



ORGAN-IZING POPULAR MUSIC

by
AL HERMANN'S

As you can see, the performance of popular music on the organ is an extensive subject that includes many details which can be taught to and learned by the average student. Musical talent comes in many degrees, and those who have less can compensate with more studying and practicing. In the field of popular music, much can be learned by listening to others. But be careful to study with or listen to those who have mastered the subject and can explain it.

At age nine, I discovered the sound of the theatre organ. From then on, I studied the radio programs every day and listened to all the organ programs that were available in the Philadelphia area. During my junior high school and high school years, I absorbed the artistry of Fred Feibel, Ann Leaf, Lew White, Jesse Crawford, Dick Leibert, Karl Bonawitz and a great many others. I did not take long to perceive that some organists sounded much better than others. Usually, the best ones were featured on the networks from New York and Chicago. The next step was to determine what it was that made the great ones sound better than the others, regardless of the organs they were playing. With careful listening, several things became apparent: 1) contrast and variety of registration; 2) a definite connection between registration and style of performance; 3) active left hand accompaniments, using fills, counter-melodies and various rhythmic patterns; 4) imaginative arrangements, including introductions and endings.

I then discovered that most of their arranging techniques could be analyzed and reduced to simple rules and formulas that anyone with an organ to practice on could learn. This is what I am presenting in this series of articles. In 1966, I explained my ideas for a comprehensive organ course to the officials of Big 3 Music Corporation in New York. They immediately produced it and, as a result, I became their organ solo arranger from 1966 to 1978, succeeding Jesse Crawford, Fred Feibel, Richard Leibert and others in that position.

In the next issue we shall take up the important subject of Left Hand Counter-Melodies.

Journal of American Organbuilding

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This publication is devoted to the dissemination of knowledge regarding the design, construction and maintenance of pipe organs in North America. Although primarily a technical journal for the benefit of organbuilding professionals, it is also a valuable resource for architects and project consultants, church musicians, building committees, seminary and university libraries, and anyone involved with the design or renovation of contemporary worship space.

Far from being the "lost art" that the average person believes it to be organbuilding in the United States and Canada is maturing and thriving in hundreds of small and large shops throughout the continent. At the same time, serious challenges lie ahead for those promoting the pipe organ in an era of limited budgets and competing options. Readers of the *Journal of American Organbuilding* will benefit from the thoughtful exchange of information and ideas intended to advance this time-honored craft.

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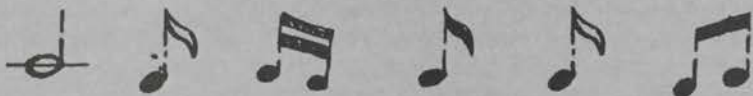
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