocate for elevating the musical tastes of the general American public. An early President of Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society, he published a Collection of Church Music (1822), which included congregational hymn-tunes, psalm-tunes, and anthems. Written by English composers, such as Martin Madan, the thirteen anthems of this influential collection contained figured bass or keyboard accompaniment. Contemporaries Thomas Hastings and William Bradbury published collections that included American anthems among European examples, written in a homophonic, hymn-like style.

By the end of the nineteenth century, American composers were traveling to Europe to study their craft, with many ending up in Germany. The resulting anthem literature was of a level more difficult than the average volunteer choir could attain. Thus, much of this music was sung by professional quartets, which were becoming popular, especially on the East Coast. Dudley Buck (1839-1909), who received his training in Leipzig, Dresden, and Paris over a period of four years, wrote secular and orchestral works in addition to serving as an organist. His contribution of over fifty-five anthems formed a sizable part of nineteenth-century Protestant church choir repertoire written for the “quartet choir.” Horatio Parker (1863-1919) wrote anthems that were more difficult than Buck’s, and thus were less frequently performed. As a professor with an annual salary, Parker’s income was less dependent upon public taste in anthem literature than was Buck’s, giving him more freedom in composition, less reliance on the solo quartet, and a stronger sense of compositional integrity.

During the first half of the twentieth century, two British immigrants, T. Tertius Noble (1867-1953) and Healey Willan (1880-1968), a naturalized Canadian, also wrote anthem literature. As may be expected, their work was in the English style, and generally featured organ accompaniments or found their basis in hymnody. Americans Everett Titcomb (1884-1968), F. Melius Christiansen (1871-1955), Leo Sowerby (1895-1968), and Clarence Dickinson (1873-1969) also wrote anthems during this period. Titcomb’s anthems, while perhaps not as sophisticated as Willan’s, were ideal for many volunteer choirs of the time, and thus were widely performed. Christiansen, a Norwegian-born composer, founded the St. Olaf Choir and contributed many anthems in the Lutheran tradition. Sowerby’s anthems, such as I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes, show an American voice, often using asymmetrical melodies and harmonies derived from the jazz idiom.

The late twentieth century saw many new American anthems published. During the 1960s and 1970s popular idioms such as folk, country, and rock began to creep into the publications; however, few of these anthems have remained in the current repertoire. The works of Daniel Pinkham, Alan Hovhaness, Lee Hoiby, Jane Marshall, Gerald Near, Gerre Hancock, and Alec Wyton have become mainstays of the literature still in use from the second half of the century, and, in the present day, American Episcopalians are familiar with the contributions of such composers as AAM members David Hurd, Dan Locklair, Bruce Neswick, William Bradley Roberts, Richard Webster, David Ashley White, and others.

3. Current Practice

Today, a body of anthem literature spanning over five centuries forms the canon of music available to Anglican choirs. Various publishers specialize in sacred choral octavos and collections, often compiled for specific choral voicings or liturgical seasons, that can be purchased or are available for download. Alternative methods of publishing have emerged, allowing composers to publish their own work and retain autonomy over their compositions. The Choral Public Domain Library is an Internet resource where newly-composed music not under copyright, and music outside of copyright, may be shared and printed freely. Yet another publisher, St. James Press, offers downloadable music with an annual subscription. The Royal School of Church Music in America (RSCMA) and its affiliate publishing house, RSCM Press, remains important in helping uphold the standards of sacred music through its Voice for Life curriculum, summer training courses, and publishing new anthems of high quality.

Endnotes:

I first visited Washington National Cathedral in 2010 for the AGO convention. I still remember walking into the Cathedral for the first time and feeling a sense of awe and wonder at the space. And that feeling of awe still hits me every time I walk into the building and see the architecture and art and hard work and effort that went into creating this place. It has been a great honor to serve here as the Gerre Hancock Fellow in Church Music, and I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Association of Anglican Musicians for fostering my vocation in this way. Reflecting on all I have learned and gained after just one year in the life of this cathedral, I cannot overstate the Fellowship’s value in my musical development at this stage in my career. It successfully placed me, a person with several years of “organ scholar” on his résumé, in a unique position to use the full range of tools I had gained throughout the time of my formal education.

As I was finishing up my M.M. degree at Yale and looking toward the future, I had a sense that I hadn’t quite finished learning. I had the degree, and I had a few years’ experience as organ scholar at two parishes, but still I was missing something. In my job search, I was hoping to find a position where I would not be expected to know everything when I arrived on my first day, and that afforded me the flexibility to try new things, ask questions, and see what worked. In practice, that meant I was hoping for a job where I could be the Assistant Organist and not the Director of Music. This Fellowship has fulfilled all of that for me, and provided the perfect opportunity for musical growth in an inspiring location.

The transitional nature of my position, situated as it was between student life and professional life, allowed me the grace to take full advantage of both roles. I did not hesitate to check in with my colleagues for any corrective nudges they might have along the way. It is here that I must pause to express my profound gratitude to everyone at the Cathedral, but especially to Director of Music Michael McCarthy, Organist and Associate Director of Music Benjamin Straley, and Rose Duncan, the Canon for Worship. Getting the chance to work closely with these and other colleagues at the Cathedral has been a cherished part of my experience here. The sense of humor, collaborative spirit, and work ethic of each has inspired me in so many ways. With their patient and constant guidance, I could ask questions and learn from individuals whom I consider the very top in their field. And in those situations for which academia did not prepare me, such as pastoral ministry, I was able to observe their actions and take an active role once I felt prepared. I owe much to these individuals, without whose grace and diplomacy I could not have thrived.
Of course, as might be expected with any program of this size and complexity, I was thrust into some situations before I felt completely ready. I think that is natural and a necessary part of learning on the job. In September, just one month after starting here, I played the live-streamed 11:15 Sunday Eucharist. I recently went back to the archive and watched some of the musical portions of the stream, and I was struck by the difference in my playing between then and now. Over the past year, I have built a level of confidence in my own playing that I didn’t have before serving here. It’s a difficult thing to pin down, but I feel as if I have a firmer grasp on the Geist of what I’m supposed to be playing. Perhaps some of that comes from learning the peculiarities of the instrument and the room; the space calls for a more detached style of playing, especially in hymns, in order for the rhythm to be clearly heard. Perhaps some of it is that after one year here, I simply have one more year of experience under my belt; that is not an insignificant amount of time at this stage in my career. I can say with absolute certainty that my confidence level is not due to any increased amount of practice time; lest the reader assume that with three full-time musicians we have ample time to practice, be assured that this is not the case. No, I think an evolution in my musicianship happened when I had been in this environment long enough to immerse myself fully in its tempo and energy.

Often, the educational aspect of my year at the Cathedral did not show itself in such overt learning opportunities. Rather, it came in subtle moments, but ones which, looking back, I recognize as important in my personal and musical growth. During choir camp, in my very first week on the job, I was asked to lead a rehearsal with the fourth-grade boys, the youngest choristers in our program, on the theme of Anglican chant. As I walked into the rehearsal room, I quickly drew together my experience singing and accompanying Anglican chant with my years as accompanist in my mother’s middle school choir classroom. I also had the immense privilege of teaching piano lessons to nine choristers this past year. While the piano studio may not have been the main reason I accepted the job—and indeed, some half-hour lessons seemed to take much longer than others—I have come to realize that those lessons gave me invaluable insights into the lives of these young men and women, with plans, hopes, and struggles of their own. The chorister program has become for me one of the primary joys of working at a place like this.

The AAM Fellowship was also designed to aid an institution that needed another organist, and to that end, this year has been highly successful. The Cathedral is in a stage of fiscal responsibility and conservation, as ongoing repair work continues in the wake of the 2011 earthquake. A hiring freeze meant that the year before I came, only two full-time musicians were on staff to support the full round of six choral services per week. This temporary situation was alleviated by the AAM Fellowship, which afforded everyone in the music department time to invest in their personal lives and relationships. As part of this team, we built a level of trust and collaboration in our work together; but just as importantly, that teamwork extends to moments outside the office when one of us needs to step away and take a day or two off. Because of the Fellowship, that was possible, and it taught me the valuable lesson of asking for time off when I need it.

I want to touch on an issue that I think most churches and cathedrals never encounter directly, yet that I feel informs my thoughts and interactions at Washington National Cathedral on an almost daily basis. Because of our public presence and status as a church of national significance, we often tread the line between church and state, sacred space and tourist attraction. The Cathedral has become the site of many national services of prayer and remembrance such as the 9/11 prayer service, the annual ANZAC Day service, state funerals, and, most recently in the public eye, Presidential Inaugurals. (Readers hoping for an editorial on this recent one will be sorely disappointed.) We are called upon to hold these two core identities, national and religious, side by side. How do we serve as a civic gathering place while maintaining our integrity as Christians? The answer, I think, lies in the Cathedral’s oft-quoted mission statement that we are “a house of prayer for all people.” We abide by that phrase in all that we do and let it guide our decisions in moments when the correct path forward may seem unclear. In my day-to-day work around the Cathedral, I encounter visitors who may not realize that I have a meeting to attend, or that I am trying to squeeze in fifteen minutes of practicing between rehearsals; they see me, a person with some degree of authority (and sometimes wearing a surplice), and want to ask questions and experience the Cathedral in a fuller way. I have grown more hospitable over this year, and whenever time permits, I enjoy pausing during my busy day for a few moments to chat with...
someone who has never seen this wonderful space. I point out my favorite carvings or stained glass, and—if they ask about it—explain a little about the organ and the music program. This is my passion, and I am fortunate to be in a place where I can share that with the many visitors who come not knowing what their experience will be. The Cathedral’s hospitality is far-reaching, and it has taught me much about how we might live into the “Gospel-based institution” that is Washington National Cathedral.

The Fellowship offered me a chance to utilize the skills I had acquired and talent I had fostered throughout my education and “organ scholar career,” but it asked me to do it very consciously and with lots of self-examination along the way. The Fellowship has been a fantastic fit for me this past year, and it has been a good fit for the Cathedral as well. In closing, I want to highlight some pieces of wisdom that I have gained here that other church musicians may find of value, and which I will certainly take with me wherever my career leads.

The first may be the most difficult, because it requires a good deal of trust. During my time at the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale, I was fortunate to live and work at Berkeley Divinity School alongside postulants and candidates for the priesthood. They often spoke of “self-care” as being a vital part of their spiritual and mental health. This idea of cultivating one’s own well-being as part of one’s vocation—not outside of it—is one that I think merits more attention in our profession as church musicians. A call to ordination is one that is formally recognized in the sacraments of the church; sacred musicians, while historically also priests, are almost entirely lay musicians now. Have a chat with your colleagues, both clergy and otherwise, about how to support each other in that ever-elusive search for balance between work and life.

The second bit of advice concerns choristers, at whatever age they come to you. It is my strong belief, having grown up in this manner, that children should be given real opportunities to be leaders in the church community. Worship and music form a central part of the life of many congregations; what better place to offer a position of leadership than one that instills in them responsibility and maturity, inextricably linked to a love of music and liturgy? To this end—and I may receive angry emails for putting this in print—I am of the opinion that in the Episcopal Church we should move away from the term “children’s choir” and use the more traditional nomenclature of “choristers.” I do not believe that one needs a chorister program as exhaustive as those at major cathedrals around the country in order to be proud of the Anglican heritage we share. If your mission for such an ensemble is to teach theology, liturgy, responsibility, and pride in the work you do, and you use singing to accomplish these things, then your program is a chorister program.

And finally, at the organ demonstrations we give for visitors at the Cathedral, I am inevitably asked, “How long did it take you to learn to play the organ?” My answer is always the same: I smile cheekily and respond, “I never stop learning.” And while it is meant half-jokingly, there is a lot of truth in that statement. This past year, as the Gerre Hancock Fellow, I was authorized to do a lot of on-the-job learning; but by no means will I stop asking questions and developing my skills now that I hold the permanent title of Assistant Organist. I will continue to reflect, examine the work I have done, and strive to improve in every aspect of my vocation. And I hope that in decades to come, if I am asked how long it took me to learn to play the organ, my answer will be the same. Never stop learning.

From Benjamin Straley

Speaking on behalf of the Cathedral staff, we are extremely thankful that we were chosen to be the host site of the AAM Gerre Hancock Fellowship for the 2016-17 program year. George Fergus has been a wonderful addition to our Cathedral staff, and we are so pleased that at the end of his term, we were able to offer him a permanent position on staff.

The Cathedral is one of the more unusual institutions in the Episcopal Church, given its visibility and its pace of activity. It was the latter aspect that we knew would be both the most challenging and most rewarding part of the Fellowship. Sometimes, things just have to “happen” and there isn’t time to rehearse with the organ and the choir together in the space.

What Mr. Fergus has written speaks volumes more than I can say about what his time with us has meant both to him and to us, and to the deep thoughtfulness and integrity that he applies to everything he undertakes. What I can add, however, is that I know the importance of this kind of program both for the musicians of tomorrow and for the Church as a whole. I learned (and owe) so much from teachers and mentors, especially Marilyn Keiser and Walden Moore. By funding this kind of post-graduate “gap year,” AAM is investing wisely in the future of our own profession and our church, as the Fellows gain invaluable knowledge and experience that they in turn will take with them as they enter the field. The Cathedral is glad to have been a part of this undertaking in the past year, and we are thankful.

In recent years, interdisciplinary research has emerged as a new and exciting methodology of contemporary arts scholarship. Multiple angles of inquiry, utilizing resources of literature, culture, religion, gender studies and other fields, often provide new insights into the interaction of art and culture in Western society. To that end, Palgrave/Macmillan has launched a new series that explores how music and literature “confront each other…and highlights the interaction between what we read and hear” (introductory material). The first book in the series is our fellow AAM member Iain Quinn’s *The Organist in Victorian Literature*, an examination of organist portrayal in two literary works from English Victoriana: Robert Browning’s “Abt Vogler” and Thomas Hardy’s “The Chapel Organist.”

The literature Quinn examines places the organist central to the narrative (but see my gloss of Hardy at places the organist central to the Chapel Organist.” Here the author briefly summarizes here. Browning’s “Abt Vogler” through a musical lens that places the poem in the context of nineteenth–century thinking allied to musical practice in terms of its aesthetic relationships and their musicological implications.

In so doing, Browning has engineered poetical commentary on sacred art that serves to elevate the place of the organist within Victorian society.

Quinn offers a quite detailed and broad-ranging argument that I can only briefly summarize here. Browning’s selection of the figure of Abt Vogler is telling and reflective of a society that lionized German culture. Vogler was a late eighteenth–early nineteenth-century German theorist, organ designer, keyboardist, and composer noted for his impressive improvisational abilities. By selecting Vogler as his “protagonist,” Browning not only plays into the cultural proclivities of his time, but also presents us with an historical figure that lends realism to his scenario while at the same time emulating positive historical models.

Improvisation is often viewed as dialogue, and here Quinn spends a good deal of time in the annals of German philosophers. Through the lens of musical aesthetics (primarily German), Vogler’s improvisation becomes musical homiletics. Critical here is the notion of Art-Religion: art enabling divine revelation because of its separation from the “real” world. This alliance is “possessed of an eternal message unhindered by temporality.” (p. 39) During the end of the eighteenth century, art became elevated above common practice; it was “completely apart from the ordinary and mundane of everyday life.” (p. 23) As Quinn notes, this “elevates his [Vogler’s] position from the outset.” (p. 23) Browning’s organist becomes a divine craftsman who is touched “by the finger of God.” (p. 25) Not only is he a musician who performs under different conditions (enacting a sacred art) but also one who hears (sees) into a spiritual realm; “the medium of improvisation offers Vogler a glimpse of the Eternal.” (p. 25) Thus (through Browning) a “contemporary” Vogler (imbued with Romantic notions of Art and Religion) underscores the special place of the organist because of what Quinn calls his “superior musical endeavours.” (p. 34) The organist becomes the purveyor of a noble, spiritual art.

Perhaps more interesting (at least to someone who has spent too much time with Massenet’s Exotic Erotics and other salacious denizens of the nineteenth century) is Quinn’s unpacking of Thomas Hardy’s “The Chapel Organist.” Here the author deftly unveils the “Other” in Victorian society and also places this gendered perception within the context of female organists and sisterhoods in Victorian society. (p. 47) The full text of the poem can be found at https://books.google.com/books?id=KsX5OX1LP1oC&pg=PA153&dq=thomas+hardy%3A+the+chapel+organist&source=blKots=CF0kAnvck2&sig=MR45wAEvI1QDYS9e010RitAL8l&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiPwZGC_sXVAhVg4FQKHcQAQc4gC7DmAQgMBAhAfq=oncop age&sq=thomas%20hardy%2C%20the%20chapel%20organist&f=false
Hardy relates the story of a female organist, of considerable talent but also of considerable moral “failing,” who assumes a position in a chapel. Her extremely desirable appearance duly noted, all goes well until people begin to gossip. She has been spotted, apparently, with too many men and too often — and at indiscreet times. Initially asked to leave, she begs for her job (music being her great passion) and offers to continue without salary. This the deacon and parish accept until the moral outcry becomes so great that she is finally removed from her position. But before she leaves, she asks to play one more time (“But let me just hymn you ONCE more!” [lines 54–55]). This she does, and plays with such abandon that the congregation remarks, “She plays as if she were possessed!” (lines 63–64) “Such harmonies I never dreamt the old instrument capable of!” (line 65) Following this unparalleled Schwanengesang, the chapel organist, whose name we never know, reaches for a vial of fatal liquid (surely it’s laudanum), downs it wholly, and then dies. As Quinn notes, “it is, for the reader, an account of a young woman’s life cut short by the society in which she lives.” (p. 51)

Hardy’s poem may seem a turgid piece of Victoriana (we’ve all seen this trope before—the fallen woman falls victim to an even more fallen society), but here is how Quinn unpacks it. He begins with the historical evidence of women in music. In a society where few opportunities were afforded women, music was one such pursuit (albeit fraught with sexual overtones; the siren nature of music needs no further elucidation here). In the Church, this role was no different and indeed it was even more restrictive. Historically, women could serve as organists in the convent or nunnery, yet only so far as to be useful to the liturgy and the clergy. In the nineteenth century, a woman’s position was hardly better. Historically, the evidence surrounding the female organist in Victorian England; many advertisements openly show the discrimination: “NO LADY NEED APPLY.” (p. 71) Dialogue through the press shows how this discrimination was “justified.” There were the physical issues (women were unable to handle the pedal board, they were a weaker sex and unable to provide the firm leadership that organ playing necessitates), the “mental issues” (woman is capable of genius but not reason: she knows but she doesn’t know why), and finally the sexual issues—given the seductive power of music, women brought sexual danger to the organ console. (pp. 70–79) By making our chapel organist a woman, Hardy (Quinn argues) forces us to consider “larger implications, notions of her as an independent musical communicant.” (p. 70)

Even more importantly, making room for women in the organ gallery put women in the public sphere. It is important to remember that for the bulk of Victorian society, women fell into one of two categories: Angels or Prostitutes. Women in the public sphere fell into that latter category and were assumed to be either actresses or prostitutes (oftentimes one and the same). Therefore, placing women in a highly visible, public role (organist), within the context of a “sacred” space (the church liturgy) was simply not congruent with contemporary social thought. This proved to be such a heavy responsibility that rather than merely being an angel (as Quinn writes), “the angel in the house was expected to be the archangel of the temple.” (p. 100)

But what of the “moral” tale? Quinn does, of course, unpack notions of the sexualized Other and its reflection on the community. As he states, “Hardy’s organist is never specifically criticized for her playing; indeed she is praised. Although she has erred and strayed in her personal life, the church authorities cannot fault her musicianship” (p. 87). This is important. Our chapel organist is removed from her position not because she is unable to do the job—indeed, her talent is considerable—but because of gossip and speculation by the deacon and members of the congregation. I turn to the Hardy text:

Well, the deacon, in fact, that day had learnt new tidings about me…. (p. 24)

These are strange rumours, he said. We must guard the good name of the chapel. (p. 27–28)

If sooth, she’s of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her? (p. 29)

They attempt to dismiss her but relent when she agrees to play without salary. Money, it seems, trumps moral code—at least temporarily. Finally the gossip becomes too great and they force her hand. In a brilliant transference of guilt, the final “hymning” ended, our chapel organist takes her own life. Quinn is eloquent here:

[Hardy] has presented a weighty challenge to the Victorian mind. He has shown a church riddled with inequality, sexism, unethical behavior, malicious gossip and above all an absence of morality, even from the deacon. Whereas he portrays the woman initially in the light of an easy sinner, he obliges us to recognize her as the bearer of a purer soul. His perception of the organist is one of a higher duty. Thus, she confesses, receives her fatal sacrament, and then sacrifices her life for the greater good. (p. 93)

Hardy’s tale thus becomes a commentary not only on Victorian society, but also on the roles and expectations of women within that society.

But I cautiously advance an addendum to the author’s argument. For as often as Quinn notes the waywardness of our chapel organist (an “easy sinner”), he seems unwilling to label her for what she is. Our chapel organist is a whore. This may seem a minor point, but its recognition intensifies Hardy’s moral judgment of Victorian society and actually shifts the narrative’s focus away from our organist and onto society itself. Let me briefly show why.

That our chapel organist is a prostitute can be discerned directly from Hardy’s text. She works for a salary that doesn’t cover her transportation to and from a distant place (indeed it falls “far short” of doing so). She must therefore have an additional source of income or else she would not be able to get to the chapel every week. She also travels from a remote location (Havenpool Town), apparently far enough away to warrant remark:

She travels from Havenpool Town, the deacon would softly speak (p. 7)

The stipend can hardly cover her fare hither twice in the week (p. 8)
Why would our chapel organist travel so far to indulge her musical gifts (and for insufficient funds to boot)? True, it could be due to lack of opportunity. But there could be another reason. Havenpool Town was Hardy's name for the actual town of Poole, a busy seaport located near Bournemouth. Rates of prostitution were high in Victorian England (by some accounts, the fourth largest occupation for women), and it was more common in commercial ports than in linen, wool and hardware centers (see Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, [New York: Cambridge, 1980]). It is highly likely that, given our chapel organist's provenance, she was a prostitute and travelled to avoid associations that would have been recognized closer to home. Additionally, the men she is seen accompanying are both varied and numerous. Hardy notes that there is the sea captain from Havenpool, a lover accompanied home at dawn, and other “wooers who sought me and won”—plural, and without distinction. Rather than parading as a libertine or “modern” woman, our chapel organist gently underscores what her profession truly is.

When the gossip first arises, an attempt is made to remove her from her position. However, because of her love of music (which in the end becomes her redemption), the chapel organist pleads for her job, willing to continue without pay. In its depravity, the congregation relents and allows her to continue. Now (and this is most important) in addition to prostituting her body, our chapel organist is asked (by the worshipful congregation, no less) to prostitute her talent, thus creating a mirror image of injustice. Here Hardy's knife cuts deeply into the Victorian moral code; the hypocrites of a morally corrupt society pass over the grievous "sin" because of financial gain and in so doing force another, equally grievous, sin.

Unlike Abt Vogler, our chapel organist remains nameless. She is the "everywoman," the whole of female Victorian society. Her plight could be any number of nameless, faceless women. She becomes the (anonymous) vehicle through which society is viewed. As such, the focus of Hardy's narrative shifts to the congregation of the chapel (i.e. society at large). Through its hardness of heart, corrupt behavior, and moral depravity, Hardy takes to task the duplicity of Victorian society. And rather than becoming the redemptive whore (saving others by sacrificing herself), the chapel organist saves only herself (in death) and allows the congregation to suffer the moral consequences.

The *Organist in Victorian Literature* is a short but deeply researched and highly readable foray into the interaction of music, literature, gender studies, aesthetics, religion and culture. Quinn has presented the tip of what appears to be a tantalizing iceberg of musical culture in Victorian England. His illumination of the Victorian organ bench reveals not only the noble servant who communicates with the Divine but also the whore who reveals a society for what it truly is. My only regret is that there wasn't much, much more.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.


Both of these two settings of the text, elusively credited to “F. B. P.,” use the familiar tune pairing of Land of Rest. Benson’s imaginative anthem allows the tune to emerge slowly over gently overlapping entrances using nothing but the word “Jerusalem.” After this prolonged introduction, the full choir sings the first stanza in unison. The five-stanza setting follows the text of The Hymnal 1982 (with one very small wording change in stanza four). Stanza two casts treble and bass voices in a one-beat canon with instrumental countermelodies weaving around. The tenors and basses sing the third verse with some very effective two-part harmony and appropriately arpeggiated figuration in the instruments. In a natural response, the sopranos and altos take the Mary stanza in three parts (and with a whimsical one-measure “descant” on the word “Magnificat”). The introduction’s texture returns as a bridge to a final unison stanza with an excellent soprano descant. Shepperd’s approach is more formulaic, following the conventions of hymn-tune anthems without some of the compositional sophistication Benson infuses. A gentle accompanimental figure begins the piece, with tenors and basses singing the first stanza. The second stanza is, as in the other setting, sung in treble-bass canon (this time at the space of two beats). Of note here is that Shepperd turns to stanzas of the hymn not used in The Hymnal 1982, including those replete with imagery derived from nature. As the second-stanza canon ends, the accompaniment makes an abrupt modulation up a step, and the choir enters for a four-part harmonized stanza with an extended ending that again modulates. The final stanza is emphatic and climactic with large fistsfuls of notes in the piano and majestic choral declamation. The piece recedes quickly with a final snippet of the melody as the piano figuration from the opening winds down. Both settings are of moderate difficulty with few significant challenges. Benson’s treatment is more subtle, whereas Shepperd’s excels in the dramatic.


Both settings of slane in E-flat are cut from the same cloth. Warmly emotive music engendered by added-tone harmonies, flattened seventh scale-degrees, and wispy piano arabesques plays upon the associative power of the Irish folk melody and text. The arrangements also share a modest technical level of writing for voices and accompaniment, making these almost sight-readable, hence practical for summer choirs. They also show some amount of reserve in not overselling climactic moments or descending into saccharine indulgence. Musselman shows a bit more sophistication, particularly in a stanza that embeds the tune artfully within inner voice part leading. Hanson is slightly more open-handed and turns to unison phrases regularly. He also modulates up a step for the final stanzas in an abrupt, unprepared shift for dramatic effect. These versions of the popular hymn are worth consideration, although the choice of one over the other would be nearly arbitrary.


This brief setting of Psalm 115:1 spins out an impressive microcosm of sound using very few building blocks. Harmonic and melodic units grow organically in a tightly integrated choral prayer. Ranges are modest, and aside for a few isolated moments of part division, the demands on ensemble size are few. Cooman makes some surprising yet logical harmonic twists that will require careful tuning, and the intimacy of the whole piece places demands on blend. This motet would work well as an introit as well as a short communion motet or other response.


These two arrangements share much in common, most interestingly a unifying rhythmic skewing of Nettleton into 5/4 by notating the first two notes as quarters and the second two as dotted quarters. The appearance of this asymmetric, driving take on the melody is curious in two contemporaneous publications, yet these pieces are hardly imitations of each other. Both use alternating octave figuration in the right hand to drive the rhythmic alternation, lending an energy redolent of popular music. Cornish has additional compositional tricks in store, including phrases that alternate 6/8 and 3/4, a stanza that freely alters and embellishes the melody, and climactic augmentation in the final pages. Schwoebel introduces Warrenton, another tune often associated with this text, mixing it with Nettleton in inventive ways. This arrangement also goes beyond the 5/4 idée fixe, a wise choice in that the peppiness could easily become cloying. Neither setting seems to take itself too seriously, with music that is broad in effect. Key changes, widely-spaced chords, and other formulæ designed to give a rise all combine to make rousing, light-hearted fare.

David P. Dahl. As the Deer Longs for the Water-brooks, SATB, org. (Sacred Music Press, 10/4858S, 2017), 12 pp., $2.15.

Smaller choirs that nonetheless include experienced singers will appreciate this intimate setting of
Psalm 42. Dahl's individual tonal language retains enough vestiges of common practice to be predictable, or at least normal-feeling, yet his own logic is a breath of fresh air. The harmonic landscape isn't harsh or dissonant, and its restless activity infuses the music with a subtle energy. The lilting 3/4 meter pairs with the plaintive melody to capture the longing in the text. The organ accompaniment was written for a small tracker instrument, and the carefully detailed registration marks are specific to the Noack organ for which they were designed. The composer invites a free alteration of the suggestions, yet the markings provide a good indication of general direction. Vocal textures frequently collapse into three or two parts without sacrificing convincing fullness. The organ accompaniment supports and gives helpful cues, yet it never really doubles the voices. An abundance of unaccompanied passages and sparse organ writing make this piece ideal for combined organist-choir directors. Logistically this piece seems superbly designed for modest situations, requiring only a limited organ, small ensemble, and single accompanist/director. Larger settings would find the composer's metrical translation of the Phos hilaron both underlaid and uncredited translation as "Dawn's radiant light brings us outpoured the radiant light." Nevertheless, the piece is Fedak's own. His gently polytonal touches, juxtaposing unrelated harmonies within a clear "home" key, and his unerring sense of pacing lend distinction to the panegyric. The highly idiomatic organ accompaniment is a further attraction for use without orchestra. Even choirs that count the Five Mystical Songs within their repertoire will enjoy having this option at the ready.

Verses of Psalms 133 and 134 appear in the bright, effusive Behold Now, Bless the Lord. Choral parts are largely homophonic with few pitfalls. The organ develops a motivic figure throughout the piece in a variety of guises, allowing it to contribute beyond mere accompaniment. Fedak paints on a large canvas with this anthem, dividing the work into distinct sections that increase the sense of grandness. At the same time, the work is natural in its expression, never fussy or self-aggrandizing. The length and variety of the textures in the choral part make this somewhat more difficult than the other works reviewed here, yet Fedak's expert craft keeps it within the grasp of most volunteer ensembles.

Fedak pairs a traditional Irish tune with Ruth Duck's deeply personal hymn "Spirit, open my heart" in a conventional format for an easy, attractive anthem. The layout follows the formula with bookends of unison stanza at the beginning and unison stanza with descant at the end. In between he explores a few standard textures, mostly in unison and two parts. The one passage of choral harmony is SAB until the last four measures, when tenors and basses divide. The piece is technically modest, and the tunefulness matches the intimacy of the text. Whether used in summer, when choristers are sparse, or any other time through the year as a foil to more challenging repertoire, this melodious anthem is sure to be popular with singers and congregations.
**Music Reviews**

**Instrumental Music Reviews**

**BRIAN P. HARLOW**

**RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF ORGAN MUSIC BY WOMEN COMPOSERS**

Despite a number of significant examples, women composers are still very much under-represented in the musical world. Women organists, and performers in general, seem to have made more progress gaining recognition than women composers. A few names of active composers come to mind readily, names such as Pamela Decker, Emma Lou Diemer, Rachel Laurin, Joan Tower, and Judith Weir, as well as composers of earlier generations who paved the way for them: Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Amy Cheney Beach, Florence Price, Elsa Barraine, Rolande Falcinelli, and Jeanne Demessieux. Given this relative obscurity, I was particularly delighted to find works for organ by women. Recordings of all of these works are available online. The two can also be played together as a diptych with a striking contrast of mood. I am particularly impressed with the variety of contrapuntal techniques that Bennett employs to get the most out of this sturdy tune. The Toccata alone contains canon at the octave, the theme in augmentation in canon with the original version, and the simultaneous playing of the tune with its inversion (something also used by Clarence Dickinson in his piece *The Joy of the Redeemed*). In addition to these devices, Bennett uses harmony and rhythm creatively. Her harmonic language is influenced by the modern French school, yet it never becomes intensely dissonant. Minor-third relationships abound in the Prelude, especially in the highly chromatic central section where the melody is altered into a mode similar to the octatonic scale. The harmony in the Toccata is more firmly planted in E minor, but twice detours into E-flat minor for the softer sections of the work. The rhythmic complexity of this work is perhaps even more interesting than the harmonic language. At the opening of the Prelude, she sets the tune, with its two eighth-note upbeats at the beginning of each phrase, against an original countermelody whose phrases begin on the first beat of the bar and emphasize the second beat, in the manner of a sarabande. This opening section is rather simple and calm, but this rhythmic offsetting creates an overlapping of phrases that blurs the meter. Thus, the theme is introduced clearly yet in a complex way made all the more effective by the beauty of a solo 4' flute in the pedal against a rich, low tessitura in the manuals. The central section of the Prelude uses mixed meter, with a frequent appearance of 7/8 time, again blurring the meter and pushing the music towards a sense of timelessness. While the Toccata is in a clear 4/4 meter throughout, the accents in the accompaniment and melody often conflict, with the main accompaniment figure grouped 2 + 3 + 3 and the Toccata theme (not the hymn tune which enters later in the pedal in the original rhythm) is grouped 3 + 3 + 2. This combination gives a remarkable vitality to this Toccata. The driving eighth notes are only abandoned during the softer section employing inversion. This makes the final two pages, when the theme, countermelody, and accompaniment return together (with the theme in canon with its own augmentation!), all the more exciting. This piece combines sophisticated counterpoint, rhythmic verve, and a sophisticated harmonic palette. I was not familiar with Dr. Bennett’s music before now, but I hope to encounter more of it. Her website lists organ and choral compositions, many of which are unpublished. I hope that she gains greater recognition and support as a composer of distinction.


Christina Harmon is an organist, composer, and teacher with decades of experience in Dallas, Tex. She served as organist and composer in residence at Park Cities Baptist Church and taught at SMU, the University of North Texas, Dallas Baptist University, and the University of Texas at Dallas. She also founded the French and British Organ Music Seminars, trips for organists to experience great European organs first-hand. Her music is, of course, influenced by her experiences, both the “grand” Protestant tradition of a certain portion of the Baptist church as well as familiarity with the French school of improvisation. Anglican musicians, please don’t let the word Baptist frighten you; I was in fact raised in an American Baptist church with fine music directed by an organist who grew up in an Episcopal choir of men and boys (but that’s a story for another day…). The *Postlude on Ein feste burg* is the simplest of the three postludes, firmly rooted in C major throughout. Repeated chords in the right hand and sustained chords in the left accompany the tune in the pedal. Throughout the course of the piece, the familiar tune is played once in a straightforward manner apart from some chromatic alterations towards the end. The opening phrase on a solo reed is used as a “tag” to conclude the piece. It is an effective short postlude, only 1:30 in duration. The *Toccata on Leon I* is slightly longer, around two minutes in length, and it has a more complex tonal language, alternating between the original minor key and the parallel
Finding excellent material to publish that will also be useful to a wide variety of organists.


Gwyneth Walker, a distinguished composer of choral and instrumental music, has been a full-time composer since 1982. Her website, www.gwynethwalker.com, is a treasure-trove of information, articles, interviews, and a complete list of scores, some of which are even available for free download. She simply asks that if you use a free score that you notify her of the performance and consider also purchasing scores to support her continued work: a very generous arrangement! There are many choral works listed on her website and I recommend taking a look, although that is not the subject of this review. She has composed six organ pieces, of which Beside the Still Waters is the most recent. It takes its inspiration from a folk-prayer inspired by the 23rd Psalm:

Beside the still waters,
I will lay my body down,
With breezes floating o’er me,
And a garland for my crown.

The piece is dedicated to school classmates who have passed away, drawing our attention to the parallel in the poem between rest on earth and eternal rest in heaven. As one would expect, the overall mood of the piece is tranquil, making use of flowing eighth notes in 12/8 time to depict gently flowing waters. An original melody is played on a solo stop in the outer sections of the piece, though it does not exactly fit the syllables of the poem, only the general mood of it. Nevertheless, it is a lyrical melody in the style of a folk-tune. The central panel of the ABA structure introduces descending scales and thirds, perhaps to depict the breezes floating overhead, as well as a repeated chord motif. This leads to a crescendo, possibly depicting the “Light Eternal,” before a return to the original melody and accompaniment texture with flowing triplet eighth notes. This time, however, there is a new motif of rising parallel sixths in duple rhythm, marked in the score “the soul ascending.” This motif interrupts phrases of the folk-like tune and becomes dominant in the final section of the piece. A fragment of the first melody is heard as a coda beneath a high E pedal. Overall, this composition is lovely and reflective, with a liberal use of diatonic dissonances; in fact, the outer sections of the piece are completely diatonic. The middle section begins in the relative minor and moves through several keys before settling back into the tonic. This piece is clearly the work of an experienced musician and composer. In addition to the well-crafted structure, it has an openness and sincerity that is unfussy yet satisfying. It would make a lovely prelude for funerals or for Good Shepherd Sunday.

Recording Reviews

MARJORIE JOHNSTON

Bonhoeffer: A Choral-Theater Piece – Thomas Lloyd. The Crossing: Donald Nally, Conductor; Malavika Godbole, percussion; John Grecia, keyboards; Rebecca Harris, violin; Thomas Mesa, cello. Adrian Peacock, Producer; Paul Vazquez, Engineer (Albany Records: Troy 1636), Amazon $19.71; also see Apple Music and other audio streaming options.

Those who follow the Grammy Awards in Classical Music may already be aware of the phenomenal recording chosen for review here, as it was nominated for Best Choral Performance in 2017. I asked a colleague who is well acquainted
with all of the nominated recordings for his thoughts, and he stated: “As a choral singer and Grammy voter, I always pay close attention to the Best Choral Performance category, and the competition for last year’s award was quite tough. I was especially happy to discover Donald Nally and The Crossing’s committed reading of Lloyd’s Bonhoeffer—a work new to this listener—which deserved to be at the top of the list.”

Agreed: this recording should be at the top of many lists. Composer, church musician, and fellow AAM member Thomas Lloyd, has written a powerful and poignant work that is really unlike anything I’ve heard. He writes that his creation was conceived as a “concert work in a theatrical context,” and his subject is the twentieth-century Lutheran theologian and poet, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The structure of the piece layers reflective meditations with dramatic scenes from Bonhoeffer’s life, referencing classical works in an unsentimental way and boldly incorporating renowned recordings of two Negro spirituals.

Bonhoeffer studied at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan in 1930, and was introduced to Negro spirituals when he visited Harlem; he closely associated the suffering of American slaves with the suffering of Jews in Nazi Germany. He left the safety of Union to return to Germany, where he became a double agent involved in the Stauffenberg Plot—an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Lloyd’s musical telling of the story beautifully includes the perspective of Bonhoeffer’s fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer, whom he met while leading Lutheran and Catholic Churches in resistance to the German leader. Much of their romantic relationship took place via letter or brief visits while he was imprisoned at the concentration camp, Flossenbürg.

The fifteen-movement, semi-staged work includes very clear stage directions, but even without a visual experience the listener is engaged immediately; I was completely unaware that 70 minutes had passed when the last note sounded. Members of The Crossing who have performed the piece have learned that it benefits from the visual experience, making the men of the chorus portraying Bonhoeffer’s seminarians more accessible to the audience. We live in a time when choral singers are called upon more and more to present staged pieces, and not just in opera choruses. Kile Smith of Philadelphia’s Broad Street Review observed the advantages of a live performance when he reviewed the premiere of Bonhoeffer in 2013, writing, “Bonhoeffer is not a performance. It’s a liturgy.”

The religious poet’s letters and those of his fiancée, along with the writings of his fellow prisoners, contribute to the “libretto” and the music is devastatingly effective. Bonhoeffer’s utter devotion to God’s will and his complete assurance of God’s love were noted by virtually everyone who encountered him. Lloyd’s well-placed use of major and minor seconds, open intervals, and parallel motion was compelling, and I found that the choices about which bits of text to repeat provided insight as to what was important to the character who was singing. In movement VIII (a scene from Finkenwalde, the illegal seminary Bonhoeffer directed), the Beatitudes are framed by recordings of “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child” sung by Paul Robeson and “Walk together, children” sung by the Hall Johnson Choir. The setting of the text, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me,” shows great contrapuntal writing, which skillfully transforms into a hopeful, yet questioning polytonal sound for “Rejoice and be glad….”

Anyone needing a fresh take on the Beatitudes will appreciate hearing this. In fact, the entire work offers a fresh take on things. Listening to this piece is not only thought-provoking, but it elicits empathy: I wonder about other Bonhoeffer-like people out there who didn’t write or have others write about them, who also had unwavering faith and made honorable choices during World War II. I wonder what it was like to be Bonhoeffer’s girlfriend—it certainly makes modern-day complaints about long distance romance and poor communication seem trivial. One could ruminatae for months on the excerpt from Meditation VII, “how the center of our own lives is outside ourselves….”

In a phone interview, I asked The Crossing’s conductor, Donald Nally, if any revelation had presented itself to him while getting to know this piece, and he said, “I had always thought of Bonhoeffer’s philosophy as if it were married to martyrdom, and I love the fact that this piece looks at both the connections and the separations between those two issues.”

The musicians who premiered this epic piece on the recording are stellar. The instrumentalists play a pivotal role in advancing the narrative, and the solo and ensemble singing by The Crossing is exactly what one would expect from a group founded and led by Donald Nally—polished and appropriate in every way. I have long admired Nally’s work as the former chorus master of Lyric Opera of Chicago, and now in his current role as the Director of Choral Organizations at Northwestern University. I had the privilege of singing under his direction in other professional choirs in Chicago and firmly believe that Donald Nally should be a household name among professional musicians and classical music supporters. Nally is in that upper echelon of musical artists who combine a freakishly refined ear with intellect, literary erudition, and good humor.

Bonhoeffer has not yet been performed by ensembles other than The Crossing, but I would especially commend it to university music schools with strong voice and choral programs. Nally agreed, saying that a piece such as this is not out of reach of college musicians. He points out to his students that the vast majority of voice performance students will not have operatic careers, and can be much more marketable as choral singers with strong musicianship. He added, “Musical skill is everything—not just reading but style—what you do to make a piece of music come alive. Having a variety of ways of using the voice in different eras of music is vital.” He concluded by saying that this important new work stands out because it contemplates theological and ethical questions without being a sacred piece.

There is a video of a performance on YouTube, but until the opportunity to attend or produce a live performance of Bonhoeffer arises, I encourage all of my AAM colleagues to get to know this exceptional recording.
The 2018 Alamo AAM Conference Committee is hard at work and is looking forward to welcoming you to the Alamo City, June 11-14, 2018. San Antonio, now the nation’s seventh-largest city, is one of the premier visitor and convention destinations in the country, thanks in part to its rich 300-year history, the spectacular River Walk, and the exceptional restaurant scene.

We have chosen as our Conference theme *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord*, inspired by the one-hundredth anniversary of C. Hubert H. Parry’s death. In addition to featuring the music of Parry throughout the Conference, Professor Dr. Jeremy Dibble, Head of the Music Department at Durham University (Durham, U.K.), will present several lectures on Parry and his music.

The Rt. Rev’d Neil Alexander, Dean of the School of Theology of the University of the South and retired Bishop of Atlanta, will be our Conference preacher.

The Conference hotel, the Sheraton Gunter, is centrally located in downtown San Antonio, about a one-minute walk from the San Antonio River, and an easy walk to many restaurants.

Musical highlights will include: a concert by Sonnambula, a Renaissance ensemble that brings to light unknown music for various combinations of early instruments with the lush sound of the viol at the core; a concert by New York Polyphony; and an organ recital by Scott Dettra. Additionally, Norbert Mehn (from the Royal College of Music, London), will present a lecture recital on the influence of émigré musicians in post-war Europe and North America.

Plan now to join us in San Antonio, June 11-14, 2018!

– Ed Rieke