From the Editor’s Perspective...

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Come, Thou Almighty King — Lloyd Larson

Whether performed as a postlude or a festive prelude, this hymn celebrating the Trinity has been an integral part of the standard repertoire for centuries. Lloyd has added his typically easy-to-play flash, befitting the text. Think “classical” in style at the beginning, and play very cleanly with minimal pedal. Note that with the verse beginning in m. 17, there is a long crescendo that lasts through m. 46 before restarting at mp and climaxing with a big finish!

Holy, Holy, Holy — John Purifoy

Speaking of hymns celebrating the Trinity, this title is no-doubt the most oft-used and beloved of that genre. Though this setting begins softly, even thoughtfully, the last verse (m. 41) provides the full-throated rendition one expects with this hymn. The surprise occurs in m. 56 with a subito mp, referencing the opening measures before an ending filled with grandeur and majesty. The tune name, NICAEA, was selected by the composer, John Dykes, because the text expounded on the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed.

Come Down, O Love Divine — Don McAfee

Not to be confused with Downton Abby (!), this tune name, DOWN AMPNEY, was chosen by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams to honor his birthplace. The text is an excellent choice for Pentecost Sunday. I was struck by the rich beauty of this setting by Don McAfee, noted composer and publisher, and was surprised to discover that this tune is rarely found in these pages. In any case, fully embrace this arrangement, never feeling rushed as you play it. Be especially gentle with the repeated notes in the LH of the penultimate measure, noting well the molto rit e dim directive, and let the final chord linger into nothingness.
This Is My Father’s World — Richard A. Williamson

I especially enjoy the clean, fresh simplicity portrayed in this musical appreciation of our Father’s world around us. It seems especially befitting a crisp spring Sunday morning! The author of the text, Maltbie Babcock, was a prominent Presbyterian minister of the late nineteenth century. He was also an accomplished athlete, excelling as a pitcher in baseball and as a swimmer, and continued to keep himself in shape with morning runs. As he left the church office to run, he would say to his staff that he was “…going out to see my Father’s world!” This text is a composite of his observations made while running.

Claire de Lune/Blessed Assurance — Claude Debussy/Kendall Lord

Strange bedfellows, indeed, and from two disparate genres to be sure, but be certain to give it a try – I think you will appreciate the creativity involved and enjoy the experience! Avoid the temptation to “overplay” the entrances of the hymn; rather, keep it within the fabric of its companion piece. The ear will pick it up and be pleasantly surprised! There are a lot of musical fluctuations in the tempo (tres expressif) throughout this work, much as there is with the Debussy original. Play the last three measures with a lot of finesse and control, savoring the final reference to the hymn. It might be a good idea to pull the Debussy original from your library and play through it. That is what I did, and I think it helped me incorporate the Debussy style within this intriguing new setting.

Joy Transcending — Lani Smith

This is certainly a well-titled original! It exudes joy, as promised. Although it is comfortable at a bright 116, play it at 132 if you can — it really sparkles, but it does have to remain technically clean, and the dynamics must be followed scrupulously to avoid non-stop banging on the keys, postlude or not!

Homage — Edward Elgar/Larry Pugh

This movement from the larger work has long been one of my favorites, and I was recently reminded of it by a wonderful performance by the Dayton Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. These high school musicians really got into its sonorous harmony and noble melody — and subsequently I couldn’t get it out of my head! So I decided to transcribe it for piano. While it inevitably loses some of the depth an orchestra can provide, I still find it both spiritually moving and appropriate for a worship service. Be very aware of and try to bring out the inner voices while also being especially mindful of the musical phrasing. Let the stronger spots be expansive rather than rushed, and work very carefully on the last three measures as we go from ff to mp in only a few beats — that takes special control to make it feel and sound fulfilled. Frankly, when I play it well, I find myself sitting quietly at its conclusion in a special private moment, a spiritual moment, if you will. I sincerely hope you will be moved as well.
**Impromptu on Holy Manna** — Hugh S. Livingston, Jr.

This piece is really fun to play, so do it with lots of style! Plus, it’s a wonderful hymn tune with several worthy texts available (three of which are listed under the title), so flexibility in usage abounds as well. Let the tempo be dictated by your own technical facility, as style is more important than speed. From m. 81 to the end, the *accelerando* can be as pronounced as you want it to be, or it can actually be played at a steady tempo and still be effective. Just avoid any hint of a *ritard*!

**Bryn Calfaria** — Penny Rodriguez

This has always been one of my favorite hymn tunes. Perhaps it’s a result of my Welsh heritage, but I find it particularly ennobling and inspiring with either text listed below the title. Hymnologist Eric Routley described the tune as “…a piece of real Celtic rock.” I’m not really sure what that means (!), but maybe it alludes to its sturdy nature. At any rate, this Penny Rodriguez setting is fairly straightforward but emphasizes the rich minor modality of the tune while ending on a triumphant Picardy third, particularly appropriate for the Ascension text.

**Crown Him with Many Crowns** — Mark Hayes

Mark Hayes, while an enormously gifted composer and pianist, is not often enough found in *The Church Pianist* because much of his writing is either too challenging or consumes too many pages to be included. But I couldn’t resist sharing this Eastertide hymn arrangement with you! It lies nicely under the fingers and offers an enticing musical variety that is a hallmark of his compositional style. You may take the full-bodied final verse as “majestically” as you need to in order to play all the notes, but take special care to play the dynamics as indicated to ensure a musically satisfying rendition.

**See How Great a Flame Aspires** — David Paxton

Here is another sturdy Welsh hymn tune that you may know better with the title *Throned upon the Awful Tree*. There is a musical difference beyond the text and usage of the two hymns, however. This one is called *ARFON* (major) while its Good Friday companion (*ARFON*) is in minor. In fact, this setting plays as well in g minor as it does in G major, so you have a “twofer” here! I can’t think of another example of this in hymnody, can you?

One of the aspects that allows it to work with either text is the surprise soft ending after having a prolonged *crescendo* (since m. 17) building to the expected *f* at m. 27 that quickly dissipates into a more subtle — and quite satisfying — ending. Whether major or minor, I find the arrangement very fulfilling.
Go Forth in Faith — Lani Smith

Lani has such a wonderful talent for providing easily played yet inspiring joyful postludes, and he has been blessing us with them for decades! Your personal pedaling choices may vary from those indicated on the page depending on your instrument and room acoustics, but let your ear be your guide as to how “muddy” places like m. 1–2 are best rendered in your situation. In any case, make certain the more melodic and legato B section also provides the needed dynamic contrasts as indicated. Overall, this is another well-titled original as a final alleluia for you worship service!