

# NEW MUSIC FOR ORGAN AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY A SERIES ON THE COMPOSITIONS OF SIX AMERICAN COMPOSERS EMILY MAXSON PORTER

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**E**MILY MAXSON PORTER (b. 1942) began piano studies at age eight and organ when she attended Concordia College in St. Paul, Minn., where she received a BA degree in elementary education (1964). She completed a minor in music at Concordia, studying the organ for four years with Paul Manz. Porter received a master of fine arts degree from the University of Minnesota (1967), where she studied organ with Heinrich Fleischer and composition with Dominick Argento and Paul Fetler. Other musical study included summer organ studies at the University of Michigan (1965 and 1968) with Robert Glasgow and composition with Jan Bender (1969) at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

Emily Porter holds an MS degree in computer science (1986) from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. She has also pursued doctoral studies in composition at the University of Minnesota as a student of Alex Lubet. Currently she resides in Fridley, Minnesota, where she serves as organist for St. Philip's Lutheran Church.

Porter has been composing steadily since her pre-college years. Her first piece was accepted and published by Augsburg Fortress in 1976. Her other publishers include MorningStar, Concordia, CPP/Belwin, and Selah. Her catalog of published and unpublished pieces includes over 125 works. The list includes ten solo vocal works, nine secular choral works, four works for various instrumental combinations, 41 sacred choral works, and more than 60 pieces for organ.

Of these works, most have been composed on chorale tunes or other cantus firmi. It is only recently that Porter has begun to compose organ music not based on pre-existing melodies. She has concentrated on chorale settings that are primarily intended for use in religious services. Her chorale preludes are mostly tonal, and the harmony is usually functional. Within that boundary, she prefers rich harmonies, with seventh and ninth chords predominating. She uses the full range of styles available to her, sometimes incorporating jazz-like elements. Much of her music explores her love for cross-rhythms and polymeters.

Two chorale preludes clearly exhibit Porter's stylistic tendencies: the prelude on *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (Chant tune: Ex. 1):

Ex. 1



and the setting of *Immortal, Invisible* (Hymn tune: Ex. 2):

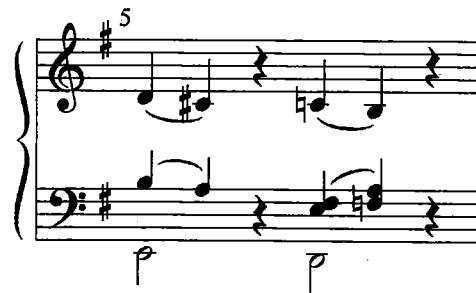
Ex. 2



Both preludes use the cantus firmus in prominent, unaltered ways. *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* includes the tune in the top voice, one octave above the usual soprano range of the melody. *Immortal, Invisible* breaks up the cantus firmus between a ritornello-like figuration that is based on motifs from the cantus. Both are tonal. *O Come* exhibits the rich harmonies Porter prefers throughout, creating a consistently colorful tonal framework. *Immortal, Invisible* uses an A B A<sup>1</sup> form in which the A sections are relatively tonal and the B section takes a dramatic detour through all the chromatic pitches. Her love of cross-rhythms is evident throughout the prelude, as the meter changes frequently from 8/8 to 9/8, 5/8, and 7/8.

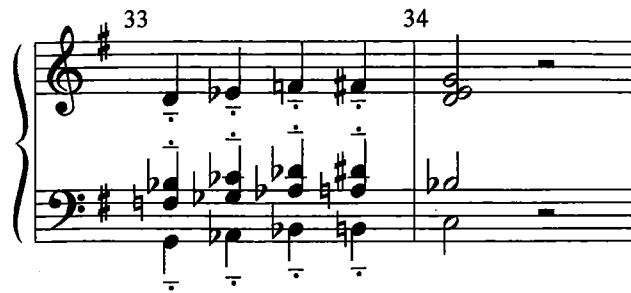
Within the complete, unaltered presentation of the *Veni, Emmanuel* tune, Porter has woven phrases of the chant. These fragments are frequently based on pitches that are not from the basic tonality of the prelude. In addition, Porter has constructed two basic ideas inspired by the melody itself. The first is a sighing motif that recurs prominently throughout the prelude (Ex. 3):

Ex. 3



The second is a pointedly detached ascending succession of seventh or ninth chords. These chords appear briefly toward the beginning of the prelude, then the motif is lengthened near the end of the prelude (Ex. 4):

Ex. 4



The prelude on *Immortal, Invisible* is constructed almost entirely of motifs derived from the hymn tune. The opening motif (Ex. 5) forms the basis of both A sections. It is constructed from all the notes found in the first line of the hymn (see Ex. 2):

Ex. 5



This motif is expanded both rhythmically and melodically in the first section, then it descends and relaxes into the statement of the first line of the cantus firmus.

The B section motif is based on pitches from the third line of the tune in the same manner as the A sections (Ex. 6). The motif ascends and descends throughout the B section by parallel whole-tone motion in the right hand:

Ex. 6



The concluding A section utilizes the same right-hand motif (seen in Ex. 5) in much the same manner as the opening A section. An A :B A<sup>1</sup> structure was a logical choice for Porter to select for this prelude, since three of the lines of the hymn tune are exactly the same (A, A, B, A).

Porter uses advanced harmonic and rhythmic language to construct her music for the church, and now she is exploring even less traditional methods in a set of pieces based on scenes from Ezekiel. The projected seven movements are not hymn-based, and are intended more for concert use than for the church. Of the seven movements, four have been completed. They are not functionally tonal, and Porter uses pitch-class collections instead of traditional harmony. Both the melodic and harmonic material are based on an eight-tone scale best described by Porter as "Lydian with the addition of a minor third."

Many composers choose to make their compositions available to the public without working through a publisher. Porter recently established a company for this purpose. Eight volumes of her pieces are now in print under the name of Calfaria Music, and may be obtained directly from the composer.

**Organ Music by Emily Maxson Porter**  
(Selected Works)

- Five Jewish Hymns (1996), CPP/Belwin
- Short Settings of Jewish Hymns for Organ (1996), CPP/Belwin
- Three Quiet Hymn Settings (1996), MorningStar

- At the Manger (1996), MorningStar
- Five Preludes for Fall (1997), MorningStar
- Partita on "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven" (1997), MorningStar
- Hymn Images for Lent and Easter (1997), Concordia
- Partita on "'How Good,' God Said, and Blessed the Two" (1998), Augsburg (in collection)
- In Process—Suite from Ezekiel (1998—??)
- Wheel of Fire, Diatribe, Lamentation over Tyre, The Lofty Cedar, Shepherd of Israel, Dance of the Dry Bones, Waters of the Temple

Available from Calfaria Music: Box 21494, Fridley, MN 55421; Calfaria@aol.com

*Celebrations of Praise*

- All Things Bright and Beautiful (ROYAL OAK)
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- O Worship the King (HANOVER)
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (LOBE DEN HERREN)
- This Is My Father's World (TERRA PATRIS)
- Thy Strong Word Did Cleave the Darkness (EBENEZER)

*Songs of the Saints of God*

- O What Their Joy and Their Glory Must Be (O QUANTA QUALIA)
- Shall We Gather at the River (HANSON PLACE)
- How Firm a Foundation (FOUNDATION)
- Marching to Zion (MARCHING TO ZION)
- The Church's One Foundation (AURELIA)

*Evensong*

- Now the Day Is Over (MERRIAL)
- Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow (O WELT, ICH MUSS DICH LASSEN)
- Abide with Me (EVENTIDE)
- The Day You Gave Us, Lord, Has Ended (ST. CLEMENT)
- God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven (AR HYD Y NOS)
- Thy Holy Wings (BRED DINA VIDA VINGAR)

*Seven Meditations for Lent*

- Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain (NAAR MIT ÖDE)
- Drawn to the Cross (JUST AS I AM)
- Go to Dark Gethsemane (GETHESEMENE)
- Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (JESU KREUZ, LEIDEN UND PEIN)
- Just as I Am, Without One Plea (WOODWORTH)
- O Christ, Thou Lamb of God (CHRISTE, DU LAMM GOTTES) (two settings)

*Carols for Christmas Eve*

- Silent Night (STILLE NACHT)
- Lo, How a Rose Is Blooming (ES IST EIN ROS)
- Oh, Sleep Now, Holy Baby (A LA RU)
- I Am So Glad on Christmas Eve (JES ER SAA GLAD)
- O Little Town of Bethlehem (ST. LOUIS)

*Songs of Comfort and Trust*

- Amazing Grace (NEW BRITAIN)
- I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus (STEPHANOS)
- There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (PLEADING SAVIOR)
- There Is a Balm in Gilead (BALM IN GILEAD)
- What a Friend We Have in Jesus (CONVERSE)

Partita on "St. Patrick's Breastplate"

Fantasy on "Gabriel's Message"

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