From the Editor’s Perspective...

January/February 2014

With Easter being mercifully late on the calendar this year (April 20th), it feels like we have more “non-seasonal” time, and indeed we do — or at the least, the time is distributed differently! So this issue has a few expected meditative, Lenten-like pieces for you as Ash Wednesday approaches, but we also have room for some exciting, spirited renditions, making for a wonderful repertoire potpourri for the January/February issue. I hope you find as much joy in sharing this music with your congregation as I did in compiling it for you! We have some wonderful, creative composers who thankfully love to share their talent with us!

Larry Pugh, Editor
The Church Pianist

Every Time I Feel the Spirit — Anthony Giamanco

Tony Giamanco indeed captures the exuberant spirit of this spiritual favorite. It is often performed during the Pentecost season — and it is perfectly appropriate for that use — but I think it celebrates the joy one feels from “the spirit movin’ in my heart” — and that can happen at any time!

The tempo can successfully vary considerably depending upon your technical skill level, but be sure to avoid any feel of on-the-edge frenzy in your playing. Also take special note of the calming down at ms. 25–26, setting up the quiet section before bursting forth in joy again at m. 31! You might want to keep in mind the text reference to prayer for the soft section:

Every time I feel the spirit
Movin’ in my heart,
I will pray!
On the other hand, if using this as a postlude, ms 25–30 could also be played at the original tempo, if a bit softer. Have some fun with this one!

**I Need Thee Every Hour** — Robert W. Thygerson

This unassuming yet captivating setting is as simple as the hymn (and its origin) itself. The text was written in the spring of 1872 by Annie S. Hanks, a simple housewife residing in Brooklyn, who proclaimed to become “so filled with a sense of the nearness of God that, wondering how one could live without Him,” the words *I need Thee every hour* flashed into her mind. She wrote the stanzas of the hymn and shared them with her pastor, Dr. Robert Lowry, who added a refrain as he composed the music for the now famous and beloved hymn.

The quaint, quasi-improvisatory feel at the beginning of this setting captures that disarming simplicity inherent in the hymn. It grows to be stronger and more confident later, much as does the hymn itself. Although Mr. Thygerson offers many stylistic playing suggestions for you — always a good guide — take your time and use some *rubato*, particularly when the harmonic movement is rich, but also in the quieter moments. Let the sound linger at the end.

**The Solid Rock** — Jason W. Krug

My first piano teacher used to remind me to “dig in” to the bottom of the keys when I played, and I was reminded of that with this setting. In addition, I would also recommend that you too “dig in” to the keys and the rhythmic vitality represented in this setting of the William Bradbury classic. The alternating *legato* and *staccati* measures are very important stylistically — give them their full due. But mostly, just enjoy presenting this “solid” hymn-tune arrangement by Jason Krug!
**Grace Greater Than Our Sin** — John Innes

Former Billy Graham Crusade accompanist John Innes provides this lovely setting of this ageless gospel classic. Now, Mr. Innes was blessed with enormous hands, so if you were not similarly blessed (as I was not!), you may well have to roll some chords or even omit some notes (I have already edited out some of them). Those of us with smaller hands are generally well aware of how to “cheat” without diminishing the overall musical effect, so I suspect all will be fine.

At m 53, there is a *ritard* indicated, so take plenty of time to make the black-key *glissando* a gentle rather than boisterous effect. Be sure to stop cleanly on the top Db, and don’t feel rushed. Remember the tempo directive at the beginning which should be heeded throughout: play at a “relaxed tempo.”

**Children of the Heavenly Father** — Anna Laura Page

In 1858, while author Carolina Sandell was taking a boat trip with her father, he fell overboard, and she saw him drown! After tragically losing her earthly father, she found comfort in writing hymns that expressed the care and assurance of her ever-present heavenly Father. This text obviously reflects that life-long desire. The words were paired with the beautiful Swedish folk melody in the 1890s and together have found a place in many hymnals ever since. This Anna Laura Page setting is beautifully compatible to both the text and the melody in its warm, unpretentiously heartfelt presentation.

**Morning Litany** — Lani Smith

Let this gentle, flowing melody expressively sing throughout, creating a contemplative mood much as God does with the dawn of each new day. I am
generally not a fan of the seemingly ubiquitous Picardy third, such as that found at the end of this original, but this one wears easily on the ear as a logical consequence of what came before, well in keeping with the mood of the music and deftly handled by composer Lani Smith.

**Leaning on the Everlasting Arms** — Anthony Giamanco

Is this fun to play or what?!

Anthony Giamanco’s seemingly limitless creativity takes us on a musical journey beginning with the hearing of a gentle familiar melody from afar to a rambunctious rendering of this almost martial-style hymn tune. The gradual 39-measure musical development to the ultimate release of unbridled joy makes the musical effect all the more jubilant. We promise not to tell anyone how really easy it is to play; we’ll just share the fun!

**O Jerusalem** — Janet Vogt

This is a plaintive and captivating original melody from composer Janet Vogt that first appeared as an anthem. Its text is based on the St. Matthew 26 & 27 account of the Last Supper, betrayal, and crucifixion of Jesus. Here’s the text:

> On the night He was betrayed, He broke the bread and blessed the cup;  
> So that sins may be forgiven and for all the world His body and His blood were given up.  

**Refrain:** O Jerusalem, why have you forsaken Him?  
O Jerusalem, city of tears.  
And they crowned Him with a crown of thorns and nailed Him to a cross;  
With His arms stretched wide, our Savior died, and sorrow swept the earth and all the world was dark and lost.  

**Refrain repeated**
The dramatic angst of the text is certainly deeply felt within the mournful melody and this melancholy setting for piano. With or without the text, it certainly sets an appropriate ambience for Lent or Holy Week use.

*Meditation on BEACH SPRING* — Jason Krug

This hymn tune first appeared in the well-known *Sacred Harp* collection of the mid-19th century and has since been placed with a variety of texts most hymnals ever since. Curiously, however, the *Sacred Harp* melody is in duple meter, while every hymnal usage I have found consistently puts the melody in a triple meter. Arranger Jason Krug chose to return to the original duple meter for this setting, but he has managed to retain the flowing serenity of the hymns we are used to hearing with it. I find it very refreshing to the ear. Here is a partial listing of a few of the more familiar titles which you could also use as the title of this piece to fit a particular service need:

*Loaves Were Broken, Words Were Spoken*
*Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters*
*God Whose Giving Knows No Ending*
*Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service*
*Come, All Christians, Be Committed*
*Jesus, At Your Holy Table*

*Quiet Devotion* — R. Kevin Bosiger

This well-titled original can fulfill several timing *niches*, from 1:30 to 3:00 minutes. The B section (m 33–49) is almost hymn-like, a nice homophonic musical contrast to the opening melody with *arpeggiated* accompaniment incorporated at the beginning. Its flexibility and simplicity is certainly well suited to fill those quiet-moment musical needs that appear in nearly every worship service.
Another well-titled original! Using the pedal exactly as marked is very important for harmonic clarity, and the dynamic fluctuations are critical as well in order to provide the prescribed musical contrasts. This is a very easy work to play, enjoyable to hear, and climaxes with a grand feeling of a huge pipe organ filling the sanctuary with big, juicy chords. I’d be tempted to add another measure at the end so I could bang another D-Major chord a couple octaves lower, keeping the pedal down to save the sound already there! (We won’t tell!)