

The **INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SCORE LIBRARY PROJECT** *as a Practical Resource for Service Playing*

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The last decade has seen a proliferation of Internet-based music sites offering sheet music for free downloading and printing. Both a bane and a blessing to the practicing organist and musicologist, the abundance of such musical resources can seem overwhelming without a viable plan to explore and exploit the veritable riches available online. Arguably, the most notable of these sites is the Petrucci Music Library, also known as the International Music Score Library Project (Imslp.org), a repository of around 300,000 public-domain scores of manifold genres and instrumentations named after Ottaviano Petrucci (1466–1539), one of the first music publishers of the Renaissance.¹

Negotiating musical resources online requires a rudimentary knowledge of, and respect for, the complex copyright laws of the United States, Europe, and Canada. According to the Church Music Publishers Association, the U.S. Copyright Law “grants the copyright owner exclusive rights to their creative work for a specific period of time or term. The term of copyright protection for works published prior to 1978 is 95 years from the date of publication. For works published after 1977, the term is equal to the length of the life of the author/creator plus 70 years.”²

Copyright strictures can evince a byzantine complexity, especially considering the complications arising from the copyrighting of modern editions of long-dead composers’ works, which, when compiled by living editors, are usually under their own copyright. Nonetheless, assembling truly copyright-free musical scores in an accessible and public forum remains the goal



The IMSLP logo is a capital letter A, taken from the first press-printed book of polyphonic music, the *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton*, published in 1501. Its printer, Ottaviano Petrucci, is this library’s namesake.

of the Petrucci Music Library, henceforth called “IMSLP.”

Launched in 2006, IMSLP is wiki-based, meaning it is designed for collaborative additions and deletions of content and configuration.³ This essay will sift through the often unwieldy amount of content on the site in order to suggest where it might be most beneficial and practical to the church organist. Instead of being provided cumbersome URLs for each piece or composer mentioned, the reader may easily reference each piece by searching for the composer and title on the home page. For our purposes, titles are provided that correspond to the manner in which they are cataloged within IMSLP, regardless of the original iteration of the title.

IMSLP began as a repository for the Bach-Gesellschaft edition of Johann Sebastian Bach’s works, published by Breitkopf & Härtel of Leipzig between 1851 and 1899, and the cantatas, organ works, and orchestral settings by

Bach remain the staple of the online database. Increasingly, the instrumental and choral parts (to the cantatas, for example) are also available along with the full scores. But Bach’s organ music is only a springboard into the treasures found on IMSLP, which can provide a wealth of service music. Johann Pachelbel’s organ chorale preludes from Seiffert’s Breitkopf & Härtel edition, republished by Dover in 1994, are all available. Eschewing much of the florid melodic ornamentation of other Baroque chorale settings, this collection contains accessible music for the organist and the congregation alike, as the cantus firmus is clearly declaimed in most settings.

Of a very different style are the 32 *Praeludia zu geistlichen Liedern vor zwey Claviere u. Pedal* by Gottfried August Homilius (1714–85), organist at

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the Kreuzkirche and the Frauenkirche in Dresden, and a proponent of the *empfindsamer Stil*, whose chorale settings are seemingly more inventive and less restrained than earlier Baroque composers. This particular volume has been typeset from the original manuscript by editor Pierre Gouin. Although Carus Verlag publishes Homilius’s works (albeit at a hefty price), sometimes one simply needs a chorale prelude on a rather obscure tune, and it is helpful to be able to view the mu-

sis online first.⁴ Also having produced a considerable number of chorale preludes, admittedly most useful to the Lutheran organist, are Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (1663–1712), whose 53 chorale preludes collected online are taken from the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst* of 1905; Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770–1846), whose *105 Organ Preludes* taken from the Peters Edition of 1887 contain 28 actual chorale preludes with the remainder being free pieces arranged by key and most notable for being composed in an era not known for its chorale prelude production; and the *30 Chorale Vorspiele*, Op. 70, of Wilhelm Rudnick (1850–1927), which represent a return to simplicity. Scanning Rudnick's music index on IMSLP also reveals more liturgical organ music as well as five "organ sonatas" based on hymn tunes.

Of course, sometimes lesser-known composers are deservedly so, and the astute musician will need to be able to discern musical value in each composer and piece. The era of physical printing allowed for metaphorical winnowing to occur, whereby music of lower quality would fall aside in favor of newer, if not necessarily better, music. As might be expected, the opening of an online music archive distresses this natural selection, and surely there are many composers now revived whose music quite deservedly had fallen into disuse. Yet, sometimes an organist needs a hymn prelude on a certain obscure tune, or perhaps a prelude or postlude of a certain character to last a certain amount of time within the ritual, and some lesser-known music may

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Some music tends to span that ineffable breach between secular concert repertoire and liturgical sacred music, perhaps not more so than compositions of Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933) and Max Reger (1873–1916), the latter of whom is probably more known for his concert works than his church music. Reger's collection of pieces on IMSLP includes 52 *Chorales*, Op. 67, which, far from being sight-readable, nevertheless present few of the challenges of the larger chorale fantasias, for example. Similarly, his *Choral Preludes for Organ*, Op. 79b, provide chorale preludes accessible to performer and listener alike, a useful gem from this volume being a setting of "A Mighty Fortress" with the cantus firmus in the pedal, not dissimilar from Pachelbel's two centuries earlier. The little pieces



of his 30 *Kleine Choralvorspiele*, Op. 135, are really better classified as chorale harmonizations, but are easy and practical for liturgical use.

Karg-Elert's *Choral-Improvisationen für Orgel*, Op. 65, is comprised of six volumes, published from 1906 to 1908, arranged according to the church year. These pieces are mostly brief but fairly technically complex. Discoveries here include his *Easy Duets for Harmonium and Piano*, a collection of three playfully programmatic pieces, and his *Improvisation on Nearer, My God, to Thee*, a highly colorful solo organ piece written as an homage to and depicting the sinking of the RMS *Titanic* in 1912.

Heretofore, the discussion has focused on “chorale” preludes —i.e., these composers stand squarely within the German chorale tradition. Organists from other traditions should not abjure this music simply because many are of Germanic provenance. After all, tunes such as O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden, Liebster Jesu, Es ist ein Ros, Lobe den Herren, Nun danket alle Gott, and the aforementioned Ein feste Burg are but a representative element of the chorale tradition that can be found within modern mainline hymnals and which form a collective, ecumenical hymnological heritage. The Victorian hymn “explosion,” precipitated and animated by the numerous printings of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in the second half of the 19th century, and coupled with the advancement in organ design in the United Kingdom and the United

States, would result in a concomitant surge of sacred organ composition, evidence of which is found in IMSLP.

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848–1918), probably better known for his choral works and larger organ pieces, published his *Choral Preludes* in two volumes of seven pieces each in 1912 and 1916. Due to their length and relative challenges, they would probably serve better as preludes or postludes to a service; but two notable settings, both in Volume II, are a meditative version of Eventide and a toccata-like setting of Hanover. Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), a founder of the Royal College of Music, published 6 *Preludes for Organ*, Op. 88, within which is a setting of Tallis' Canon. His *Six Short Preludes for Organ*, Op. 101 and 105, are mostly non-hymn based, but stand as worthy service music. Alec Rowley (1892–1958), an English composer connected with Henry Willis and Sons Ltd, writes in a pleasantly restrained Romantic style, as evidenced in his *Preludes Based on Famous Hymn Tunes*, published between 1951 and 1954. These five volumes contain settings of common tunes as Greensleeves, Rockingham, Veni Sancte Spiritus, St. George's Windsor, and a separate setting of St. Clement. A glance at Rowley's oeuvre for organ reveals programmatic pieces, concert works, and many further hymn preludes, including *Nine Hymn-Tune Voluntaries* of 1958.

Turning to North America, Dudley Buck (1839–1909) is represented by a number of concert works on IMSLP, including his famous *Concert Variations on The Star Spangled Banner*, but also including his 6 *Short Chorale Preludes*, Op. 49, the highlights of which are settings of St. Anne and Old Hundredth. (There is even a facsimile of *Variations for Organ on Home, Sweet Home!*) Peter Christian Lutkin (1858–1931) is probably best known for his choral music, most notably his benedictory "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," but is less known as a Founder of the American Guild of Organists in 1896; his *Hymn Tune Transcriptions for Organ* contains ten hymn arrange-



ments, probably best suited for service music rather than as hymn preludes, based loosely on the liturgical year with tunes including Veni, Veni, Emmanuel; Dix; Nicaea; and Mendelssohn. William Carl (1865–1936), organist at First Presbyterian Church in New York City, a founder of the Guilman Organ School, and noted for his compilations and editions of "historical" organ repertoire, in 1900 published *Thirty Postludes for Organ*. In the preface, the author states their purpose as follows: "In the extensive development of modern organ literature, the proportion of compositions written for use as postludes in the church service is surprisingly small." The volume seeks to rectify this lacuna by assembling short, generally festive pieces by relatively obscure composers, collected from "London, Paris, Antwerp, Brussels and Copenhagen, as well as New York and Boston."⁶

Naturally, IMSLP will be limited necessarily in its contemporary repertoire, because of copyright limitations. Yet, there are still composers of quality and note whose work is represented on IMSLP. Gaël Liardon, a Swiss composer and organist, has numerous settings of chorale tunes (both Reformed and Lutheran) that are rather useful. His organ works are generally written in a neo-Classical style with a predominance of partitas and fuguetas, the latter of which make excellent hymn in-

troductions because of their brevity and relatively clear declamation of the cantus firmus.⁷ Rob Peters (b. 1969) is a Dutch organist who maintains a large collection of his music at IMSLP, among which are a number of chorale prelude collections that can tend to be harmonically adventurous in places. That IMSLP offers the option to upload and listen to recordings is particularly convenient when exploring the modern repertoire for which there may not be any other representative audio samples.

The intrepid musicological explorer into the recesses of IMSLP wishing to discover other treasures will find an increasing number of manuscript facsimiles, particularly within the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, including a number of the cantatas and the *Orgelbüchlein*. A glance at some of these facsimiles engenders an appreciation for the editors and publishers who labored to decipher the peculiarities of a particular composer's handwriting, perhaps allowing us to glean the reasons behind some of the misprints and seeming incongruities of the standard performing editions.

Occasionally, one can easily access original manuscripts through a link on IMSLP. For example, searching for Schubert's *Deutsche Messe*, D. 872, takes one out of IMSLP to Schubert-online.at, which provides numerous manuscript facsimiles in an easy-to-search format. Even when the original manuscripts are not available, or not yet digitized, one can often assemble a publication history that can elucidate anomalous passages or at least offer performance clarity. Felix Mendelssohn's *Organ Sonatas*, Op. 65, are offered in the important original editions, including the first edition of 1845 published simultaneously by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, Coventry & Hollier in London, Schlesinger of Paris, and Ricordi of Milan (this is what can be found in the Dover reprint), and the Peters Edition of 1898. Some of the editions on IMSLP can be "handmade" and must be regarded with a critical eye and ear; for-

THANKS TO THE INTERNET, finding musical scores has never been easier. Sites like the International Music Score Library Project (Imslp.org) and Choral Public Domain Library (Cpdl.org) house tens of thousands of free public-domain scores, and many more are available for purchase online at sites like Amazon, SheetMusicPlus, and J.W. Pepper. This wealth of music also gives performers access to multiple editions of the same piece, reflecting immense diversity in the art of music editing.

Once you've decided on a musical work, how do you know which edition to use? Generally, one should attempt to find the one that most accurately reflects the markings the composer set down originally, translated to modern notation in the most comprehensible manner possible. Particularly in the case of music dating from before the 20th century, editors over the years have felt free to add various interpretive markings to compensate for the original editions' lack of the same. Dynamic markings, staccato and legato markings, and registrations for organ music are among the most common. In many cases, these added markings are well reasoned, but they serve as an unnecessary intermediary between the composer and the performer. Fortunately, scholars around the world are now compiling authoritative "ur-

text" editions of musical literature, free of added markings, in an attempt to create an unmediated line of communication between the past and present.

The fact that J.S. Bach didn't include dynamic markings in most of his music doesn't mean that he meant for it to be played at an unchanging dynamic level, and the same goes for phrase markings and organ registrations. Rather, he felt that he could leave specific decisions in these areas to the discretion of the performer, and a body of conventional wisdom at the time insured that performers' interpretive choices fell within certain reasonable parameters. Since you are undoubtedly the equal of any musician in any earlier area, why trust an editor when you can make decisions for yourself? Good composers have always embraced the fact that their music will be played differently by different performers. Upon hearing two dramatically different readings of the same piano piece consecutively, Johannes Brahms remarked that he couldn't choose a favorite between them.

If you wish to ensure that your performance falls within the realm of good taste as understood by the composer, a variety of primary-source resources is available to help you do so. The most frequently cited for early music are C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard In-*

struments, François Couperin's *The Art of Playing the Harpsichord*, Leopold Mozart's *Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, and Joachim Quantz's *On Playing the Flute*, all of which transcend their chosen instrument to encompass a wide variety of performance practices. These treatises are invaluable aids in creating authoritative interpretations, but their methods are not universally applicable. For instance, Couperin's advice may apply only to French music, and C.P.E. Bach's advice may reflect his own generation's preferences more than his father's.

As musicians, we face the challenge of performing centuries-old music in a way that is both historically informed and musically satisfying. There is no single correct interpretation of any musical work, nor a single correct edition. Even urtext editions differ according to the differences in source material, and the search for an unassailably correct edition will never end. However, the choice of a good edition will help you to encounter the composer as a living person, and will shake off some of the editorial "dust" that has accumulated over the centuries.

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tunately, such editions are properly labeled and easily discernable on the listing page.

Whether one is interested in *Fiori Musicali* by Frescobaldi, the 19th-century Sacred Harp oblong hymnals, any of the major symphonic or chamber works, Lieder, the staples of the classic organ repertoire, or practical organ music for worship, IMSLP provides a point at which to start. The resources offered there cannot replace the scholarship and labor that has been poured into the great modern musical editions that are often the product of years of comparative musicological scholarship. This online resource must be approached critically and thoughtfully; in so doing, some quality music, heretofore lost and forgotten, might



once again come to life and offer practical benefit to the organist in his or her vocation.

NOTES

1. For biographical information related to Petrucci, see the "Biography" section in Stanley Boorman, *Ottaviano Petrucci: Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
2. See the Church Music Publishers Association website for a more thorough review of copyright law in the United States: <http://cmpa.music.org/copyrights/>. Canadian copyright remains in effect for 50 years after the death of the composer. For details regarding Canadian

- copyright, visit here: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>. IMSLP is under the jurisdiction of a Creative Commons Attribution, a type of license in which the creator allows for use of his or her material with limited restrictions. For more about Creative Commons licensing, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>
3. <http://imslp.org/wiki/IMSLP:About>
 4. <http://www.carus-verlag.com/Homilius.en.html>
 5. William C. Carl, ed., *Thirty Postludes for Organ* (New York: Oliver Ditson, 1900). Preface.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Gaël Liardon's homepage: <http://www.domisolmifa.net>

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