

Utilizing IMSLP

Margaret Evans

We've all been in this situation: We are suddenly asked to play a hymn new to us and to our congregation. We wish we could find an organ prelude on that hymn tune to help introduce it to our congregation. Perhaps we have no catalogue for our personal library or it is woefully out of date. We haven't yet signed up to be a member of the Church Music Institute, so we don't have access to that database of organ pieces based on hymn tunes. What can we do?

We could go to our web browser and enter "hymnary.org," then insert the name of the hymn tune in the search box on that site. Titles and publisher information about some pieces commercially available might come up there, but we don't have time to order these pieces.

At Hymnary.org we might notice that our hymn tune has several different names. That gives us more food for thought—might we know this tune under one of the alternate names?

We know that there is a digital music library available, IMSLP, or Petrucci, but we haven't had much experience searching for a tune. Now is the time to experiment!

IMSLP, or International Music Score Library Project, was begun by a consortium of music libraries. One of its primary goals is to provide access to scores in the public domain. Many, many scores are now available, including, in our area, the works of J.S. Bach as found in the Bach Gesellschaft edition, among others. Please note: these are all scores in the public domain. They will not contain the latest scholarship or research. For some composers and works there will be multiple editions.

So how does one find items in this library?

1. Enter "imslp.org" into your web browser.
2. When the IMSLP page appears, in the search box in the middle of the page, type the name of the hymn tune. For this example, use "Lobe den Herren" followed by "organ."
3. Immediately a list of web pages appears, and if you look at the addresses, you'll see that they all include "imslp."
4. Click on the title of a piece you might like to see. As I'm writing this column in October, the first piece that appears is a work by Johann Kirnberger. When I click on that link, the IMSLP page opens for this work. I see there is sheet music available for two trumpets and two trombones. I also see a tab for "organ scores," so I click there. A score appears edited by Gayk Aboyan. When I click "complete score," an organ

score appears, which I can then read from my screen, save, or print.

5. But perhaps that's not the ideal piece for you. Back up until you return to the listing of pieces available in IMSLP. The next several pieces listed include recent works that composers have placed into the IMSLP library.
6. You find Martin Shaw's "Processional." Clicking on that page, you see "complete score." However, you notice below this, in red, "non-PD US" and "non-PD EU," which are shorthand for "non-public-domain in the U.S." and "non-public-domain in the European Union." This means that in these locations these pieces are still under copyright. If you click on "complete score" anyway, you will have to click on a disclaimer stating you realize this work may not be in the

public domain in your country. Knowing that you should respect copyright laws, you don't go any farther in trying to open this particular piece. Note: IMSLP is used all over the world, and copyright laws differ from country to country.

As you look at the IMSLP pages you will see many works based on this tune—old works and recent

settings, chorale preludes, postludes, hymn reharmonizations, and other types of pieces. You have at your fingertips many more works than you ever thought possible!

But a word of warning, if you are like me: When I start searching for a piece, I usually get distracted and find many other pieces that I didn't know I needed to know. You may want to set for yourself a time limit.

In a later column, we'll look at how to do more advanced searching in IMSLP.

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Margaret R. Evans, former vice president of the AGO, is professor of music emerita of Southern Oregon University (SOU) and has performed recitals throughout the U.S. Having held positions as director of music (organist-choir director) in churches for 50 years, she is currently compiling a database of organ literature based on hymn tunes for the Church Music Institute. She is the author of a book on sacred cantatas and numerous published articles and reviews, and has recorded a CD of works on the Spreckels organ in Balboa Park, San Diego. She teaches for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University and is dean of the Southern Oregon AGO Chapter.

