

## New Anthem for the Service Playing Exam

### John Rutter's *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*

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The English style of anthem accompaniments has a long and rich history. In America, we have enjoyed recordings and broadcasts of such venues as St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in London, Clare College and King's College in Cambridge, and others. John Rutter comes to us from this tradition—but he gives this piece a new and delightful twist, and a lighter and thoroughly modern texture.

The recent edition of the *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* by Oxford University Press (2015) contains these notes from the composer:

My juvenile composition (I truly cannot remember why I wrote it) lay in a drawer for some two years until I pulled it out to fill a gap in a Christmas recording I had been invited to conduct while a student at Cambridge. I expected to hear no more of it, and was surprised when David Willcocks asked to look at a score, which he drew to the attention of Oxford University Press. They asked to publish it—along with most of the other items in my debut recording, which was of carols. I was astounded when the *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* quickly became a best seller, and now I am quietly amazed that, 50 years on, the shepherd is still piping as merrily as ever . . .

Concerning the performance of the piece, he writes:

Many choirs have discovered that the *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* is not as easy to sing as they expected from hearing professional performances and recordings of it. It calls for rhythmic precision, pinpoint pitch accuracy, and the ability to project a quite wordy and fast-moving text to the listener. The changing time signatures have often given trouble, and the solution is to remember that quavers [eighth-notes] remain absolutely constant. In fact, the 3/8–2/4 passages could have been notated without changing from 4/4, but the resultant syncopations might have given even more trouble.

If I may make one heartfelt plea based on hearing many performances, it is not to slow down in verse three; the more tranquil feeling called for can be conveyed by beating in two rather than in four from letter C to letter D and after the return to 4/4 in this verse. To slow the tempo just weakens the momentum of the carol.

This is such great information: *crisp articulation* and *steady rhythmic playing*.

At this point, I encourage you to listen to recordings of the *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* on YouTube. While a number of recordings are available, I believe the two presented here are the best for our discussion. [Tinyurl.com/y8za9d8p](http://Tinyurl.com/y8za9d8p) is a particularly good recording with the original orchestration. From this recording, we can glean the texture, timbre, and articulation. The piccolo part is particularly interesting and thanks to the cameraman, we see when it plays and when the player switches back to the flute. Because the piccolo is about half the size of a flute, it sounds one

octave higher. Music for the piccolo is notated one octave below the actual pitch, so the piccolo can be considered a transposing instrument.

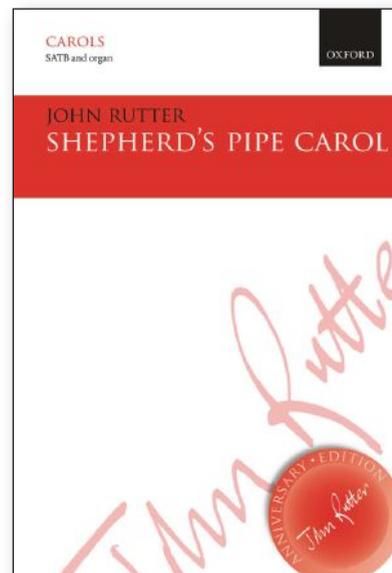
A fine setting of the carol with organ can be followed at [Tinyurl.com/yae99slw](http://Tinyurl.com/yae99slw), from King's College, Cambridge. Here we can see at the beginning the left hand on the Swell and the right hand on the Choir. The

Swell registration is *mf* foundations 8' and 4' with the Swell box almost closed; the Choir is an 8' flute and a spikey 2'. (Remember that the orchestra piccolo plays an octave higher than written.) In many orchestrations the flute often plays an octave above the oboe. So here is our 2' Piccolo on the Choir playing two octaves above the 8' flute. (If you have the choice I would choose an 8' Gedackt or Rohrflöte. They tend to have more of the woodwind sound.) On the Great use a light 8' Bourdon (possibly with a light 4' flute, depending on the choir singing), with both the Swell and Choir coupled.

This new edition (2015) has a pedal part on its own staff. This is particularly nice, since the real bass part is often difficult to decipher in piano versions of orchestral scores. The only way to be sure of the bass part is to look at the original orchestral score. (Seeing the score is especially important when playing oratorio accompaniments.) Here, for the Pedal, I would advise a light 16' flute stop, and, if you have it, a light 16' string, to imitate the string bass in the orchestra. If you have a nice 16' Bourdon, use it. The English seem to love the Pedal to be a bit more substantial than the manuals. Use the Swell to Pedal, since the left hand and pedal work as an accompanimental unit.

Here are some specific suggestions:

- Begin with left hand on Swell and right hand on Choir.
- m. 9, close Choir to half; at m. 8, open Choir for one measure then close again; repeat for m. 10.
- m. 12, right hand goes to the Great; m. 20, right hand goes back to the Choir with the box closed to half.
- At B open the Choir box again.
- For the second ending, both hands go to the Swell, and close the box (for the exam I would suggest playing the small notes) as per Mr. Rutter, making sure to maintain the tempo.



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- At D, both hands on Swell with the box closed; prepare the Choir box to be open at E.
- m. 63 open the Swell to half; m. 65 close Choir to half.
- m. 72 during rest, add 4' and 2' to Swell (no mixtures).
- m. 73, right hand goes to Great, open the Swell.
- m. 81 after second beat, Swell: remove 4' and 2' and close box to half; right hand goes to Choir.
- m. 84 during rest, add 4' and 2' to Swell (possibly the Oboe if it is warm and not loud); right hand moves to Great.
- At G after beat 3, Swell returns to beginning registration; m. 94, right hand moves to Choir with box at half.
- m. 100, both hands on Swell, close the box.
- m. 102, N.B. *poco meno mosso*; reduce Swell and Pedal; Choir nearly closed (as if on a hill far away).
- Last chord, both hands on Great; full Swell with reeds, but no mixture; Pedal with 16' reed.

Remember that these suggestions are just one approach to this work.

At this point, I encourage you view two videos in the *AGO Masters Series*: the wonderful video about Gerre Hancock and the delightful video on Frederick Swann. Both of these master musicians provide inspiring words to guide you as you look at anthem accompaniments. (These videos can be viewed in their entirety on the AGO website via the Educational Resources page.) Watch other videos from English cathedrals and churches with good choral programs to get the sound of the English anthem accompaniment style in your ears.

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