Twenty-Five Free
Hymn Harmonizations
for Organ
Set 1
by Derek Remeš
Twenty-Five Free Hymn Harmonizations for Organ, Set 1

These free hymn harmonizations are intended to provide variety during the church service with the ultimate goal of encouraging congregational singing. They are the result of years of writing free harmonizations each Sunday for my own use as an organist. Most are meant for the last verse of the hymn, but some may also be appropriate as introductions, particularly if the congregation is already familiar with the tune. Some might even be used as codas or interludes, even when not indicated as such. As John Ferguson once said to me, "Not every hymn should be an 'event.'" I believe he was right. One free harmonization per Sunday is usually enough. Always use the text of the hymn as a starting point for deciding whether to use a free harmonization at all.

Some tunes in this set include optional introductions, modulating interludes or other variations. Interludes, modulating or not, are important for giving untrained singers a chance to rest, particularly on longer hymns. Interludes also provide the opportunity to contemplate the meaning of the text.

No dynamics or registration indications have been given, except the occasional hairpin to indicate use of the swell box, if available (St. Columba is an exception, however). The variety of organs in use today makes it difficult to give meaningful registrations for all situations. If notated on two staves, the lowest line should always be played with the pedal. The default touch should be strict legato in all parts.

Although the usual texture is four part chorale-style, a fuller texture can be achieved by filling in more gaps in the chords, regardless of parallels. At times, I have written in this texture where I felt it would sound better (particularly at the end of the hymn to create a crescendo), but you should feel free to use this technique even where it is not indicated. It is important to remember than since the congregation will be singing unison on the last verse, rather than in four part chorale-style, the organ accompaniment does not always have to adhere to the rules of part writing which would otherwise forbid parallels. The pedal line might also be played in octaves at times, if you desire a fuller bass line and can manage to play legato.

No tempo indications have been given. One should always sing the hymn to find a suitable tempo, keeping in mind that the right tempo may vary depending on the traditions of a particular congregation and the acoustics of the room. After choosing your tempo, stick to it rigidly, only stretching slightly for breaths at the ends of phrases. At these places, my personal preference is to break the manuals while keeping the pedal legato. For very dry acoustics, one might only break the soprano line, or for very wet acoustics, break all voices.

Though all these arrangements are originally intended for the organ, some may be suitable for the piano if an organ is not available. If played on the piano, one should double the bass line in octaves, omitting the tenor voice if it cannot be played by the right hand. Lastly, be sure to check for melodic variations from the hymn tunes in your particular hymnal to be sure the versions are exactly the same, transposing if need be.

I sincerely hope you enjoy playing these free hymn harmonizations and find them of use in your own work as organists.

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March, 2013
Eastman School of Music
Rochester, NY
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Azmon

Introduction:

Carl G. Gläser, 1784-1829
Arr. Derek Remeš
Setting for last verse:
Caithness

Setting for last verse:

The Psalms of David in
Prose and Meeter, 1635
Arr. Derek Remeš
Christe Sanctorum

Setting for all verses but the last:

Modulating Interlude:

Paris Antiphoner, 1681
Arr. Derek Remeš
Setting for last verse:
Deus Tuorum Militum

Setting for last verse:

Grenoble Antiphoner, 1753
Arr. Derek Remeš
Earth and All Stars

Setting for all verses but the late:

Modulating interlude:
Setting for last verse:
Foundation

Setting for last verse:

The Sacred Harp, 1844
Arr. Derek Remeš
Italian Hymn

Setting for last verse (tune in the bass):

Felice de Giardini, 1716-1796
Arr. Derek Remeš
Kings of Orient

Setting for last verse:

John H. Hopkins, 1820-1891
Arr. Derek Remeš
Melita

Setting for last verse (tune in the bass):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Part } 1: \\
\text{Part } 2: \\
\text{Part } 3: \\
\text{Part } 4: \\
\text{Part } 5: \\
\text{Part } 6: \\
\text{Part } 7: \\
\end{align*}
\]
Nun Danket

Setting for last verse:

Johann Crüger, 1598-1649
Arr. Derek Remeš
Old 113th

Setting for all verses but the last:

Strassburger Kirchenamt, 1525
Arr. Derek Remeš

Modulating Interlude:
Setting for last verse:
Ratisbon

Setting for last verse:

Gesystliche gesangk Buchleyn, 1542
Arr. Derek Remeš
St. Anne

Setting for last verse (tune in the bass):

[Music notation image]
St. Columbia

Irish Melody
Arr. Derek Remeš

Great: 8' Open Flute, 8' Stopped Flute
Swell: String, Voix Celeste
Pedal: 16' Bourdon
Swell to Pedal

Introduction:
Setting (tune in the bass):
Setting for last verse (with coda):

Sw:

registration from intro.

pp
Slane

Irish Ballad Melody
Arr. Derek Remeš

Setting for last verse:
Song 46

Orlando Gibbons, 1583-1625
Arr. Derek Remeš
Alternate Harmonization:

Setting for last verse (melody on solo trumpet):
Southwell

Daman's Psalter, 1579;
adapt. Hymnal 1982
Arr. Derek Remeš

Setting for last verse:
Tidings

Setting for last verse:

James Walsh, 1837-1901
Arr. Derek Remeš.
Wachet auf

Setting for last verse:

Hans Sachs, 1494-1576;
adapt. Philipp Nicolai, 1556-1608
Arr. Derek Remeš
Walton

Sacred Melodies, 1815
Arr. Derek Remeš
Setting for last verse:
\[\text{legato pedal}\]
Winchester New

Musicalisches Hand-Buch, 1690
Arr. Derek Remeš