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A TRANSCRIPTION FOR SOLO ORGAN: *SYMPHONY ON*  
*A HYMN TUNE*, Op. 53, BY VIRGIL THOMSON

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Musical Arts

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by  
SunYoung Park Chu  
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APPROVAL SHEET

A TRANSCRIPTION FOR SOLO ORGAN: *SYMPHONY ON  
A HYMN TUNE*, Op. 53, BY VIRGIL THOMSON

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Sun Young

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2012

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Transcriptions, adaptations of music for a medium other than its original one,<sup>1</sup> have held an important place in music history. Transcriptions can be traced back to the earliest appearances of instrumental music. It is reasonable to assume that even the earliest pipe (flute) players sometimes played songs that they or others had sung earlier. In effect, they created aural transcriptions of vocal songs to play on their pipes.

In organ literature, numerous transcriptions have been crafted from literature originally written for other types of instruments, such as harpsichord and piano pieces, as well as works for ensembles and full orchestra. Johann Sebastian Bach's transcription of Vivaldi's concertos and Liszt's transcription of the *Pilgrim's Chorus* by Wagner, along with Guilmant's *The Swan* (Saint-Saëns), and Vierne's *Sicilienne* (Bach) have long been included in the standard repertoire for solo organ.

Given the simultaneous development of the "symphonic organ" and the growing popularity of organ transcription, it is difficult to know exactly how much the two event inspired each other. However, organ building developed significantly during the nineteenth century. The pioneering innovations of the "orchestral" organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899) demonstrated the capacity for an organ that was capable of

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Davies, "Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 216.

dramatic dynamic contrasts as well as coloristic nuances. Charles-Marie Widor wrote about Cavallé-Coll's organ innovations in Widor's preface to his score for *Symphony II*:<sup>2</sup>

It is he [Cavallé-Coll] who conceived the diverse wind pressures, the divided windchests, the pedal systems and the combination registers, he who applied for the first time Barker's pneumatic motors, created the family of harmonic stops, reformed and perfected the mechanics to such a point that each pipe—low or high, loud or soft—instantly obeys the touch of the finger. . . . From this result: the possibility of confining an entire division in a sonorous prison—opened or closed at will—the freedom of mixing timbres, the means of intensifying them or gradually tempering them, the freedom of tempos, the sureness of attacks, the balance of contrasts, and, finally, a whole blossoming of wonderful colors—a rich palette of the most diverse shades: harmonic flutes, gambas, bassoons, English horns, trumpets, celestes, flue stops and reed stops of a quality and variety unknown before.

During this period, stops with imitative names of orchestral instruments were included in specifications. The disposition of the Cavallé-Coll organs has influenced international organ building, especially that of large instruments. The world's largest pipe organ, The Atlantic City Organ, was built between May, 1929, and December, 1932, by the Midmer-Losh Organ Company of Merrick, New York. It has 455 ranks; 33,112 pipes; seven manuals; and 22 divisions, including Wood Wind, String Organ No.1, String Organ No. 2, String Organ No. 3, Brass Chorus, Fanfare, Orchestra Reeds, and even a Percussion division.<sup>3</sup>

Concurrently, a plethora of transcriptions by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century composers, arrangers, and organists, such as those by W. T. Best (1826-1897), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), Theodore Dubois (1837-1924), and Edwin Henry Lemare (1865-1934) were produced. Their works contributed to the development of the

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<sup>2</sup>Charles-Marie Widor, *The Symphonies for Organ: Symphony II*, ed. John R. Near (A-R Editions, 1991), xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Orpha Oches, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 362-63.

modern “orchestral” organ and demonstrated at the same time the capacity of the modern organ for dramatic dynamic changes and coloristic nuances. Lemare, especially, was known as the preeminent master of concert organ playing not only in England, but also in Europe and the United States with his organ transcriptions of widest variety of orchestral works. He himself claimed to have produced more than 800 organ transcriptions.<sup>4</sup>

The works most often transcribed, however, have been those of Baroque and Romantic composers. There are relatively few transcriptions of compositions by twentieth-century composers. Furthermore, there has been a particular lack of attention to transcribing symphonies by American composers such as Virgil Thomson (1896-1989), or other composers who produced the leading works of twentieth-century American music. This study attempts to address this deficiency by providing a transcription and performance guide for a major work by the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer (1936), Virgil Thomson.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is two-fold: first, to explore the life of Thomson and his music with a more focused view on how his early career and organ study influenced his composition of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*; and second, to present an original transcription of a performing score for solo organ with a performer’s guide that provides basic analysis and discusses the technical difficulties encountered when transcribing and performing this specific work. Musical examples both from the author’s own transcription and Thomson’s organ works composed in the years 1922-1927 are included

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<sup>4</sup>Edwin H. Lemare, (1956), *Organs I Have Met* (Los Angeles: The Schoolcraft Company; reprint: Braintree, MA: Organ Literature Foundation, 1992), 48 and 82.

as necessary. Further discussions encompass organ registration, tempi, manual suggestions, articulation, phrase markings, and dynamic expression. All of the author's editorial dynamic, articulation, and phrasing marks are presented in brackets.

## **The Problem**

### **General Statement**

The transcription of a symphonic work to the organ requires the adaptation of musical notation for the purpose of performance on the new medium. The central problem of this study was to determine an acceptable level of "adaptation" while preserving the spirit and values of the composer's original work.

### **Sub-Problem**

The sub-problem of this study was two-fold: (1) problems faced in the process of transcribing; and (2) problems that may be faced by potential performers as they prepare to perform the author's transcription. In each case, the issue of adaptation was involved.

The first category of the sub-problem relates to the issue of playability and sound quality. Although both the modern organ and the orchestra share similar symphonic aspects and stereophonic perceptions, the original multi-layered dramatic symphonic work was necessarily condensed into a texture that is "playable" by an organist.

Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* exhibits some adventurous orchestration and form. For example, Thomson adds a section called 'cadenza' at the end of the first movement which is really a cadenza-like quartet for violin, cello, trombone

and piccolo. The tone quality of the organ generally does not reflect adequately the character of this kind of passage with its thin texture and high tessitura. Solutions were found to preserve Thomson's intent for this cadenza.

Another challenge faced by the organist/transcriber was how to deal with non-keyboard elements such as quickly reaching a full crescendo of orchestral sound while maintaining sustained notes. The rendering of the timpani roll posed its own special problem on the organ. In situations like this, many other transcriptions use octave tremolos or trills on adjacent notes. However, trying to imitate a timpani roll by simply repeating the same note or neighboring notes was not always effective in Thomson's work. In this transcription trills of "chord clusters" present an answer as to how best to convey not only the dynamic but also the nuances in timbre of the timpani.

The second category of sub-problem faced by a potential performer may be related to the issue of improvisation. The definition of improvisation varies, and becomes even more complex in performing organ music. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines it as "The creation of a musical work . . . [to] involve the work's immediate composition by its performers, or the elaboration or adjustment of an existing framework, or anything in between."<sup>5</sup> Playing organ music often requires some level of improvisation, since each organ has its own peculiar characteristics in specifications, size, and acoustic environment in which it is played.

Considering the improvisatory nature of organ music, some level of adaptation is unavoidable in the performance of Thomson's work. Suggested registrations, tempos, dynamics, etc., need to be adjusted according to the type of organ and its environment. In

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<sup>5</sup>Imogene Horsley, "Improvisation," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980), 9:31.

some situations the suggestions made in this project may not be reproduced easily on smaller organs. Therefore, the main goal of this performance guide is to present the larger process of transcription, how problems were identified, and how they were dealt with, so that this transcription and guide may serve as a model both for potential performers and transcribers.

### **Definition of Terms**

In the field of transcribed music, three different terms are used according to the degree of transformation: paraphrase, arrangement, and transcription.<sup>6</sup> In every case, some degree of re-working is unavoidable, and the result may vary from the straightforward or literal presentation of the original to an on-going transformation, or even a rebirth into a new piece through complete re-working that might be considered as more the work of the transcriber than of the original composer.<sup>7</sup>

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines transcription as follows: “A copy of a musical work, usually with some change in notation or in layout. . . . Therefore [it] involves some degree of editorial work . . . especially one involving a change of medium.”<sup>8</sup>

While the term transcription more closely resembles the literal transcription, the word arrangement can be applied “to any piece of music based on or incorporating pre-existing material. . . . In the sense in which it is commonly used among musicians,

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<sup>6</sup>Maurice Hinson, *The Pianist’s Guide to Transcriptions, Arrangements, and Paraphrases* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), x.

<sup>7</sup>Howard M. Feldsher, “Transcription or Arrangement,” *The Instrumentalist* 25 (1971): 39.

<sup>8</sup>Hugh MacDonald, “Transcription,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980), 19:117.

however, the word may be taken to mean either the transference of a composition from one medium to another or elaboration (or simplification) of a piece, with or without a change of medium.”<sup>9</sup>

Paraphrase, as its name implies, is the most free style among the three. “It can embrace the entire act of an opera, mixing and mingling the material en route, giving us an aerial view of the composition. . . . In a paraphrase, the arranger is free to vary the original, to weave his own fantasy around it, to go where he wills.”<sup>10</sup> Liszt’s *Fantasia and Fugue on Ad nos, ad Salutarum* based on Meyerbeer’s opera *Le Prophet* is a proper example of the “most free” kind of transcription.

Scholars generally agree that adaptation is unavoidable in the process of transcription, but the degree of transcription often differs. Alan Walker, biographer of Liszt, asserts that “the transcription must be obedient” and should be “a true copy of the original.”<sup>11</sup> Roger Scruton agrees with Walker that the intention of the transcriber is to preserve the original intention of the composer, only changing the instrumental color of the work.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, Busoni extends the concept of transcription to a new level—performance. Busoni included performances into the transcription category and wrote that “the performance of a work is also a transcription . . . for the musical work of

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<sup>9</sup>Malcolm Boyd, “Arrangement,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001), 2:65-66.

<sup>10</sup>Alan Walker, *Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 158.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 451-52.

art exists whole and intact before it has sounded and after the sound is finished.”<sup>13</sup> To Busoni the whole process of music-making, “from inspiration through notation to performance,” is the process of transcription.<sup>14</sup>

Even though the acceptable degree of adaptation is varied according to scholars and arrangers, they seem to agree that creativity is the most essential part of transcription. Davies describes:

The role of the transcriber is essentially creative, because it is the transcriber’s job to adapt the composer’s score, not merely reproduce it, and to adapt it so that it is suitable for the medium into which it is transcribed in order that the composer’s musical ideas are preserved rather than distorted by the new medium . . . the faithful presentation of the composer’s musical ideas in a way consistent with the medium into which the work is transcribed provides scope for the creative imagination of the transcriber.<sup>15</sup>

Paul Thom, in his book *The Musician as Interpreter*, asserts that creativity is required by the transcriber as much as it is needed by the composer, and wrote that “the transcriber, like the composer, creates a realization of the abstract idea through a written score, but chooses a different ‘musical agency’ from the one chosen by the composer for realizing this idea.”<sup>16</sup>

It might be said that the art of transcription in a modern sense began with Liszt, who wrote that “practicing the art of transcription for fifty years has brought me to maintain the right balance between too much and too little in this field.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Jonathan Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>15</sup>Davies, “Transcription, Authenticity, and Performance,” 224.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Thom, *The Musician as Interpreter* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), 4.

<sup>17</sup>Kregor, *Liszt as Transcriber*, 1.

In this paper, for the sake of avoiding the problem, the words “transcription” and “arrangement” are used as interchangeable, overarching terms, to denote all types of transcribed works in the organ repertory.

### **Delimitations**

This study is limited to (1) a transcription of Virgil Thomson’s *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*; (2) a performance guide to the transcription; and (3) a study of the personal and musical background of the composer that led to his composing the work, which included his organ study and his composition of works specifically for the organ.

The analysis of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is not intended to serve as an in-depth study of the melodic and harmonic aspects of the work, but to bring attention to the distinctive forms and musical characteristics of the composition.

Therefore, this paper attempts neither to provide the reader with detailed formal musical analyses of the symphony itself nor of the hymns and folk tune that Thomson used in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. Inclusion or discussion of other literature was pertinent to this research only as related to the work or as they helped to clarify Thomson’s broader stylistic and characteristic approaches to composing.

### **Basic Assumptions**

The basic assumption of this study is that a transcription of Virgil Thomson’s *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* may be useful primarily for recital organists, but also may serve for capable local church organists to program for special occasions. It is also assumed that this transcription may serve as a pedagogical work that may provide organists a different way of approaching modern registration and organ performance

techniques. Furthermore, such a resource may also be used as a supplement within a literature seminar dealing with twentieth-century American composers and art music.

Performing this transcription will be beneficial not only for musicians, but also for audiences who will have the opportunity to hear music that might otherwise be unavailable to them, or to let hearers re-experience the work with the new and interesting effects of a different version on a new medium—the organ.

It is further assumed that this study and compilation of materials will result in an increased interest in other works by Virgil Thomson, thus providing an impetus for the preparation transcription or performance of other works composed by him.

### **The Need for the Study**

By the turn of the nineteenth century, American musicians began to re-think music and traditions rooted in the past. During this period, American art music was heavily influenced by European art culture. Hitchcock explained this phenomenon:

American music of the cultivated tradition from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I was largely dominated by the attitudes, the ideals, and the modes of expression of nineteenth-century Europe, particularly Austria and Germany. Our leading composers almost to a man were initiated into music by first-generation Americans emigrated from Europe; they were trained professionally during sojourns in Europe and when they came back their music was played by ensembles, choruses, and orchestras led either by Europeans or Europe-trained conductors.<sup>18</sup>

Music written in America “was [stylistically] not much different from [that] current in Europe at the end of the 19th century.”<sup>19</sup> Thomson gave somewhat the same

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<sup>18</sup>Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 148.

<sup>19</sup>William Sternfeld, ed., *Music in the Modern Age* (New York, Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 366.

evaluation, writing that “it was nonetheless a pale copy of its continental models.”<sup>20</sup>

American audiences welcomed European-trained musicians and especially, as Charles Hamm wrote “the Germanic style was the only basis for successful composition.”<sup>21</sup> The American public showed their favoritism to what was “made in Europe,” and what was “made in America” was considered less-valued. Michael Broyles points out that the American public considered “if a composer was American, he was inferior.”<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century American composers were searching for a new path, the path to independence “from the European tradition” in order to find their own “paths to follow.”<sup>23</sup> Ironically, the Czech composer Anton Dvorak was the one who stirred this movement. In 1892, he challenged American composers to revalue their cultural heritage, and to turn their interest toward finding their indigenous resources and roots to create their own voices.<sup>24</sup>

Virgil Thomson was one of the earliest American composers who functioned as a link between the contemporary European music and American sound. Although Virgil Thomson was also a composer trained in Europe, his interest was principally in the newer trends led by the French. Thomson’s compositional style is simple, direct, clear, and witty, and is often associated with French composers (particularly Satie and *Les Six*) and his well-known teacher Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Thomson was one of several

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<sup>20</sup> Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910, Twentieth-Century Composers* (New York: Hold, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York: Norton, 1983), 413.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Broyles, “Art Music from 1860 to 1920,” in *The Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998): 214-56.

<sup>23</sup> Sternfeld, *Music in the Modern Age*, 365.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

American composers who studied with Boulanger at the Paris Conservatory. Among other Americans were Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, and Walter Piston.

However, Thomson's source of musical materials contrasted with those under the influence of the French. To establish his musical identity, Thomson utilized pre-existing materials and sources with which he was readily familiar. He departed from the German-centered European style, practiced by composers of the previous generation, and sought to reach the general audience in America by means of music "rooted in American speech rhythm and hymnbook harmonies."<sup>25</sup>

Hymn tunes are indeed central to *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. Thomson used nineteenth-century shape-note hymns as source materials: "How Firm a Foundation" and "Yes, Jesus Loves Me."<sup>26</sup> Thomson said that these Southern hymns were so deeply in his mind that "When you reach down into your subconscious, you get certain things. When Aaron [Copland] reaches down, he does not get cowboy tunes, he gets Jewish chants. When I reach down I get Southern hymns."<sup>27</sup> In his biography, Thomson expressed his

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<sup>25</sup>Richard Crawford, *An Introduction to America's Music* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 199.

<sup>26</sup>During the eighteenth century, hymn tunes were notated in a "shape-note," first in the four shape-note, later in the seven shape-note (mid-nineteenth century). Even though the shape-note tradition began in the northern part of America, it flourished in the rural South. Harry Eskew and James Downey wrote that "Much of the music in the shape-note hymnbooks was written by the late 18th-century singing school composers of New England, . . . To the New England repertory of psalms and hymn tunes, fusing-tunes, set-pieces and anthems, the shape-note hymnbook compilers made a significant addition-folk hymns and spirituals down from oral tradition." Harry Eskew and James Downey, "Shape-note Hymnody," in Grove Music Online, Oxford Music [on-line]; accessed 2 July, 2011; available from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyremote.gablib.uga.edu/subscriber/articale/grove/music/25584#S25584.2>; Internet.

<sup>27</sup>Virgil Thomson, *A Virgil Thomson Reader*, intro. John Rockwell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), 530.

deep love for church music and stated that for him: “Professional status was at all times a joy, as was indeed, for the most, church music itself.”<sup>28</sup>

Thomson made use of all types of materials, from Southern hymns he learned as a child in his home town of Kansas City, to the hymns he played in the various churches he served as organist, to the compositional techniques learned in Paris, and finally to his love for church music. By synthesizing all resources, he built his own distinctive vocabulary in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, which was recognized as “American” by audiences during the 1930s.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* deserves more scholarly attention due to its unique characteristics and position in American music history.

### **Related Literature**

There is a genuine paucity of transcription manuals. A descriptive process of ‘how to transcribe’ exists only in a few texts. Among published books used as antecedents for this study, one of the most important is Herbert Ellingford’s *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ*.<sup>30</sup> This method book, the definitive volume on the subject, served as a principal reference for this study. It provided step-by-step instructions throughout the entire book, including extensive lists of examples that range from the Baroque to the late Romantic musical epochs.

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<sup>28</sup>Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1966), 19.

<sup>29</sup>Barbara L. Tischler, *Introduction, An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 6.

<sup>30</sup>Herbert F. Ellingford, *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ: A Complete Text Book for the Organist in Arranging Choral and Instrumental Music* (Boston: Wayne Leupold Editions, 1992).

One of the best methods for understanding transcription is to compare transcribed scores with original orchestrations, especially when the transcription was rendered by the composer himself. Johann Sebastian Bach's organ transcriptions of the concertos of Antonio Vivaldi provide excellent examples of how one might transcribe and condense a full-ensemble texture into a manageable size on the organ, and yet balance authenticity with creativity.

Some choral-orchestral works from composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide an alternative version for organ accompaniment. Brahms's *Psalm 13*, Op. 27, is scored for women's chorus with piano *or* organ *or* strings accompaniment. Samuel Barber provided a transcribed version of his choral/orchestral *Prayers of Kierkegaard* for organ accompaniment. Duruflé made three versions of the accompaniment to his *Requiem*, and one of them is for organ. Bernstein provides a reduction of the orchestral score of *Chichester Psalms* for organ, harp, and percussion. Morten Lauridsen's *Lux aeterna* (1977) was published with accompaniments in three versions: chamber orchestra, organ, or piano.

Peter Sykes, a professor, organist, and arranger who teaches both at Boston University and the New England Conservatory School of Music, published an organ transcription of *The Planets* (1998), composed by Gustav Holst (1824-1934), along with a performance guide containing registration suggestions.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Gustav Holst, *The Planets*, transcribed by Peter Sykes (Boston: Wayne Leupold Editions, 1998).

*The Great Organ Transcriptions* (2005),<sup>32</sup> selected and edited by Rollin Smith, includes twenty-six annotated scores that contain works similar to the present transcription for *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

Several published resources were helpful for the study of transcribing the present work. Works shedding significant light on issues of transcription include Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*;<sup>33</sup> Paul Thom's *The Musician as Interpreter*;<sup>34</sup> Roger Scruton's *The Aesthetics of Music*;<sup>35</sup> and Michel Talbot's *The Musical Work*.<sup>36</sup>

Michael Meckna published an article (1990) focused especially on *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.<sup>37</sup>

John Cage wrote one of the earliest biographies of Virgil Thomson,<sup>38</sup> and it is still regarded as the standard biography of Thomson. The materials in this biography do not appear in strict chronological order, but instead are organized by topics. Cage's book is primarily a discussion of Thomson's music, his life's important influences, and incidents that affected his music.

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<sup>32</sup>Rollin Smith, ed., *Great Organ Transcriptions: 26 Works by Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Bach and Others* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005).

<sup>33</sup>Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>34</sup>Paul Thom, *The Musician as Interpreter* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup>Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>36</sup>Michel Talbot, *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention* (Liverpool University Press, 2000).

<sup>37</sup>Michael Meckna, "Sacred and Secular America: Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*," *American Music* 8, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 465-76.

<sup>38</sup>John Cage and Kathleen Hover, *Virgil Thomson: His Life and Music* (New York, London: Thomas Yoseloff Publisher, 1959).

Perhaps, the most recent and comprehensive of the Thomson biographies is Anthony Tommasini's *Virgil Thomson*<sup>39</sup> in which much of the information was garnered from interviews with Virgil Thomson himself.<sup>40</sup>

A published dissertation served as a resource for understanding hymns that Thomson quoted. Joanna Ruth Smolko's dissertation (1999)<sup>41</sup> contains a helpful listing of shape-note hymn tunes quoted by American composers of the twentieth century. Smolko refers to Virgil Thomson in her dissertation.

The performance suggestions included in this project and from the related literature (above) may serve as a guide to performing these transcriptions on the organ; however, directly studying the original work is suggested as the best way to gain an informed perspective of the intention of the composer.

### **Procedure in Collecting Data**

The search for biographical data concerning the composer, by means of studying scores, books, journals, articles, dissertations and recordings, began with the music library of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Additional information came from other libraries, personal correspondence, catalogs, and brochures.

The original orchestral score, published by the Southern Music Publishing Company in 1954, served as the primary resource for the body of the transcription. The

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<sup>39</sup>Anthony Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), 1997.

<sup>40</sup>Tommasini was a music critic for The New York Times and knew Virgil Thomson personally.

<sup>41</sup>Joanna Ruth Smolko, "Reshaping American Music: The Quotation of Shape-Note Hymns by Twentieth-Century Composers" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1999).

recording of a piano transcription for four hands by John Kirkpatrick,<sup>42</sup> who is best known for his advocacy of Charles Ives, was also a valuable resource. Several reliable recordings of the original orchestra work were also essential because they helped to make the piece “real.” *Finale 2010* software was used for both the scoring and the editing of the transcription.

### **Procedure in Treating Data**

The transcription process involved three aspects:

First, in order to establish the transcription process for *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* for solo organ, a review of Virgil Thomson’s compositional style and influences was conducted. References to primary sources and scholarly research provided a basis from which to construct this transcription. To achieve the best possible organ transcription, a study of Thomson’s several organ compositions was made.

Next, although the best method to understand Thomson’s own style of transcription might be to study scores that were rendered by the composer himself, comparing these with the original orchestral scores, no transcriptions were made by Thomson. Therefore, Ellingford’s methods and strategies were adopted as the basic guideline. In the introduction of his book, Ellingford provides a descriptive process of “how to transcribe” for anyone who endeavors to transcribe orchestral music for organ:<sup>43</sup>

- a. Eliminate the *unessential*, and lay out the *essential* to the best advantage on the organ.
- b. Aim at simplicity and avoid complexity.

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<sup>42</sup>Arthur Berger, Harold Shapero, and Virgil Thomson, *Works for piano four-hands* [CD] (New York: New Worlds Record, 1999).

<sup>43</sup>Ellingford, *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ*, 3.

- c. Complex and involved passages, though they may be technically playable on the organ, should be altered and rewritten, *unless the effect is artistic*.
- d. Avoid the exact reproduction of any idiom peculiar to one particular class or group of orchestral instruments, which is not artistic and effective in the transcribed medium.
- e. *Alter* the context or figures of an instrumental part, rather than reproduce an idiom which does not belong to the organ.
- f. Avoid rapid repetitions either of single or double notes. These repetitions may often be technically or mechanically possible at a great speed on an organ – but they can never sound really well, because at the high speed one note will run into the other, and this merging of one sound into the next, results in the effect of one continuous sound, or at best, a sustained wobble!
- g. Try to reproduce the spirit of the score – not the letter.

In the process of crafting the transcription of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Samuel Adler's *The Study of Orchestration*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.,<sup>44</sup> served as a basis for instrumental reference, while Peter Sykes' transcription of Holst's *The Planets* served as a model for scoring. The new score was kept as similar as possible to the original orchestra score, except for slight differences in phrasing, articulation, dynamics, and of course, organ registration.

In the third and final stage of the process of this project, the author prepared for a performance of the transcribed work. Registrations, dynamic expressions, and articulations were revised as necessary. The goal of the transcription was to make *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* sound as if it had been written for the organ from its very beginning.<sup>45</sup> The ideal sound—truly an orchestral impression—for this work could not be produced by simply imitating the orchestral sound. Rather, the organ transcription necessitated similar, but slightly different, changes of tone color, flexible dynamics, differentiated articulations, and rubato as necessary to make the transcription as musical

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<sup>44</sup>Samuel Adler, *The Study of Orchestration*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1928).

<sup>45</sup>Hugo Leichtentritt. "Ferruccio Busoni as a Composer," *Musical Quarterly*, 3 (1917): 88.

as possible. The present transcription was first performed by the transcriber on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2011, in the Alumni Chapel of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

A recording of this premier performance is included with the dissertation.

### **Procedure in Reporting Data**

The dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This division of the study presents an overview of the purpose, sources, and constituents in this dissertation.

Chapter 2: This chapter provides a brief biographical portrait of the composer, with special emphasis on Thomson's compositional style and the various influences upon it.

Chapter 3: In four sections, this chapter focuses on the symphony's four movements. It includes a discussion of transcription issues related to each movement, registration considerations, manual changes, expressive markings, and interpretive suggestions. Providing formal analysis where helpful, along with discussions of musical and technical aspects, an approach to the performance of each movement of the transcription is suggested.

Chapter 4: This chapter, the heart of the dissertation, consists of the performing score of the author's transcription of Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

Chapter 5: The final chapter includes a summary of observations to conclude this present body of work, as well as suggestions for further study.

## CHAPTER 2

### INFLUENCES FROM VIRGIL THOMSON'S EARLY LIFE AND WORK UPON *SYMPHONY ON A HYMN TUNE*

This chapter presents a brief biographical portrait of Virgil Thomson, with a special emphasis on (1) his general importance in early twentieth-century American musical life, particularly in fostering a distinctive American voice in music composition; (2) influences of upbringing and training that came to bear upon his compositional style, most especially his experience as a church organist; (3) Thomson's affinity for hymns and his incorporation of hymns into his compositions; and (4) stylistic attributes of playing the organ and its repertoire that affected elements of style in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

#### **Thomson's Place in Early Twentieth-Century American Musical Life**

Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) had several careers throughout his life. As a composer, Thomson was best known for two operas to libretti written by Gertrude Stein: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), and *The Mother of Us All* (1947). The success of his film scores for Pare Lorentz's films, *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937), brought his music and name to the public. The Pulitzer Prize-winning score to Robert Flaherty's film *Louisiana Story* (1948)—the only one ever awarded for a film score—brought him rapidly to fame.

Above all, he is remembered by many as a music critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* (1937-1951), and Thomson's journals and critical writings have been published and regarded as some of his most perceptive achievements. Thomson authored eight books, including an autobiography, *Virgil Thomson*,<sup>1</sup> for which he won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1982. Even though there are many different criteria for discussing the "musical American," many scholars agree that the majority of Thomson's music has been significantly influential in the development of the "American Sound."<sup>2</sup>

### **Thomson as a Young Organist and Composer**

Because of his multiple professional careers that garnered outstanding achievements in his later years, few remember that Virgil Thomson's first career was as an organist—a career that influenced his early compositions significantly. He began his career as a church organist at Calvary Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, where he was born in 1896. Born into a Southern Baptist family, Thomson grew up in a cultural environment made up of the southern tradition: Christian teaching and southern hymns.

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<sup>1</sup>Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1966).

<sup>2</sup>Crawford wrote that Thomson's particular blend of musical eclecticism distinguished him from virtually all other composers of the twentieth century and made his compositional voice recognizable for what Thomson called its "Americanness." Richard Crawford, *An Introduction to America's Music* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 199. In his discussion of Thomson's contribution to American music, Victor Yellin wrote, "Virgil Thomson's main contribution to American music is his blending of the musical elements of melody, harmony, and rhythm into a musical style proper to American speech." Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910* (New York: Hold, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 91. Joan Peyser wrote, "No living composer has exerted a stronger influence on American music than Virgil Thomson." Joan Pyser, *The Music of My Time* (New York: Pro/Am Music Resource, 1995), 65; see also Barbara L. Tischler, Introduction, *An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

Thomson wrote “I was [D. Sears’] assistant at twelve. I played the organ professionally in churches.”<sup>3</sup> He continued to study and served churches until 1917, when Thomson joined the army; he later resumed his career as a church organist when he entered Harvard in 1919. In his autobiography, he stated that his goal for studying at Harvard was to “become an organist and choir director in some well-paying city church and from there to pursue a composer’s career.”<sup>4</sup> While at Harvard, he studied piano with Heinrich Gebhard and organ with Wallace Goodrich, the organist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Dean of the organ department at the New England Conservatory School of Music.<sup>5</sup>

In 1921, Thomson made a brief trip to France as accompanist for the Harvard University Glee Club. He subsequently decided to take a one-year hiatus from his university course to study with Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau in France. This institution was founded in 1921 by American conductor Walter Damrosch for the purpose of exposing outstanding American musicians to the French musical tradition. Thomson, along with Aaron Copland and Roy Harris,<sup>6</sup> became one of the first generation of American composers to study with Boulanger. Boulanger had been the pupil of Louis Vierne and Alexander Guilmant in

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<sup>3</sup>Tim Page and Vanessa W. Page, eds., *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 233-34.

<sup>4</sup>Thomson, *Virgil Thomson*, 44.

<sup>5</sup>Anthony Tommasini. *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 77.

<sup>6</sup>Copland studied between 1921 and 1924, Thomson in 1921, and Harris between 1926 and 1929. A list of Nadia Boulanger’s American students can be found at the website [nadiaboulanger.org](http://nadiaboulanger.org) and from composers listed in the two editions of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

organ performance and Charles-Marie Widor and Gabriel Fauré in organ composition.<sup>7</sup>

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* provides more than a hundred names of American composers and organists who studied with her, some of whom include Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Marc Blitzstein, Elliott Carter, Irving Fine, David Diamond, Ned Rorem, Noël Lee, Philip Glass, Paul Chihara, Adolphus Hailstork, and David Conte. The impact that Boulanger had upon America's musical development was profound.

Boulanger's teaching was closely associated with one of the major musical trends in Paris during the 1920s—neoclassicism. This style is represented in some of the music of Eric Satie, Igor Stravinsky, *Les Six*, and other contemporary Parisian musicians. Boulanger held Wednesday classes for her students, during which they played and studied Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's contemporary scores.<sup>8</sup> The main focus of Nadia Boulanger's instruction was in the areas of counterpoint and harmony. Aaron Copland, one of her students, recalled that she especially emphasized clarity and proportion, with “a sense of forward motion, of flow and continuity in musical discourse; the feeling for inevitability, for the creating of an entire piece that could be thought of as a functioning entity,” which she termed “*la grande ligne*,” the long line.<sup>9</sup>

Aaron Berkowitz, one of Nadia Boulanger's students, remembered his teacher as one who made her students “do four-part harmony and counterpoint and fugue. . . . I

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<sup>7</sup>Virgil Thomson, *A Virgil Thomson Reader*, intro. John Rockwell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 46.

<sup>8</sup>Steven Watson, *Prepare for Saints: Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thomson, and the Mainstreaming of American Modernism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 33.

<sup>9</sup>Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry and Holt and Company, LLC, 2000), 49. Also see Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 232.

had to realize figured basses at sight all of the time. . . . I was doing various kinds of sight-reading all of the time, and . . . forced to master principles of voice leading.”<sup>10</sup>

Thomson’s study was not much different from other students except that he also studied organ. Thomson remembered that Boulanger’s teaching “consisted of some excellent training in counterpoint, harmony, and organ-playing, and in having put me at ease with regard to the art of composition.”<sup>11</sup>

Boulanger not only challenged her students to expand their style by studying all periods of classical music, but also introduced them to the most up-to-date musical trends. Yet she encouraged them to develop their own musical language. What Thomson admired most about her approach to teaching was that she exhorted her students to find their own ‘voice.’

Nadia Boulanger, then thirty-four . . . was endeared most to Americans [for] her conviction that American music was about to “take off,” as Russian music had done eighty years before. Here she differed with the other French musicians, who, though friendly enough toward Americans . . . lacked faith in us as artists.”<sup>12</sup>

In his later years Thomson defined the meaning of Americanness in his book, *A Virgil Thomson Reader*: “The way to write American music is simple. All you have to do is to be an American and then write any kind of music you wish.”<sup>13</sup> In other places, he added an explanation: “At 28 I was ceasing to be a neo-classical, neo-medieval, neo-

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<sup>10</sup>Aaron Berkowitz, *The Improving Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 83.

<sup>11</sup>From Thomson to a correspondent, 17 December, 1952, in *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson*, 260.

<sup>12</sup>Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (1966), 54.

<sup>13</sup>Virgil Thomson, “On Being American,” in *A Virgil Thomson Reader* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 304.

baroque. . . . As for being ‘American,’ I learned 50 years ago that all you had to do . . . [was] to write music. National qualities follow.”<sup>14</sup>

While refining his organ playing and compositional style, Thomson met artists who led the foremost musical trends in Paris, such as the poet Jean Cocteau, Thomson’s lifetime friend Gertrude Stein, members of *Les Six* (especially Milhaud, Poulenc, and Honegger), and above all, Eric Satie.<sup>15</sup> In his writings Thomson acknowledged his high valuation of the music of Satie, and wrote, “of all the influential composers of our time . . . Satie is the only one whose works can be enjoyed and appreciated without any knowledge of the history of music. . . . They are as simple, as straightforward, as devastating as the remarks of a child.”<sup>16</sup>

In his later years, Thomson remembered that he and Boulanger had a disagreement on matters of musical taste.<sup>17</sup> Thomson loved Satie’s and Milhaud’s music, while the method of Boulanger’s teaching emphasized Bach-based neoclassicism and Fauré-based harmony.<sup>18</sup> Thomson wrote, “Her attentive efforts to lead me in the directions of Fauré and Mahler were not successful. . . . We were in accord about Sebastian Bach (I was an organist) and Stravinsky. . . . She did not care for Satie or Milhaud, whom I admired.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Page and Page, *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson*, 237.

<sup>15</sup>This group of composers were all disciples of Satie.

<sup>16</sup>Virgil Thomson, *The Musical Scene* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1945), 119-20.

<sup>17</sup>Watson, *Prepare for Saints: Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thomson, and the Mainstreaming of American Modernism*, 33.

<sup>18</sup>Page and Page, *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson*, 260.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

During this brief period (1921-1922) and under the instruction of Boulanger, Thomson wrote several short organ works: “Fanfare,” “Fantasia,” “Christmas Plainsong,” and “Prelude for Organ.” In those compositions, Thomson mixed various musical elements, such as simple repetitive chordal accompaniments, thin textures, simple diatonic melodies, the incorporation of *ostinati* bass, and fugal elements. In this way Thomson made an effort to combine the models of Boulanger’s French neoclassicism and his own style (‘voice’).

Returning to Harvard to complete his degree in 1922, Thomson became the organist and choirmaster at King’s Chapel in Boston (1922-1923). He remembered the organ in King’s Chapel: “I enjoyed a modern four-manual organ. . . . I played the full organ repertory, from Frescobaldi by way of Pachelbel to Roger-Ducasse and Vierne.”<sup>20</sup> After his graduation from Harvard in 1923, he earned a grant from The Juilliard School and continued to commute from New York to Boston for a couple of years.

In 1925, Thomson’s musical career took a radical turn when he decided to focus on composing. He wrote “I had practiced successfully organ playing, teaching and conducting; but I did not want to be going on doing any of them. They filled up my waking mind with other’s music.”<sup>21</sup> He returned to Paris and remained there for fifteen years. During this stay in Paris, Thomson’s mature musical style took shape and he became an important American composer. In the second year of Parisian residency, 1926, he began to work on his first large orchestral work, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*,

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<sup>20</sup>Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (1966), 62.

<sup>21</sup>Thomson, *A Thomson Reader* (1981), 41.

struggling for three years until its completion in July of 1928.<sup>22</sup> During the time that he was writing the symphony, 1927, he also finished four sets of organ works, *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*. This was the only organ work that Thomson composed during his second residency in Paris. For the next thirty-five years, Thomson wrote no additional organ compositions, except for one brief wedding piece for a friend in 1940. In October of 1940, he returned to New York and became a resident at the Hotel Chelsea, where he resided until his death on September 30, 1989. Thomson's first composition was the organ work "Fanfare (1922)" and ironically, his last composition was also an organ work, a set of three voluntaries that were commissioned by the American Guild of Organists (AGO) in 1985.<sup>23</sup>

Thomson's life and work—his compositions, his writings, and his achievements—have been documented in more than twenty theses and dissertations. Yale University holds most of Thomson's papers and manuscripts. In 1988 a volume of Thomson's personal correspondence was published by Tim and Vanessa Weeks Page.<sup>24</sup> As Robert Richard writes, "Thomson may well be remembered as much for his correspondence as for his music and criticism."<sup>25</sup> Virgil Thomson received many honors and awards, including 16 honorary doctorates (among them degrees from Harvard, Johns

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<sup>22</sup>Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, 154.

<sup>23</sup>For detailed biographical information, see Kathleen Hoover and John Cage, *Virgil Thomson: His Life and Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), Anthony Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, and Thomson's own biographical book *Virgil Thomson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1977).

<sup>24</sup>Page and Page, *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson*.

<sup>25</sup>Libby Van Cleve, "The Composer's voice: Virgil Thomson," *Music at Yale* (2005) [on-line]; accessed 10 September, 2010; available from <http://www.music.yale.edu/news/?p=2338>; Internet.

Hopkins, and Columbia), the National Book Critic Circle Award, the French Legion of Honor, and the Kennedy Center Award for Lifetime Achievement.

When compared to his later career and achievements, the significance of Thomson's early career and education, and their influences upon his early (1922-27) organ pieces and his orchestral *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* (1928) have not been fully recognized. In essence, Thomson spent the first thirty years of his life (1896-1927) either performing or composing organ music. Although the number of organ works is small in comparison to the total number of his entire compositional output, the organ works are important to understand his early compositional style: out of over two hundred compositions, only twenty individual solo organ works exist, and fourteen out of the twenty were composed in Thomson's early years of composing, 1922-1927. The complete list of Thomson's organ works follows:<sup>26</sup>

Fanfare (1922)

Fantasia (1922)

Pastorale on a Christmas Plainsong (1922)

Prelude for Organ (1922)

Passacaglia (1922)

*Five Chorale Preludes* (1924)

1. O, Sacred Head Now Wounded! (O, Haupt von Blut und Wunden!)
2. The New-Born Babe (first version) (Das neugeborne Kindelein)
3. The New-Born Babe (second version)
4. The New-Born Babe (third version)
5. Praise God, Ye Christians Ev'ry where (Lobt Gott ihr Christen allzugleich)

*Variations on Sunday School Tunes* (1926-27)

1. Come, Ye Disconsolate
2. There's Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus
3. Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?
4. Shall We Gather At the River?

Church Wedding Music (1940)

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<sup>26</sup>The present study contains selected quotations from his books and his articles. A brief biography presents his involvement with the organ as a student, church musician and recitalist. The listing of his organ works are provided with descriptive analysis by John Cage, Rollin Smith, Anthony Tommasini, and others.

- Pange lingua* (1962)  
Theme for Improvisation (1981)  
*Organ Voluntaries 1, 2, & 3, a Suite* (1985)
1. Fred Tulan: An Organ Piece
  2. Portrait of Paul Sanfançon
  3. Portrait of Christopher Wanklyn

Thomson's early years created an opportunity for him to be exposed to a vast amount of sacred and secular organ repertoire and its related knowledge. This early experience and involvement as a church organist resulted in his compositional style both for organ works and his organ-registration approach to orchestration for *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. A study of Thomson's music composed for organ and *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* demonstrates that these works were deeply influenced by his Southern Baptist background as well as his experience and education as a practicing musician.

### **The Influence of Thomson's Church Experience on His Early Composition**

Thomson was exposed to Christian hymns at an early age, as well as given formal training in organ music performance. Thomson said "The music of religious faith, from Gregorian chants to Sunday school ditties, was my background."<sup>27</sup> As he himself confirmed, those religious tunes he grew up with became "his musical background, his musical language."<sup>28</sup> This influence is revealed through a variety of compositional techniques in his early organ works and his *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. These consist of

1. The incorporation of hymn tunes;
2. The implementation of specific formal devices such as variations, passacaglia or ostinato, and fugal elements, as well as the genre of chorale prelude;

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<sup>27</sup>Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (1966), 45.

<sup>28</sup>Thomson, *A Virgil Thomson Reader* (1981), 530.

3. The pervasive use of the interval of the fifth, both melodically and harmonically;
4. The unique use of orchestra instruments that reflects specific techniques of organ performing (pedal solos and pedal points, as well as colorful registrations and strong dynamic contrasts).

### **Thomson's Incorporation of Hymn Tunes**

One of the most important influential features of Thomson's career as organist/composer lies in his use of hymn tunes and the way he constructed pieces based on them. Ten of his twenty organ works are based on hymn tunes: these include *Pastorale on a Christmas Plainsong* (based on the tune, DIVINUM MYSTERIUM), *Variations on Sunday School Tunes* (Four Southern Hymns), and *Five Chorale Preludes for Organ*. Even though these compositions incorporate well-known hymn tunes, Thomson's organ works represent his least-performed repertory both in recitals and worship settings—considered as the least important of his oeuvres.<sup>29</sup>

Thomson took familiar tunes and radically modified them, almost to the point of being unrecognizable. The excerpt in example 1 from “Come, Ye Disconsolate”<sup>30</sup> shows not only distortion of the traditional harmony and rhythm of the hymn, but also the application of several techniques not commonly associated with hymn settings, such as bi-chordal harmonies, flat-hand block chord clusters, and strong dissonances that sound like atonal or polytonal. Thomson's organ works are full of “wrong-note harmonies, out-

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<sup>29</sup>Mary Idele Hitchcock, *Virgil Thomson and the Organ* (DMA diss., University of Georgia, 1992), 2.

<sup>30</sup>Virgil Thomson, “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” in *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*, NoS06 (New York: The H.W Gray Co., 1954).

of-sync part writing, musical non-sequiturs, tone clusters, absurdly pompous and meandering fugues.”<sup>31</sup> Thomson’s use of “tone cluster” is shown in example 1.

Example 1: Virgil Thomson, “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” VAR. III

VAR. III

with the hands flat

Gt. Full (but no Reeds)  
with Mixtures coupled

Ped. coupled

Thomson favors such distortions in his early organ works at least in part because of the influence of French composer Eric Satie, whom Thomson admired. As Roger Nichols mentioned, one of the ideals of Satie’s music is “familiar objects in unfamiliar perspective.”<sup>32</sup> The idea of using distortion and exaggeration in the “decomposition” of a traditional hymn tune became a primary compositional feature of Thomson’s.

*Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is exceptional among Virgil Thomson’s compositions in that it is one of only two orchestral works based on hymn tunes. The other is in the orchestral suite, *Pilgrims and Pioneers* (1971). The role of the hymn tune in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, as the title implies, is central. Although Thomson was undoubtedly influenced by the European portion of his education, his source of musical

<sup>31</sup>Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, 154.

<sup>32</sup>Roger Nichols, *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris 1917-1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 30.

materials contrasted significantly with the influence of style and music from his studies in Paris. In *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Thomson quoted two nineteenth-century American hymn tunes as primary thematic source materials: “How Firm a Foundation” [FOUNDATION] and “Yes, Jesus loves me” [CHINA]. Only a small portion of motivic and thematic germ materials for *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is originally-composed music; most of Thomson’s materials are, in effect, reharmonizations or free improvisations based on established, well-known hymns and folk tunes. It should be noted that Thomson utilized only the tune of the refrain of CHINA in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, but this refrain occurs in all four movements and is actually more prevalent than FOUNDATION.

Although the texts for the two major hymn tunes in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* suggest strong Christian teaching and influence, it is not known if Thomson specifically chose FOUNDATION and CHINA for their qualities as tunes, for their associated hymn texts, or for both tunes and texts. As an experienced church musician, he certainly knew the words usually sung to these tunes. The text of stanza 1 “How Firm a Foundation” is as follows:

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said,  
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

The text of “Yes, Jesus Loves Me” follows:

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong.  
(Refrain)  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
The Bible tells me so.

With the exception of Charles Ives' symphonies, the quotation of hymn tunes is not a common practice in orchestral symphonic literature. For Thomson, hymn tunes constituted youthful memories connected with church music he sang, played, and directed. These memories certainly influenced the course of the formation of his early musical preferences. Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, borrowed hymns that reflect a childhood exposure to church music, and an interest in and respect for Southern hymns. In fact, several of the musical ideas in his symphony are later re-borrowed by the composer, recycled in his score for the film, *The River*. The materials utilized in the symphony (the two hymn tunes plus the folk song "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"), were familiar to him as he grew up in the southern regions of the United States, where those tunes were well known. It is not surprising that the most familiar, almost innate material, hymns, appeared in Virgil Thomson's first serious, large-scale composition, the symphony.

### **Thomson's Implementation of Specific Forms and Genres**

The most frequently employed forms in Thomson's early organ works included chorale variations, passacaglias, and fugues, as well as the genre of the chorale prelude. As the title implied, *Variations on Sunday School Tunes* contains variations on four old Southern hymns. *Pastorale on a Christmas Plainsong* consists of an un-harmonized melody, followed by five simple variations. In 1924 Thomson wrote a group of chorale preludes that includes two variations on the tune of *The New-Born Babe* and a set of variations on *Praise God, Ye Christians Ev'rywhere*.

Thomson never composed any independent works under such classical titles as “Prelude and Fugue,” “Toccata and Fugue,” or “Fantasia and Fugue.” However, he often utilized “fugue” as an independent section in his organ works. Each of the four sets of *Variations on Sunday School Tunes* consists of seven variations and a fugue. Thomson did not count the fugue as one of the variations, but treated it as an independent section. Although Thomson’s original title is *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*, Anthony Tommasini more accurately termed the work, *Variations and Fugue on Sunday School Tunes*.<sup>33</sup>

Thomson cultivated the Baroque passacaglia in his organ work, *Passacaglia for Organ*. Obviously, the use of a passacaglia as a compositional technique stems from (1) neo-baroque influences upon Thomson through his studies with Nadia Boulanger, and (2) Thomson’s organ study of the passacaglias of Dietrich Buxtehude, J. S. Bach, and later composers Sigfrid Karg-Elert and Max Reger. Corliss Arnold mentioned Thomson in a list of six twentieth-century organ composers who have utilized the Baroque passacaglia form. Among them are Ellis B. Kohs, Douglas Moore, Leo Sowerby, Gardner Read, and Searle Wright.<sup>34</sup> However, unlike traditional eighteenth-century passacaglias, which are usually in 3/4 meter, Thomson’s passacaglia was written in 4/4 meter.

In a brief interview with Bill McGlaughin, then the conductor of the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra, Thomson mentioned that the musical model for *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* was Brahms’ *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Op. 56a.<sup>35</sup> Thomson

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<sup>33</sup>Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, 10.

<sup>34</sup>Corliss Arnold, *Organ Literature: A Comprehensive Survey* (NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 198.

<sup>35</sup>“Virgil Thomson talks about Kansas City Ragtime and the Kansas City Philharmonic

borrowed ideas from Brahms and, like the work of Brahms, he used variations and passacaglia as principal forms in his symphony. The four movements of the symphony are in the traditional fast-slow-moderato-fast arrangement (Allegro-Andante-Allegretto-Allegro), but their individual forms demonstrate Thomson's remaking of traditional design. Thomson's biographer, John Cage, wrote that "each movement consists of a further set of variations tightened-up in various ways, the first in the manner of sonata, the second as a Bach chorale prelude, the third as a passacaglia. The fourth is twice tightened up, once as a fugato, once as a rondo."<sup>36</sup>

As a traditional practice, the passacaglia offers a way of modifying and developing melodic material, of drawing a variety of possibilities out of a single motive. Thomson not only did this, but he added popular modern entertainment elements, such as a waltz-like texture to serve as an organizing bass. In other places in the symphony, Thomson made frequent use of the waltz rhythm, as well as the tango. By synthesizing neo-baroque stylistic nuance with modern dance-like lightness, Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* reflects the musical preferences of his early years as a composer.

### **Thomson's Pervasive Use of the Interval of the Fifth**

Katherine Bergeron writes that medieval and renaissance musical characteristics were perceived as 'modern' in the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Although

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Orchestra plays one of his composition" (February 22, 2009) [on-line]; accessed 10 September, 2011; available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQaSzS4VEg&feature=related>; Internet.

<sup>36</sup> John Cage and Kathleen Hover, *Virgil Thomson: His Life and Music* (New York, London: Thomas Yoseloff Publisher, 1959), 153-54.

<sup>37</sup> Katherine Bergeron, *Decadent Enchantments: The Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 7.

Thomson had early been interested in medieval music, it was while studying with Boulanger that he developed a deeper knowledge of the ‘old style.’ John Cage wrote, “One could trace Thomson’s interest in organum to his long history as a church-goer, to his familiarity with pre-Renaissance choral works gained at Harvard, and to Nadia Boulanger’s interest in modal counterpoint.”<sup>38</sup>

As an organist Thomson had many opportunities to be exposed to earlier periods of music, and probably practiced (as a way of liturgical singing) two or more vocal parts moving in parallel motion, usually in fourths and fifths. Thomson defined organum in this way: “Originally called organum *novum* (or a new tool), the music was no longer monolinear but [was] composed as two part and three part tunes made to be heard together in pitch relations, . . . primarily fifths, fourth, and octaves.”<sup>39</sup>

Pentatonic (five-note scale) melodies, harmonies with emphasis on fifths, and parallel motion between voices are all basic elements of Thomson’s musical language. Thomson’s work, “There’s Not a Friend”<sup>40</sup> (Example 2) is an early example of compositions that utilize the style characteristic of parallel-fifth triads.

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<sup>38</sup>Cage and Cage, *Virgil Thomson*, 157.

<sup>39</sup> Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson: A Reader: Selected writings, 1924-1984*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89.

<sup>40</sup> Virgil Thomson, “There’s Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus,” in *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*, No. S07 (New York: The H.W. Gray Co., 1954).

Example 2: Virgil Thomson, “There’s Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus,”  
VAR. IV, mm. 53-61

VAR. VI  
♩ = 128

*ff* solo or Gt. 8' with Reeds 8', 4', Mixtures

Thomson’s use of parallel fifths in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is shown in example 3.<sup>41</sup> The symphony begins with a theme stated in a series of parallel fifths, as in medieval organum. This theme is an original melody of Thomson. The opening theme reprises throughout the work, but it appears in several contrasting moods and serves the purpose of unity that was the architectural role in the variation form: each movement contains either the entire theme or some fragment of it. In some places this opening theme appears like a solemn brass fanfare and at other times like a meditative chant.

Tommasini pointed out that the passage in Example 3 is “made up of a series of perfect intervals, bare parallel fifths, . . . like the medieval sacred music Thomson had once sung in Sunday school chorus.”<sup>42</sup> However, although agreeing that Thomson’s opening theme to *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is very much like organum, Southern Baptist church musician and music theorist Ronald Turner disputes Tommasini’s assertion that organum was a style of music that Thomson learned in Sunday School.

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<sup>41</sup> Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune for Large Orchestra*. (New York: Southern Music Publishing Company, 1954).

<sup>42</sup> Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, 154.

Turner comments that “Tommasini obviously knew nothing at all concerning Southern Baptist Sunday School music of the early twentieth century!”<sup>43</sup>

Example 3: Thomson’s original theme in parallel fifths

Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. I, mm. 1-4, Orchestra

**Introduction and Allegro** (♩ = 120 circa)

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Flutes (1/2), Oboes (1/2), Clarinets in A (1/2), Bassoons (1/2), Horns in F (1, 2, 3, 4), Trumpets in C (1, 2), Trombones (1/2, 3), Tuba, Kettledrums, Triangle, Snare Drum, Rattle, Tambourine, Cymbals, Tamtam, and Bass Drum. The second system includes parts for Violins (1, 2), Violas, Violoncellos, and Contrabasses. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The tempo is marked 'Introduction and Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp' for piano.

<sup>43</sup>Ronald Turner, interview by author, Louisville, January 3, 2012.

## **Thomson's Unique Use of Orchestral Instruments that Reflects Organ Performance Techniques**

Although the organ is not the sole factor to influence Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, it can be assumed that his pedal-related compositional techniques show the influence of an organist familiar with the possibilities of the organ's pedalboard. Two distinctive features in Thomson's organ music are his use of pedal points and pedal solos. The organ is the perfect instrument for implementing these compositional devices, given that it is able to sustain a sound for as long as needed. Creating tension by increasing dissonance that is followed by a sudden release are typical effects of Thomson's pedal points.

Several organ works of Thomson feature pedal points, including "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" and "There's Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus." One such work extends the idea of chromatic motion over a pedal as seen in Example 4. The first and sixth variations of "There's Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus,"<sup>44</sup> is built entirely over a single pedal note, G.

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<sup>44</sup>Thomson, "There's not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus," in *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*.

Example 4: Virgil Thomson, "There's Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus,"  
VAR. VI

VAR. VI *legato*

Sw. or (Ch.)  
Flutes 16', 8'

Ped. 8' soft Reed or String, not coupled

Strategically placed pedal points represent one of Thomson's most common harmonic devices. In several places the pedal point appears harmonically, as repeated or sustained chords over a long passage. In most pedal points in *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, the sustained pedal notes do not belong to the chord, but are used to create dissonance against it.

Example 5<sup>45</sup> is a passage from the symphony's first movement in which the upper line plays a long waltz-like melody, all of which occurs over an F-sharp pedal point.

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<sup>45</sup>Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

Example 5: Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, mm. 42-51, Orchestra

Musical score for Example 5, measures 42-51. The score is for the Oboe, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The Oboe part (top staff) begins at measure 42 with a melodic line in G major, 3/4 time. The Viola (second staff) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of chords. The Violoncello (third staff) and Contrabass (bottom staff) play a similar rhythmic accompaniment of chords. The score ends at measure 51.

In addition, Thomson inserted pedal solos in several places in his organ works, similar to the virtuosic pedal solos of Bach's organ music. Example 6<sup>46</sup> demonstrates Thomson's use of a pedal solo.

Example 6: Virgil Thomson, "Come Ye Disconsolate," VAR.VII

Musical score for Example 6, "Come Ye Disconsolate," VAR.VII. The score is for a piano and organ. The piano part (top two staves) is in G major, 3/4 time. The organ part (bottom two staves) features a pedal solo starting at measure 16, marked "Ped. 16', 8', 4'" and "detached". The pedal solo is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and consists of a series of chords and eighth notes. The piano part has rests in the first two staves.

<sup>46</sup>Thomson, "Come, Ye Disconsolate," in *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*.

The very-low-registered instruments of the trombones and other brass have a specific role in their solo passages that either introduce a new section, serve as a bridge, or finish a section. In many instances they have the sound and effect of an organ pedal solo. Thomson’s use of a pedal-solo-like passage played by solo trombone (mm. 183-188) in the first movement of the symphony is shown in example 7.<sup>47</sup>

Example 7: Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*,  
Mvt. I, mm. 183-188, Orchestra

Cadenza Obligato  
Ist movement (Piccolo, Trombone, Violin, Cello)

183

Horn in F 1

Horn in F 2

Trombone

Snare Drum

solo

*mf* legato espress

Thomson is very specific in the registration of his organ works, often indicating every detail as exactly as possible. Such use of organ registration to achieve unique timbres is typical of Thomson’s music. This is most easily achieved on a large organ that has three, four, or more separated manual divisions in which its several compound stops are entirely unique in sound quality.

In Thomson’s organ composition, “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” four different changes of manuals and pedal are indicated within nine measures—Swell to Choir, Choir

<sup>47</sup>Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

to Great and, finally, Great to Pedal. Thomson specified all of the stops to be used. The effect resembles an orchestral dialogue between string, brass, and wind choirs. See

Example 8.<sup>48</sup>

Example 8: Virgil Thomson, “Come, Ye Disconsolate,” VAR. II

VAR. II

Sw. 8', 2 2/3'

*mp*

Ch. 8', 4', 2'

Gt. 8', 4'

*mf*

Ped. Reeds 16', 8' *f*

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes a treble clef staff with a melody starting on a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note G4. The bass clef staff has a melody starting on a quarter note B2, followed by eighth notes A2, G2, and F2, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note B2. The second system continues the treble melody with a quarter note D5, followed by eighth notes C5, B4, and A4, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note G4. The bass clef staff continues with a quarter note B2, followed by eighth notes A2, G2, and F2, then a quarter rest, and finally a quarter note B2. The score includes various stop indications: 8', 2 2/3', 4', 16', and 8'. Dynamic markings include *mp*, *mf*, and *f*.

The excerpt in Example 9<sup>49</sup> from the third movement of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* uses several different instruments in a manner very similar to alternating manuals and timbres on the organ—sometimes called terraced dynamics, but in this instance also terraced timbres.

<sup>48</sup>Thomson, “Come, Ye Disconsolate” in *Variations on Sunday School Tunes*.

<sup>49</sup>Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

Example 9: Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*,  
Mvt. III, mm. 426-430, Orchestra

The image displays a musical score for an orchestra, specifically for measures 426-430 of the third movement of Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two sharps (D major). The instruments included are Flute, Bassoon, Horn in F 1, Horn in F 2, Horn in F 3, Horn in F 4, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The notation shows a fragmented melodic line that is passed between various instruments, creating a collage of timbres. The Flute and Bassoon parts are relatively sparse, while the Horns and Trumpet play more active roles. The strings provide a harmonic and rhythmic foundation.

Thomson took a very ‘organistic’ approach here, using the fragmentation of a melody into short phrases to set off different orchestral timbres. Thomson often combines dissimilar timbres to achieve unique acoustic ends in his organ works. He did this intentionally to achieve specific effects. A technique similar to manual changes and

contrasting stop combinations appears above in his *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. Although there are certainly other influences on his orchestration technique, experienced organists will quickly recognize how ‘organistic’ Thomson’s orchestrations sometimes are.

### Conclusion

If, indeed, individuals are the sum of all of their experiences, Virgil Thomson as a composer was the sum of his many life experiences. The brief biography related at the beginning of this chapter establishes Thomson to have been a major figure in the musical life of America during the period from the mid-1920s through the 1980s. His early Southern Baptist church experiences that led him to become an organist played an especially important role in the composition of his first large-scale orchestral work, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

Thomson relied upon the hymns of his youth for a large preponderance of thematic materials used in this symphony, and he was also influenced both in compositional techniques and in orchestration by his experience as a church organist and his personal study of the church music of earlier ages. Thomson’s early compositions for organ later proved to have been developmentally important as Thomson prepared himself to become a major American composer for the symphony orchestra, as demonstrated by musical examples quoted in this chapter. He gave that which was innately familiar to him—the hymns of his childhood—a new and different perspective in a unique work. *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* not only honored Thomson’s religious heritage, but also broke new ground in the development of his sense of “Americanness” in music.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRANSCRIBING *SYMPHONY ON A HYMN TUNE* FOR THE ORGAN: A MOVEMENT-BY-MOVEMENT PERFORMER'S GUIDE

Although Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is divided into four movements, it is basically a series of variations on two American hymns and a celebratory folk tune: "How Firm a Foundation," "Jesus Loves Me," and "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Each movement also contains one or more of Thomson's original motives, according to Cage and Hover, "suggesting both Roman Catholic and Anglican church music."<sup>1</sup> All of these themes bring into the symphony their own unique aspects that distinguish one from the other. Thomson incorporated American materials—hymns, a folk tune, and his original themes—into traditional European forms—sonata, chorale prelude, passacaglia, fugue, rondo, and variations. At the same time the composer incorporated two different compositional devices that implied the "sacred" and "secular." Tunes in parallel fifths, reminiscent of organum of medieval church music, represent the "sacred," while descending scales imply the "secular."<sup>2</sup>

Thomson's original score utilizes a large orchestra: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets in A, two bassoons, four horns in F, two trumpets in C, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, snare drum, rattle, tambourine, cymbals, tam-tam, bass drum, violin I,

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<sup>1</sup>John Cage and Kathleen Hover, *Virgil Thomson: His Life and Music* (New York, London: Thomas Yoseloff Publisher, 1959), 154.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

violin II, violas, violoncellos, and contrabasses. The main task described in this chapter is how best to represent the full orchestral texture within a performance transcription for the organ. The chapter provides a discussion of issues encountered by the performing organist and a description of the methodology used to create the arrangement of this specific work for organ. The four movement-by-movement sections of this chapter each consist of two parts: (1) a brief overview of the movement, and (2) a performer's guide that may include basic analysis and aspects of registration, manual changes, tempo, expression, and interpretation for each movement, as well as issues of transcription that impinge upon performing the movement. Musical examples from the organ transcription are cited as necessary.

### **Movement I: *Introduction and Allegro***

The first movement, *Introduction and Allegro*, begins slowly and mysteriously. In the *Symphony*, several instruments in succession introduce and then extend in various ways a “motto” theme.<sup>3</sup> This motto theme appears to be the original composition of Virgil Thomson—both the motive itself and the various extensions and elaborations of it. Stated in a series of organum-like, parallel, perfect fifths that resemble medieval chant, *Introduction* (mm.1-20) gradually gives way to the first statement of an entire hymn tune, FOUNDATION (“How Firm a Foundation”), which begins in functional four-part church-hymnal-style harmony, but at times evolves into polytonality. From this quiet and somewhat austere introduction that includes FOUNDATION, waltz-like music emerges. The soft waltz-like accompaniment, with an originally-composed Thomson melody that

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<sup>3</sup>A “motto” theme is usually considered to be one that recurs, sometimes transformed, throughout the course of a composition. It is used in this symphony as a unifying device.

hints at the CHINA refrain tune,<sup>4</sup> is played by the oboes. It stands in stark contrast to Thomson's somber motto theme's parallel fifths. Furthermore, segments of the familiar refrain of CHINA ("Yes, Jesus loves me") are more clearly interspersed within the waltz, sometimes at soft dynamic levels and at other times quite robustly.

High-spirited sections follow with grand, rhythmic, festive, and overture-like smaller segments. Interruptions of the chant-like motto recur, however, sometimes at a fortissimo level. "Yes, Jesus loves me" seems to be one of the movement's climactic themes as it appears in avant-garde harmony in high-pitched, boisterous instruments. It is surrounded by brass fanfares and timpani rolls. The finale of this movement is a long cadenza (mm. 186-233) for a quartet of four dissimilar timbres in which Thomson uses several twentieth-century compositional devices, such as polytonality, asymmetrical rhythms, changing meters, mixed modes and scales, and non-functional sonorities.

### **The Performer's Guide**

For the benefit of non-organist readers, the organ is an accent-less instrument; it is impossible to create an accent on a given note or chord by the power of touch alone. The organ's volume is not related to how hard a key is played. Unlike the piano, the organ produces the same amount of volume whether its keys are depressed gently or with great force.

The modern organ provides the organist with three distinct ways of achieving dynamic contrasts: (1) a continuous, more gradual crescendo or decrescendo; (2) terraced

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<sup>4</sup>It should be noted that FOUNDATION and CHINA share one three-note melodic segment that provides an almost omnipresent pattern throughout Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. In FOUNDATION these three pitches are the sol-la-do opening of the first phrase, while in CHINA they are the third, fourth, and fifth pitches of the refrain (the words are "-sus loves me"). This three-note motive occurs so often in the symphony as to provide a kind of pervasive unifying factor.

dynamics and changes of timbre; and (3) sudden extreme changes of volume and stops. While these are all common qualities in any performance by a professional symphony orchestra, their realization upon the organ may present organists with substantial challenges, given the instrument's essentially mechanical nature. The following discussion considers methods by which the organ may achieve the kind of expressivity possessed by a full orchestra, through (1) the organ's use of expression (swell) pedals; (2) use of terraced dynamics, changes of timbre, and articulation; (3) the creative use of the crescendo pedal; and (4) a means for accomplishing a convincing "timpani roll" on the organ.

**Expression facilitated by swell pedals.** A continuous dynamic change is achieved on the organ primarily through the use of the expression pedals (which includes Swell and Choir division pedals on the Alumni Chapel Aeolian-Skinner organ on which the present transcription was premiered). The swell pedal gives control over the volume of the instrument by opening chamber doors that enclose a specific body of pipes (often called a "division" of the organ). This provides a gradual increase or decrease in volume with no change of timbre. The pulled stops remain the same. Another name for the swell pedal is the "expression" pedal. Edwin Lemare wrote that the swell pedal is "the only means so far devised of giving any expression at all to the 'monotonous' or 'one-toned' pipes."<sup>5</sup>

In the organ transcription of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, expression pedals are used both for controlling the volume and creating musical expression. The motto theme

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<sup>5</sup>Edwin H. Lemare, "The Art of Organ-Playing," in *The Organ Music of Edwin H. Lemare*, ed. Wayne Leupold, series 1, vol. 1 (Boston: Schirmer, 1990), 10.

in its entirety is incorporated in the twenty measures of the *Introduction* seen in Example 1. It, or portions of it, links together not only the first movement but the whole symphony. The section begins in parallel fifths that rise and fall. Furthermore, a crescendo-decrescendo occurs as the organum-like passage moves above and then below the tonal centers of “D” and “A.”

Example 1: Use of Expression Pedals in Thomson’s  
*Introduction* and Motto Theme

Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. I, mm. 1-20, Organ

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. A tempo marking of quarter note = 120 is indicated at the beginning. The first system (measures 1-7) starts with a *pp* dynamic and features parallel fifths in the right hand. The second system (measures 8-13) continues the organum-like passage with various rhythmic values and dynamic markings. The third system (measures 14-18) shows further rhythmic complexity and dynamic changes. The fourth system (measures 19-20) concludes the passage with a final cadence.

Thomson's expression markings seen above include accents that require the detached playing of parallel fifths (mm. 1, 7), along with the smoothly performed but discontinuous use of the parallel-fifth pattern (mm. 8-11). All of Thomson's markings help the performer to know how this introduction should be phrased and expressively performed. Since *Introduction* is marked *pp* by Thomson, organists who perform the transcription should take care to make neither too sudden nor too great changes with the swell pedal.<sup>6</sup>

**Terraced dynamics, changes of timbre, and articulation.** In Virgil Thomson's orchestra score several instruments in succession have short, fragmented motives that Thomson excerpts from the two hymn tunes. The orchestra's horns are followed by the strings, the flutes, trumpets, bassoons, and finally the clarinet. To replicate all of these changes on the organ, discreet terraced (and sometimes sudden) timbre/stop changes require the addition or subtraction of stops along with manual changes. Organ stops such as the oboe, strings, flutes, trumpet, and krummhorn are used (see mm. 1-15 in the organ transcription score). The organ's trumpet stop takes the place of the orchestra's trombone for a brief interrupting phrase in Ab major (mm. 16-20) that opens with the symphony's pervasive three-note fragment (Eb-F-Ab), the first three notes from FOUNDATION.

Following the introduction, the first two phrases of FOUNDATION enter with flowing strings in functional, four-part, hymn-style harmony in A major. The third phrase ("B" in the A-A'-B-A form of the tune) enters in non-traditional polytonal harmony. The

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<sup>6</sup>The next paragraph of this paper includes suggestions for registering on the organ the opening *Introduction* motto theme.

final “A” phrase returns in traditional harmony as the excitement of the movement builds. It is necessary to open the swell pedal as this first statement of FOUNDATION is completed.

Quickly the swell pedals are closed and a new registration is used for the abrupt entrance of a quiet, though joyous waltz at m. 39—manual changes are likely required. Although heavily disguised, the tune of the waltz has qualities that hint at the refrain of CHINA, “Yes, Jesus loves me.” The waltz melody is “sung” by the orchestra oboes (on the organ, a light reed stop played in the right hand). The left-hand accompaniment must remain in a steady, quarter-note rhythm, while slightly staccato pedal notes are barely heard on the downbeats of each measure (mm. 39-57).

The 3/4 tempo of the waltz is faster than the FOUNDATION statement that precedes it; the waltz should be played at quarter = 180. A slight *ritard* along with detached playing of beats 2 and 3 at m. 51 helps to provide a dance-like nuance that leads back into the repeat of the waltz at mm. 52-53. In case his audience is in any doubt about the waltz’s origins, Thomson includes the refrain of CHINA in block harmony (mm. 61-72). This statement should be played slightly detached and with a strong registration as it appears over the rhythmic 3/4 waltz meter in the left hand and pedal. Later, the same refrain occurs in parallel thirds in the left hand, under the right hand, at a *pp* dynamic (mm. 87-93). *Sostenuto* playing of the left hand (with a slightly less legato right hand) will allow the softer repeated CHINA phrase to be heard amidst the cacophony of right-hand polytonalities.

From the gentle 3/4 waltz Thomson then bombards the listener with a flurry of twentieth-century compositional techniques, to create a grand, more rhythmic, festive,

and overture-like passage. Beginning at m.110, meters change from 2/2 to 3/2 to 4/4 to 3/2, ending with 2/2 at m. 128. Finally, at m. 128, the pedal booms out the CHINA refrain in augmentation while the manuals have their own syncopated dissonances. Careful registration in the manuals will prevent any covering of the pedal's important CHINA refrain. Over the motto theme in the pedals (parallel fifths) the frenzy builds until the melody of "Yes, Jesus loves me" is heard in full polytonality and full organ in mm. 145-148.

Following the climactic CHINA statement, Thomson becomes absorbed with a rhythmic figure in mm. 149-166. See Example 2. Here the use of terraced timbres becomes most important as the rhythm is tossed from one timbre to another. In the performance of this passage on the organ, the use of detached playing between the tied notes and the notes following them (marked by horizontal brackets) will help clarify the rhythmic precision needed for the playing of this fast, accented, chordal passage.

### Example 2: Articulation

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. 1, mm. 149-153, Organ

The musical score for Example 2: Articulation, measures 149-153, is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score begins at measure 149 with a dynamic marking of *sfz* and a *p* dynamic. The music features a complex rhythmic figure with terraced timbres, characterized by a series of chords and single notes. The upper staff is marked with "Detached" and horizontal brackets indicating the articulation of notes. The lower staff shows a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The score is marked with measure numbers 149, 150, 151, 152, and 153.

To introduce the movement's cadenza, Thomson recapitulates the motto section of the *Introduction*. To emulate the orchestra's full sound, the passage begins at m. 166 with the robust sound of parallel fifths in the organ's pedal division, and builds at m. 174 to nearly full organ. Thomson's early introduction of the first twenty measures of this movement is repeated nearly exactly, only this time at a fanfare-like forte dynamic level, requiring the use of the organ's full-bodied stops and opened swell pedals.

Possibly the most important use of terraced timbres and dynamics occurs in the cadenza which begins at m. 186. The original orchestration of piccolo, violin, trombone, and bassoon—each with their own uniquely idiomatic parts—was technically impossible to recreate upon the organ. Elimination of some notes was unavoidable in the cadenza, and, as Ellingford recommends, only essential parts were kept.<sup>7</sup>

**Creative use of the crescendo pedal.** Creative, somewhat unorthodox uses of the crescendo pedal were sometimes found to be effective in emulating the performance capabilities of the symphony orchestra. In the organ transcription the crescendo pedal is utilized in three specific ways: (1) to create a crescendo in order to accent beats of a trill, (2) to color and enhance glissandos, and (3) for a *sforzando* effect.

In Example 3 an accent on the first beat of m. 177 is achieved by suddenly opening, then slightly closing and opening again the crescendo pedal at a high rate of speed.

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<sup>7</sup>Herbert F. Ellingford, *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ: A Complete Text Book for the Organist in Arranging Choral and Instrumental Music*, (Boston: Wayne Leupold Editions, 1992), 3.

### Example 3: Accents Facilitated by Crescendo Pedal

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. I, mm. 175-177, Organ

The musical score for Example 3 shows measures 175, 176, and 177. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. In measure 175, the right hand plays a series of chords. In measure 176, the right hand continues with chords, and the left hand plays a bass line with a long note. In measure 177, the right hand plays a series of chords with accents (>), and the left hand plays a long note. A box highlights the beginning of measure 177 with the instruction "Open the crescendo pedal" and a double fermata symbol (ff). The score also includes a grand staff with a bass line and a separate bass staff.

In Example 4 (mm. 203-207) the crescendo pedal is used to enhance and create unique glissando effects. However, it is not necessary to open the crescendo pedal fully; the resulting increase in volume would be too great to allow for smooth glissandos. Furthermore, the crescendo pedal must be closed and then opened again in order to follow the crescendo markings in mm. 203-204. At m. 207 the crescendo pedal must remain open for the *ff* passage following the glissando.

### Example 4: Crescendo Pedal Used during a Glissando

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. I, mm. 203-210, Organ

The musical score for Example 4 shows measures 203 through 210. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. In measure 203, the right hand has a rest, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 204, the right hand has a rest, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 205, the right hand has a rest, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 206, the right hand plays a chord marked *mf*, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 207, the right hand plays a chord marked *ff*, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 208, the right hand plays a chord marked *ff*, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 209, the right hand plays a chord marked *ff*, and the left hand plays a glissando. In measure 210, the right hand plays a chord marked *ff*, and the left hand plays a glissando. A box highlights the beginning of measure 207 with the instruction "Open the crescendo pedal during a Glissando" and a double fermata symbol (ff). The score also includes a grand staff with a bass line and a separate bass staff.

In Example 5, the crescendo pedal provides a quick way to achieve full organ for a chordal flourish that is sandwiched between two softer passages. The pedal is

quickly opened to its full capacity and then immediately closed. While playing the notes in the rectangular box, the crescendo pedal needs to be opened as quickly as possible.

### Example 5: Crescendo Pedal for Sudden or Dramatic Crescendos

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. 1, mm. 154-158, Organ

The image shows a musical score for organ, measures 154-158. The score is written for three staves: a treble clef staff, a bass clef staff, and a lower bass clef staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 3/2. The score includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at measure 154, *mf* (mezzo-forte) at measure 155, and *sfz* (sforzando) at measure 156. A rectangular box highlights measures 155 and 156. Above the score, there are two instructions: "Open the crescendo pedal" with a right-pointing arrow and "Close the crescendo pedal" with a left-pointing arrow. The box is positioned between these two arrows, indicating the period when the pedal should be open.

**Accomplishing a “timpani roll” on the organ.** The first movement of the original orchestra version of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* features many timpani rolls or drum effects. On the organ, an especially non-percussive instrument, the rendering of a timpani roll poses a special problem. Three traditional transcription approaches for achieving a timpani roll on the organ are (1) to repeat the same pitch rapidly; (2) to utilize an octave tremolo; or (3) to trill the pitch with a neighboring tone. However, none of these effects approximate the particular “mystical” characteristic sound of the timpani as used by Thomson. In this matter, the recommendation of Ellingford was not to use rapid repetitions of a single note to reproduce the timpani sound because “at a high speed one note will run into the other, resulting in the effect of continuous sound.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ellingford, *The Art of Transcribing for the Organ*, 3.

Through experimentation it was found that “timpani rolls” could be achieved on the organ both at soft and loud dynamics by using rapid tremolos of chord clusters in the lowest registers of manuals and pedal, using foundation stops of 32’, 16’, and a soft 8’. The aim was to approximate as nearly as possible the nuances of timbre in the original orchestration. In Example 6, pulling additional 16’ and 32’ reed stops on the last beat (indicated as a rectangular box) of the movement creates a dramatic crescendo/accents effect (the same technique used in the fourth movement to achieve accents during a timpani roll).

Example 6: Cluster Tremolo Used as a Timpani Roll

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. I, mm. 230-233, Organ

The musical score for Example 6 consists of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a trill-like figure starting at measure 230. The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) showing a cluster tremolo. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a cluster tremolo. Annotations include 'Foundations 16', 8'' above the middle staff, 'Foundations 32', 16', 8'' below the bottom staff, and 'Add Reeds 32', 16'' below the bottom staff. A rectangular box highlights the final beat of the tremolo.

**Movement II: *Andante Cantabile***

The beginning of the second movement, *Andante Cantabile*, gives the impression that it is written in the style of a typical Bach chorale prelude. As an organist, Thomson would have studied and performed many chorale preludes whose textures resemble that seen in this organ transcription. The slow-moving pedal theme (transcribed from the original clarinet and violin “solo” in the full orchestra score) contains small fragments of the two main hymn tunes. As seen in Example 7a, the first three dotted-half

notes (indicated as a rectangular box) are the aforementioned pervasive melodic-interval pattern common to FOUNDATION and CHINA.

Example 7a: Three-note Pedal Motive Derived from FOUNDATION

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. II, mm. 234-239, Organ

The musical score for Example 7a is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins at measure 234 with a tempo marking of quarter note = 56. The piece features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand (treble clef) plays a series of triplets of eighth notes, while the left hand (bass clef) plays a steady, slow-moving line. A rectangular box highlights the first three notes of the left-hand line, labeled "Three-note motive". The notes are G2, A2, and B2, which are repeated throughout the piece.

Yet after this brief FOUNDATION/CHINA “quote,” Thomson also hints further at the refrain to CHINA (“Jesus loves me”) in mm. 249-251, shown in Example 7b, by preceding the three-note pattern with a fourth note.

Example 7b: Pedal Motive Derived from CHINA

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. II, mm. 249-253, Organ

The musical score for Example 7b is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins at measure 249. The right hand (treble clef) plays a series of triplets of eighth notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady, slow-moving line. A rectangular box highlights the first four notes of the left-hand line, labeled "Four-note motive". The notes are G2, A2, B2, and C3, which are repeated throughout the piece. The lyrics "[ Je - sus loves me ]" are written below the bass line.

The entire slow-moving solo (the pedal part in the organ transcription) seems to improvise on fragments of the two hymn tunes that are also accompanied by three sets of triplets in 3/4 meter in the manuals.

Furthermore, in the accompanying triplet motives of mm. 255-258 (indicated by  $\curvearrowright$   $\curvearrowleft$ ), the CHINA refrain is easily heard in triplets and in diminution, shown in Example 8.

Example 8: Accompaniment Motive Derived from “Yes, Jesus Loves Me”

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. II, mm. 255-258, Organ

After thirty-five measures, Thomson abandons the chorale-prelude texture, never to return. Instead, at m. 269 (*Un poco meno mosso*—the thirty-sixth measure of this movement) he inserts a bi-modal “bluesy” section for nine measures in which he mixes D major and D minor modes. This short thin-textured passage is interrupted by *a tempo*—a bright, quick fourteen-measure F-major passage in 3/8 meter. Amazingly, both of these new sections reappear in nearly the same compositional texture and keys in the final (Fourth) movement, *Allegro*.

After a return to nearly fourteen measures of sliding from one chord to the next (with intermittent whole-note flute or piccolo pitches between them), Thomson slows down the movement by using what is effectively a written-out *ritardando*. In m. 311, Thomson prescribed “*glissando lento*” in his original score. In essence, *glissando* is a concept of a supreme legato connection between notes. In the performance of this section

on the organ, use of overly-legato playing between the notes marked by horizontal brackets, and slightly detached between third and fourth beats will help to clarify the rhythm of a harmonic glissando effect (some may hear this effect as somewhat like the “chug” of a steam engine). The tempo and texture imbue the movement with emotional pathos and rich coloring. See Example 9.

Example 9: Written-out *Ritardando* with “Sliding” Bi-tonal Chords

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. II, mm. 308-324, Organ

The image shows a musical score for organ, measures 308-317. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The organ part is shown in two systems. The first system (measures 308-317) includes parts for flute, krummhorn, horns, and trombone. The organ part is marked *pp* and features bi-tonal chords and glissando markings. The second system (measures 317-324) includes parts for flute and organ. The organ part is marked *ppp* and features bi-tonal chords and glissando markings.

A final unique formal feature in this movement is Thomson’s constant use of asymmetrical phrases. He begins with two five-measure phrases in the opening chorale-prelude. However, the horns (played by orchestral chimes in the organ transcription) seem to interrupt with four quarter-notes in 4/4, played *fp*. Following this single 4/4 measure, Thomson continues the chorale prelude with an extended phrase of nine measures. Again, another single measure of four quarter-notes (horns) follows, interrupting the chorale prelude. Seven-measure and other similar non-symmetrical phrases continue throughout the second movement. However, the measures that contain

the horns are initially single measures of four quarter-notes in 4/4 (mm. 244 and 254), then four half-notes in four measures of 4/8 (mm. 306-309), and, finally, four whole notes as they appear at the end of the movement. For whatever significance the horn parts assume (some may hear them as “train whistles”), they are interpolated twice in the chorale prelude and then, significantly, begin and end the final coda (the *glissando lento* section at m. 310).

**Performer’s Guide:  
Registration Considerations**

Choosing appropriate registrations to replace the orchestral strings sound upon the organ was one of the most pressing issues in *Andante cantabile*. Treating organ stops as orchestral instruments, or attempting to “duplicate orchestral sounds” is often unsuccessful. Rather, as Lindley wrote, the organist “should attempt to approximate the instrumental colors in a *general way*.”<sup>9</sup>

In the beginning of this movement a combination of the Rohrflöte 8', Flute Celeste 8', and Viole de Gambe 8' were used for the right hand on the Swell manual. The left hand on the Choir manual was registered with the Cor de Nuit 8', Erzähler Celeste 8', Erzähler 8', and the Violone 16'. The 16-foot stop added weight and strength to the overall string tone of the manuals. The solo in the pedal was registered with the 8' Quint, the Bourdon 8', the Rohrflöte 8', and also had the Great stops, as well as the Brustwerk Holzgedeckt 8', coupled to it. This gave the pedal a timbre that was analogous to, though not a copy of, the clarinet used in the original orchestra version. In order to ensure the prominence of the pedal solo, it was played in the upper register of the pedalboard.

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<sup>9</sup>James Vail, “The Use of the Organ Transcription in Choral-Orchestra Works,” *The American Organist* 43, no. 2 (February 2000): 71.

Although numerous efforts were made to emulate the *fp* sound of the horns on the organ (for example, at m. 244), all attempts seemed sterile and unmusical. An experiment then was made on another organ to use chimes, and this sound was quite pleasing. However, given that Southern Seminary's Aeolian-Skinner organ did not contain a chimes stop, the playing of orchestral chimes by a second player proved to be an effective substitute. Some consideration had to be given, however, to the kind of mallet used, the position of the orchestral chimes in the room, and its proximity to the organist. However, the overall effect in performance enhanced the contemplative, almost mystical or "prayerful" mood of this movement.

In the "bluesy" bi-modal section (mm. 269-277), a blending of organ celeste stops with the Vox Humana and a soft 8-foot flute produced the desired "strings" tone-color. As the Vox Humana stop may differ considerably from one organ to another, three possibilities for its use exist: (1) if the Vox Humana is quite soft, it can be coupled with 8-foot flutes or celestes; (2) if the Vox Humana is overly loud or excessively reedy, it can be omitted, instead using 8-foot flutes and 8-foot celestes together; or (3) if the Vox Humana is not too soft, it is likely that it can be used alone.

In the bright F-major *a tempo* section (mm. 278-283), a combination of Krummhorn with light flute stops produced the needed bright contrast in sound. Consequently, at mm. 285-291 soft flutes on the Swell manual created the desired echo effect.

In the transcription score, registration indications are more general, with a minimal number of suggestions except for the use of specific solo stops such as the oboe, krummhorn, or trumpet. Often there are suggestions for the levels of pitch (i.e., 16', 8', or

4') and the family group (i.e., reed, principal, flute, or string). In this way each performer of this unique movement may create his or her individual approach to registration, rather than attempting to replicate the registrations that were most effective on the large 113-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ at Southern Seminary.

The most valuable aid in the registration of any organ transcription is an understanding of the work's original instrumentation. In light of this, effective stops should be employed that not only reflect the original orchestration, but that are sounds available on one's individual organ. However, to further aid the performer of this movement (and indeed the entire Thomson *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*), the detailed registrations and specifications presented in Appendixes I and II are those used by this transcriber in performance on the four-manual Alumni Chapel Aeolian-Skinner organ at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Although many organs cannot match the resources of this instrument, studying these specific registrations may at least give a general indication of the registrations that seem most appropriate for the various sections of music.

### **Movement III: *Allegretto***

In contrast to the slow, meditative second movement, Movement III (*Allegretto*) begins with a rather startling, repetitive bass line that Anthony Tommasini describes as “a rustic dance or perhaps a Baroque passacaglia.”<sup>10</sup> The repetitive motive (perhaps more accurately termed a *basso ostinato*) consists of a set of five pitches that end with a retrograde of the first three notes of FOUNDATION (Instead of sol-la-do, Thomson ends the ostinato with do-la-sol). The *basso ostinato* motive encompasses a range of an octave,

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<sup>10</sup>Anthony Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 156.

incorporating eight beats that conclude with a final eighth-rest. The rhythm for the motive is  s seen in mm. 328-330 of Example 10.

Example 10: Thomson's Use of *Basso Ostinato*<sup>11</sup>

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. III, mm. 328-341, Organ

**Allegretto** ♩=96

Melody from "He's a Jolly Good Fellow"



328

pp

Three-note motive retrograde from FOUNDATION

legato

335

The brief eight-beat *basso ostinato*, which appears throughout the movement in A major, is repeated again before Thomson introduces the first of two eight-measure melodic phrases that consist of the repeated rhythm of two eighths and a quarter (mm. 332-341). Disguised within this simple repetitive rhythm (which appears first in the clarinets and then in the flutes) are the essential pitches for the folk tune, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Thomson deceived his audience by leaving out repeated notes and entering some of the melody pitches in the lower parts of the parallel-thirds passage. The

<sup>11</sup>Although Thomson's original orchestral score ends the ostinato with a dotted-half note (m. 330), for articulation on the organ it was deemed better to end each ostinato phrase with an eighth-rest prior to the beginning of the next repetition.

circled notes in mm. 332-339 of Example 10 may be compared to the actual folk tune (with lyrics) in Example 11.<sup>12</sup>

Example 11: Melody of “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”

For he's a jolly good fel-low, for he's a jolly good fel-low, for he's a jolly good fel - low, which

7 no-bod-y can de - ny, \_\_\_ Which no-bod-y can de - ny, \_\_\_ which no-bod-y can de - ny, \_\_\_ for

The eight-beat *basso ostinato* repeats four times beneath the transformed folk tune (Example 10). In the folk tune’s repeat (m. 341), the ostinato appears in the pedal a minimum of six times with many repetitions following as momentum builds.

In performing this passage, the lyrical right-hand melody (the familiar folk tune) requires full-legato playing. However, the left hand contrasts the right with *détaché* that includes three levels of detached touch: staccato ( • ), tenuto-staccato ( ◡ ), and tenuto ( - ). The staccato is held for only half of its rhythmic value, while the tenuto (mezzo-staccato) is held for three quarters of its rhythmic value. The tenuto is held longer, only slightly detached. Such measured articulation in the left hand helps to reproduce the orchestra’s “perpetual motion” effect. Listening to an orchestra’s performance of this passage is helpful as the organist attempts to interpret upon the organ the orchestral attacks, releases, and phrases that propel the movement as it works into a full frenzy that

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<sup>12</sup>Note that Thomson appears to use only the first two phrases of the song [mm. 1-8 of this example] in his *Symphony*. Also, the pervasive three-note pattern that permeates the symphony appears in retrograde at the cadence into the second fermata of Example 11, on the words “can de-ny” (pitches D-B-A in Example 11).

combines syncopation with changing meters above the constant *basso ostinato*. See Example 10 for these articulation markings.

Finally, the *basso ostinato* appears in parallel motion by full orchestra and at fortissimo (m. 357) to herald the horns' fanfares (mm. 359-362) which take the form of "horn-fifths." All of this is preparation for the fortissimo entrance of the CHINA refrain by full orchestra in block diatonic chords at mm. 363-366 in the movement's key of A major. Of course, organ stops will need to be added as the crescendo builds to this climactic statement.

Ten measures of solo lines follow, played by the lower strings in the orchestra score, mm. 366-375. On the organ, the foundation stops and trumpet 8' were used. The Pedal to Great coupler was added in anticipation of the crescendo in m. 375, before the *basso ostinato* entered again on the anacrusis to m. 377. As before, stops should be added with every motivic repetition; in m. 382 the crescendo pedal should be opened immediately for a full-organ sound at the downbeat of m. 383. Slightly sustaining the D-major and then E-major chords (beats 3 and 4 of m. 382), which precede this "rush" to the A-major chord, will aid the desired crescendo effect.

At this point Thomson is seemingly overcome by diatonicism as he inserts, fortissimo in A major, I-IV-I-V-IV-I chords (full orchestra or organ). No dissonances appear, and, after a descending A-major scale, the CHINA refrain enters again (mm. 392-399). Marked *p*, this short portion of "Yes, Jesus loves me" is presented first in augmentation (see the rectangular-boxed notes in Example 12). Then Thomson reiterates the same refrain in diminution as the meter changes to 4/4 and the refrain enters with a sixteenth-note rhythmic pattern at m. 400 (Example 12).

Example 12: Melody from “Yes, Jesus Loves Me”

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. III, mm. 392-403, Organ

392 melody from "Yes, Jesus Loves Me" in Augmentation

399 melody from "Yes, Jesus Loves Me" in diminution

As a finale to the third movement, Thomson brings in, at *ff* volume, the motto theme in parallel fifths in the pedal (of the transcription), mm. 403-405. A soft timpani roll follows which for the organ was transcribed by using a low, soft left-hand cluster tremolo below the sustained high-pitched Bb in the right hand (see mm. 406-407 of the organ score). Of particular interest is that this Bb is the only tone in the movement, other than the motto theme, that is non-diatonic to A major. In A major, Bb is the “Neapolitan” tone (or “upper leading tone”). One may speculate that Thomson used the Bb as a kind of specialized upper neighboring tone to link the A-major ending of movement III with the A-major beginning of movement IV (he repeats and expands this concept near the end of the fourth movement, mm. 592-594).

## Performer's Guide

Although references have been made earlier as to how the organ transcription should be played, three additional considerations related to this movement should be noted:

1. In performing the augmented CHINA refrain (mm. 392-399), a flute with added tremulant may be used for the solo. Using such a solo sound with the expression pedal will insert a period of beautiful repose in this motor-driven movement.
2. Manual changes add beauty and color to melodic fragments, or even to passages such as the descending A-major scale at mm. 387-391. By use of quick changes from one manual to another, both the dynamics and timbres of the scale are altered simultaneously to create a unique effect (see Example 13). Notice also in this example that on the four-manual Aeolian-Skinner organ, manuals Great, Swell, Brustwerk, Choir, and Pedal divisions were used in that order to change the timbre as the scale decreased in volume.<sup>13</sup>
3. The tempo of this movement should not exceed the *allegretto* suggestion. Too fast a tempo will create difficulties in playing the sixteenth-note passages. Furthermore, a true *allegro* should be reserved for the fourth movement.

### Example 13: Manual Change

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. III, mm. 386-391, Organ

The musical score for Example 13, Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. III, mm. 386-391, Organ, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 386-387) features a treble clef with a Gt (Great) manual change and a dynamic of *sfz*, and a bass clef with a Sw (Swell) manual change and a dynamic of *f*. The second system (mm. 388-389) shows a Sw manual change with a dynamic of *f* in the treble and a Br (Brustwerk) manual change with a dynamic of *mf* in the bass. The third system (mm. 390-391) includes a Ch (Choir) manual change with a dynamic of *mp* in the treble and a Ch manual change with a dynamic of *p* in the bass. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

<sup>13</sup>Throughout the transcription score manual changes are indicated by abbreviations of the names of the division being utilized, rather than as manuals I, II, III, IV. Given that the Alumni Chapel Aeolian-Skinner organ incorporates six divisions on four manuals, the roman-numeral system of manual designation was deemed too imprecise for the purposes of this project. The following abbreviations are followed: Sw-Swell; Gt-Great; Ch-Choir; Po-Positiv; Br-Brustwerk; Ped-Pedal; and Bom-Bombarde.

### Movement IV: *Allegro*

*Allegro*, the fourth and last movement of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, is an amazing synthesis of the many tunes, melodic motives, rhythms, and other compositional techniques used by Virgil Thomson in the three preceding movements. Based on the FOUNDATION tune, Thomson enters the *Allegro* movement with two four-measure phrases in the style of a question and answer. The first phrase ends on an E octave, while the equally short second phrase crescendos to a full chord on the A-major tonic chord. These short antecedent/consequent phrases at a *forte* grab the listener's attention as they crescendo to *ff* on a full A-major chord (see mm. 409-417 in the organ score).

After the fanfare opening, Thomson (always full of surprises) introduces a complete reprise of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" in A major in full block chords, but with much syncopation and at a softer dynamic. This was played on the Choir manual with soft strings. See Example 14.

Example 14: Syncopated Reprise of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow,"

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 417-424, Organ

417 Melody from "He's a Jolly Good Fellow"

The image shows a musical score for Example 14, measures 417-424. It features a piano part with a forte (ff) dynamic marking and a melody from "He's a Jolly Good Fellow". The score is written in A major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The piano part consists of block chords with syncopated rhythms. The melody is a syncopated version of the hymn tune. The score is presented in two systems: the first system has a treble and bass staff, and the second system has a bass staff.



A descending sequential repetition of m. 424 extends for six measures. Upon the organ such an extension presents many opportunities for terraced colors and timbres as each measure can be played on a different manual. Example 15 shows how different manuals' stops were used to incorporate contrasting colors.

Example 15: Motive Treated Sequentially in a Descending Scalar Pattern

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 425-430, Organ



After this sequential passage, Thomson recapitulates a four-measure fanfare-like phrase (at *f*) that crescendos to an A-major added-sixth chord (m. 435). The crescendo pedal is helpful in m. 435 for achieving this dramatic increase in volume. However, it must be closed immediately before the next measure, m. 436.

Again the dynamic drops to *p*, and Thomson brings in a passage of music from Movement II. Measures 436-449 are altered from their earlier appearance in mm. 278-

291. In the fourth movement the original trumpet (organ reed) fanfare is now at a softer dynamic level. Instead of the meter of 3/8 in F major, this repetition is in 3/4 and in the key of A major. The whole section in Movement IV appears in an augmented rhythm, even though the number of measures for the two passages, fourteen, are the same.

Possibly the most clear and concise way to show how Thomson synthesizes portions of Movements I, II, and III into movement IV is in the form of a table. Therefore, the Table below provides the measure numbers on the left referring to appearances of motives, tunes, and sections of music (as well as alternations made to them) in Movement IV. The measure numbers on the right refer to earlier appearances of the same motives, tunes, or sections in movements I, II, and III.

Table: Motives, Devices, and Phrases in Movement IV  
That Are Reiterations from Previous Movements

In Movement IV	This Material in Previous Movements
<b>Mm. 436-449</b> Exact repetition, same tempo, in the key of A major, but written in 3/4 meter	<i>Movement II</i> , mm. 278-291 In the key of F major, 3/8 meter
<b>Mm. 450-469</b> Mixed-mode “white-note” waltz melody begins with sol-la-do opening motive from FOUNDATION	<i>Movement I</i> , mm. 39-60 G major waltz melody begins with mi-sol-mi-sol-do opening of FOUNDATION’s third phrase
<b>Mm. 478-482</b> Four-measure version of passage mixes D minor and D major	<i>Movement III</i> , mm. 269-277 Nine-measure version of passage mixes D minor and D major
<b>Mm. 497-508</b> Pedal point of F for twelve measures	<i>Movement I</i> , mm. 39-57 Pedal point of F sharp under the waltz melody
<b>Mm. 557-573</b> Under FOUNDATION tune: 1) <i>Basso ostinato</i> in augmentation in pedal 2) “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” in parallel 3rds (accompaniment), but in augmentation	<i>Movement III</i> , 1) <i>Basso ostinato</i> organizes entire movement 2) Parallel 3rds passage (based on “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”) from mm. 332-350

<b>Mm. 590-591</b> Motto theme in two measures (7/4 & 6/4)	<i>Movement I</i> , mm. 1-4 Motto theme in four measures (4/4)
<b>Mm. 592-594</b> A dissonant Bb extended-tertian chord bridges two A-major sections	<i>Movement III</i> , mm.406-408 Bb pitch provides a bridge between A-major Mvt. III and A-major beginning of Mvt. IV

After the pervasive diatonic tonality of the third movement, in Movement IV Thomson returns to his penchant for dissonances and mixed modes. The mixing of D minor and D major at mm. 478-480 is included in the chart above. In mm. 481-482, to end this “bluesy” reminder, an A natural is held while two half-note Ab-major chords end the passage. Similarly, at mm. 488, Thomson sustains a B-natural tied-note that clashes with an F#-major chord to end the B-major statement of CHINA. In mm. 519-521, a transitional passage, the D natural on the second beat clashes with the D sharp on the fourth beat as they appear in canon with each other. However, the most striking passage of mixed modes occurs at mm. 574-580 with the FOUNDATION tune played *ff*. Possibly for dramatic effect and for emphasis, Thomson mixes A-major and Ab-major tonalities as full orchestra (or full organ) “scream” the third phrase of FOUNDATION.

Surprisingly, even when he is at his most “dissonant,” Thomson never forgets his other penchant, diatonic tonality. Large sections appear in diatonic keys. Nearly all of the first part of this movement (mm. 409-449) is in the “home” key of A major. Measures 483-488 place the CHINA refrain in B major, while mm. 489-496 use the key of Eb major for the CHINA refrain, as it appears “echo-like” (at a softer dynamic) to the B-major statement. Furthermore, diatonic scales and sequential passages, usually in the key of A major, are prevalent throughout the movement.

After the climactic combination of the fourth phrase of FOUNDATION with the CHINA refrain in its entirety, simultaneously presented with two and one-half repetitions of the *basso ostinato* motive in the pedal (mm. 580-589), the motto theme (mm. 590-591) announces the Coda to this movement. As at the end of the third movement, a B-flat pedal now heralds the ultimate conclusion to Movement IV, and thus the entire *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*. In this instance, however, the single pitch of Bb is expanded into a massive, powerfully dissonant, nominally dominant-functioning chord that ends on a *sforzando*. After a dramatic rest, Thomson ignores the harmonic tension created in the monumental Bb chord, and quietly reiterates the sol-la-do opening motive of FOUNDATION, presenting it first in A, followed by a passing-tone Bb that leads into sol-la-do in F. The movement (and the symphony) then concludes with nine sharply dissonant (and *sfz*) F/A2 chords that resolve into a blazingly bright, long-held A-Major chord that ends the work with a crescendo into a climactic *sffz*.

### **Performer's Guide**

Although it seemed logical to include some performance suggestions within the preceding discussion of Movement IV, several additional pertinent considerations are included below.

**The need for register changes.** Because of the numerous and important themes and motives that Thomson includes in the fourth movement, a major consideration was how each could be transcribed and heard most clearly on the organ. As in any transcription for solo organ from a full orchestra score, first of all the doubling of parts needed to be reduced. Such simplification of the orchestra score at mm. 580-589,

however, only resulted in a cacophony of sound. Neither FOUNDATION nor the CHINA refrain were heard clearly.

Therefore, it was decided to experiment with the placement of the two tunes; a reversal of relative register positions was the result. In the original orchestra score the CHINA refrain is played by the strings in the upper register, while FOUNDATION is played by the stronger brass ensemble in the middle register. However, in order for FOUNDATION to be heard equally well with CHINA on the organ, FOUNDATION was transcribed in the higher-pitched register, and the CHINA refrain was moved to the middle register, but given prominent reeds to make it clear and audible.

Example 17, a first organ transcription attempt, shows how the lower register of the brass part (the top staff) is naturally overpowered by the strings' CHINA refrain, when CHINA is played an octave above the treble clef (as is the natural register for strings). See Example 16.

#### Example 16: Organ Reduction at Original Register Levels

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 580-587, Organ

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 580 measure marker. The middle staff is a treble clef with an 8va marking. The bottom staff is a bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The top staff contains a melody of quarter and eighth notes. The middle staff contains a melody of quarter and eighth notes, marked 8va. The bottom staff contains a melody of quarter and eighth notes.

After reversing the placement of the two tunes, the full harmonic texture of FOUNDATION in the higher register balanced well with the reeds solo of CHINA in the

middle register. All three important units (FOUNDATION, the CHINA refrain, and the *basso ostinato*) could be heard in balanced proportion (see Example 17).

Example 17: Organ Reduction at Modified Register Levels

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 580-587, Organ

Musical score for Example 17, showing organ reduction at modified register levels. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the right hand of the organ, starting at measure 580. The middle staff is the left hand of the organ, starting at measure 580. The bottom staff is a separate line of music, starting at measure 580. The top staff is labeled 'Foundations, Mixture' and has a dynamic marking of *f*. The middle staff is labeled '*f* Trumpet 8', Clairon 4'. The bottom staff is labeled '*fff* Foundations, Trombone'.

**The need for additional notes or voices.** In mm. 413-417 notes were added to the original texture. These added layers of sound created a richer fullness, and produced the desired crescendo effect without altering Thomson's original harmony (see Example 18).

Example 18: Adding Voices to Enhance Fullness of Sound

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 413-417, Organ

Musical score for Example 18, showing adding voices to enhance fullness of sound. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the right hand of the organ, starting at measure 413. The middle staff is the left hand of the organ, starting at measure 413. The bottom staff is a separate line of music, starting at measure 413. The top staff is labeled '*f*' and has a dynamic marking of *fff* at the end. The middle staff is labeled '*f*' and has a dynamic marking of *fff* at the end. The bottom staff is labeled '*f*' and has a dynamic marking of *fff* at the end. An annotation 'adding middle voices' with a bracket points to the middle staff in the final measures.

**The need to make effective accents on the organ.** Earlier, the use of the crescendo pedal was discussed as a means to create accents, especially as they may be needed on various beats of trilled notes. However, an accent in some passages may be helped by a slight holding back from playing the accented note or chord. In this way a slight pause (notated in Example 19 below by a breath mark) will give the effect of an accented chord at m. 476. This is especially effective if the playing prior to the accent is *legato*, accompanied by a slight *ritardando* and careful opening of the expression pedal.

Example 19: A Breath Mark to Facilitate an Accent on the Next Note

Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, Mvt. IV, mm. 470-477, Organ

Thomson, an experienced organist, well understood how to produce accents on the organ, “by a leisurely breathing between phrase and an almost imperceptible wait before attacking, with no added force.”<sup>14</sup>

**The need for articulation for rhythmic accuracy.** Movement IV contains many rhythmic and syncopated passages. In order to ensure accurate and precise playing, the use of graduated articulation (discussed in the beginning of Movement III) is of supreme importance.

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<sup>14</sup>Virgil Thomson, *A Virgil Thomson Reader*, intro. John Rockwell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), 225.

**The need for adding stops on repeated chords.** In Movement I, there was a discussion of the use of the expression pedals and crescendo pedal for crescendos and sudden dynamic changes. Measures 600-603 of Movement IV presented a specialized problem in which there were nine repetitions of the same chord over a low-pedal trill of A and B. Since these *sfz* chords begin almost at full organ, neither the expression pedals nor the crescendo pedal were able to effectively increase the volume. A solution was devised by adding a number of the remaining stronger stops and couplers successively, with one or two stops or couplers added during the rests between chords. On the Alumni Chapel organ, stops and couplers were added in the order of 8' Bombarde, 4' Bombarde, Grande Fourniture IV-VI mixture, remaining manual couplers, and Pedal to Great 8' coupler. The 32' pedal stops were not used at this point, however, being withheld for a final “timpani roll” at m. 604.

**The need for a final organ “timpani roll.”** Following the repeated chords discussed in the preceding paragraph, Thomson’s score presents a final A-major chord. For emphasis of this A-major chord, it was decided to extend Thomson’s treatment of hesitation as a means of enhancing or accenting a chord. In this instance an organ “timpani roll,” using a cluster tremolo, was inserted immediately prior to the final chord. The rationale for such an insertion was (1) to allow the 32' foundation and reed stops to create an even greater crescendo by compounding the overtones produced by very close dissonances of low pitches, using the lowest C, D, D#, and E pedals;<sup>15</sup> and (2) to allow a

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<sup>15</sup>Music theorist Ronald Turner explained that this crescendo is caused by the creation of “difference” tones. The sounding of four simultaneous pitches at the interval of whole-step or half-step at

heightened sense of expectation before the final accented A-major chord. At the end of the “timpani roll,” the sforzando button was pushed, with the pedal A in octaves added at the final release.

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extremely low pitches (in this instance, two octaves lower than the organ pedalboard) actually creates multiple additional low pitches. Listeners perceive additional tones, described by organist Sandra Turner as a “rumble,” whose frequencies represent the differences between the harmonics of any two of the sounding pitches. Organ builders use this acoustic principle in creating pedal stops that produce a tone that is an octave lower than should normally be produced by the length of their pipes. These are often called “resultants” in organ-stop nomenclature. Ronald Turner, interview by author, Louisville, February 10, 2012.

CHAPTER 4

The Transcription Score for Solo Organ

**SYMPHONY ON A HYMN TUNE**

**I**

Sw. Hautbois 8'  
Gt. String 8'  
Ch. Flute 8'  
Br. Krummhorn 8'  
Ped. 16', 8'

Introduction and Allegro  
♩=120 (circa)

**Virgil Thomson**

Transcribed by Sun Young Park Chu

Sw (Horns)

Organ

*pp*

Gt (Strings)

*pp*

Ch (Flutes)

*pp*

con sord. (straight mute)

12

Gt (Oboes)

Br (Trumpets: flutter tongue)

Sw (Bassoons)

*pp*

*p*

16

Trombone

*pp*

*molto*

*p espress.*

Sw. Flute 8'  
 Gt. Flute 8', 4' Sw. to Gr. Ch. to Gr.  
 Ch. Flute 8', 4'  
 Ped. Flute 16', 8'

19

Gt. (Strings)

*pp*

25

Sw (w.w.)

*pp*

*cresc.*

37

Gt

*pp subito*

*f*

Sw. Hautbois 8'  
 Gt. Flute 8', 4'  
 Ch. String 8'  
 Ped. 16', 8'  
 (♩=♩.)

37

Sw (Obs)

*pp*

Ch. (Strings)

44

52

60

Gt (Strings)

*pp*

*non dim.*

67 Sw (Tpts)

Musical score for measures 67-73. The top staff is for Trumpets (Tpts) and the bottom staff is for strings. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The trumpet part features a melodic line with a dashed line indicating a breath mark. The string part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a bass line.

74

Musical score for measures 74-81. The top staff is for Trumpets (Tpts) and the bottom staff is for strings. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The trumpet part features a melodic line with a solid line indicating a breath mark. The string part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a bass line.

82 Gt (Strings)

Musical score for measures 82-89. The top staff is for Trumpets (Tpts) and the bottom staff is for strings. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The trumpet part features a melodic line with a dashed line indicating a breath mark. The string part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a bass line.

90

Sw (Hns)

*pp un poco marcato*

98

Ch (Strings)

*ben marc. e cresc.*

Sw. Hautbois 8',  
 Gt. Foundation, Mixture  
 Ch. Flute 8', 4', 1'  
 Ped. Foundations, Reed 16', 8'

106

Gt (Strings)

*f*

*sfz*

110

*f*

(Hns)

*f* *ben tenuto*

115

Sw (Fls / Obs)

*mf*

Ch (Strings)

*p*

(Tpt: con sord.)

118

Gt (Fls / Obs)

*mp*

(Horns)

*mp*

*f*

*pp*

(Brass)

122

Open the  
crescendo pedal

Sw (Obs/ Bns)

*ff*

*ff*

*p*

*mf*

*fz*

126

Ch (Hns)

*mf*

(Vlcs)

*mf*

131

Gt

*f*

(Trbs)

*mf marcato*

135

Gt (woodwinds)

Open the crescendo pedal (mute Tpts)

*ff*

*ff* Sw (Bns) *p*

140

(Strings)

*mf*

Ch

(Trbs)

*p*

144

Gt (Fls/Obs)

*f*

*f*

147

*cresc.*

Open  
Crescendo  
pedal

a tempo

(Cla/Bns)

*sfz* Sw *p*

150

154

Open the  
crescendo  
pedal

Gt  
(Tpts)

*mf*

*sfz* Sw *p*

157

Gt

mf

Open  
crescendo  
pedal

160

*sf* Sw *p*

4+8/8

163

4+8/8 3/4 5/4 4/4

166 Lento (♩ = ♩)

Ch

*pp*

*ff marcato sostenuto*

172 Gt (Tpts)

*ff*

*fff*

176

*ff*

178

Gt (Vlas/Vlcs)

*f*

Sw. String  
 Gt. Trombone  
 Ch. Flute  
 Ped. Trombone

181

Flute

Cadenza Obligato  
 I<sup>o</sup> Movement ( Piccolo, Trombone, Violin, Cello)

*p*

Gt (Trb)

*mf*

185

191

Musical score for measures 191-193. The score is in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with rests. The middle staff is a bass clef with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up stepwise to D5, then a series of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with rests. A 3/2 time signature change is indicated between measures 191 and 192.

Ch (Picc)

194

*mf*

Musical score for measures 194-195. The score is in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up stepwise to D5, then a series of sixteenth notes. The middle staff is a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The bottom staff is a bass clef with rests. A 7-measure rest is indicated above the top staff in measure 194.

196

Sw (Vlc)

*mf*

Musical score for measures 196-198. The score is in 4/4 time. The top staff is a treble clef with a melodic line starting on G4, moving up stepwise to D5, then a series of sixteenth notes. The middle staff is a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The bottom staff is a bass clef with rests. A 5/4 time signature change is indicated between measures 196 and 197.

198

3

203

(Vln)

*tr* *tr* *mf* *ff* *ff*

209

Ch (Vln)

(Trb)

*mf*

214

Gt

Ch

Musical score for measures 214-217. The top staff is for Guitar (Gt) and the bottom staff is for Clarinet (Ch). The music is in 3/4 time. The guitar part features a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the clarinet part has a similar melodic line. The bass line is mostly rests.

218

(Vln/Vlc)

Sw

Musical score for measures 218-222. The top staff is for Violin/Viola (Vln/Vlc) and the bottom staff is for Sw. The music is in 3/4 time. The violin/viola part has a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the Sw part has a similar melodic line. The bass line is mostly rests.

223

Ch (Picc)

*mf*

*cresc.*

Musical score for measures 223-226. The top staff is for Clarinet in Piccolo (Ch (Picc)). The music is in 3/4 time. The clarinet part features a melodic line with slurs and ties, marked with *mf* and *cresc.*. The bass line has a few notes.

225

*cresc.*

7

7

*tr*

*tr*

228

*tr*

*tr*

*tr*

Foundations 16', 8' (Percussion)

*sfz*

*sfz*

Foundations 32', 16', 8'      Add reeds 32', 16'

## II

Sw. Flute 8'  
Gt. Flute 8'  
Ch. String 16', 8'  
Ped. Quintaton 8', 4'

Andante Cantabile ♩=56

Musical score for measures 234-237. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is Andante Cantabile with a metronome marking of ♩=56. The dynamics are marked *p* (piano) and *p cantabile*. The score features three staves: Sw (Vlas) in the treble clef, Ch (Vlcs) in the bass clef, and (Cla/Vlns) in the bass clef. The Sw part consists of a melodic line with triplets and slurs. The Ch part has a bass line with triplets and slurs. The (Cla/Vlns) part has a long, sustained note in the bass register.

Musical score for measures 238-241. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The dynamics are marked *p* (piano). The score features three staves: Sw (Vlas) in the treble clef, Ch (Vlcs) in the bass clef, and (Cla/Vlns) in the bass clef. The Sw part continues with a melodic line featuring triplets and slurs. The Ch part has a bass line with triplets and slurs. The (Cla/Vlns) part has a long, sustained note in the bass register.

243

Chime (Hns) Sw: add Flute 4'

*fp fp fp fp* *p*

Ch

248

253

(w.w.)

Chime (Hns) Gt

*p legato uguale*

257

Sw. add foundation 8',4'

*p*

Ch

*mp cantabile*

260

Sw.Flute 8', '4', 2 2/3'  
(w.w./strings)

Un poco meno mosso

265

Sw

*pp*

270

*legato*

*pp*

Sw. Flute 8'  
 Gt. Flute 8', 2'  
 Ch. Krummhorn 8', Flute 8'

275

*a tempo*

Gt *mf*

281

Gt *pp*

Sw *pp*

290

Sw

298

Sw Strings 16', 8'  
 Gt Flute 8'  
 Ch. Krummhorn 8'  
 Ped Trombone 16',  
 Flute 16', 8'

304

ppp

Sw (Hns)

Chime (Hns)

pp

f

311

Gt (Fl) | Ch (Tpt sost.)

*pp* senza vibrato

*glissando lento* | *simile*

317

Gt (Fl)

323

Chime (w.w./strings)

*ppp*

### III

Sw. Strings 8'  
Gt. Foundation 8', 4'  
Ch. Flute 16', 8'  
Ped. Foundation 16', 8'

**Allegretto** ♩=96

Musical score for measures 328-333. The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is Allegretto at 96 beats per minute. The music features a piano accompaniment in the bass clef and a solo line in the treble clef. The piano part is marked *pp* and *p*. The solo line is marked *pp*. The solo line is labeled "Sw (Cla)" and the piano part is labeled "Ch (Strings)".

Musical score for measures 334-339. The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is Allegretto at 96 beats per minute. The music features a piano accompaniment in the bass clef and a solo line in the treble clef. The piano part is marked *simili*. The solo line is marked *pp*. The solo line is labeled "Sw (Cla)" and the piano part is labeled "Ch (Strings)".

339

*p*

344

Ch

add Flute 4'

349

Gt

354

Trumpet

Gt *ff*

(Hns)

*mf* *ff*

360

Trumpet

Full organ (W.W./Brass/Strings)

Gt *ff*

*ff*

365

Sw. Foundation 8', 4', 2, Reeds 8' (Vlc/ Cbs)

*f*

368

370

*mf*

Sw. Foundation 8', 4', 2'  
 Gt. Foundations, Mixture  
 Ch. Strings 8', 4'  
 Br. Trumpet 8'  
 Ped. Foundations 16', 8', 4'

373

Ch (Tpts)

*ff* *mf*

377

Br (Hns) Br (Tutti orch.) Br

Sw *f* Sw *f*

(Trbs/Vlcs/Cbs) *ff*

382

Gt

Open the crescendo pedal

*fff* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

*sfz*

Sw. Flutes 8', 4', 2', 22/3'  
 Gt. Foundations, Mixture  
 Ch. Flutes 8', 4', 2'  
 Br. Foundations 8', 4', 2'  
 Ped Soft 32, 16, 8'

385

Ch

Gradually reduce stops

*sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *mf*

*tr*

388

Sw (Obs) *ff* Br (Cla) *f* Ch (Picc) *p*

Ch (Bn) *mf* Sw (Strings) *p espressivo*

(Cbs) *mp* *p*

393

Sw. Hautbois 8'  
 Gt. Flute 8', 2'  
 Ch. String 8'  
 Br. Krummhorn 8'  
 Ped. 16', 8'

Ch:  
 add Flute 1'

399

Sw (Tpts, con sord.) *p*

Gt. *p*

402

Flute 8'

*pp*

Full Organ (Hns)

Foundation 16', 8'

*ff marcato* 3 *non dim.*

407

*pp*

(Trbs)

Flute 16', 8'

# IV

Sw. Foundations, Mixture, Reeds 16', 8'  
 Gt. Foundations, Mixture  
 Ch. Foundations, Sw to Ch  
 Ped. Foundation, 16', 8', 4', Reed 16'

**Allegro**  $\text{♩} = 72$

409

Gt (Fls)

Ch (Trbs/ low Strings)

*f*

Sw. Oboe 8'  
 Gt. Flute 8', 2'  
 Ch. Strings 8'  
 Br. Krummhorn 8'  
 Ped. Soft 16', 8'

415

(Obs/Hns)

Gt

*ff* Ch. *mf* (Strings)

420

424

Gt (Fls) Sw (Tpts) Br (Hns)

428

Sw (Bns) Gt (Vlcs) Ch (Vlcs) Full organ (Fls/Tpts/Trbs/Strings)

Gt *f*

432

(Fls/Strings)

*ff*

Br *p*

437

Gt Fls)

443

(W.W./Horns)

Ch

450

Chime (Glock)

*mp*

458

Krummhorn (Hns)

466

Foundations 16', 8', 4'  
Reeds 16', 8'

(Brass)

(Horns)

*f*

474

Un Poco meno mosso  
(Cl/Bn/pizz. Strings)

*fff* *molto*

Ch *p* uguale

480

Br (Trbs)

*pp*

Gt (Tpts/Hns)

*f marc.*

a tempo

485

(Fls/Strings)

Ch *mp*

*ff*

*f*

Sw. Foundations, Reeds 8'  
 Gt. Foundations  
 Ch. Foundations, Sw to Ch  
 Ped. Foundation 16', 8',

509

Piu mosso ♩=96

Ch (Trbs/Tuba)

*f*

515

Gt (W.W./ Brass/Strings)

*ff*

Sw. Trumpet  
 Gt. Foundation, 8', 4', 2', Mixture  
 Ch. Flutes 8', 4'  
 Br. Flutes 8', 4', 1'  
 Ped. Foundation 16', 8', 4'

521

Ch

*sf* *mf*

526 (Picc)

Sw (Tuba)

531

Gt (Fls/Vlns)

Gt (Hns)

*ff*

536

Sw (Hns)

Ch

540 Sw Gt (Bns/Vlcs)

*ff*

544 (Fls/Obs/Strings)

*sfz ff*

(Trbs/Tuba)

549

*fff*

*fff* Foundation, Reeds 32', 16'

554

Solo Trumpet  
(Hns)

*f*

Foundation 8', 4', 2'  
(Strings)

560

566

572

Sw. Foundation, Mixture  
 Gt. Foundation, Mixture, Sw. to Gt., Ch. to Gt.  
 Ch. Foundation, Mixture  
 Br. Solo Reeds, 8', 4'  
 Ped. Foundation 32, 16' 8'

579

Gt (Hns)  
 Br (Strings)  
 (Trbs/Tuba)  
 fff

585

*rit.e cresc.*  
*molto rit.*

590

Gt (Brass/Strings)

*ff*

592

Ch

*f*

Open the crescendo pedal

594

(Tpt. solo)

*sfz* Flute 8' (Trbs/Tuba)

*pp*

Flutes 16', 8'

*pp*

(Tutti orch.)

600

Gt *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

*tr* *tr* *tr*

Foundation 32', 16', 8'

603

*sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

Full Organ

Foundations 32', 16', 8' *sfz*

Reeds 32'

CHAPTER 5  
CONCLUSION

Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* has long been recognized as an important early work that helped to establish Thomson's reputation as an American nationalist composer. Saying that the work is "important," however, is not the same as saying that everyone understands, or even appreciates, Thomson's work. In 2005, Kyle Gann, while discussing *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, cites Thomson's contemporary, Aaron Copland, as one who understood Thomson's motives as a composer:

[*Symphony on a Hymn Tune*] was absolutely audacious music, radical in its use of the orchestra, which revealed the orchestra not as an illusion of a great blended mass, but as a group of individuals, any one of whom might have his or her own points to make. No wonder so many professional composers didn't respect his music: it abandoned illusionistic expertise in favor of humorous realism. I admired Copland for accepting that. When a friend mentioned that Thomson's music was "dumb," Copland replied, "Yes, I know, but it's intentionally dumb. He's the American Satie."<sup>1</sup>

Part of the dilemma in transcribing *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* was how best to allow Thomson's whimsical compositional style to continue to shine through the transcription. Two principles remained in mind throughout the process of transcribing the *Symphony*. First, organ transcription is an art of re-creation, and not merely the mechanical reduction of a score. Effective transcription involves craftsmanship—

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<sup>1</sup>Gann, Kyle. "Virgil Thomson in His Own Precise Words and Notes," *PostClassic: Kyle Gann on music after the fact* (September 2, 2005) [on-line]; accessed 8 February, 2012; available from [http://artsjournal.com/postclassic/2005/09/virgil\\_thomson\\_in\\_his\\_own\\_prec.html](http://artsjournal.com/postclassic/2005/09/virgil_thomson_in_his_own_prec.html); Internet.

specifically, the ability to make a connection between the purely technical aspects of transcribing and the artistic values of the original work. And second, excellent transcription requires what is commonly called “good taste,” a factor that helps the transcriber to achieve a balance between authenticity and creativity.

Technically, a large organ of many stops and sounds can be “symphonic” without the assistance of any other instruments. Even though organ and orchestra are different in nature, the organ’s power and versatility may equal or even surpass a symphony orchestra in at least three ways: (1) the organ has a wider range of sound, stretching octaves below and above orchestral instruments; (2) the organ has the ability to produce a wide range of dynamic and different tone colors, certainly equal to those of a symphony orchestra; and (3) played by one solo performer, the performer’s musical intention can be more readily controlled in performance. These advantages are important elements to the performance of a transcribed symphonic work by one organist who is playing a fine instrument.

From a performance viewpoint, playing an organ transcription demands an attitude that is both improvisatory and interpretive. A good performance aims to realize the composer’s score faithfully while providing scope for the imaginative spirit of the performer. In all these senses, organists who have proper knowledge and experience have often proved to be among the most reasonable transcribers.

Thomson’s *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* has now been transcribed, and this study has attempted to remain faithful to the principles expressed above. The process was four-fold: (1) to research into primary and secondary sources of Virgil Thomson’s life for references that facilitate an understanding of Thomson’s music and the early life

influences that may have affected *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, as described in Chapter 2; (2) to analyze the work and to explore possible solutions for the technical difficulties faced in the transcription process of the work, while discussing suggestions learned from the real-life preparation and performance of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*, as described in Chapter 3; (3) to create the transcription score itself, contained in Chapter 4, using *Finale* computer software; and, (4) to record the transcription score as an aid to future performers of the organ version. Included with the dissertation is a supplementary recording of the premier performance of the transcription on the four-manual, 113-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ housed in Alumni Chapel of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

Some who are familiar with Thomson's original orchestra version of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* will notice differences in tempo and dynamics in the transcription score. These should be noted, along with a basic rationale for making such changes.

A general concern for all four movements was the matter of tempo. Even though Thomson indicated specific tempo markings for each movement in his original orchestral score, realizing his tempos on the organ is sometimes problematic. However, recordings of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* by different performers and orchestras often vary significantly in tempos. In the recording of his own transcription for piano/four-hands, John Kirkpatrick played much more slowly than Thomson's indications.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Kirkpatrick performed the *Introduction* section of the first movement almost twice as

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<sup>2</sup>Arthur Berger, Harold Shapero, and Virgil Thomson, *Works for piano four-hands* [CD] (New York: New Worlds Record, 1999).

slowly as Thomson indicated in the score. On the other hand, in a recording of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, conducted by James Sedares,<sup>3</sup> the same music is played in a livelier mood, faster than Thomson's original metronome marking. In yet another recording<sup>4</sup> the Philadelphia Orchestra plays the third movement entirely differently from Thomson's indication, much faster, at almost double-speed.

In the recording of the author's performance of the organ transcription, for the most part, Thomson's tempo indications are followed, except for the cadenza. Even though Thomson's is a written-out cadenza, traditionally the concept of "cadenza" allows for improvisation or rhythmic freedom, and the author as transcriber and organist took advantage of that tradition in an effort to make the music successful on the organ.

Certainly, the question regarding the matter of tempo remains in each performer's taste. The only suggestion here is that any organist who plays this *Symphony* should at least attempt to convey the vitality of Thomson's original suggestions for the music. The suggested tempo markings in the transcription score are all Thomson's originals.

Another consideration in playing the transcription is the interpretation of Thomson's dynamic markings. The concluding measures of the fourth movement offer an interesting instance of deviation from Thomson's original dynamic indications. After a long trill in the pedal (mm. 600-603), the crescendo indication (mm. 604-606) was

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<sup>3</sup>Virgil Thomson, *Symphony on a Hymn Tune, Symphony No. 2 in C major, Symphony No. 3 (Pilgrims and Pioneers)*, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, conductor, James Sedares [CD] (Naxos American, 2000).

<sup>4</sup>"Virgil Thomson talks about Kansas City Ragtime and the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra plays one of his composition" (February 22, 2009) [on-line]; accessed 10 September, 2011; available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQaSzhS4VEg&feature=related>; Internet.

ignored. Rather, the emphasis was put on the final chord. Although there is no justification in Thomson's score, prescribing the addition of the full organ on the last beat gives an extremely powerful effect. This departure from the original score was not so much a matter of choice as of necessity because, on the organ, a smooth crescendo within a range from *mezzo piano* to *sforzando* is not possible while holding a chord. Although full organ is not the same as the orchestra's crescendo, it creates a powerful ending, especially with the addition of the *sforzando* button for an accented release.

Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* is but one work among many symphonic works that warrant the crafting of a transcription for organ. After having turned their backs on transcriptions for a half-century, organists have once again regained the joy and benefits of creating and playing them. For example, one of the rising "stars" of the organ world is Isabelle Demers, a young French-Canadian organist. Of her December, 2011, recital in Nashville, Tennessee, music critic John Pitcher wrote,

The highlight of Sunday's concert came at the end, with Demers' rendition of *The Nutcracker Suite*. Demers' interpretation was orchestral both in its sense of sweep and color. She brought whimsy and fantasy to the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," and she played the "Russian Dance" with unbridled virtuosity, which prompted the audience to interrupt the performance with applause. Her rendition of "Waltz of the Flowers" shimmered with symphonic color – indeed, one half-expected to see a ballerina glide across the stage.<sup>5</sup>

Such a description demonstrates the potential power of organ transcriptions, both to stimulate renewed interest in the organ and to make music known that otherwise may seldom be heard. It is hoped that the present transcription of Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* will have the effect both of making this unique work known to a new

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<sup>5</sup>John Pitcher, "Organist Isabelle Demers shines in holiday pipes concert" *ArtsNowNashville*, (December 19, 2011) [on-line]; accessed 8 February, 2012; from <http://artnownashville.com/nashville-music-news-and-reviews/classical-music/organist-isabelle-demers-shines-in-holiday-pipes-concert>; Internet

audience and drawing a non-organist population to hear and appreciate the magnificence of the pipe organ.

## APPENDIX 1

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE ORGAN PLAYED FOR THE TRANSCRIPTION RECORDING: THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ALMUNI CHAPEL

Aeolian Skinner, Boston, Massachusetts, Opus 1162-A, Built 1963,  
Four Manuals, Seven Divisions, 113 Ranks, 98 stops, 6,562 pipes

#### **Pedal**

Soubasse - 32'  
Flute Conique - 16' (Swell)  
Contre basse - 16'  
Quintaton - 16' (Great)  
Soubasse - 16'  
Violone - 16' (Choir)  
Quinte - 10 2/3' (Choir)  
Octave - 8'  
Quintaton - 8' (Great)  
Bourdon - 8'  
Rohrflote - 8' (Swell)  
Violone - 8' (Choir)  
Spitz Quinte - 5 1/3'  
Super Octave - 4'  
Schalmei - 4' (Brust)  
Nachthorn - 4'  
Octavin - 2'  
Mixtur - III  
Scharf - IV  
Contre Bombarde - 32'  
Bombarde - 16'  
Contre Trompette - 16' (Swell)  
Dulzian - 16' (Brust)  
Bombarde - 8'  
Dulzian - 8' (Brust)  
Bombarde - 4'  
Kornett - 2'  
Positiv on Pedal - 8'

#### **Brustwerk**

Holz gedeckt - 8'  
Koppel Flote - 4'  
Schalmei - 4'  
Blockflote - 2'  
Gemshorn - 1'  
Tertian - II  
Cymbel - IV  
Dulzian - 16'  
Krummhorn - 8'  
Brustwerk Unison Off  
Positiv on Brustwerk - 8'

#### **Couplers**

Great to Pedal - 8'  
Swell to Pedal - 4', 8'  
Choir to Pedal - 4', 8'  
Brust to Pedal - 8'  
Bomb to Pedal - 8'  
Swell to Great - 4', 8', 16'  
Choir to Great - 4', 8', 16'  
Brust to Great - 8', 16'  
Pedal to Great - 8'  
Swell to Choir - 4', 8', 16'  
Brust to Swell - 8'  
Brust to Choir - 8'

## Great

Quintaton - 16'  
Principal - 8'  
Flute Harmonique - 8'  
Bourdon - 8'  
Gemshorn - 8'  
Rohrflote - 4'  
Octave - 4'  
Octave Quint - 2 2/3'  
Blockflote - 2'  
Super Octave - 2'  
Terz - 1 3/5'  
Klein Mixtur - III  
Cymbel - IV  
Grande Fourniture - IV-VI (Bomb)  
Fourniture - IV-VI  
Bombarde - 16' (Bomb)  
Trompette Harmonique - 8' (Bomb)  
Clairon Harmonique - 4' (Bomb)  
Positiv on Great - 8'  
Great Unison Off

## Choir

Violone - 16'  
Cor de Nuit - 8'  
Erzahler Celeste - 8'  
Erzahler - 8'  
String Diapason - 8'  
Tierce - 1 3/5'  
Gemshorn - 4'  
Nachthorn - 4'  
Nazard - 2 2/3'  
Piccolo - 2'  
Sifflote - 1'  
Acuta - III  
Clarinet - 8'  
Choir Unison Off  
Choir - 4'  
Choir - 16'  
Great on Choir - 8'  
Positiv on Choir - 8'  
Tremulant

## Swell

Flute Conique - 16'  
Rohrflote - 8'  
Flauto Dolce - 8'  
Viola de Gambe - 8'  
Geigen Diapason - 8'  
Flute Celeste - 8'  
Viola Celeste - 8'  
Principal - 4'  
Harmonic Flute - 4'  
Nazard - 2 2/3'  
Fifteenth - 2'  
Plein Jeu - III  
Cymbel - IV  
Contre Trompette - 16'  
Trompette - 8'  
Vox Humana - 8'  
Hautbois - 8'  
Clairon - 4'  
Tremulant  
Swell Unison off  
Positiv on Swell - 8'  
Swell - 16'  
Swell - 4'

## Positiv

Po. - Br. - Trem. - Flues  
Spitz Geigen - 8'  
Praestant - 4'  
Schalmei - 4' (Brust)  
Leiblich Prinzipal - 2'  
Oktav Quinte - 1 1/3'  
Sesquialtera - II  
Scharf - IV-VI  
Dulzian - 16' (Brust)  
Krummhorn - 8' (Brust)

## Bombarde

Bombarde - 16'  
Trompette Harmonique - 8'  
Clairon Harmonique - 4'  
Grande Fourniture - IV-VI

APPENDIX 2

THE REGISTRATION LIST FOR *SYMPHONY  
ON A HYMN TUNE, OP.53*

**System I**

**General 1 (m. 1, 39)**

Great	Flute Harmonique 8, Bourdon 8
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole Celeste 8, Hautbois 8
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Quintaton 16, Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Soubasse 16, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8
Coupler	none

**General 2 (m. 95)**

Great	Bourdon 8, Gemshorn 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Rohrflote 4, Principal 8, Octave 4, Super Octave 2, Blockflote 2
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Viole Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Hautbois 8
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, String Diapason 8, Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, Nachthorn 4, Gemshorn 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Positive on Choir
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Lieblich Prinzipal 2, Praestant 4
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Contre Basse 16, Quinte 10 2/3, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Flute Nachthorn 4
Coupler	Choir to Great 16, Brust to Great 16, Swell to Great 8, Choir to Great 8, Brust to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Swell to Great 4

**General 3 (m. 21)**

Great	Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Principal 8
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Swell	Violo de Gambe 8, Flute Celeste 8, Violo Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Rohrflote 8, Violo Celeste 8, Harmonic Flute 4
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Bourdon 8, Soubasse 16, Violone 16, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8
Coupler	Swell to Pedal 8, Choir to Pedal 8, Swell to Great 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Swell to Choir 8, Brust to Choir 8

#### General 4 (m. 149)

Great	Flute Harmonique 8, Trompette Harmonique 8, Bourdon 8, Principal 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Klein Mixtur III, Positiv on Great
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Violo Celeste 8, Hautbois 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Harmonic Flute 4
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8, Gemshorn 4, Positiv on Choir
Positiv	Krummhorn 8
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Violone 16, Soubasse 16, Rohrflote 8, Bourdon 8, Violone 8
Coupler	none

#### General 5 (m. 183)

Great	Flute Harmonique 8, Trompette Harmonique 8, Principal 8, Gemshorn 8, Bourdon 8, Octave 4
Swell	Contre Trompette 16, Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Swell 16, Flauto Dolce 8, Violo de Gambe 8
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, String Diapason 8, Piccolo 2, Sifflole 1, Positiv on Choir
Positiv	none
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Soubasse 16, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Dulzian 16, Violone 16, Rohrflote 8, Bourdon 8, Violone 8
Coupler	Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Brust to Choir 8

**General 6 (m. 234)**

Great	Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Positive on Great
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Viole de Gambe 8
Choir	Violone 16, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8
Positiv	none
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	Great to Pedal 8, Brust to Pedal 8

**General 7 (m. 269)**

Great	Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Nazard 2 2/3
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, Nachthorn 4, String Diapason 8
Positiv	Krummhorn 8
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	none

**General 8 (m. 310)**

Great	none
Swell	Swell 16, Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole Celeste 8, Viole de Gambe 8
Choir	Cor de Nuit 8
Positiv	Krummhorn 8
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Violone 16, Contre Trompette 16, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8
Coupler	Swell to Pedal 8

**General 9 (m. 231)**

Great	Quintaton 16, Bombarde 16, Flute Harmonique 8, Bourdon 8, Gemshorn 8, Trompette Harmonique 8
Swell	Swell 16, Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Viole Celeste 8,

(cont.)	Flauto Dolce 8, Violo de Gambe 8
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Choir 16, Violone 16, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8
Brustwerk	none
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Quinte 10 2/3, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Octave 8, Violone 8, Violone 16,
Coupler	Swell to Great 16, Swell to Great 8, Choir to Great 16, Choir to Great 8, Swell to Choir 16, Swell to Choir 8

**General 10 (m. 166, 600)**

Great	Quintaton 16, Bombarde 16, Bourdon 8, Gemshorn 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Principal 8, Rohrflote 4, Trompette Harmonique 8, Clairon Harmonique 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Octave Quint 2 2/3, Terz 1 3/5, Klein Mixtur III, Fourniture IV-VI, Cymbel IV, Grande Fourniture IV-VI, Positiv on Great
Swell	Flauto Dolce 8, Flute Celeste 8, Rohrflote 8, Violo de Gambe 8, Trompette 8, Hautbois 8, Harmonic Flute 4, Clairon 4, Principal 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Plein Jeu III
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Choir 16, Choir 4, Violone 16, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Cor de Nuit 8, Nachthorn 4, Gemshorn 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Piccolo 2, Tierce 1 3/5, Acuta III
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4, Lieblich Prinzpal 2, Oktav Quinte 1 1/3, Scharf IV-VI, Schalmey 4
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Blockflote 2, Koppelflote 4, Gemshorn 1, Cymbel IV
Bombarde	Bombarde 16, Trompette Harmonique 8, Clairon Harmonique 4, Grande Fourniture IV-VI
Pedal	Contre Bombarde 32, Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Contre Basse 16, Bombarde 16, Bourdon 8, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Dulzian 16, Contre Trompette 16, Quinte 10 2/3, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Octave 8, Spitz Quint 5 1/3
Coupler	Swell to Great 16, Swell to Great 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 16, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 16, Brust to Great 8, Swell to Choir 16, Swell to Choir 8, Swell to Choir 4, Brust to Choir 8

## Divisional Pistons

### Swell

1 (m. 5)	Swell 16, Viole Celeste 8, Viole de Gambe 8
2 (m. 12)	Flauto Dolce 8, Rohrflote 8, Vox Humana 8
3 (m. 13)	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Hautbois 8
4 (m. 16)	Swell 16, Viole Celeste 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Flute Celeste 8
5 (m.16 3 <sup>rd</sup> beat)	Contre Trompette 16
6 (m. 29)	Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8

### Pedal

<b>1(m.107)</b>	Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 16, Violone 16, Soubasse 16, Contre Basse 16, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Octave 8, Quinte 10 2/3
<b>2(m.149)</b>	Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8

## System II

### General 1 (m. 328)

Great	Gemshorn 8, Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Principal 8, Octave 4, Rohrflote 4, Blockflote 2
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole Celeste 8
Choir	Violone 16, Gemshorn 4, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, String Diapason 8, Erzahler 8, Nachthorn 4
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4
Brustwerk	none
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Soubasse 16, Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Octave 8, Violone 8, Super Octave 4
Coupler	Choir to Pedal 8, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Choir 8

### General 2 (m. 595)

Great	Positiv to Great, Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Clairon Harmonique 4, Blockflote 2,
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Cor de Nuit 8

Positiv	none
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	Choir to Great 8, Brust to Choir 8

### General 3 (m. 417)

Great	Flute Harmonique 8, Blockflote 2
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Hautbois 8, Viole de Gambe 8
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, Nachthorn 4
Positiv	none
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Krummhorn 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 8, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	none

### General 4 (m. 436, 478)

Great	Flute Harmonique 8, Blockflote 2
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8
Choir	Positiv to Choir, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8, Nachthorn 4
Positiv	Krummhorn 8
Brustwerk	Krummhorn 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Violone 16, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	Swell to Choir 8

### General 5 (m. 387, 497)

Great	Positiv on Great, Flute Harmonique 8, Bourdon 8, Principal 8, Gemshorn 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III
Swell	Flute Celeste 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Rohrflote 8, Harmonic Flute 4, Principal 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Fifteenth 2
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Choir 4, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, String Diapason 8, Nachthorn 4, Gemshorn 4, Piccolo 2
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4, Lieblich Prinzipal 2
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4, Blockflote 2

Bombarde	Trompette Harmonique 8
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Violone 16, Rohrflote 8, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Violone 8
Coupler	Swell to Great 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Brust to Choir 8

**General 6 (m. 406, 524)**

Great	Bourdon 8, Gemshorn 8, Principal 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Viole Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8
Choir	Violone 16, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8
Brustwerk	Positive to Brust, Dulzian 16, Holz Gedeckt 8
Bombarde	none
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Violone 16, Rohrflote 8
Coupler	Swell to Pedal 8, Choir to Great 8

**General 7 (m. 557)**

Great	Positiv on Great, Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Principal 8, Gemshorn 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III
Swell	Rohrflote 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Flute Celeste 8, Principal 4, Harmonic Flute 4, Fifteenth 2, Plein Jeu III, Cymbel IV
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Great to Choir, Choir 4, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, Erzahler 8, String Diapason 8, Nachthorn 4, Gemshorn 4
Positiv	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4, Lieblich Prinzival 2
Brustwerk	Dulzian 16, Holz Gedeckt 8, Krummhorn 8, Koppelflote 4, Schalmei 4, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	Trompette Harmonique 8
Pedal	Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Bourdon 8, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Positiv to Pedal, Dulzian 16, Violone 16, Contre Trompette 16, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Quintaton 8, Octave 8, Nachthorn 4, Super Octave 4, Octavin 2
Coupler	Swell to Pedal 8, Choir to Pedal 8, Brust to Pedal 8, Swell to Great 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Swell to Choir 16, Swell to Choir 8,

Coupler (cont.)	Swell to Choir 4, Brust to Choir 8
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**General 8 (m. 409, 431, 470, 512, 592)**

Great	Positiv on Great, Bourdon 8, Principal 8, Gemshorn 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III, Grande Fourniture IV-VI
Swell	Contre Trompette 16, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Rohrflote 8, Trompette 8, Hautbois 8, Harmonic Flute 4, Principal 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Plein Jeu III
Choir	Positiv to Choir, Choir 16, Violone 16, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzähler Celeste 8, Erzähler 8, String Diapason 8, Gemshorn 4, Nachthorn 4, Piccolo 2
Positive	Dulzian 16, Spitz Geigen 8, Krummhorn 8, Praestant 4, Lieblich Prinzpal 2, Oktav Quinte 1 1/3
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4
Bombarde	Bombarde 16, Trompette Harmonique 8, Clairon Harmonique 4,
Pedal	Positive on Pedal, Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Dulzian 8, Dulzian 16, Violone 16, Contre Trompette 16, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Bombarde 8, Nachthorn 4, Super Octave 4, Octave 8, Octavin 2, Mixtur III, Scharf IV
Coupler	Swell to Pedal 8, Choir to Pedal 8, Brust to Pedal 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Swell to Choir 16, Swell to Choir 8, Brust to Choir 8

**General 9 (m. 376)**

Great	Positiv to Great, Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Gemshorn 8, Principal 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III, Cymbel IV
Swell	Flute Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Rohrflote 8, Viole Celeste 8, Principal 4, Fifteenth 2, Plein Jeu III
Choir	Positiv to Choir, Choir 4, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzähler Celeste 8, Erzähler 8, String Diapason 8, Gemshorn 4, Nachthorn 4, Piccolo 2, Sifflote 1
Positive	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4, Lieblich Prinzpal 2
Brustwerk	Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	Trompette Harmonique 8
Pedal	Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 16, Violone 16, Soubasse 16, Contre Trompette 16, Rohrflote 8, Bourdon 8, Violone 8, Octave 8, Super Octave 4

Coupler	Swell to Great 8, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Swell to Choir 8, Brust to Choir 8
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### General 10 (m. 357, 551, 580)

Great	Positiv on Great, Bourdon 8, Flute Harmonique 8, Gemshorn 8, Principal 8, Rohrflote 4, Octave 4, Blockflote 2, Super Octave 2, Klein Mixtur III, Cymbel IV, Grande Fourniture IV-VI
Swell	Principal 4, Rohrflote 8, Flute Celeste 8, Viole Celeste 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Viole de Gambe 8, Harmonic Flute 4, Nazard 2 2/3, Plein Jeu III, Cymbel IV
Choir	Positiv on Choir, Choir 16, Acuta III, Cor de Nuit 8, Choir 4, Siffle 1, Erzähler Celeste 8, Erzähler 8, Piccolo 2, Nachthorn 4, String Diapason 8
Positive	Spitz Geigen 8, Praestant 4, Schalmei 4, Lieblich Prinzipal 2, Oktav Quinte 1 1/3, Scharf IV-VI
Brustwerk	Positive on Brust, Holz Gedeckt 8, Koppelflote 4, Blockflote 2, Gemshorn 1
Bombarde	Grande Fourniture IV-VI, Bombarde 16, Trompette Harmonique 8, Clairon Harmonique 4
Pedal	Positive on Pedal, Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Bombarde 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Dulzian 8, Dulzian 16, Contre Trompette 16, Bourdon 8, Octave 8, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Violone 16, Bombarde 8, Nachthorn 4, Super Octave 4, Octavin 2, Mixtur III, Scharf IV
Coupler	Great to Pedal 8, Swell to Pedal 8, Choir to Pedal 8, Brust to Pedal 8, Swell to Great 8, Swell to Great 4, Choir to Great 8, Choir to Great 4, Brust to Great 8, Swell to Choir 8, Swell to Choir 4, Brust to Choir 8

### Divisional Pistons

#### Great

1(m. 483)	Trompette Harmonique 8 (Bomb)
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#### Swell

1 (m. 367)	Rohrflote 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Trompette 8, Hautbois 8, Principal 4, Harmonic Flute 4
2 (m. 535) 2 (cont.)	Contre Trompette 16, Rohrflote 8, Trompette 8, Hautbois 8, Flauto Dolce 8, Principal 4, Harmonic Flute 4,

	Plein Jeu III
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### Choir

1 (m.345)	Gemshorn 4, Cor de Nuit 8, Erzahler Celeste 8, String Diapason 8, Erzahler 8, Nachthorn 4
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### Pedal

1 (m.403)	Positive on Pedal, Soubasse 32, Flute Conique 16, Quintaton 16, Contre Basse 16, Soubasse 16, Dulzian 8, Dulzian 16, Violone 16, Contre Trompette 16, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Rohrflote 8, Violone 8, Bombarde 8, Nachthorn 4, Super Octave 4, Octave 8, Octavin 2, Mixtur III, Scharf IV
2 (m. 487)	Positive on Pedal, Flute Conique 16, Contre Basse 16, Quintaton 16, Soubasse 16, Dulzian 16, Octave 8, Quintaton 8, Bourdon 8, Nachthorn 4

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## ABSTRACT

### A TRANSCRIPTION FOR SOLO ORGAN: *SYMPHONY ON A HYMN TUNE*, Op. 53, BY VIRGIL THOMSON

Sun Young Park Chu, D.M.A.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012  
Chair: Dr. Sandra C. Turner

The primary purpose of this study is to provide a transcription for solo organ of Virgil Thomson's *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*.

The study is two-fold: first, to explore the early life and career of Thomson with a focused view on how his organ and composition studies influenced the composition of *Symphony on a Hymn Tune*; and second, to present an original transcription of the work in a performing score for solo organ. In addition to the final score, the study provides an analytical overview along with a description of methodology used to create the transcription, and a discussion of issues encountered by the performing organist in playing the transcription. Discussions encompass organ registration, tempi, manual suggestions, articulation, phrase markings, and dynamic expression. Musical examples both from the author's transcription and Virgil Thomson's organ works are included as necessary.

Two appendices are included. Appendix 1 presents the specifications for the Aeolian Skinner organ of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, on which the transcription was originally performed. Appendix 2 itemizes the registration lists used for the original performance of the organ transcription.

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