



Venturing Beyond the Page

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SESSION OUTLINE

The page is not the music. The “page” gives us symbols with which we launch the music.

We either create the music, or re-create music of a composer but it is still unique

Many are almost 100% paper trained. Yet we can venture beyond what information the page gives us. We can do so a little, or a lot. Do not be afraid!

Why?

Helps bring texts and tunes to life, can amplify the meaning and character

Add contrast – within a service, or within a season

Can be custom for every assembly and context

Each assembly is unique, that exact gathering is no more likely to be duplicated than a snowflake. We can amplify that too – what is this gathering doing well (or not)?

Where?

Congregational song –

Supporting the singing; the setting (harmonization, accompaniment)

Introductions.

Perhaps Prelude, offertory or Postlude but not as critically important

While editors mostly make decisions about harmony, settings, etc, the melody and text are the given, the rest can be up for grabs!

Both can be wonderful launch points (as long as tune and tactus is clear)

Is there a musical phrase to be harnessed?

Is there a phrase or word of the text that can be represented?

“Come Down oh Love Divine...

The word “follow” can be canon

Is there an affect that can be represented musically?

Bach: Joy figure, or “sighing motive”

Some tunes are indeed too closely linked to the setting to do different things with them: ST HELENA, JERUSALEM, but for the most part, the best and long lasting melodies are not harmony dependent and stand on their own with or without harmony, and can be supported with different harmonies

Where to start?

Introductions that are not first and last line

An enticing introduction not only introduces musical matters, it also draws the assembly into the *spirit* of the text in that particular context.

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus: “rest”, “fears and sins” or “Israel’s strength”? Which is more important that day when this hymn is sung?

Some simple introduction ideas:

Start with one voice, add others

Alternate unison and harmony (move melody around to LH, or pedal)

Mix up phrases

Canon

Pedal point

Pattern

Fanfare

Harmony

Change one chord. Scan to the last note of the first phrase, think of a different chord from the one printed which includes that pitch. Try it.

Then change 2 chords. Can the chord you came up with in step one be preceded by its dominant? (if d-minor is the final chord, can A-Major precede it?)

Then harmonize a whole line. Then the entire hymn tune. Try using a relative key.

Improvising a counterpoint melody with the hymn tune. The first step to freedom!

RH: Melody of hymn with reed

LH: Flute on another manual. first one note, per RH note (quarter notes), then two eighths per RH, then triplets, then sixteenths, then all mixed up.

This takes a while, be patient

Try to move all around – OK to cross the melody, try not to get stuck in a 5-finger pattern. Vary scalar type movement with skips.

Think opposite direction from melody of the RH.

Create a counterpoint line for the first phrase, use that alone as interlude-in different keys!

Create an unrelated “answer” or “statement” to which the melody is the answer.

Alter the rhythm when introducing if extremely well known

Introducing the Lutheran Gospel Acclamation, or hymn of praise

In summary: if the cue to breathe/sing is clear, if the melody is clear and enhanced (not made harder), you are free to venture beyond the page!

For more, see “Let the People Sing” David Cherwien, 1997, CPH 99-1666

EXAMPLES

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (first stanza)

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in thee.

Harmonizations of "G"

Love Divine

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heav'n, to
2 Breathe, oh, breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - 'ry
3 Come, Al - might - y, to de - liv - er; let us all thy
4 Fin - ish then thy new cre - a - tion, pure and spot - less

earth come down! Fix in us thy hum - ble dwell-ing, all thy
trou - bled breast; let us all in thee in - her - it; let us
life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -
let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

Love Divine (first line)

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heav'n, to

What God Ordains Is Good (first line)

1 What God or - dains is good in-deed, for all life well pro - vid - ing.