Greetings from the desk of the editor,

Welcome back to the cyber-column experiment! We’re still a bit in catch-up mode (i.e., I suspect some of you have received the March/April issue before this made it to the web site), but by the May/June issue, we should have achieved some sense of normality, or maybe regularity is a better word choice. In any case, I still welcome your feedback (and always will). If this column is not additive or helpful to you, then it need not exist. I must say, though, that I do appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you, and perhaps in time, we can make this more interactive than monologue in nature.

**Triumphal Entry** – Eugene Butler

This heroic hymn-tune setting may obviously be used as a triumphant postlude, but also as a jubilant prelude for Palm Sunday, and the first ten measures would also serve as an fanfare-like intro for the singing of the hymn, *All Glory, Laud, and Honor*, though some transposition may be needed (the hymn is often in Bb). The composer marks the tempo at 84, but I tend toward a more exuberant 92–96 metronome setting, especially if used in conjunction with the singing of the hymn. Whatever the tempo, play it cleanly, in a clipped martial fanfare fashion, using minimal pedaling—give it some bite, as a brass player might.

**Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?** – Gilbert M. Martin

This artfully crafted setting might be better titled “A Meditation on MARTYRDOM.” Portions of this profound Holy Week hymn is nearly always present in this arrangement, yet the musical phrases are rarely stated in their entirety. The awe and mystery is sustained throughout, and emphasized even more so at the end with the pedal sustaining and melding the last four measures as one, ultimately “resolving” with an unexpected and uplifting A-major chord. Undying love and grace indeed. I would encourage your congregation to read the Isaac Watts text as you play this thoughtful meditation.
The Day of Resurrection – Larry Shackley

First written as part of a larger poem for the funeral of a fellow 8th-century Greek Orthodox monk by St. John of Damascus, it wasn’t translated until over 1000 years later, finally finding its way to be placed with the suitably rousing march tune by Henry T. Smart. The tune LACASHIRE is often sung to the text Lead On, O King Eternal, so with a change in title, this rousing postlude may be used in virtually any non-seasonal time throughout the church year.

This is a lot of fun to play and sounds more challenging than it really is. Make the most of the contrasts in dynamics. And if you feel like it needs a D-major stinger at the end, have at it! It is a march after all.

In the Cross of Christ I Glory – Robert Lau

The history of the naming of this tune—RATHBUN—is a story with which all choir directors can certainly empathize. One cold Connecticut winter Sunday morning in 1849, only one soprano arrived to sing in the choir Ithamar Conkey directed. Though Conkey was initially deeply discouraged, his minister picked up his spirits with a rousing sermon based on the hymn text, “In the Cross of Christ, I Glory.” The rejuvenated choir director decided to write a new tune for the text. He named the newly written tune after that lone, faithful choir member, Mrs. Beriah S. Rathbun!

By the way, in case you have a small attendance for your congregation on the Sunday this is played, I have indicated an alternate stopping point for a shorter offertory if needed. I hope you can use the whole setting, though, as the second half is particularly nice, and has a much more satisfying ending.

Come Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain – Garrett Parker

Get ready to have your toes tappin’ and having your counting brain on full alert for this one! Although at first glance, this piece may appear daunting, as long as the 8th notes are kept as a constant pulse for counting, this vigorous setting fits nicely under the fingers and is much easier to play than it sounds (or looks). But if further simplification is needed (particularly if you have smaller hands), then follow the instructions for the first 5 measures and continue to omit other octaves as is necessary. This piece may take a little practice, but it’ll be worth it. Maintaining the spirit of the piece and having fun playing it should be the primary objectives for your performance though. Let the beaming of the notes be your guideline for musical accents, pick a
manageable tempo (it can be effective at a variety of tempi), and let ‘er rip! Oh, there’s no time to be bothered with page-turns, so photocopy the pages and spread them out (it’s ok and legal—you own the book). Now you’re ready. Have fun!

**Like a River Glorious** – Frederick Chopin/Kendall R. Lord

This piece arrived on my desk “out of the blue,” so to speak, and I was immediately taken with its ingenious melding of a well-known Chopin prelude with a gospel hymn, a combination that, on the surface, would normally make my teeth itch. But Mr. Lord accomplished it seamlessly and quite artfully. You will want to take some *rubato*-like liberties with the tempo, especially at phrase endings so that you never feel rushed or unduly metric. It is, after all, from the Romantic period! Make sure the melodies always sing above the accompanying figures. As the dynamics build at m 25, think a broadening of the tempo, again, never rushing. Let the piece have its moment at m 28–29 and again at m 38–39. Musically “milk” the penultimate measure. I hope you enjoy this setting and this concept as much as I did (hint: there is another similar setting coming down the pike).

**Quiet Thoughts** – R. Kevin Boesiger

This flexibly-timed piece is simply a beautiful melody with a mostly arpeggiated accompaniment—a perfect simplicity for creating a mood or period of peaceful meditation. This composer has created several pieces in this style for us, and I think they are well-written and provide some pleasant, restful music for thoughtful, quiet moments. In fact, although this achieves a dynamic peak of only *mf*, I would consider notching it back one level softer throughout, depending on its ultimate use and the venue involved. Maintain the simplicity of the music and let the melody speak for itself.

**What a Friend We Have in Jesus** – Martha Sherrill Kelsey

Although this setting of the beloved gospel hymn begins with a gentle rhythmic accompaniment, this rhythmic figure should remain subtle, flowing easily and simply while supporting the melody. At m. 20, the composer deftly adds a surprising lift for the listener, moving in a harmonic 3rd relation to the warmer key of Eb to enfold the tune. In spite of the considerable interest and artistry shown in this setting, it is understated throughout, as though the composer simply wanted to provide music that would encourage the listeners to silently
consider the warmly reassuring lyrics to the hymn, probably first sung during their childhood, and remaining a fond memory ever since. Or maybe that’s just me...

**Morning Has Broken** – Neil Maxey

This lovely Gaelic folk melody is really of fairly recent vintage in its appearance as a hymn. English poet and children’s author Eleanor Farjeon created the text with this melody in mind in 1931, and it gradually found its way into a few hymnals. Prior to that, the primary usage for the tune was as a Christmas carol, “Child in the Manger, Infant of Mary.” As you may know, the newer hymn-version was eventually popularized internationally by a recording from the folk singer, Cat Stevens, in 1971, and has appeared in numerous hymnals and remained popular ever since.

This setting is especially reflective of its title, with the introduction offering brief, growing glimpses of the first phrase, much as the sun gradually adds light as it peaks over the morning horizon. By m. 24, the day and the melody have fully blossomed, only to gradually subside into a peaceful, harmonically interesting coda as the day fades into night.

**Benediction** – John Ness Beck/Larry Pugh

One of the people in the sacred music industry that I have most admired and, coincidently also served as one of my early mentors/supporters (and we all need them, don’t we?), is John Ness Beck. He composed this *Benediction* as an anthem in 1972, and it quickly became one of my favorites. Being a pianist as well as choir director, I was particularly struck by the lovely accompaniment John provided, always a notable characteristic of his choral writing. He died much too young, at age 57, following a lengthy battle with cancer.

As a personal homage to this wonderful, incredibly talented man, I have transcribed his anthem into this setting for piano, weaving the familiar melody into the beautiful accompaniment John wrote. These are almost entirely his notes. I only hope that this transcription retains the beauty of the original work and that you will enjoy it in this new format.
Aria – Anthony Giamanco

The tempo and style instruction above the first measure really captures and describes this original composition in a phrase: *Molto espressivo e cantabile* (very expressive and in a singing style). There. Now go play it!

Although this indeed is primarily a tuneful song with flowing triplet arpeggios accompanying it throughout, there is some dramatic intensity provided by the harmonic changes on p. 34. Don’t overdo them dynamically, but feel the tension gradually build until easing as the opening melody quietly returns in m 33. Be mindful to keep the duplets absolutely even throughout as well, creating a nice contrast to the “roundness” of the pervasive triplets in both the melody and the accompaniment. Enjoy the ending, letting it simply drift softly into nothingness.