

Looking Back

10 years ago in the January 1999 issue of THE DIAPASON

Christopher Marks wins the Arthur Poister Competition

Frederick Swann plays his last service at the Crystal Cathedral, before beginning as organist at First Congregational, Los Angeles

Stephen Tharp completes his 11th European tour

Articles by Carl Sloane (Francesco Gasparini's Twenty-one Keys) and R. E. Coleberd (The Economics of Pipe Organ Building)

Hendrickson builds op. 92 for Wayzata Community Church, Wayzata, MN

25 years ago, January 1984

Articles by Timothy J. Tikker (On a Successful Organ in a Dry Acoustic) and Susan Ferré (The Organ Works of Ottorino Respighi)

New organs by Abbott & Sieker, Brunzema, Peter Collins, McNeil & Campbell, Roche

50 years ago, January 1959

Austin builds 133-rank organ for St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Hartford, CT

Aeolian-Skinner builds 4-manual for Westminster Presbyterian, Buffalo, NY

Holtkamp builds 3-manual for General Theological Seminary, NYC

Articles by E. Power Biggs and Robert Sutherland Lord

Alexander Schreiner on 10-day tour of Southern states

Martin Shaw dead at 82

Gerhard Krapf appointed at University of Wyoming

News of Claire Coci, David Pizarro, Carlton Young

Organs by Audet, Estey, Kuhn, Möller, Pels, Reuter, Wicks

75 years ago, January 1934

Obituaries of Joseph Claver Casavant and Everett Truette

Dr. William C. Carl elected president of National Association of Organists

News of Garth Edmundson, Donald Ketting, Frederick Maxson, Adolph Steuterman, Leon Verrees

Organs by Aeolian-Skinner, Austin, Frazee, Hillgreen, Lane & Co., Kilgen, Kimball, La Marche, Möller, Pilcher

technology. (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000)

evolution: *n.* **1.** A gradual process in which something changes into a different and usually more complex or better form. **2a.** The process of developing. **b.** Gradual development . . .

word-play: *n.* **1.** Witty or clever verbal exchange; repartee. **2.** The act or an instance of such exchange.

I can name that tune in four notes.

In 1964 the comedian and parodist Allen Sherman (1924–1973) performed a concert with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra. The program included Sherman's reading of *Peter and the Commissar*, a parody on Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* with Cold War overtones (when discussing the effectiveness of an imaginary Politburo, Sherman quipped: "A camel is a horse that was designed by a committee."), and a hilarious orchestral medley, *Variations on "How Dry I Am,"* which opens with a statement of the original and familiar melody (*sol-do-re-mi*) and continues with the beginnings of a series of familiar compositions and songs that start with the same four notes, ranging from *You are my sunshine* to the *1812 Overture*. There's even an inversion moment quoting one of the variations of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini*.

I think most musicians have had the experience of freely associating a few notes from one melody with another. I know it's happened to me many times—I'm sitting all dressed up at Symphony Hall surrounded by serious music lovers (and a few old men snoring), when one of those associations hits me—I chuckle and receive my wife's elbow. And I know I amused the choir at church countless times (at least I thought so) by interrupting a rehearsal to turn a phrase from an anthem by Vaughan Williams into a Rodgers and Hart song. As a budding continuo player while a student at Oberlin, we roared one night in rehearsal turning the second trio from the last movement of Bach's first *Brandenburg Concerto* into "The Lonely Goatherd" from *The Sound of Music*. You can't tell me Richard Rodgers never heard Bach.

Word-play is same sort of thing. You hear a word that reminds you of another, swap them in context, and you have a pun—that high form of humor that invites such frequent elbows. It's a matter of sound association—does that make musicians naturally inclined as punsters (otherwise known as pundits)?

I'll give you a couple classics for free:

Dorothy Parker (1893–1967) was a writer and poet, perhaps best known for her humorous commentary on urban life in America published in *The New Yorker*. She was a founding member of the Algonquin Round Table, a group of writers, critics, and other literary folk who gathered each day for lunch at the Algonquin Hotel (West 44th Street near Fifth Avenue) from 1919 to about 1929. Harpo Marx, Tallulah Bankhead, and Edna Ferber were among other participants. Speaking about the Round Table years later, writer and curmudgeon H. L. Mencken



Walt Disney Concert Hall

commented, "their ideals were those of a vaudeville actor, one who is extremely 'in the know' and inordinately trashy."

One session included a contest—each member was given a word around which to construct a pun. Ms. Parker was given *horticulture*. Her response, "You can lead a whore to culture but you can't make her think."

Science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov presented his favorite pun, which involved the story of an old cattle rancher whose offspring inherited the ranch, renamed "The Focus Ranch" as a stipulation of the will. The source of the name—"Where the sun's rays meet." Get it—focus, sun's rays!¹

An evolutionary revolution

In the last several days I've experienced two artistic revolutions and as I reflected about them, the word *evolution* joined the fun. I couldn't find any pub-

lished etymological connection between the two words, but I can't avoid the sound association leading to a more meaningful connection—is a revolution a *re-evolution*? The evolution of musical theater includes several revolutionary moments like Monteverdi's opera, *The Coronation of Poppea* (1642), which stands out as a breathtaking and groundbreaking composition with a raft of soloists, a chorus, lots of orchestral music and dancing—a mid-17th-century foreshadowing of the tradition of romantic *Grand Opera*.

Yesterday we attended a live-by-satellite broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera of Hector Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust*. The revolutionary brainchild of Peter Gelb, general manager of the Met since 2006, these performances are broadcast to nearly 800 venues, including movie theaters and concert halls, exponentially expanding the Met's paying audience. The audiences are treated not

In the wind . . .

by John Bishop

revolution: *n.* **1a.** Orbital motion about a point, especially as distinguished from axial rotation: *the planetary revolution around the sun.* **b.** A turning or rotational motion about an axis. **c.** A single complete cycle of such orbital or axial motion. **2.** The overthrow of one government and its replacement with another. **3.** A sudden or momentous change in a situation: *the revolution in computer*

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To get to the “tracker console” of the Disney organ, you walk between a forest of façade pipes. Their toes are on the stage floor around the console—wind coming from who-knows-where through the floor.

Looking at the façade from inside the organ is a little like getting a backstage glimpse at the Met—you can see the clever structure that supports the façade: each pipe is curved, each pipe faces in a different direction, and there’s no apparent order to them that can be derived from musical scales, tuning systems, or chest order, as with virtually every other organ with an architectural presence. So much for obedience. (Notice that I didn’t bother to mention symmetry!)

In one sense this mighty organ represents a logical evolutionary step. In the past couple decades we’ve celebrated the design and construction of quite a few tremendous new concert hall organs. Each one has design features that build on its predecessors. A terrific amount of work has been devoted to understanding how to move enough air through an organ to produce pleasing and musical tones that can take a listener from whisper to volcano. It’s a grand achievement for a pipe organ to “stand up to” a modern symphony orchestra, which is capable of bewildering volumes of sound. To achieve that with modest wind pressures and slider chests is especially impressive.

There’s nothing quite like the bass response of a symphony orchestra. No great conductor is willing to wait a nanosecond for a bass note to develop. The bottom notes from the orchestra’s tuba, trombone, contrabassoon, cellos and basses, and timpani are in the listener’s ears *right now*. Having spent a lifetime working to make organs sound their best, I can remember myriad struggles with bass response. Think of that low note in the Pedal Bourdon that yodels a little around the second partial before it settles on its pitch, or the note in the Contra Bombarde that offers a half-second of *ppffff* before you hear a note. No way. The organs that play with modern orchestras have to perform with their orchestral neighbors. On the Disney organ it’s possible to draw a dozen or stops at 32- and 16-foot pitch and play staccato notes in the bottom octaves—surreal.

On the score of his massive *Grande Messe des morts (Requiem)*, Berlioz notes, “The number [of performers] indicated is only relative. If space permits, the chorus may be doubled or tripled, and the orchestra be proportionally increased. But in the event of an exceptionally large chorus, say 700 to 800 voices,

the entire chorus should only be used for the *Dies Irae*, the *Tuba Mirum*, and the *Lacrymosa*, the rest of the movements being restricted to 400 voices.”

The score calls for 4 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 English horns, 4 clarinets, 8 bassoons, 12 horns, 4 cornets and 4 tubas (in the orchestra), 4 brass choirs [Choir 1 to the north: 4 cornets, 4 trombones, 2 tubas; Choir 2 to the east: 4 trumpets, 4 trombones; Choir 3 to the west: 4 trumpets, 4 trombones; Choir 4 to the south: 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 4 ophicleides (usually substituted by tubas)], a battery of percussionists, 16 timpani played by 10 timpanists, 2 bass drums, 4 tamtams, 10 pairs of cymbals, 25 first violins, 25 second violins, 20 violas, 20 violoncellos, 18 double basses, 80 women’s voices (divided between sopranos and altos), 60 tenors, 70 basses, and tenor soloist.

Alas, no organ. And he thought it would be a grand performance.

But the nearly equally ambitious (minus the four spatial brass choirs) *Te Deum* is scored for 4 flutes, 4 oboes (one doubling on cor anglais), 4 clarinets (one doubling on bass clarinet), 4 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 cornets, 6 trombones, 2 ophicleides/tubas, timpani, 4 tenor drums, bass drum, cymbals, tenor solo, 2 large 3-part (STB) mixed choirs, 1 large unison children’s choir, strings, and (yes, Virginia) organ.

I’d love to hear that piece performed in Disney Hall. Given available space, they’d probably have to settle for about 300 singers, but that’d do. In the hall’s spectacular acoustics I’m sure I’d be able to hear every “K”, every “T”—and while most vowels would be clear, I’m afraid barely “O’s.” (Sorry, Hector.) ■

Notes

1. ps. *Where the sons raise meat.*

On Teaching

by Gavin Black

Repeated notes

The playing of repeated notes on organ and harpsichord has always been an issue unto itself. If two notes in a row are the same, they cannot be treated like two notes in a row that are not the same. The reason for this is simple: in order to repeat a note that you are holding, you must first release it. This seems so obvious to those of us who play only these instruments that it is worth noting that this is not true in all kinds of musical performance. It is not true at the piano, except

in situations that rule out the use of the damper pedal. It is not true with plucked string instruments. In singing, the repeated note phenomenon is only rarely an issue in itself. With bowed string instruments and most wind instruments, the relationships among articulation, technique, and pitch are complicated, with repeated notes as such only sometimes being a special concern.

One way to describe the situation with repeated notes at the organ or harpsichord is this: in general, any pattern of notes that doesn’t involve repeated notes can be played legato (though of course it doesn’t have to be), but repeated notes actually *cannot* be played legato. Therefore, patterns of non-repeated notes have, in theory, the full range of articulation available to them, from “as short as physically possible” to a full overlapping legato. Repeated notes have most but not all of that range of articulations available.

Since repeated notes cannot be (fully) legato, the more legato the overall style of a given performance is—whether because of the performer’s preference, or because of something that is known about the composer’s own style—the more any repeated notes are in danger of standing out, of sounding different at the very least and maybe stylistically wrong, and in any case amounting to a problem to be solved.

This, in turn, may be one reason that repeated notes have often been considered a problem—or again at least a particular issue that needs to be addressed—in hymn playing, since there is a strong tradition of playing hymns legato. Repeated notes are sometimes seen as a source of a disruptive choppiness in hymns, and thus, for some players in some circumstances, are considered worthy of being eliminated through tying.

In addition to obvious repeated notes—instances of the same note occurring two or more times in a row in one melody or one voice—there are various kinds of hidden repeated notes. These arise from voices crossing or from one voice playing a note that was just played by another voice or that is being held by another voice. They can also arise because of ornaments—when there is no repeated note printed on the page, but one arises from the notes implied by the ornament sign.

Of course, repeated notes occur in all sorts of rhythmic contexts. Sometimes the first note is an upbeat and the second a downbeat, sometimes the other way around; sometimes they are two successive weak or light beats, sometimes two successive downbeats. (Of course there are chains of more than two repeated notes in which more than one of the

above may occur in succession.) Repeated notes can be fast or slow.

In all of these circumstances the same underlying fact applies: it is necessary to release the first note before playing the next one. It is certainly possible, and often necessary or a good idea, for a student or other player to think analytically about how long or short to make any note that is about to be repeated and to think about how the articulation and timing allows it to fit in to the rest of the music. This has been the subject of extensive discussion, analysis, and debate by teachers and players over many years. For example, David N. Johnson has a detailed and interesting discussion in his *Instruction Book for Beginning Organists*. Marcel Dupré is famous for having described a very clear-cut system for counting out the amount by which notes should be reduced prior to being repeated. (Perhaps I should say “infamous” since his system is widely considered to be *too* cut-and-dried to be artistically valid. However, it is worth remembering that he almost certainly intended his guidelines to be a stage in learning, not an end result.)

Rather than suggesting specific musical answers to repeated note issues, I would prefer to begin by helping students to do two things: first, to develop the greatest, most comfortable, and most reliable technical control over the physical act of playing repeated notes; and second, to develop the habit of listening closely to every part of any repeated note transaction—the articulation prior to the first note, the beginning, middle, and end of the first note, the space between the notes, the beginning, middle, and end of the second note, and so on. Once a student has made good progress on these things, then he or she will be able to make choices about how to play repeated notes in various different contexts, and these choices will be able to reflect the whole range of possibilities.

There is, I believe, a simple key to developing the greatest possible technical command of the playing of repeated notes: *play them with different fingers, one from the other*. That is, if you have played the first note with finger *x* and are holding it with finger *x*, then it is appropriate to play the second note (that is, the repetition) with any finger other than *x*. It is not OK to play it with *x*. This means that a note repeated more than once can be played with fingers *x-y-x-y* etc., or with fingers *x-y-z-a-b-c* etc., until the fingers run out, but not, again, *x-x-x-x* etc.

When a player repeats a note with the same finger that is holding it, that finger must travel both up, off the key, and back down, to play the note again, in the

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