

André Thomas, **KEEP YOUR LAMPS!** (Hinslow Music HMC-577), SATB with conga drums. André Thomas is a well-known master of the spiritual arrangement, and this setting is very popular. The repetitive nature of the piece gives it a continual forward motion right to the end. It is not difficult and would work well with a youth choir.

TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE TO PLAY THE ORGAN

Leslie Wolf Robb

Rosephanye Powell, THE WORD WAS GOD (Gentry JG2196), SATB a cappella. If you are looking for a lively setting of John 1:1–3, this is it! There is some divisi but it is doable even with a small choir, and you will enjoy the spirit of the syncopations. As an introduction to a gospel style, Rosephanye Powell's setting is definitely worth a look. She understands vocal range, and your choir will enjoy this uplifting piece! Medium difficulty.

Rosephanye Powell, NON NOBIS, DOMINE (Gentry JG2291), SSATBB a cappella. A setting in Latin of the familiar text that gathers momentum with its fast, four-measure phrases in the men's part, while the women contrast this with more lyrical writing. A good festival piece, also suitable for high school or college choirs.

Rosephanye Powell, SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A MOTHERLESS CHILD (Gentry), SATB with some divisi. I commissioned this setting of the familiar spiritual from Rosephanye two years ago; she decided to incorporate into the setting several West African phrases that add a poignant touch to the lament. It would make a strong statement for a Lenten anthem, perhaps being paired with a setting of "By the rivers of Babylon" in the same service. Highly recommended.

Adolphus Hailstork, THE SONG OF DEBORAH (Alliance Music AMP 0056), SATB and soprano/alto soli a cappella. Commissioned for the 1994 AGO National Convention in Dallas, this is a strong work, a setting of words from the Old Testament book of Judges. Hailstork writes challenging music, but music that is worth the effort. The piece makes use of lots of fourths, sounding fanfare-like, and has a beautiful, luminous closing.

Adolphus Hailstork, GO DOWN, MOSES (Presser 312-41763), SATB a cappella with bass solo. With many settings of this spiritual available, I was taken with Hailstork's rhythmic underpinning of the bass solo that makes the music very powerful. If you have a strong bass soloist, this is a piece you will want to consider—the words "Let them go" have a real impact in this wonderful setting.

PHILIP BRUNELLE

JOHN (not his real name) came for his first lesson with me last Tuesday. He's eight and has had about six months of piano with another teacher. He switched to me for lessons because he wants to study organ so much. Not too many years ago, he and his mother would have been told that he was too young—that he needed to have several years of piano before starting organ and that he needed to be taller in order to reach the pedals properly. Fortunately, thanks to the availability of pedal extenders and early-level organ music (such as the wealth of materials available through Wayne Leupold Editions), John will be playing the organ (in addition to piano, so that he builds a solid technique) in a few weeks, rather than waiting years—and I can capitalize on his tremendous interest in and enthusiasm for the King of Instruments!

It has always seemed very natural to me that young people would study the organ—after all, I began my studies at age eight on a Hammond B–3! I was much more excited about the organ than the piano at that age, much to my father's dismay, as you could rent a piano but had to purchase an organ. I see the same fascination with the King of Instruments among my students today. I am fortunate in my work as music director in a Lutheran church to be part of a congregation that has a preschool–eighth-grade day school as part of its ministry. Students attend chapel services each Wednesday, where they hear a variety of styles of music and instruments, including organ. In addition, students up through fifth grade can have their lessons during the school day, which is wonderful in terms of scheduling.

Finding young organ students has been relatively easy for me. Students in our day school hear the organ played regularly at weekly chapel services, both by me and by the students. Since choir is a requirement for students in kindergarten through fourth grade, that provides additional opportunities for introducing students to the organ. My piano students hear their peers who study organ perform at three student recitals each year. The San Diego AGO Chapter has an active scholarship program that includes scholarships for pianists of any age who wish to study the organ and scholarships for students who already play the organ. The chapter has put on two Pipe Organ Encounters as well. All of these activities have generated interest in the organ in our community and have encouraged young people to study organ. I encourage all of my piano students to give the organ a try—perhaps working on just one short organ piece in addition to their current piano assignment. Because early-level pieces have minimal pedal, they can practice these on the piano and still have success at the organ at their next lesson—and they're always excited by the glorious sound and the opportunity to use multiple keyboards and push pistons.

I do require that students study piano

along with their organ work in order to build a strong technical foundation and for exposure to a wide variety of musical literature. For the youngest students, a half-hour lesson works well with one organ piece in addition to their piano pieces. As students become more advanced, we increase lesson time to 45 minutes and eventually an hour, with a gradual increase in the amount of organ work until the lesson is half organ and half piano.

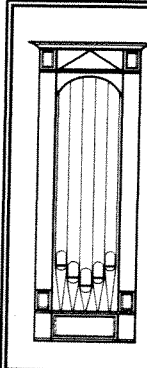
Finding practice organs for students has occasionally been a challenge, but as organists look for new practice organs for their homes, they have been very generous to those of us with young students by providing the organs free or at a very minimal cost, so that these children can have as much practice time as possible. In this age of multiple after-school activities, it's a tremendous advantage when students can have an organ in their own home for practice. Often this inspires a younger brother or sister to study organ as well.

Finding organ shoes for constantly growing feet can be a challenge—I keep a box for shoes that students have outgrown, and parents are always grateful for a chance to browse through them rather than having to purchase new ones so frequently. Given the rate at which kids grow today, a pair of shoes usually goes through several owners before they wear out!

Nowadays, there are many things competing for students' interest and time—sports, academics, social events, and church groups. I've found that a student's interest in organ can be maintained and encouraged by providing a variety of incentives. As students progress in their playing, they can play for school programs (especially if they attend a parochial school, where there usually is an organ!), church services, and AGO chapter events. They can play in student recitals, participate in organ scholarship auditions and competitions, and attend Pipe Organ Encounters—all are great opportunities, not only to perform but also to meet other young people who are as excited about the organ as they are.

Your situation may be very different—but surely there is at least one young student in your church or community who would like to try the organ. Remember those who encouraged you in your early days at the organ and pass that on to those who will be the organists of the future!

Leslie Wolf Robb received a BA in music from San Diego State University, and has done extensive graduate work in keyboard pedagogy. She currently is organist and director of music at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School in San Diego, and teaches piano and organ to both children and adults. She has served on the board of the San Diego AGO Chapter in many capacities, and was dean from 2001 to 2003. She is presently chair of the San Diego Chapter's scholarship committee and is the director of the AGO's Committee on Regional Conventions. Her materials for organ instruction are published by Wayne Leupold Editions.



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