

Doug McConnell ***Works for Keyboard***

Works for Organ

For years, my Christmas traditions involve writing a new piece for my wife, Joan. As you can see, the pieces are hymn-based; this reflects my interest in not only the tune itself, but also the hymn-text that I associate with it. I love hymn texts; they are like mini-sermons. The best ones have a lot to tell us about our relationship with God.

Some of these works were designed for use as service music; others are appropriate for recital use. My wife has used these settings for both purposes, but other organists can decide for themselves. The timings are very approximate but are listed to provide a general idea of the piece's length. I am trying to find time to send these off to publishers; for now, please contact me if you would be interested in performing any of these works.

A Selected List of Hymn-based Compositions

Adoro Te Devote: Based on the well-known plainsong melody; dedicated to the memory of Leonard and Jean Lilyers (5' 20")

Beach Spring: three explorations of the tune in a single setting, varied styles (4'20")

Bradbury: a gentle, nostalgic setting of this sentimental hymn, appropriate for Good Shepherd Sundays and a variety of other occasions. (4')

Coronation: a very energetic and at times Ives-inspired setting of this early American hymn. This works well as the final selection for a set of hymn-based pieces, or as the final piece at the end of a recital program. (3' 20")

Good Christian Friends Rejoice: a festive setting of the popular Christmas hymn tune, presented in three main sections. Two outer sections are of similar construction; a middle, more lyric section in a slower tempo offers contrast. The piece can be played in its entirety, or use individual sections to meet your needs.

Holy Manna (solo organ version): a more abstract presentation of the well-known hymn tune; one long setting of the tune that allows for exposition and development to occur at the same time. Overall, this was an experiment in style that my wife says is difficult to play, so be warned! A later version of this piece, greatly modified, appears in *The Trinity Suite* (see below) for trumpet and organ. (3')

Go Tell it On the Mountain: This is a spirited rendition of the traditional Christmas/Epiphany hymn tune, one that uses 10/8 meter and various other metric challenges for humorous effect. At the same time, the music expresses the joy of the birth of Christ.

Houston: A simple, direct setting, suitable for service playing, of an Epiphany hymn (2' 20'')

Jerusalem: Based on the choral song composed by C. Hubert H. Parry (1848-1918), the setting features an extended introduction before the first presentation of the tune. A spirited development section follows, before a triumphant return to the original material. (3' 15'')

Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine: An extended presentation of the Christmas hymn tune that uses elements of exposition and development at the same time. (4' 20'')

Joy to the World: The pedal introduces the opening phrase segment of this famous Christmas carol; from there, the piece is a fantasia-like setting of the famous tune. (2' 20'')

Kingsfold: a brief and straightforward setting of the folk tune dating back to the Middle Ages. Modal scale flavorings are used throughout. (1' 10'')

Simple Gifts: a simple yet free setting of the famous Shaker tune. An opening presentation of the entire tune gives way to a second, more contrapuntal setting, in a trio style. (2' 10'')

Sojourner: the hymn tunes appears in three settings. A quiet more reflective introduction leads to a second presentation that uses a steady, walking rhythm. An interlude eventually leads to a final, more triumphant setting of the tune. Overall, the setting makes use of various jazz and blues inflections. (3' 10'')

Multi-Movement Works for Organ

Easter Suite

While the suite is performable as a set, individual movements can be used for recitals or as service music

Morning Song (4' 20'')

Noel Nouvelet (3')

Easter Hymn (2' 50'')

Morning Song uses the hymn tune *Lasst uns erfren*; it begins quietly, using motives from the hymn tune in a variety of way, as it builds to a larger climax. This piece was rewritten, with new material added, in *Your Morning Rises as a Song*, for alto saxophone and organ (see below)

Noel Nouvelet uses considerable melodic ornamentation, and changing meter to create a fantasia based on the French hymn tune.

Easter Hymn is based on the well known hymn known to many as “Jesus Christ is Risen Today.” It uses some striking dissonances and driving rhythms to capture the excitement of Easter morning and declaim victory over death.

Partita on “Wittenberg New” (13’)

Introduction

Theme: *Wittenberg New*

Variation I: Bicinium

Variation II: Trio

Variation III: Fantasia/Interlude

Variation IV: Finale

Written in 1981-82, and revised in 2008, this piece is based on a hymn tune written by Jan Bender, (1909 – 1994,) one of my first composition teachers. The tune is based in F minor, but the treatment of the source material allows for a strong, dissonant harmonic language. This is strictly recital music and is a challenging work.

Works for Instruments and Organ

The Trinity Suite, for C Trumpet/Flugelhorn and Organ

(Additional forces are required for the middle movement)

Children of Creative Purpose (5’)

Great Spirit, Come (7’ 30”)

Their High Communion Find (7’)

Written for Thaddeus Archer and Joan McConnell, The Trinity Suite is an exploration of the Holy Trinity. While the three movements are to be presented as a set, performers can select individual movements for recitals.

Children of Creative Purpose: based on the *Holy Manna* hymn tune, which originally appeared in the Columbia Harmony collection of 1829. Some people associate the tune with the text, *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heaven*, as written by Catherine Cameron. The title of the movement is a phrase borrowed from this text (“Children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.”) This fantasia-like movement is a re-working of an earlier organ setting of this tune.

Great Spirit Come..... This movement features the use of flugelhorn with one brief passage for C trumpet. The music also features the use of choral voices; they are asked to perform in various groupings within the audience. The size of the choir may vary, from 20 voices (recommended minimum) to a larger group of singers, depending on local availability. Two vocal soloists are used in the middle section of the movement, and are placed in appropriate places in the nave. Light percussion (2 – 4 triangle players) are also used. The music should surround the audience as much as possible. The movement uses

prominent motives from the traditional Southern hymn tune *Prospect*, with choral text taken from the traditional hymn, *The Lone Wild Bird*.

Their High Communion Find: The tune is a traditional African-American melody, which some congregations use for the text, *In Christ There is No East or West*. The piece is a uses a theme and variations approach to feature the tune in several contrasting styles.

Your Morning Rises as a Song, for Alto Saxophone and Organ

Leanne Fazio (1944-2013) was a keyboard performer with multiple interests; she performed regularly on the organ, piano, and harpsichord throughout her career as a soloist and as a collaborative musician. For more than three decades, she served as a member of the music faculty at Mississippi State University, in Starkville, Mississippi. She was also an active church musician throughout her career. Leanne used her love of music to build community; those of us who were privileged to work with her will always remember her enthusiasm, her generous spirit, and her sincere interest in everyone who came in contact with her.

Your Morning Rises as a Song, written in memory of Leanne, is a fantasia based on the *Lasst uns erfreuen*, a hymn tune that dates back to the seventeenth century. This is a tune that would have been well known to Leanne from numerous church services. The title of the piece is a fragment taken from a hymn text, as adapted by Miriam Therese Winter, one that is sometimes associated with this tune.

*“Your morning rises as a song,
And lights of evening sing along.....”*

The music is cast in two large sections, as various motives from the well-known hymn tune are gradually introduced and developed. The opening section is slow and meditative; the alto saxophone sings out freely over a more sustained organ accompaniment. A second, faster section, marked “With Joy” in the score works more directly with the hymn tune fragments, using various compositional devices, from imitation to inversion, before building to a final triumphant section.

Works for Solo Harpsichord

Travein’ Music (2012-13)

Prelude: Goin’ Get Ready

Goin' Joyful

Goin' Away

Goin' Alone

Goin' to a better place

Goin' to settle down

Commissioned by Jackie Edwards Henry, and dedicated to her late husband, Dr. William Patrick Henry (1958-2014.) For many years, Bill was a professor of Inorganic Chemistry at Mississippi State University, but he was also an avid music lover and great supporter of his wife's work as a professional musician. He especially loved the harpsichord and enjoyed Jackie's numerous performances on this instrument.

Jackie requested a suite of pieces for the harpsichord that would celebrate the American folk tradition. She also requested that the pieces be "audience-friendly," and they are! Each of the selected tunes touch travel in some way, either in tempo and style, or by the text that is often associated with the tune. The movements may be presented as a set, or separately.

Prelude: Goin' Get Ready: After the suite was completed, Dr. Edwards-Henry requested a "warm-up" piece, a short keyboard piece that would prepare the fingers for the rapid passage work in *Goin' Joyful*. This brief prelude attempts to fulfill this request, with the help of various motives and phrases from the subsequent movements.

Goin' Joyful is an energetic setting of a traditional American folk song *Cindy*, a tune that may have originated in North Carolina. The piece uses an straightforward exposition-development-recapitulation format, and yes, the open-ended conclusion is on purpose!.....

Goin' Away: He's Gone Away is an Appalachian folk song that describes a woman's love, one that continues even though her lover and she will be separated for a long time. This simple, quiet setting offers two presentations of the folk song, with the latter presenting a more developmental variation.

Goin' Alone: The folk tune/spiritual *Wayfaring Stranger* tells the tale of a solitary traveller, one who has been on the road of life for quite some time, and longs for a better place, the kind that Heaven will provide. In this setting, the famous tune is introduced by a somber refrain, one that interacts with the more famous tune at various times. The development section takes the tune through a variety of intense and dramatic styles, with more than a touch of jazz and the blues.

Goin' to a Better Place: Like *Wayfaring Stranger*, the folk song *All My Trials* speaks of a better day to come, despite the current hard times. The song was rather popular during the social protest era of the 1950s and 60s. The tune itself may have some connections with the Bahamas; some sources refer to the tune as a lullaby. It is this link that influences the more gentle travelling song setting that you will hear in this presentation.

Goin' to settle down: Not everyone wishes to spend their life on the road. There are those travelin' folks who finally decide to find one place and call it home. This humorous, more off-the-wall theme and variations is based on *Old Settler's Song (Acres of Clams)*, a tune that is attributed to the Pacific Northwest. Expect lots of sudden changes of style, mood and temper, not unlike watching a Warner Bros. cartoon.

Selected Works for Solo Piano

Prelude on a Familiar Tune (2000)

Commissioned by Jackie-Edwards Henry, to be performed as a companion piece/response to the Prelude in C# Minor, Op. 45, by Chopin. The tune Londonderry Air is featured; motives from this well know English folk tune bear a resemblance to a theme that is developed in the Chopin prelude.

from Three Pieces for Piano (1995)

Commissioned by pianist Joel Harrison as a set. The commission called for a series of pieces for solo piano that used hymn tunes in some fashion. The pieces are not chorale preludes; the hymn tunes or hymn tune fragments are used as subtext, enhancing the meaning of the overall composition.

Variations on a Mode: The mode is Phrygian; the piece weaves together a set of variations on the pitches of this famous scale, as opposed to an initial theme. Fragments of the Third Mode tune by Thomas Tallis begin to accumulate; gradually, more and more of this hymn tune commands attention.

Nocturne: A quiet, delicate, Chopin esque movement, one that is inspired by *Ar Hyd y Nos*, a Welsh folksong that some people associate with the text *All Through the Night*. The tune is heard prominently in the A sections of the work, the first of which follows an atmospheric introduction. A contrasting B section has fragments of the tune, but also is a gentle reminder of the time of day. This piece also exists in a modified form in my Piano Trio, 2006. (*see Instrumental Works*)

Invention: The title says it all; a light-hearted, two-part invention for piano, modeled after J.S. Bach, but with the sensibilities of more contemporary composers such as Webern and Cage. Expect to hear silence as a compositional element, not to mention more extreme octave registers. German Lutheran hymn fragments abound, most notably *Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word*. A revised version of this piece was completed in 2012; a chamber version is featured in my *Piano Trio*, 2006. (See Chamber works)

Buxton Farm (1982)

Years ago, I participated in a fund-raiser for the Cincinnati Composers Forum. A member of the group devised a unique offer: for a total price of \$32.95, anyone could commission a Cincinnati Composers Forum member to write a short piece as a gift for someone of the buyer's choice. The performance medium and level of difficulty was to be determined by the buyer as well.

There was a quick turn-around time for this product, as it was a fund-raising scheme for the holidays. I received my “commission” on a Monday, and had to had the piece composed, copies and ready for a recoding session by the following Saturday! My assignment: to write a piece for solo piano, in a down-home style that would bear the following title: *Buxton Farm*. Oh yes, they also wanted flash; something virtuosic.

With six days to create this little masterpiece, I knew that I had to rely on my own four years of college piano, yet make it sound like I had more experience than that. A simple ternary form developed, with various tunes quoted, a la Charles Ives. Expect to hear *Old McDonald had a Farm*, *Turkey in the Straw*, and whatnot. In case you are wondering: I did make the deadline, and the rest is history! The piece now exists in its original solo version, plus a second one for piano two-hands.

Works for Solo Accordion

Toccata and Polka in D Minor (2001)

The title alone should warn the listener sufficiently. A tribute to serious accordionists everywhere, especially those who first learned the classics by playing them on the accordion! The famous Bach *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* is fodder for this concert piece, but if you listen carefully, there are strains of a certain well-known polka that will appear as well.