

## Organ Method XIV

This month's column continues the discussion of learning to play more than one note or voice in each hand, specifically expanding it to music in which the multiple-note texture is that of counterpoint. Playing multiple independent voices in one hand is a practice that many players, most particularly beginning students or aspiring players, find intimidating. As always, part of my own aim in teaching this aspect of playing, or in presenting it in written form, is to demystify it and make it seem less scary, though of course without in any way "dumbing it down" or leading students to believe that it can be achieved trivially or without plenty of study. This is an area in which I would most appreciate feedback from DIAPASON readers. I begin with a discussion of the concept and move on to exercises and practice suggestions.

The distinction between multiple-note textures that are chords and multiple-note textures that are voices is one that is meaningful and important, but not always cut-and-dried. In the setting of the OLD HUNDREDTH discussed last month (see October issue, pp. 18–19), there are four voices: each voice might well be sung as a separate melody by members of a choir or of a congregation. For purposes of practicing at the organ, and in particular becoming accustomed to playing more than one note in each hand, it is possible to think of the piece as being written mostly in chords without misrepresenting it, because the voices are mostly in the same rhythm as one another. Voices (in keyboard pieces) that sound together and that are in the same rhythm as one another are, in effect, simultaneously voices and chords. Voices that differ from one another in rhythm are clearly voices as such. If the number of notes in the texture varies a lot, then it is probably a sort of hybrid. At this stage you should feel free just to keep these notions in the back of your mind. You do not have to define the texture of any passage that you are working on: just notice its characteristics. You will perhaps explore these definitions and distinction further, from a theoretical point of view, later on. The distinctions are also somewhat circular, in a way that is artistically meaningful: that is, you as a player can influence, by how you play, the listener's sense of what is counterpoint and what is chordal texture, when, because of the nature of the writing, both are possibilities.

In fact, the last line of the OLD HUNDREDTH can be used to illustrate the process of practicing separate voices—that is, in a texture in which there clearly are independent voices—that fall in one hand. (The last line is best for this because in that line the rhythm does vary a little bit from one voice to another.) This process is, as mentioned above, mostly one of training the ears: that is, training the ears to follow the separate voices as melodies while playing them together (Example 1). (Note that in this example the voices are differentiated from one another by the direction of the note stems. Most publishers use this technique when it is appropriate to the music.)

Start with the notes—the two voices—in the upper (treble) staff. Work out a fingering for just the upper voice, in the right hand. Since the notes of this voice, taken by itself, span a fifth, the fingering could be as simple as the five fingers over the five notes. This would give (in order) 5-3-1-2-4-3-2-1. Now work out a left-hand fingering for the lower of these two voices. (Yes: you will, when putting the voices together, play them both in

the right hand. This left-hand fingering is temporary.) This line covers a span of only three notes, and there are many possible fingerings. One would be 1-2-3-2-1-2-1-2-3. Practice each of these lines separately a little bit: until each one seems solid. (Each of these lines is, in itself, fairly simple, but should still be practiced enough to become really well learned.)

Now put the two voices together—one in each hand, as you have practiced—on two manuals. This makes the notion of the independence of these voices as concrete a physical reality as it can be, and therefore makes it easy and intuitive for your ears to follow it. At first, choose sounds that are similar in volume but different in character. Then, after you have done this a few times, try sounds that are very different in volume: one of them almost, but not quite, drowning out the other. Then play the two voices together on one manual—still in two hands.

Next, go back to playing the entire two-voice texture together in the right hand, using the fingering that you worked out when you worked on this hymn earlier (October, p. 19). After the experience of separating the two voices between the hands, you should be able to hear the voices independently as you play them together—or at least to be able to begin to do so.

Now follow this same procedure with the two lower voices—those that will end up being played together in the left hand. A right-hand fingering for the upper (of these two voices) (the tenor voice) might be as follows: 4-3-4-3-2-4-3-4. A left-hand fingering for the lower (bass) voice might be 2-1-3-1-5-3-2-1-5. Of course, other fingerings are possible; work out fingerings that seem comfortable to you. After you have learned each line, and tried out various keyboard and sound combinations for playing the two voices together in separate hands, put them back together in the left hand, again using the fingering that you worked out earlier.

At this stage of putting two voices back together in one hand after practicing them (temporarily) in separate hands, you can try to focus your listening on one of the voices at a time, while playing both. In doing this, you may notice that it is easier to listen consciously to one of the voices than to the other, or that focusing on one of the voices tends to make the playing easier while focusing on the other makes it harder. You can then "zoom out" so to speak, and listen to both voices while playing them both. You should also go back and forth: after you have put the two voices back together in one hand, separate them again and play through them in two hands a few times.

It is, psychologically or as a matter of perception, easier to hear two voices simultaneously and to follow them as separate melodies if you can feel yourself playing them with different physical entities. This sort of practice is a way of enlisting your ears in helping you to follow separate voices when, because they are together in the same hand, they are naturally pulled towards feeling like part of the same entity.

It can also be useful to ask your teacher or another player to help you with a drill similar to this one. This involves your playing one voice while the other player plays the other voice of the two that will later be combined in one hand. This should of course be done

in all of the different possible combinations. You should play one voice by itself two or three times in a row, then you should play it again while your assistant adds the other voice on a different keyboard. (Note: choose keyboards in such a way that the two of you don't bump into each other.) Next, switch voices. Then, right away, while that experience is fresh in your ears, you should play the two voices together in one hand with the proper fingering.

Here are some further exercises and excerpts from pieces to help you get accustomed to this sort of practicing, with comments about how to approach each one (Examples 2 and 3). In these two exercises, each separate voice stays within a compass of five notes, so the fingering for the hands separated into voices is straightforward. When you recombine the voices into one hand, feel free to keep the articulation detached if that helps the fingering to remain

Example 1

Example 2

Example 3

Example 4

Example 5

Example 6

Example 7

Example 8



(The upper voice goes high enough that it lies extremely comfortably under the fingers of the right hand). When the two voices are put together in the left hand, the fingering is challenging, especially since the composer has marked the entire piece *sempre ben legato*. This does not necessarily mean that all notes must always be legato. However, any convincing rendering of the legato style calls for the use of substitution, an important technique which is discussed later in this method. For purposes of using this and other similar short excerpts as part of the project of learning to hear multiple voices clearly while playing them together in one hand, it is acceptable to play the lines less fully legato than you would want to play them if you were learning the piece. (For example, using 5 on certain successive notes in the lower voice can clarify and simplify the fingering quite a lot, in a way that will be useful for a player who is not already familiar with this repertoire. The articulation that that gives might differ from what you would end up preferring if you were to learn the piece. You should experiment with different possibilities for fingering the two voices together, while working on getting to know the voices separated between the hands.) The fingering can be modified later, if necessary. In fact, just out of interest, I will use this same passage as part of the material for discussing substitution later on. ■

*This discussion will continue next month, and will then segue into certain special techniques in manual playing, including substitution and playing repeated notes. After that, in the following several columns, I will deal with combining hands and feet. That will conclude the "nitty-gritty" practical aspect of the Method. It will be followed later on by discussion of registration, repertoire, and the history of the instrument.*

*Gavin Black is Director of the Princeton Early Keyboard Center in Princeton, New Jersey. He can be reached by e-mail at [gavinblack@mail.com](mailto:gavinblack@mail.com). He writes a blog at [www.amorningfordreams.com](http://www.amorningfordreams.com).*

simple. Here is one suggested fingering for each hand, though as always others are possible (Examples 4 and 5).

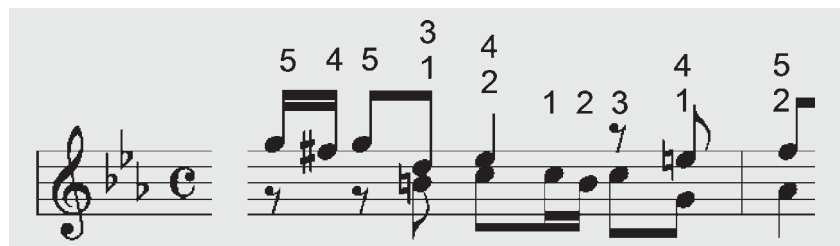
In the following examples, the two voices are more different from one another rhythmically (Examples 6 and 7). Again, neither of the separate voices spans a particularly wide compass, so the fingering and practicing of the separate voices is straightforward. In practicing the separate voices on different sounds, it is particularly interesting in this case to try registrations in which the two voices are quite different in volume, and in doing so, try to listen carefully to the one that is quieter. See what effect this has on your ability to hear the two voices independently when you put them back together in one hand on one sound.

The following is an excerpt from the Fugue in C Minor from Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by J. S. Bach (Example 8). The two voices, which are the upper two voices of a three-voice texture, pass a motive back and forth. In performance, the left hand is fully engaged with much lower notes and cannot participate in playing either of these two very active melodies. A possible fingering for the passage might begin like this (Example 9). The fingering of the individual lines, one in each hand, is straightforward, especially since the rests allow for easy repositioning of the hand.

Since this is a lively and dance-like passage, it is interesting to try the separate voices on colorful sounds: perhaps reeds, flute combinations including mutations, and so on. Again try some combinations that make the two voices similar in volume, and others that almost drown out each voice in turn. Focus on listening to the voice that is harder to hear. When you put both voices back together in the right hand, notice that in some of the spots where the two voices are both present and moving, they are moving at the same rhythm as one another. Can you hear those spots are individual voices rather than as chords? How does that compare to the last half-measure of the excerpt?

(There are many passages in Bach's works both for harpsichord and for organ that provide excellent material for this sort of practice. You can browse through *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, both preludes and fugues, or, especially, the fugues from the various Preludes and Fugues for organ looking for appropriate passages. It is a good idea to do this sort of practicing in fairly short increments: about the length of the Bach example above.)

Here is an example for the left hand, from the Chorale-Prelude *Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit* from Opus 79b by Max Reger (Example 10). Each of the two voices ranges fairly far. However, each is still fairly simple to finger for one hand.



Example 9



Example 10

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