

Organ Improvisation: A Philosophy and Pedagogical Method

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
at the
Peabody Conservatory of Music
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

May 2013

Abstract

Many classical musicians have had little to no training in the art of improvisation. As a result, musicians fabulously skilled at executing notes on the printed page find themselves nearly incapable of improvising their own music. Utilizing the diatonic modes (all 12 Ecclesiastical modes plus the novel Locrian mode), the acoustic scale, the whole tone scale, the octatonic scale, and Messiaen's third mode of limited transposition, this method will disclose a variety of techniques for improvising extemporaneous compositions in a modern neo-modal style. In addition, numerous musical examples will demonstrate various ways of accompanying and developing a theme. This method seeks to define improvisation, address common misperceptions associated with it, and offer a brief historical survey of improvisation within the western classical tradition. Such knowledge will situate the modern improviser within the continuum of this art as it has been practiced since the early sixteenth century.

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