

ated high in the peak of the cathedral ceiling. Below the shutters, a glass wall allows full inspection of the immaculately laid out chamber. While it is possible, via the computer's playback facilities, for visitors to enjoy hours of entertainment by such luminaries as Hector Olivera and Donna Parker, the convention committee has opted to present a real live artist in the person of Melissa Ambrose, from the Detroit area. Melissa, you may remember,

was the first runner-up in the 1985 Young Organist Competition.

As space within the homes is restricted, the number of seats for each tour is strictly limited, and will be available on a first come, first served basis. To avoid possible disappointment, convention registrants are urged to forward their reservation requests at the earliest possible date. □

feel the periods of silence in their music is as important as, or more important than, the notes they play!

### Tempo

Tempo refers to the speed at which you perform your selection. Some composers and arrangers indicate a metronome tempo (number of beats per minute). As most students can't tolerate practicing with the relentless tick of the metronome, they choose to use an automatic rhythm unit instead. This works equally as well and is often easier on the nerves! But rhythm units have no compassion either, and will not wait while you falter for any little reason. Although many selections sound better without automatic rhythm, it is excellent discipline to practice with it to check the steadiness of your tempos. There are some commonly used musical terms referring to tempo: Adagio, largo and lento = slow; moderato or andante = moderate speed; and allegro, vivace or presto = fast. Accelerando means to speed up and ritard means to slow down. "A tempo" indicates to return to your original tempo. Remember the pros love to dazzle us with their dexterity at fast tempos. But, you must remember to always practice slowly and steadily, and gradually work up your tempo to a comfortable level for *you*.

### Articulation or Touch

We all have been taught that the organ is a very legato, smooth instrument. We practice finger substitution exercises and heel-toe pedal technique by the hour to develop that smooth, lush sound. But remember, sometimes a different touch might be better. For example, most marches are played with a marcato or detached touch wherein the notes are distinctly separated, but not necessarily short. A polka or novelty number might be played with a staccato or short, almost plucked, touch. Develop at least three distinct touches to have at your command in your hands and feet, and you will be prepared for any occasion. Always imagine how the orchestral instrument you are imitating would perform a passage and try to imitate that touch and sound.

Expression is a very individualistic area. There is no right or wrong. If you were to listen to five of your favorite organists interpret the same selection, you would hear five different interpretations. Who is to say which one is "correct" or even "best"? You will enjoy the one that matches your ideas of how it should sound. So why not spend some time analyzing your own playing, perhaps through taping yourself and listening critically as you play it back? After you have listened and corrected the obvious weak spots in note and timing, turn to interpretations and expression. Is there any life, feeling, soul and message to the listener? And as a final test, try to sing along as you listen to yourself. Did you give yourself time to breathe?

Remember, all the flamboyant arrangements and dazzling techniques will not please you or your audience half as much as a beautifully interpreted arrangement with your *unique* expression clearly displayed and refined. □

## KEYBOARD TECHNIQUES



by Cheryl Seppala



## EXPRESSION

When studying the organ, students must learn and memorize many patterns and formulas, such as those we have recently explored relating to rhythms and chords. There are definite procedures to follow in these areas. Even theatre organ styles, such as block chords, open harmony and chromatic glissandos, follow a particular structure or fingering pattern. But when the pupil turns to the subject of expression, there are really no rules or standards to follow. The pupil must not only learn to use the swell pedals smoothly, but to analyze phrasing, dynamics, tempos, and touches as well. All this, when it's hard enough just to hit the correct notes with the proper timing!

Let's divide this subject of expression into four important areas: dynamics and the use of the swell pedals, phrasing, tempos, and articulation. We will also include the necessary musical terms pertaining to these subjects.

### Dynamics and the use of the Swell Pedal(s)

There are some very frequently used terms and abbreviations relating to the volume recommended for a particular selection or passage, *p* = piano = soft, *f* = forte = loud and *m* = mezzo = moderately (preceding a "p" or "f"). Crescendo or  $\text{<math>\text{<img alt='crescendo symbol' data-bbox='115 815 135 835'>}</math>$  indicates to gradually get louder, while diminuendo or  $\text{<math>\text{<img alt='diminuendo symbol' data-bbox='115 835 135 855'>}</math>$  indicates to soften gradually. With these vague terms as relative guidelines, the arranger helps the player to interpret the mood of the piece through the selection of an appropriate level of volume. Operating the expression pedal with our right foot is usually the last of our four limbs we coordinate, after we can play both hands and the pedals with

our left foot. It would seem to be the easiest assignment, simply get louder or softer at your discretion. It is easy, but beware of a common pitfall. Do not keep time by "pumping" the expression pedal up and down. This has a sickening effect for the listener. Except when a strong accent is desirable by a quick jerk of the pedal, a gradual movement is much more effective. If you are fortunate enough to be playing a pipe or electronic organ with divided expression, make sure you know exactly which stops are controlled by which pedal, so you may use them individually to best advantage.

### Phrasing

Much can be learned in this area simply by studying the words of a song and observing the punctuation in your music. Occasionally you may find a popular organ arrangement where phrasing is indicated by long curved lines extending over the phrase. Most often, however, phrasing is left to the player. Just as you could not imagine listening to a singer perform a selection without breathing, you should not perform at the organ without letting your music breathe by lifting your fingers at the ends of the musical sentences or phrases. Often the accompaniment is carried through while the melody is phrased. If more dramatic punctuation is required, both hands and pedals lift simultaneously. Some people are blessed with the innate ability to phrase their music beautifully, while others must study and mark phrasing on their music with the aid of a teacher or by listening to a pro. Either way, it is an essential element in developing a professional sound. Many musicians