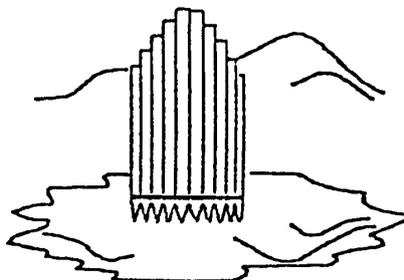


CUMBRIAN SOCIETY OF ORGANISTS



Training Programme

Introduction and Samples of Course Material

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Cumbrian Society of Organists (CSO) Training Programme information pack.

1.1. Early History

by Colin Rae (Former Chairman of CSO)

In the summer of 1991 the committee of the Cumbrian Society of Organists felt it should expand its activities from organising events for members to providing assistance to the many organists in Cumbria who were new to the demands of service accompaniment.

A sub-committee then prepared a scheme, the aim of which was to encourage organists to improve their standards by supplying suitable training together with a voluntary certificated examination, the standard somewhat below that of the Incorporated Association of Organists (IAO) certificate.

The scheme was launched in the spring of 1992 with a poster emblazoned with "Organists Wanted", containing a commendation from the Bishop of Carlisle, (then President of the Society), and further advertisements in the press and on the radio.

As a result, we were taken aback by the number of the applications: forty in all. From the forms we determined what would be the best evening for each area of the county and we realised that an examination was irrelevant to the needs of the applicants.

A professionally qualified tutor was appointed to each of four groups: Jeremy Suter (Master of Music, Carlisle Cathedral), Colin Dean (Ulverston), Colin Marston (Penrith) and John Morris (Keswick). Each course consisted of five lessons of one and a half hours each from October 1992 to March 1993.

Pupils paid £25 for the course at the first lesson, and there were no rebates for absences. These fees covered each tutor's fee of £100 and church expenses, mainly for heating of premises. Five pupils were therefore required if we were to cover costs. Due to the numbers involved, the groups contained up to ten pupils and a surplus of £120 accrued.

The groups were as different from one another as were the backgrounds and needs of the members in each group. The scheme provided assistance to those unable to arrange private lessons.

At the end of the first course a tutors' meeting was held in November 1993. A common observation was that the groups were too large, pupils being very diffident in exhibiting their frailties to an audience, preferring to seek advice on their individual problems. Nevertheless, our tutors did their best to overcome this basic problem by splitting into smaller groups on alternate weeks or by giving short individual lessons within each session.

As was to be expected, the abilities of pupils varied, many being press-ganged pianists, most of them women, of whom a few were grade seven or eight. Colin Dean used his different pupils' churches for each lesson; a policy which was further adopted in the second course.

The overall approach was to meet the needs of the pupils as far as possible rather than to expect them to conform to a structured syllabus. The topics covered were the mechanics of the organ, hymn playing, registration and technique. Few pupils were involved with choirs, and the use of the pedals was limited.

The courses were much enjoyed and the tutors agreed to repeat them with a maximum of six pupils per group to start after Easter 1994, with the offer of an advanced course with a maximum of three pupils. A suggested format for each lesson of the starters' course was group instruction at the beginning and end, with individual attention in the middle. Spacing between lessons should be three weeks for the starters' course and four to five weeks for the advanced course. The need for consistent practice was stressed to the pupils.

The second course, preceded by the same publicity, started in March 1994. There were twenty-seven applicants. A great advantage of a summer based course was that it removed the church heating charge and avoided Lakeland winter evening travel. The heavy administration of the first course was avoided by publishing a list of tutors and their starting dates and venues. Applicants then contacted their nearest tutor. There were five groups and the tutors were Jeremy Suter, John Morris, Colin Marston, Adrian Self (Cartmel Priory) and James Wishart Hodgson (Lancaster). One advanced course took place in Carlisle and the pupils opted for five individual one hour lessons at £12 a lesson.

A second review meeting took place in September 1994 at which tutors reported on their pupils' backgrounds, class organisation and levels of achievement.

As on the first course there were as many backgrounds as pupils. Jeremy Suter's group was typical of the varied composition of the groups; his group consisted of two women, one of whom was a grade eight pianist, two fifteen-year-old girls, one observer and one other who dropped out. Such mixed groups posed severe problems, including that of access to awkwardly placed consoles.

The class organisation varied among groups, although the topics covered were the same as on the first course, there being no time to include extra topics such as ear tests. In Colin Marston's group, all the pupils were taught together, whereas John Morris managed to give half-hour personal lessons to his pupils on their own local organs. There was a much greater willingness to use the pedals on this course.

All tutors remarked on how little pupils knew about the organ as an instrument; the first of the lessons having to be devoted to this topic so that pupils realised the many different effects available from even the most modest instrument. The achievements of the pupils depended on the amount of practice between sessions, but their main achievement from their course of seven and a half hours was an enthusiasm to consolidate the benefits they had received by further practice and a desire to improve their performance in accompanying services. Adrian Self summed up the tutors' views that the course acted as a catalyst enabling isolated rural organists to share problems and to expand repertoires. Some pupils have continued with private lessons from their tutors.

Jeremy Suter's advanced course was based on David Sanger's organ "Tutors" with other added elements to the repertoire. His pupils had the bonus of having their last lesson on the cathedral organ. Jeremy thought it possible to run this course as a master class if the three pupils were evenly matched.

Due to churches not charging for heating there was a further surplus for the second course, making a total surplus of £200 which the tutors thought would be best devoted to assisting organists to attend courses organised by the IAO National Organists Training Scheme (NOTES) and other similar training courses rather than buying "Tutors" to lend out, such stocks tending to evaporate rapidly.

I must pay tribute to the devotion of the tutors, who obviously generated enthusiasm and gratitude, and spent a great deal of extra time preparing information sheets and attending review meetings.

A largely unresolved problem is reaching the target clientele with the message of the course, not all church leaders being equally assiduous in spreading the information.

Church Times, 20 October 1995

1.2. Review of the 1993 Penrith Course **by Colin Marston (Tutor)**

The Penrith group of organists has now completed its five sessions of training. The first four sessions were held at Christ Church and the last session at St. Andrew's. Nine people attended the course, seven attending all the sessions – the two others each missed one session. The standard of attainment varied considerably: two were really quite competent organists, able to use pedals and playing regularly for services. A further group of three (who have arranged a continuation session) were competent with manuals but unable at the start of the course to use pedals. They have worked hard on pedal technique and are now beginning to include this in their playing. The others were very much in the 'converted pianists' category but were keen and worked hard on the aspects we discussed and were showing much greater confidence in their hymn playing and beginning to introduce some judicious use of pedal. The content of the five sessions worked out as follows:

Session 1: general introduction and discussion of techniques, use of stops, different types of organs, hymns, and congregations.

Session 2: hymn playing (each member prepared a hymn to play) – some dos and don'ts, discussion of pedalling (some took away a handout of exercises to practice).

Session 3: voluntaries (again each had prepared a piece to play – these varied from some fiendish-looking harpsichord Renaissance music through the usual Romantic slushy stuff to a very competent performance of Healey Willan's Chorale Prelude on "The strife is o'er"). We discussed repertoire and looked at several books which people had brought along, including Janette Cooper's books for the reluctant organist.

Sessions 4 and 5: at the request of the members these were sectional sessions dealing with continuation of the aspects introduced above on a more individual level. (3 groups of 3 with a session lasting approximately 40 minutes for each.)

I felt the idea of the course was a good one and I got the feeling (though I didn't directly ask them) that the customers found it useful. By the end of the third session we all felt that dividing into smaller groups would be useful and this enabled us to have our final session on the much better instrument at St. Andrew's, where we could just squeeze five people into the organ loft. The idea is certainly worth repeating in due course. The nine who attended were basically from three parishes – Greystoke (3), Kirkby Stephen (1) and the Shap/Bampton ministry (5), and it may be that other parishes were not aware or had not publicised it properly. (This was certainly the case in Penrith.)

My main criticism is that nine was too large a number: there was a tendency in the early sessions for some to feel reluctant to play before an audience, and the large number restricted the amount of individual work as well as making it difficult to see points demonstrated.

11 April 1993

1.3. Review of the 1998 Penrith Course ***by Rev Michael Cannon (Tutor)***

Today we have completed the fifth and last session in the Penrith-based Foundation Course. We met twice in Penrith Methodist Church (where the sequencer is a very useful teaching aid) and once each at Barton, Crosby Ravensworth and Kirkby Stephen – three lovely churches with interesting instruments.

I feel that the course has been very worthwhile. The participants have been enthusiastic and made progress. Between them they have bought recommended music to a value of about £60 and will hopefully continue working to improve their playing.

All three of them came from Anglican Churches and I wonder how widely the course is advertised beyond the Carlisle Diocesan News. I think there might well be organists of other denominations who would be interested in joining a future course if information were circulated through denominational channels such as (for Methodists) the Methodist Church Music Society, and/or District Synod and (for the United Reformed Church organists) the United Reformed Church Musicians' Guild, the Northeast branch of which met recently in Penrith – Just a thought!

I am glad to have been involved in the course and have enjoyed the sessions and discovering new organs, and I wish you and the CSO well in the future.

31 July 1998

1.4. Review of the 2004 Penrith Course ***by Jean Hill (Participant)***

This course was described to me as a beginner's guide for the reluctant organist; however all of the participants on the course I attended were very enthusiastic from the start. Age is truly no barrier: three of our group of four were retired. Nor should anyone of a nervous disposition feel discouraged from trying such a programme. The course tutor, Colin Marston, had a relaxed and friendly manner and structured the five ninety-minute sessions so that all could participate at their own level, or just observe. A interval of three weeks separated each session, which allowed time in between to practice.

So how did we get on? We were a mixed-ability group, some with piano grades, some not, some with considerable experience of playing for services, others less. Our teacher managed this well by providing an introductory talk at the beginning of each session, a demonstration of the main points at the instrument, then a chance for us to have a go with feedback, which was always to the point and encouraging. This for me was the most helpful aspect of the course, as I had been playing for a number of years without any professional observation of my technique. A sheet of graded exercises was given as 'homework', e.g. basic pedal technique with toes and heels, building up over the weeks to a hymn with a pedal line separated out for practice on its own, written with the right hand part, with left, and finally altogether.

There was plenty of opportunity to ask questions, even obvious ones like “how much time should I leave between verses?”, “is there a simple voluntary I could play at Easter?” and “What about Mission Praise?”

Although the syllabus was given in a pre-course leaflet, Colin was open to suggestions and incorporated our concerns in his teaching. For example, all were keen to discuss the challenges of registration and providing ‘oomph’ when playing an instrument of limited specification. We even dipped a toe into the nerve-racking waters of improvisation; and survived.

We had the opportunity to play two organs: St Andrew’s and Christchurch Penrith, although the majority of our time was spent at Christchurch. Colin held a repertoire workshop, during which we examined a wide variety of music books and resources to help the parish organist, such as the RSCM magazine. He also introduced me to Roger Firth’s organ music business on the Internet, a useful source of books and sheet music, who managed to track down a good second-hand copy of Percy Buck’s *First Year at the Organ* at a reasonable price.

If outcome is a measure of success, then the fact that half of the course participants have gone on to take lessons with a professional is testimony to the careful teaching received during this highly enjoyable programme. One of the members of the congregation where I play commented that my playing was very much better this St Andrew’s day than last. The Foundation Course in Organ Playing bearing fruit, perhaps.

January 2005

1.5. Development

The courses described above have been held most years since 1993.

In addition, the Society has also arranged a number of one-day courses. Typically, the morning is spent in informal groups with tutors, with the opportunity to try the organ at the course venue. In the afternoon the tutors give talks with demonstrations to the whole group on topics such as hymn playing, the art of practising and sight reading, selecting and playing voluntaries for various occasions, and extemporising. The day concludes with a question and answer session. Players can bring their own music for study, and are advised to bring a number of copies for others to follow, (which are destroyed afterward).

The Society has often noted the lack of availability of organ studies in schools, and has actively campaigned to increase awareness of the instrument. Presently, the assistant organist at Carlisle Cathedral is visiting schools to generate interest in those at GCSE music level, with the support of the Society.

The Society has also compiled and maintains a directory of organists in Cumbria, including information on those who are available to deputise on different days of the weeks or for different types of service.

2. Syllabus

The Cumbrian Society of Organists *Foundation Courses in Organ Playing* scheme provides practical and informal courses for pianists or organists wishing to build on their existing technique, suited more to the requirements of the participants than to a rigid timetable. The range of subjects includes:

Using the pedals:

A source of mystery to many non-organists! Whether to use the toe or heel is explained as well as whether to use the right foot or the left foot. Also, practice methods which will speed up your co-ordination between hands and feet.

Choosing the correct stops:

The myriad of buttons, things to pull and push etc. can bewilder even the most curious. Here, the different families of stops are explained as well as which stops work well with each other.

Selection of appropriate voluntaries:

There has been a massive amount of organ music written over the centuries and a great deal is still being written today. We now have a chance to learn how to make the most appropriate choice of music for both the occasion and also your technique, along with suggestions about which music books to buy.

Basic hymn playing:

Much more difficult than many people believe. How to decide which notes to play with your hands and your feet (if you are using them) as well as suggestions for encouraging people to sing and keep in time. Also how to get effective contrasts between verses.

Finger technique and substitution explained:

The organ does not have a sustaining pedal like the piano, but we learn here how to get the same smooth effect which, incidentally, is also very helpful to playing much other keyboard music.

Arrangement of modern hymns for organ:

Many newer hymns are written more with the piano in mind and can appear bewildering when trying to play on the organ. However, there are certain patterns to look for to make them easier to adapt and these are explained under this heading.

Improvisation:

Does the collection take too long? Is the bride late? Has your piece finished too soon? There are numerous times when it is handy to be able to make up music 'on the spot' and an introduction to the art of improvisation is available to those on this course.

A peek at the pipes:

Nothing too profound or lengthy here, but often a fundamental understanding of the way the organ produces musical sounds can help speed progress and resolve any problems which might occur on the way.

Help in deciding which tutor book to use:

Nowadays there are a number of excellent publications to help you learn the art of organ playing. However, this variety can in itself be confusing and we are now able to show you sample copies of a range of books and help you decide which will suit you the best, should you wish to further your studies.

There is no compulsion to play on any of these courses – just watch if you prefer!

The CSO also offers:

- Professionally qualified and experienced tutors.
- A comprehensive library of tutor books to enable you to choose which is best suited to your needs.
- Advice about financial assistance if you should wish to study further.

Each course generally consists of five sessions of about one-and-a-half hours each, roughly at monthly intervals, with a maximum of six participants per course. An effort is made to have sessions at different venues within the area, so as to add variety and interest. As indicated above, each course is designed to reflect the needs of the participants on that particular course, so it is important for you to make known to your tutor what your special areas of interest are so as to gain maximum benefit. At the time of writing (1998), the inclusive cost for attending the entire course is thirty pounds, payable in full to the tutor at the first session (cheques to be made in favour of the "Cumbria Society of Organists"). Many will find that their respective churches will reimburse part or all of this fee. Receipts will be gladly issued when requested.

3. The Tutor's Guide

3.1. Aim

The overall aim is to direct pupils onto a sure personal career of self improvement as a church organist.

3.2. Objectives

The objectives are to provide a basic course covering help primarily on good leading of a congregation in the singing of hymns, both traditional and contemporary. Some *Mission Praise* type hymns are better accompanied on the piano but since the Training Courses are restricted to the organ, arrangements of modern hymns could be included. Other topics should include choice and advice on the playing of voluntaries appropriate to the abilities of the pupils, and improvisation (gap filling). These objectives would necessarily include help with basic keyboard technique (as different from piano technique), pedalling as appropriate to each pupil, registration and understanding of the organ as a musical instrument.

3.3. Pedagogy

Each session should be structured in advance but be sufficiently flexible to enable the teaching to take place through, rather than at, the pupils, both in discussion and playing, in order to accommodate a wide variety of skills and experience. The sessions should rotate round the pupils' churches to widen their experience and enjoyment. The pupils' programme of practice between sessions must be an integral part of the course and pupils must complete each session with a feeling of having advanced their learning. Whilst help with pedalling could be given to those already having some ability, special pedal tuition or detailed instruction about pieces would require private lessons. Where pupils are too diffident to play in the group the possibility of short private sessions could be arranged either by making the time available by shortening sessions or by charging for extra time by agreement. The use of handouts is strongly recommended to help efficient practice between sessions and to summarise the content of each session – thus enabling pupils to consolidate their learning process.

A library of suitable books and tutors will be available from the society for display at the first session enabling pupils to order direct from the publishers.

3.4. Administration

Intending course members should contact their nearest tutor by sending a stamped addressed envelope and request for the arrangements of each course for which the tutor, rather than the society, has complete responsibility. However the Society will advertise the courses and provide the tutor with handouts containing information about the courses. These handouts should be sent by return in reply to initial enquiries.

Each pupils' fee is currently £40 for five sessions of 12 hours in groups of five or six. The fee is payable to the *Cumbrian Society of Organists* on the first session and refunds are not available. The tutor's fee is currently £150.

4. Self Taught

Adrian Self has published two volumes entitled "Self Taught", based on the CSO scheme. These are available from *Animus*, 4 Rawlinson Street, Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA15 8AL, www.animus.org.uk.

The following review refers to volume 1...

Adrian Self has put together a collection called "Self Taught: Music, Help and Ideas for the Amateur Organist".

The preface indicates the realism of the author: "The reluctant organist is now a well-established character in the fabric of so many rural communities, but what of the 'reluctant organ'? So many were built as little more than hymn-machines, but with a little imagination and judicious use of the limited resources at his or her disposal, even the most miserable organs can be persuaded to be rather less reluctant."

A section on practising follows with a wealth of sound common sense, beginning with "Start away from the organ" and "Practise with the motor switched off." Some may not like the author's insistence on respecting the composer's intentions, but to help everyone who uses the book to do just that, Adrian Self provides each piece with a well-informed page of comment. These pieces are ideal for the purpose and lead to advice on where to look for additional similar material. Sometimes the material is set out for two manuals so that different colours can be used even on the smallest two manual, sometimes the pieces are designed for one manual use only.

One of the excellent features of the book is the choice of pieces which enables an organist to produce a variety of different styles and effects from very small resources. His choice of Samuel Wesley's *Voluntary in C* illustrates the point with its three distinctive sections and moods. Pedals are introduced carefully and helpfully, with each item in the book providing a potential service piece. Even the tercentenary of Merkel is not overlooked and Merkel's *Evening Hymn* is produced in a very fine editorial form.

Finally there is a section on repertoire and on accompaniment with advice which includes this sobering thought: "Don't sing at the same time as you are playing – you will end up accompanying only yourself." Altogether this serves its limited purpose admirably. Anyone working on a small organ will find the information, the tips and the music well worth having.

Ivor H Jones
Church Times, 20 October 1995

5. Choosing Your Repertoire

“Some very personal and biased suggestions” by *Adrian Self*

5.1. Introduction

In his encyclopaedic *Directory of Composers for Organ* (2nd edition, 1999) John Henderson lists more than 9,800 composers who have composed music for the instrument. If each of these listed composers wrote, let us say, just ten works, it doesn't take an Einstein to deduce that there are not far short of 100,000 organ compositions floating around the globe. This is both a solace and a pain: a solace because someone, somewhere is bound to have written a piece of music which will fit exactly our requirements for a given occasion; a pain because even if we manage to track it down, it's probably out of print.

Remember too that in a number of instances there may be more than one edition of the work we are looking for. Sometimes the differences between editions may be little more than cosmetic. On the other hand, the differences may be radical.

Then there's the vexed question of arrangements and transcriptions: most of us play them regularly, perhaps having long forgotten that pieces such as Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*, Wagner's *Bridal March*, Bach's *Jesu, joy* or Handel's *Water Music* were not conceived for the instrument on which they are most often heard.

More important than any of these arcane considerations is a much more practical point: most of us don't want to shell out hard-earned cash on pieces which, in our heart of hearts, we know we shall never be able to play, or on collections where we have most of the contents in other volumes already.

What follows can make no claim whatsoever to either comprehensiveness or anything other than a highly personal selection of possible repertoire at varying levels of technical accomplishment. They are all pieces which I have enjoyed (and generally still enjoy) or have used with pupils over the years and which, on the whole, have stood the test of time's rudely winnowing hand.

Most of us in Cumbria live miles from the sort of music shop where we can happily browse well-stocked shelves of organ music and buying 'blind' by mail-order can be a costly and frustrating business, but don't forget that:

- The library service can obtain most titles (as long as you're not in a hurry).
- Some publishers (e.g. Oxford University Press (OUP) and Kevin Mayhew) offer detailed catalogues with full album contents.
- Second-hand organ music *can* be a good bit cheaper (although not always). Look for advertisements in periodicals such as *Organists' Review* and *Church Music Quarterly*. Try Roger Firth, Tel: 0161 303 9127, or see his catalogue of second-hand organ music on-line at www.organmusic.org.uk.
- Don't forget, too, that the Royal School of Church Music can offer both expert help and an excellent mail-order service.

Other than personal choice, I have tried to employ the following criteria:

- Large (and expensive) collections have mostly been avoided.
- Volumes with only one piece of the appropriate standard have been avoided.
- Volumes specifically aimed at a particular market (such as the many collections provided by Kevin Mayhew) have largely been omitted because they are essentially self-identifying and organists will be able to tell for themselves whether or not they will be appropriate.
- Music which is currently out-of-print or otherwise difficult to obtain has been omitted.

I can only hope that this very rudimentary list will be used as a springboard to explore a truly vast and infinitely rich repertoire. There is more than enough organ music to keep even the most avid sight-reader perfectly happy for a lifetime!

5.2. If you are an absolute beginner (and want to do it properly!)

Sanger, David	Play the Organ, Book 1, published by Novello (Music Sales)
Thomas, A M	Organ Practice Guide, published by the RSCM

No music in either of the following but both are excellent value and make a splendid introduction to the organ, its history and music:

Thistlethwaite & Webber	The Cambridge Companion to the organ (paperback) ISBN 0 - 521 - 57584 -2
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Baker, David	The Organ, published by Shire Publications ISBN 0 - 7478 - 0131 -2
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5.3. If you've got an electronic with 13 sticks for pedals

Baker, Kenneth	The Complete Organ Player, Book 1 (2, 3, 4, 5 etc. as well), published by Music Sales
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5.4. If you are a pianist who would like to play the organ:

Phillips, Gordon	Basic Organ Tutor, 3 volumes, published by Anium
Self, Adrian	Self Taught, Book 1, published by Animus (based on the CSO Training Scheme)
Self, Adrian	Self Taught, Book 2, published by Animus

5.5. If you are a pianist and not bothered about the pedals:

Boyce, William	8 Symphonies, (ed. Moore), (Mayhew)
Coleman, Henry	24 Interludes on Communion Hymns
Stanley, John	30 Voluntaries, in three books, Opus 5, 6 & 7, (Peters), (Not all technically easy by any means – start with Opus 5)
Thomas, A M	A Graded Anthology for Organ, Book 2, (Cramer)
Trevor, C H (ed.)	Manual Miscellany, 2 Books, (Elkin/Music Sales)
Trevor, C H (ed.)	Old English Organ Music for Manuals, 6 volumes, (OUP)
Trevor, C H (ed.)	Organ Music for Manuals, 6 volumes, (OUP)
Various	The Colebrooke Collection, (Animus)
Various	The Oxford Book of Wedding Music for Manuals, (OUP)
Wesley, Samuel	Ten Short Pieces, (Animus)

If you are desperate to get started there's always:

Simper, Caleb Voluntaries, in 12 volumes, (Stainer and Bell)
(of dubious musical value but endlessly reprinted so someone
somewhere must love them!)

Of course, there are literally thousands of works for organ without pedals, but the above provides a reasonable start. If you feel more adventurous, try the titles below, but beware – these are by no means easy!

Couperin, L Messe pour les Paroisses, (Belwin Mills)
Franck, César L'Organiste, 4 volumes, (UMP)
Handel, G F Organ Concertos Opus 4, 2 volumes, (Barenreiter)
Handel, G F Organ Concertos Opus 7, (ed. Williams), (OUP)
Haydn, F J 8 Pieces for Musical Clocks, (Novello)
Sweelinck, J-P Keyboard Works, (Dover)
Various 18th Century English Organ Music, 6 volumes, (Animus)
Vierne, Louis 24 Pièces en style libre, 2 volumes, (UMP or Master Musicians)

5.6. If you want to play the pedals and are looking for simplistic repertoire: (Up to and including Grade 5 Associated Board standard approximately)

Bach, J S 8 Short Preludes and Fugues, (Novello Book 1)
Elgar, Edward Vesper Voluntaries, (Faber)
Lefebure-Wély Favourite Organ Music Book 1, (ed. Sanger), (OUP)
Morrison, Graham Four Short Pieces, Set 1, (Animus)
Rawsthorne, Noel Aria, (Mayhew)
Thalben-Ball, G Elegy, (Paxton)
Thiman, Eric 8 Interludes Sets 1-3 Complete, (Novello)
Thomas, A M (ed.) A Graded Anthology for Organ, Books 3, 4 & 5, (Cramer)
Thomas, A M (ed.) The Church's Year, (Cramer)
Trevor, C H (ed.) Easy Graded Organ Music, 2 volumes, (OUP)
Trevor, C H (ed.) Organ music for services of thanksgiving, (OUP)

Obviously there are loads more pieces which come into this category of technical difficulty, but the titles above should contain very little *above* this level and so might provide a good start. The suggestions below come from collections or works where other movements may be of considerably greater difficulty:

Buxtehude, D Choral Preludes, (Breitkopf / Hansen) – some also available in "The
Progressive Organist", Books 1, 2 & 3, (Novello)
Hurford, Peter Meditation from Suite "Laudate Dominum", (OUP)
Also in "A Book of Organ Miniatures", (OUP)
Ireland, John Several pieces in "Organ Music of John Ireland", (Novello)
Karg-Elert, S Chorale-Improvisations, Opus 65, (Breitkopf) – some are easy.
Mathias, William Canzonetta and Chorale, "Mathias Organ Album", (OUP)
Mendelssohn, F Movements from the six sonatas
 Sonata 1: 2nd movement
 Sonata 3: 2nd movement
 Sonata 6: Fuga and Finale
Stanford, C V 6 Short Preludes and Postludes Set 1, Op.101 No.1, (Stainer and Bell)
Various Little Organ Book (in memory of Hubert Parry), (Banks)

5.7. If you seriously want to progress beyond Grade 5 standard:

Sanger, David Play the Organ, Book 2, (Novello).
It's far and away the best resource available for this level and contains a wealth of varied music and introduces the concept of stylistic appreciation. A *must have* for any serious organ student. There's also a very useful repertoire list.

5.8. For the aspiring Carlo Curley:

What follows is entirely personal. Lists are always fun, and so here are four. Apart from the final list, I hope that these pieces are not impossibly tricky.

Ten pieces which are a bit off the beaten track but fun to play:

Anon. The Robertsbridge Codex (c. 1320), (Doblinger). Some of the earliest organ music there is. Wonderfully virile. Not technically difficult but definitely not for the rhythmically challenged.

Balbastre C-B His umpteen Noels were so popular that the Archbishop of Paris banned them for fear of riots. They are published in three books by Belwin Mills and offer possibilities for all sorts of unlikely effects.

Bonnet, J In Memoriam Titanic (from 12 pieces pour Grand Orgue), (Leduc). Full of pathos and ravishing sounds, but either take out a mortgage or borrow it from a rich friend.

Dubois, T Marche de Rois Mages, (UMP). You'll need a pencil to wedge down a high E, and everyone will think the organ's ciphering.

Handel, G F Organ Concerto (The cuckoo and the nightingale), (Peters). It's the second movement with the birds. A free hand to blow a birdwarbler is probably not authentic but is more fun, or you could improvise an 'aviary' cadenza.

Hewitt, James The Battle of Trenton, (arr. E Power Biggs), (Theodore Presser). Complete twaddle but easy and terrific fun, describing Washington's victory.

Ireland, John Elegiac Romance (included in 'The Organ Music of John Ireland'), (Novello). Gorgeous Edwardian goo. It's not easy (partly in six flats) but pure musical indulgence.

Lefebure-Wély Scène et Fantaisie Pastorales, (Animus). A 'storm' piece which is not as difficult as most.

Sark, E Toccata Primi Toni, (Hansen). Written in 1951, this Danish neo-classic bacon positively spits in the pan. A joy to play. Useless on a soggy pneumatic action – try the Ireland instead.

Vivaldi/Bach Concerto in A minor, slow movement, (Novello Book 11). If all you have is one manual, no pedals and just an 8' flute, don't despair. It's worth playing the organ just for these two heavenly pages.

Ten pieces by twentieth century composers which won't drive you insane:

(although one or two might empty the church quite rapidly)

Alain, J Organ Works Volume 3, (Leduc). Most of this composer's music is extremely hard but this volume contains some beautifully polished gems which are easier. Look at Climat, Petite Pièce, Berceuse, Ballade en

	mode phrygien, Postlude pour l'Office de Complies. There are also the Deux Chorals, (Combre).
Hindemith, P	I've had a soft spot for Hindemith ever since a critic wrote of a performance I gave, "Why must organists play these pieces?" Well, there are three sonatas to choose from and the third is probably the most fun to play, with a real whizz-bang finale. It's hard to believe that it's actually a chorale-prelude.
Leighton, K	Six Fantasies on Hymn Tunes, (Basil Ramsey). This is a treasure-trove. Particularly effective are the little canonic variations on <i>Lamentto</i> and the huge fantasia on <i>Veni Emmanuel</i> . They are not easy but anything from the pen of this fine composer is worth the trouble.
Mathias, W	Carillon, (OUP). Everyone plays the <i>Processional</i> , but this late piece is probably easier and just as effective.
Messiaen, O	(Yes, HIM!) <i>Le Banquet Céleste</i> , (Durand). Unbelievably slow, intensely beautiful, but needs good celestes and a 4' stop which can be coupled to the pedals. Title has nothing to do with bankers.
Messiaen, O	(HIM again!) <i>Apparition de l'église éternelle</i> , (Lemoine). Incredibly slow with plenty of time to work out the next chords. Builds to an impressive climax.
Mushel, G	Toccata. Was in Volume 2 of <i>Modern Organ Music</i> , (OUP) and in <i>Soviet Organ Music</i> , (Peters). A sparkling dash through the snow which comes up fresh every time.
Peeters, F	There's so much of it, but the old favourite, <i>Suite Modale</i> , (Lemoine) is not quite as hard as much of his output and is a joy to play.
Steel, C	<i>Six Pieces</i> , (Novello), or <i>Suite Changing Moods</i> , (Basil Ramsey). These are two of the most imaginative and rewarding collections to have been written in the last thirty years. Great fun to play and to listen to and they will work on almost any two-manual organ.
Whitlock, P	Either the <i>Plymouth Suite</i> , (OUP), the three middle movements are easier than the two outer ones, or the <i>Complete Shorter Organ Music</i> , (OUP), and look at the <i>Three Reflections</i> , <i>Folk Tune</i> and <i>Andante Tranquillo</i> from the <i>Five Short Pieces</i> . Lovely stuff which fits the organ like a glove.

Ten pieces which sound a lot more difficult than they actually are:

Andriessen, H F	<i>Theme and Variations</i> , (Zengerink). Another piece it's worth learning the organ for. Grand stuff.
Bach, J S	<i>Fantasia (and Fugue) in A minor</i> , (Novello Book 12). It's not very great music and probably not even by Bach, but all these scales and arpeggios dashing all over the keyboard and a pretty somnolent pedal part are just the job. (The only tricky bit of pedal can actually be played on the manual).
Bach, J S	<i>The D major Fugue</i> , (Novello Book 12). Not the master at his best but it sounds like the real thing and is an awful lot easier than the other D major Fugue.
Buxtehude, D	<i>Variations on 'How brightly shines the Morning Star'</i> , (in <i>Organ Music for Christmas</i>), (OUP). Easy-peesy pedal part but lots of scope for fun registrations.
Guilmant, A	The 1 st movements of both the 3 rd and 4 th sonatas, (Schott), sound incredibly flashy, but are actually quite easy!

Pachelbel, J	Fantasia in C minor, In 'Self Taught 1", (Animus), also Easy Graded Organ Music, (OUP). Pull out Great to Fifteenth, imagine you're playing after Evensong at St. Paul's and just wallow in this gorgeous harmony.
Pierné, H C	Trois Pièces, (Durand). The Prélude sounds enormously difficult, but isn't and the Cantilène is a wonderful bit of schmaltz. Dust down the tremulant.
Reger, M	How nice to be able to include something by the man who must have had shares in Quink ink. The Toccata in D minor from Volume 1 of the Opus 129 pieces, (Hinrichsen), is very flashy with lots of sudden dynamic changes, but actually is fairly straightforward with a nice simple pedal part. The Fugue is not too bad either, but the real bonus of this collection is the lovely (and easy) Melodia in B flat.
Rheinberger, J	Sonata 8, (Novello or others), contains a terrific Scherzoso which is not particularly difficult. It also includes the great Passacaglia and a delightful Intermezzo, which makes it worth starting with this sonata.
Yon, P	Humoresque, (Belwin Mills). Bubbly little toccata for just one 8' flute and a pedal 16' coupled to it.

Ten pieces to avoid at all costs:

Don't worry if you can't play any of them – you never will – they are all quite impossible. Most of us bought the scores when we thought we might learn them one day. Ask Ian Hare, David Sanger or one of our indigenous virtuosi to play them, or else buy a decent CD.

Bach, J S	The Trio Sonatas – unless you are blessed with two brains.
Bossi, E	Etude Symphonique – book the osteopath before commencing.
Cocker, N	Tuba Tune – that wheezy Swell Cornopean will never sound like the York Minster Tuba, not even with the suboctave coupler.
Dupré, M	Variations sur un noel, the Prelude and Fugue in G minor, or indeed anything by this ridiculously impossible composer.
Duruflé, M	Suite – Don't even bother to try. It starts at Grade 20+ and gets progressively harder.
Liszt, F	Prelude and Fugue on BACH – the only way around this piece is to play it so fast that no-one really notices that you are actually making it up as you go along.
Mozart, W A	Fantasia in F minor – written for a mechanical device and not intended for humans.
Thalben-Ball, G	Variations on a theme of Paganini – do you seriously think that you will ever be able to do pedal glissandi in two directions at once?
Vierne, L	Naiades – don't waste time trying to work out a decent fingering; there isn't one. Just because it's quiet doesn't mean that it isn't absolutely impossible.
Widor, C M	The rest of the Fifth Symphony (apart from the nice slow bit just before the Toccata).

6. Improvisation

“Gaining Inspiration” or “Whither the Lost Chord?”

by John Morris

Contrary to many assumptions, you do not need to be a genius in order to be able to improvise. There is no denying that some show a greater aptitude than others, but this is true of most activities. Like everything else, it will improve with practice.

Improvisation can be fun!

We tend to think of improvisation as a necessary evil for filling in those unexpected gaps in a service, but do we ever improvise purely for pleasure in the privacy of an empty church or at home? Try it sometime and as you improve, keep a tape recorder handy, or a manuscript book, just in case you strike gold! Keep them handy anyway; it's amazing what can come to you whilst defrosting the cat, oiling the toaster, etc.

Extra-musical stimulation

The French are the masters of this art – I wonder whether the expressive French character can supply any clues? Think of impressionism; Debussy's association with images in his Preludes, Claire de lune, Golliwog's Cakewalk, etc.

Don't try to be too clever

Your improvisation does not need to be startlingly original. Everyday ideas in a coherent form will do. A well made speech is a good example of structured improvisation. Generally a speech which is read word for word has too many subordinate clauses and comes across in a stilted fashion, whereas the speaker who just uses notes for the outline and supplies the actual words spontaneously can be much more convincing. In fact, if you think about it, we spend most of our lives improvising in one way or another.

Practicalities

Start with singing and creating melodies only. If nothing comes to mind think of some evocative words or phrases – Pastorale, Ode to Joy, Sicilienne, Praise the Lord!, Lugubrious, Toccata, Let us give thanks, Sorrowful, I will lift up mine eyes, etc.

Poetry

Find a favourite poem and sing a line of it: this is, in fact, included in the Associated Board's Grade 7 and Grade 8 Practical Musicianship Tests. Or maybe you can think of a melodic shape by using a picture for inspiration, (Grade 8).

Rhythm

Perhaps you can think of a rhythm on its own and then clothe it with a melody. “I must pay the gas bill” will supply ideas for a rhythm, as will most everyday phrases, pleasant or otherwise!

One thing at a time

Notice that so far we have not mentioned *playing*. It is too difficult at first to successfully attempt both stages, i.e. creating a melody *and* cope with the mechanics of playing it. However, if you are prepared to work on them separately for a while, combining them will become easy.

Answering Phrases

Singing an answering phrase is a good way of encouraging logical musical thought. The phrase should balance the given phrase, maybe include an idea or two from it, and have a 'finished' feel to it, (i.e. not leaving the music 'up in the air'). It should not be like the three old ladies, (q.v.)

Group Work

Singing answering phrases in small groups is good as it can stimulate the imagination and produce constructive criticism. The Practical Musicianship tests for Grades 1 and 2 include examples of two bar answering phrases and four bar phrases in Grade 3. These do not require any set harmonic scheme.

Putting it together

So, how do we link up the brain with the keyboard? Start with a very well-known melody, one that you could sing or whistle in your sleep. Then try playing it by ear. Choose an easy key like C major.

Make sure that you are completely familiar with the key. Firstly, play the scale with the proper fingering and then try it in thirds and sixths. If all is well try root position triads:

G	A	B	then first	C	D	E	then second	E	F	G
E	F	G	inversions	G	A	B	inversions	C	D	E
C	D	E...		E	F	G...		G	A	B...

When you are satisfied that you can play your melody accurately, (for this purpose, fingering is not vitally important), try it in another key. Don't worry if accuracy takes a while – treat it as something of a 'hit-and-miss' experience! Just use one finger if you like.

A peek into the future

What has been said so far should enable you to make a good start with improvisation. We have not mentioned much about harmony as that really has to wait until fluency is gained with the melodic side of things. If you find that things are happening quickly, have a look at AB Grade 4 Practical Musicianship, (tonic and dominant harmonies), and Grade 5 (subdominant and supertonic harmonies).

Chord symbols / harmony

Grade 5 also has the opportunity of improvising an accompaniment using chord symbols. This is an alternative but equally useful way of gaining fluency with chords. Plenty of popular music uses chord symbols and some recent hymn books also make use of them. There is a very useful section in David Sanger's "Play the Organ" Volume 2, pp 202–207, in which he mentions, amongst other things, taking a chord sequence and improvising a melody above it,

an excellent idea once you feel fluent with melodies. As you progress, you will find a wide harmonic vocabulary an invaluable asset in imaginative improvisation.

Using what is already there

This is a collection of ways of 'manipulating' a tune so that it will spin things out if the unexpected happens. If the collection took too long, you could continue playing from the midway point of the tune. So, if it is "Glorious things...", I would pick it up from "Fading is the worldling's pleasure" and play the second half again, maybe playing the last line, (None but Zion's...), twice, with a good *rallentando* to wind up the proceedings. I have found that the most common reason for 'running out of hymn' during the Offertory is because a hymn with four-line verses has been chosen. Four or five verses of an eight-line tune should be long enough for most ordinary occasions.

Adagio e dolce

If the tune is to be played gently, the following works well. Start playing from the middle on strings, slower than normal, and then play the whole tune through, melody soloed on quiet oboe / clarinet / flute (4'). Very often, the last phrase can be repeated. It is a useful exercise to arrange hymn tunes so that the melody can be soloed in the right hand. All it really involves is the left hand taking over the alto part.

Funerals

Playing the melody as a right hand solo can be effective at the end of a Funeral where the last hymn has been e.g. "Abide with me", "The day thou gavest", "Amazing Grace", etc. With the latter, I have found it effective to do as outlined in the previous section but to extend the final phrase so:

Was blind but now...	(clarinet solo)
Was blind but now...	(strings)
Was blind but now I see	(clarinet solo)

A variation is to play the gentle tune all the way through with strings and right hand solo then pick it up from half way through, strings only, and play the final phrase solo, (maybe with extended cadence).

Echoing part of a phrase

Brackets = quiet stops only, otherwise right hand solo...

The angel Gabriel from heaven came (from heaven came)
 His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame (his eyes as flame)
 "All hail" said he "thou lowly maiden Ma—ry" (-den Ma—ry)
 Most highly favoured lady,
 Glo—, (Glo—), Glo—ria

Extending cadences

It is often useful to be able to extend the final cadence to pad things out: e.g. quadruple 3rd and 2nd chords from the end...

Come, with all thine angels come,
Bid us sing thy Har - - - - vest - - - - Home
 2-3-4 2-3-4

Coda

Obviously, the same thing won't work in every case – that's the whole point of improvisation! But these hints will cover quite a range of situations. I am sure that once you start experimenting and extending your musical imagination, you will find many more ways of doing things as you practice, develop and improve your very useful, newly acquired skill. Enjoy it and nurture it!

7. Some Thoughts on Accompaniment

by John Morris

Revised November 2012

Utopia!

My ideal is to have such a wonderful memory so as to only need to play a piece of music a few times and there it would be - for ever ingrained in the memory. The rest of the faculties would be left free to concentrate on controlling stops, pistons, pedals, as well as cope with the idiosyncrasies of the instrument and also to watch the conductor's every move, the conductor being clearly in view at all times.

However...

Back down to earth! Most of us need to work on memory, strange organs, awkwardly written accompaniments, questionable arrangements of orchestral scores, inconveniently positioned organs, a time lag, and a conductor whose abilities are not up to scratch.

Do you have the right disposition to be an accompanist?

Somebody who is inflexible in their outlook will never become a good accompanist. Being open-minded and receptive to, and respectful of, others' opinions is important and not the same as being a pushover.

Do you *enjoy* accompanying?

If you do, the chances are that you will find it easier. If you don't, then don't do it! Do you get on well with the people with whom you work? In turn, are they fair and considerate towards you? It's not about winners or losers but working side by side. You may well prefer some styles (e.g. baroque/romantic) over others - in this case there is a good chance that you will be more competent with the styles you prefer but that is no reason why you should not work at other styles.

Accompanying versus solo performing

The accompanist has a harder job. The soloist can get thoroughly absorbed in the music and be totally focussed whereas the accompanist not only needs to know his or her material inside out but also be aware of numerous peripheral factors. This is why...

Accompaniment is like reading the road

Drivers (especially if you get behind one) who are oblivious to their surroundings are frustrating. You need to read the road and anticipate. The better you know the road, the easier it is. So, also, an accompanist needs to know the music well and develop an instinct as to what is happening. This is not so far-fetched as it may seem. The more regularly you do it the easier it is.

Personal Organisation

Aptitude is always important, but organisation is a very close second. A lot of talent is wasted through poor planning.

It's not what you do but how you do it

Try to assess each piece and work out how many hours it will take to learn. Remember, slower expressive pieces may be no easier to accompany effectively than something that romps along like, say, Haydn's "The Heavens are Telling". Slow pieces may well be harder to accompany well as every note counts. Try to find out metronome marks from the conductor beforehand - these may be different to those in the score. Then produce a work sheet for yourself, divided into half or quarter hour slots.

Let's imagine that you are about to embark upon **Plomford's "Hymn to St Ivel"**. It is reasonably within your capabilities, the odd awkward corner, a few stop changes and a final flourish which involves some dexterity. After a few minutes silent reading and then one or two rough try-throughs, noting particularly awkward corners you decide that this will take you three-and-a-half hours in all.

Question: *By when do you need to learn it?*

Answer: *The end of next week.*

Right, let's say two-and-a-half hours this week and one hour next week. If you are able to practice in half-hour units, at the end of this week it could look something like this as you cross out each session:

Plomford: Hymn / St. Ivel 3.5 / 3 / 2.5 / 2 / 1.5 / 1 / 0.5

Be realistic in your planning and if in doubt, err on the side of more time required rather than less. You will start to refine your skills at predicting the amount of practice needed as time goes by. If you are accompanying on a regular basis, say once a week with five hours available per week for practice, you could create a four-weekly sheet looking something like this:

Plomford : Hymn / St. Ivel 3.5 / 3 / 2.5 / 2 / 1.5 / 1 / 0.5

3 new Psalms and Chants @ 1 hour each 3 / 2.5 / 2 / 1.5 / 1 / 0.5

That anthem that was almost right last time,
but could really do with a bit more work
on the middle section

2 / 1.5 / 1 / 0.5

New Communion Setting 11.5 / 11 / 10.5 / 10 / 9.5 / 9 / 8.5 / 8 / 7.5 / 7 / 6.5 /
6 / 5.5 / 5 / 4.5 / 4 / 3.5 / 3 / 2.5 / 2 / 1.5 / 1 / 0.5

Sometimes it will take less time, sometimes more, but it's always a nice feeling if you do happen to find the odd half-hour left over and can go onto something new or give some more time to something else. It's certainly much better that being in a panic-stricken fug and not knowing how much time you've got and, worse still, how much time you need.

Watching

Watching the conductor is important, but some places are more important than others.

Question: *Where are they?*

Answer: *Speed changes.*

Most pieces get slower at the end so the last few bars should be known as thoroughly as possible. However, many change midstream. Stanford's Magnificat in C looks easy enough, but what about those pauses? The piece would be ten times easier without them. Some conductors will say "hold each pause for so many beats", others will be less precise.

In any case, the first few bars of any piece should be known as thoroughly as possible so that you can get off to a secure start at the correct speed. Page turns (especially the bar or two after the turn) are also good places to memorise. Before starting the piece, reach agreement with the conductor as to whether you will just get an upbeat or whether you will get a whole bar. If the beats are fairly quick, a whole bar is better.

I'm all right, Jack – or am I?

If you go to a good stage production you will appreciate that the actors not only know their own lines but have a working knowledge of those around them. It is clear to the discerning listener if there is an empathy between accompanist and singers.

Perhaps you could decide that a proportion of your practice time could be spent learning the vocal parts and adjust your practice sheet accordingly. It is good score-reading exercise to try to read the other parts at the same time as your part, even if the whole thing does occasionally tie the fingers in knots! Another way is to record the accompaniment once you have learnt it and then play the vocal parts with it. Check also that speed and dynamic changes in the vocal parts are also written in your part.

Allowing for imperfections in the Singers

With the best will in the world, sometimes things go wrong. This could be a choir member coming in early and upsetting the others or the conductor missing an entry. The better you know the vocal parts the more chance you have of rescuing the performance. Slips on the singers' part also gives you an opportunity to demonstrate the true value of the ability to improvise!

Which notes can be left out?

Many scores which are piano reductions of orchestral scores need to be tweaked when played on the organ. The pedals probably take over the lower left hand notes and the harmony often reinforced by the left hand. A pick-up note (or anacrusis) can sometimes be omitted if it is the same as in the vocal part. A good arrangement should sound as though it were the original.

"We've been asked to sing Evensong at St. Polycarp's"

Wunderbar! Afternoon out for everyone, warm welcome and tasty nosh before the service.

Question: *What could be more perfect?*

Answer: *Ask the organist.*

It's all right for the singers, they only have to do what they always do but in different surroundings and get used to the acoustic. But what about Our Hero? Gone is the familiar friend he or she plays each week. The nightmare has arrived. Noisy tracker action, yellow keys with furrows and chips out of the edges, non-RCO pedalboard, combination pedals, but to Great only and spring-loaded swell pedal that will only lock in the open or closed position, and a highly menacing "doiynnnng" every time you play bottom D flat. (This is not my imagination

working overtime - it is an instrument within a few miles of Carlisle where I once found myself in this situation!)

What do I do with this strange organ?

If you can, visit and play the instrument before agreeing to the final choice of music. If you can't, get as detailed and complete a specification and description as possible, maybe even with a drawing/diagram of the console and make that the basis for deciding the programme.

There is much music that can - with a little imagination - be performed on instruments from the humblest to the most mighty. But it really does sound silly to hear someone struggling with Howells' *Collegium Regale* on a seven-stop worn-out tracker job. It is surprising the respect which you can often gain if you say "no" to over-ambitious proposals. Do not be bullied or manipulated with such comments as "Oh, you'll be all right".

Having agreed on the musical content, practice it on your own instrument, but 'faking' the conditions which will apply when the real thing happens. It is a good idea to try and predict the stops you will need beforehand, even if you have to modify them on the day. Remember, every rest in the organ part is worth its weight in gold!

Chief or Indian?

Is the organist to lead or to be led? If someone is conducting, the organist follows, but if not, the organist usually leads. Even where there is a conductor, hymns will often be left to the player. It is important to be as consistent as possible in gaps between verses and in using 'gathering notes' (which I generally dislike). But whatever you decide, be consistent and don't be afraid of the two or three beats silence between verses.

Plainsong Hymns

Plainsong hymns, strictly speaking, should be for voices alone, but can be rewarding to accompany if you have confident singers and you can vary the accompaniment and the registration - rather like psalms.

Try to use light registrations and be sensitive to the flow of the words. If you wish to compose or improvise your own accompaniments, avoid strong chords like second inversions and dominant sevenths and go mainly for first inversions with a sprinkling of root positions. Pedals should not really be used but, if so, only a very light 16' at, say, the Amen.

Certain plainsong - if well known - can be accompanied with a higher profile: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" sounds lovely if sung with a large body of singers and a fairly solid organ accompaniment. It falls down if the organ part is too lumpy, i.e. there are too many chords. Bad examples of this are in AMR (49), AMNS (26) or SOP (66) and good examples in EH (8) or NEH (11).

The plainsong accompaniment should support and (if no conductor) discreetly lead without getting in the way of the fluidity of the music. Consistency is important here so that the underlying rhythm of each verse is consistent without sounding too regimented. Sing it yourself during your practice sessions.

The organist's and singers' genuine musicianship and subtle nuances really come into play here. The lovely "Missa de Angelis" (a good alternative to Merbecke) can also send shivers down the spine if handled positively but sensitively.

Was it always like this?

Historically, the performance was often directed from the harpsichord rather than a dedicated conductor. The idea of an assistant organist in a cathedral is relatively recent - before that, the man in charge would both accompany and direct the choral music, often with members of the choir providing cues. The mysterious hand on the organ case of Ripon Cathedral is an early example of long-distance communication!

Anglican Chant

Much of what has been said about plainsong also applies to psalm accompaniment. Again, the blurring of the edges between leader and follower can be a problem if the psalm is sung congregationally. In this case, a no-nonsense approach needs to be taken unless it is sung so often that the congregation instinctively knows what to do.

Accompanying an accomplished choir in psalm singing can be immensely rewarding. There are opportunities for a wide palette of registrations to reflect the moods of different verses. These should always be worked out beforehand and written in pencil beside the text. There are also opportunities for playing single-note descants above the choir in some verses. I find the best way to do this is to write the actual letter-names of the notes to be used above the words. If the chant can be memorised, this really is a great help.

Coda

Your art of accompaniment should consolidate and mature, but still evolve. Don't confuse imagination with inconsistency. Try to keep your mind open with regards to interpretation - you may hear a new performance which alters your whole perception of a piece. Be receptive and study background material as much as possible. In the case of instrumental accompaniments arranged for organ, try to listen to the original version wherever possible. Try to get on well with the people you work with. Try to instigate a "Care and Maintenance" programme where you spend some of your practice time on repertoire not necessarily on the forthcoming list. Keep list of awkward corners in a notebook. Remember no two pieces are the same. An organist's job can - at times - be lonely, but a meeting of minds through discussion, social or otherwise, will often make the difference between average and convincing performances. Good luck!

http://www2.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page is an excellent source of free, public domain music for you to download.

Appendix - Dos and Don'ts for Accompanists

I asked some famous musicians for their thoughts on this matter. Mr Jeremy Suter, Mr Jamie Brand, Mr Anthony Gowing, and Mr John Robinson all very kindly responded. If there is repetition it is because more than one person made the comment and I have reproduced them with a minimum of editing and in no particular order save for grouping similar comments together. Here they are:

DOES

- *Do* memorise the music (if there is time)
- *Do* know your accompaniment backwards - if accompanying on organ, this means you can watch and follow the choir parts and not get behind!
- *Do* get to know the choir parts

- *Do* cultivate the ability to score read in rehearsal and possibly even in performance!
- *Do* follow what the conductor is saying to the choir in rehearsal so that you will be ready to give the notes and pick up the piece from any particular point promptly
- *Do* have dialogue with the conductor - this is essential as is planning
- *Do* listen to whomever you are accompanying in the case of a piano accompaniment; it is vital for rendering a sensitive accompaniment
- *Do* listen
- *Do* watch
- *Do* always watch the conductor at least once a bar (especially if the singers are a long way away)
- *Do* watch the conductor (if they are clear)
- *Do* communicate as to whether you will get just a beat or a whole bar in
- *Do* play rhythmically
- *Do* be confident. The conductor should never spring sight reading on you
- *Do* follow the flow and outline in a confident manner rather than trying to play every single note (especially if it is an orchestral arrangement)
- *Do* cultivate the ability to judiciously and musically edit the accompaniment so that it is playable in a musical style
- *Do* play fractionally ahead (if that's how the conductor likes it)
- *Do* anticipate slightly if choir is any distance from the console
- *Do* play the words if accompanying Lieder/song. You have to colour the text with the sound you make
- *Do* "breathe" with the instrument/voice you are accompanying. Even hymns on the organ in a church setting need this - it is vital!
- *Do* breathe with the choir (assuming they breathe)
- *Do* as you're told (if you have to)
- *Do* (to conductors) appreciate and recognise the extreme amount of preparation which the accompanist makes
- *Do* go into accompanying with your eyes open before committing yourself

DON'TS

- *Don't panic*
- *Don't (organ) listen to the choir and adjust if the instrument is a long way from the choir - everything will get slower and slower. Just watch, play rhythmically and close your ears! 9 times out of 10 most reasonable conductors will go with you anyway*
- *Don't play like a machine (unless it's by Mathias)*
- *Don't play unrhythmically*
- *Don't let the pedals be late (they usually are)*
- *Don't take matters into your own hands (unless it's for the good of the music)*
- *Don't try to 'drive' a performance - if you don't agree with a tempo that has been set by whomever you are accompanying, tough. It's not your job*
- *Don't play too loudly. As in the previous point, it isn't about you. Being an accompanist is often a thankless task, but it is the very best exponents who one doesn't notice*
- *Don't rely on luck (any more than the lottery)*
- *Don't kick up a fuss (unless you're sufficiently senior)*

8. Fitting Hymn Tunes to Words

by John Morris

Virtually all hymns have a metre. This is a simple device measuring the number of syllables per line. The most usual metres are:

Long metre (LM)	8, 8, 8, 8
Common metre (CM)	8, 6, 8, 6
Short metre (SM)	6, 6, 8, 6

“D” signifies double length, e.g. DCM = 8, 6, 8, 6, 8, 6, 8, 6

The three metres shown above are for four-line verses; “D” will therefore indicate eight-line verses. It is necessary to be careful on occasions as a particular hymn (e.g. *Love Divine* or *Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow*) may be published as so many verses of eight lines, or twice as many verses of four lines. An unfortunate event which I witnessed as a choirboy, (alas, many years ago), involved a somewhat truculent member of the congregation setting about the organist with a stout umbrella. At the end of a long day the unfortunate musician had played the shorter tune to the latter hymn but with his thoughts on his first pint of beer after Evensong had only played it four times, forgetting that each of the four verses in the book actually has eight lines. The result of this was a huge intake of breath after verse four shortly followed by an explosion of splutters. The less than charitable language between the two of them was enough to make anybody blush!

Precisely why ‘Common Metre’ is known as such is something of a mystery. In most books there are as many, if not more, Long Metre tunes.

Any tune is interchangeable with another providing that they both have the same metre. Hymn books will often suggest alternative tunes, but these are not mandatory. It is sufficient to look up the metre in the metrical index of the book and any one of the tunes under that heading will fit the words in question. Usually it is only the full music edition of the hymn book which has a metrical index. Ancient and Modern Revised (AMR) has a total of 144 different metres plus fourteen irregular hymns.

Sometimes there is only one tune that will fit a particular hymn, some examples being *Jesus lives!* (St. Albinus), *Angel Voices* (Angel Voices), *Now thank we* (Nun Danket), *Let all the world* (Luckington), *We plough the fields* (Wir pflugen) and *Onward Christian Soldiers* (St. Gertrude). So, in other words, if you don’t like the set tune for any of the above hymns, you will have to compose your own (or get somebody else to!)

The fourteen irregular hymns in AMR include *O come all ye faithful*, *In the bleak mid-winter*, *God is working his purpose out* and *St. Patrick’s Breastplate*. If you are familiar with these you will appreciate the problems that can occur, especially in *In the bleak mid-winter*. In cases such as these, it is essential for the organist to know the hymn inside out. Each verse has a similar but not identical metre. That accounts for the notes in small print, the bar-lines between the words or both. These are cases when a well rehearsed choir is a boon.

One final word: the same metre can exist in both *iambic* and *trochaic* form; in other words there is the same number of syllables involved, but the accentuation is different. The tune would fit the words but all the accents would be in the wrong place.

9. Participants Questionnaire

To acquire feedback on the effectiveness of courses, participants are sometimes issued with a questionnaire, for example:

*If you are not playing at a church at the moment, ignore the questions marked **

- 1) Which parts of the Training Course did you find most helpful?
- 2) What help would you have liked which was not covered by the Course?
- 3) Do you think it would be useful to join a local group of organists?
- 4) What topics or activities do you think such a group would be involved in?
- 5) If you are not playing for services but have been asked to, what are the reasons which prevented you from playing?
- 6) How was the request made? (Playing or not)
- 7) Have you studied the organ previously to being asked?
- 8) * Which church are you playing at?
- 9) * Is the organ pipe or electronic? Please briefly describe the instrument.
- 10) What, if any, are your views about the relative merits of pipe and electronic organs?
- 11) * If you share playing, how is it shared?
- 12) * Please specify if you are experiencing problems (e.g. state of organ, lack of partnership with clergy, unrealistic fees, etc)
- 13) Would you be prepared to demonstrate the organ to groups of pupils from local schools?
- 14) What topics would you like included in any future one-day courses?
- 15) Please give any other information you might think relevant.