

# KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES



by Cheryl Seppala



## PEDALING

The pedals of the organ hold a peculiar fascination for us all. For the beginning organist, the pedals seem the most confusing, distant and complex piece of equipment on the machine, but also the most intriguing. For the pro, they are a continuing challenge. How many ways can I use the pedals to enrich my arrangements or at least show off a little? But to the audience they are a special mystery. How can anyone be coordinated enough to keep both hands making pretty music while their feet dance so assuredly over the pedals?

It is true that playing the pedals while using both hands requires a minimal amount of coordination. But most of all, it requires the development of good pedal technique and much *practice*.

So let's begin to explore this pedal mystery with the goal of learning how to find and strike the proper pedal with either foot. Our ultimate accomplishment will be to learn to use both feet (not just the left) and develop a legato heel-toe technique. These abilities are not reserved for the classical or church organist. However, we will save playing "The Flight of the Bumblebee" as a pedal solo for the pros!

We will assume you are practicing on a full 32-note AGO pedalboard, common to most pipe and electronic theatre organs. However, the following suggestions will certainly apply to 25-note (two-octave) pedalboards as well.

1. First make sure you are sitting comfortably in the middle of the bench, toward the front. If you are sitting correctly, your knees will remain still and together while your legs swing weightlessly from the knee.
2. Strike the pedals with the inside edge of your toe or heel. Keeping the feet slanted inward will help you avoid the problem of striking two pedals at once.

3. Maintain a position on the natural pedals near the back pedals to avoid unnecessary sliding back and forward.
4. There is a great deal of debate among organ instructors whether students should be allowed to "feel" for the correct pedals by feeling the "holes" between the groups of two and three black keys with their toes. This does help the student get started as long as they remember there will not always be enough time to feel the spaces. With time, the feet should memorize the position of the pedals as the hands have memorized the keyboards.

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\* Books are available from your local music store or the publisher until supplies run out (no plans to reprint).

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**Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation**  
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5. Then the big question — Should you look at your feet? For the beginner, it is unreasonable to say *Never Look At Your Feet!* If you don't look, how do you know if you hit the right one? When practicing pedals, look the first time as you feel and locate and hear the correct pedal, then repeat the same passage several more times without looking, relying on your ear to tell you if you are correct. Watching your feet or hands or even glancing down too frequently is a bad habit. You may likely lose your place on the music.

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- Most of all, don't attack the pedals as if you were trying to squash a bug. Use as little motion and as light a touch as possible. Reserve the dancing, darting feet for the showman.
- The type of shoes you wear while playing the organ does make a difference, too. Try to find a shoe with a thin leather sole and a 1-1/2" leather heel. These types of shoes are available in dance-wear stores or through the mail, specifically for organists.

At one time it was difficult to find many theatre organ arrangements with pedaling

indicated for use of heel and toe and both feet. But fortunately, many editors are now publishing arrangements complete with pedaling. This is the normal code:  $\blacktriangle$  = toe;  $\blacklozenge$  = heel. These symbols below a note indicate left foot and above a note indicate right foot. If the pedaling is not given, first determine what kind of touch is required. If it calls for a rhythmic staccato bass, just toe it. If the melody is in the pedals or some other interesting progression or counter-melody appears there, then choose a legato touch accomplished by using heel-toe technique and the use of both feet. Remember to use your right

foot any time you cannot reach or connect pedals comfortably with the left.

The following two exercises will help you with these two different styles of pedaling.

- For all-toe staccato pedaling: Play the foot to the fifth with the left foot to the octave with the right foot. For example, Low F — middle C — High F. Remember to look down only the first time, then repeat several more times without looking. Do this in all 12 keys.
- For legato pedaling: Play a chromatic scale up and down in the pedals using heel and toe technique, substituting toe to heel where there are two adjacent chromatic white keys (for example, E-F and B-C).

Many organ technique books include exercises on pedaling and some are devoted entirely to that subject. A recent publication you may wish to use is "Joyce Jones's Pedal Mystery for the Organ," Bradley Pub./Columbia 23E09. Have fun playing with your feet!

# MEMBERSHIP CONTEST

## ATOS MEMBERSHIP CONTEST WITH BIG WINNERS!

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There are two ways to win. One is to sign up more new members than anyone else in ATOS. The second method is to secure just five (5) new members. Your name will then be part of a drawing made up of those who have gotten their five. From that group a winner will be selected. Think about it. When did you have a chance to win a prize of that value for such little effort and with such favorable odds?

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TOUR

### CONTEST ENDS DECEMBER 31, 1985

The contest is now underway and ends December 31. The rules and an advertisement describing the trip are below. One important point — **be sure your name as sponsor accompanies the new member application.** With some thought you can name five good prospects. Get them in! Get in the drawing!

## Lance Johnson's Troubleshooting Guide Quiz Question

You are at the console and find that the Clarinet on the Great is dead on Tenor B. Explain procedure for locating the cause of the dead note.

Answer on page 63.

### Questions and Answers

Lance Johnson will answer readers' technical questions by telephone. He can be reached at 701/237-0477 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday, or in the evening from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at 218/287-2671.

### ATOS MEMBERSHIP CONTEST RULES

#### TWO GRAND PRIZES

Each prize is for two people. It is the full cash payment required of couples making the Australia-New Zealand tour. Based on two per room. Must accompany the tour group.

#### See Patterson Travel Ad on page 7

**Prize 1:** The person securing the most new members during the contest period. A tie will be decided by a coin flip.

**Prize 2:** The other winner will be based on a drawing from the names of everyone who secured five (5) new members during the contest period. A person's name will be placed in the drawing for each multiple of five (5) new members secured. The winner of Prize 1 will not be in the drawing.

#### TIME OF CONTEST

This contest began June 10, 1985 and closes with new memberships postmarked not later than December 31, 1985. They must be received not later than January 6, 1986. Winners will be notified on January 8, 1986.

You may use the Membership Application Form on page 31 or a facsimile.

#### RULES

- All persons holding membership in ATOS on May 1, 1985 eligible to participate. In memberships held as "Mr. & Mrs." either, but not both, may participate.
- Every new member application must be accompanied by the name of the sponsor when received at the ATOS office. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- Any person who has not been a member of ATOS during 1985 is eligible to be counted as a new member. The December 31, 1984 roster of ATOS is the guide.
- If a person who has paid for the trip is a winner they shall receive a full refund.

#### RECORDS

The ATOS Executive Director shall keep all contest records. Members will be notified when the records show five new members have been secured. No other information regarding numbers shall be released. All records will be verified by the Treasurer. Neither the Treasurer nor the Executive Director is eligible to participate in the contest.

Contest is based on 50 paying persons on the trip. With a lower number the drawing prize will take precedence.

## Two New Chapters Added to ATOS

At the recent National Convention in Chicago, two new chapters were added to ATOS, which were not included in the listing given in the July/August issue of THE-ATRE ORGAN. Their names and officers are as follows:

### MID-FLORIDA (MF)

Chairman: Mike Wells, 1243 East Colonial Drive, Orlando, Florida 32803. Secretary: Cliff Shaffer, 1216 Chelsea Place, Orlando, Florida 32803.

### VIRGINIA (VA)

Chairman: Paul W. Harris, 2321 Hey Road, Richmond, Virginia 23224. Secretary: David M. Barnett, P.O. Box K 95, Richmond, Virginia 23288, phone 804/359-6318.