Discover the Basics® and Discover the Organ®

A Beginning Keyboard and Pedal Method for the Organ

by Wayne Leupold

The *Discover the Basics*[®] and the *Discover the Organ*[®] beginning keyboard and pedal method for the organ, published by Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc., now provides a wonderful opportunity for upper-elementary and middle-school students to study the organ at much earlier ages than in the past. This method has been in development for ten years and is the result of contributions by 6 editors, over 100 composers, a graphic artist, and over 50 test teachers.

Since there were no similarly published, classically oriented, elementary keyboard methods for the organ as models, a test-teacher program was instituted to test the materials before they would be published. The feedback from these test teachers has been invaluable in developing materials that appeal to young students and develop sensitive musicianship and solid technical facility.

The Discover the Basics[®] and Discover the Organ[®] beginning keyboard and pedal method for the organ is now available in four different levels: the beginning series (Discover the Basics[®]: A Beginning Series for Any Keyboard Instrument) and levels one, two and three in five different series (Basic Organ Repertoire, Modern Keyboard Technique, Christmas Season at the Organ, Easter and Pentecost Seasons at the Organ, and Organ and One Instrument). Volumes in levels four and five are in preparation.

The beginning series, Discover the Basics[®]: A Beginning Series for Any Keyboard Instrument, co-edited by Wayne Leupold and Lucy G. Ingram, utilizes an intervallic approach to reading music and consists of four successive books (A, B, C, and D). Each book is complete in itself, in that it contains lessons, theory, repertoire, and technique materials, therefore eliminating the need to buy multiple books for each level. Book A introduces intervals up to and including fifths. Book B reinforces these intervals within the context of the grand staff. Book C presents eighth notes and beginning two-part playing. Book D introduces the intervals of sixths, sevenths, and eighths, more expanded two-part playing, and the beginning playing of three very easy simultaneous parts, and emphasizes note spelling. Many pieces have optional pedal points and approximately 70 percent of the compositions in all four books have a duet part for the teacher to play. Folk songs and spirituals from many different countries and cultures are used extensively. The four families of organ tone are gradually presented (illustration 1) and practice suggestions (illustration 2) throughout the four books assist the student in developing good practice habits. Several distinctive features with many illustrations broaden the student's general musical knowledge: (1) a brief history of the organ at the beginning of Book C (illustration 3); (2) a brief history of stringed, keyboard instruments (clavichord, harpsichord, and piano) at the beginning of Book D (illustration 4); and (3) brief biographical sketches of composers throughout books B, C, and D, who significantly contributed to the organ, piano, and harpsichord literature (illustrations 5 and 6).

Book A may be begun with students as early as the third grade. Older children and adult beginners may begin with Book B. Book B also may be used for adult beginning class keyboard instruction. In our test-teacher program the B, C, and D books have been used very successfully in colleges and universities as the texts for their beginning class keyboard courses. A supplemental beginning book of hymns and carols also is available: Christmas Season at the Organ (beginning level).

While studying in the beginning series, a student may use any keyboard instrument for daily practice, i.e., a piano, electronic keyboard, or an organ. When the student has progressed to the level one materials (see below), it is recommended that he or she have at least one practice session a week at an organ to become comfortable with the optional simple one- or two-note pedal parts.

Discover the Basics[®]: A Beginning Series for Any Keyboard Instrument, may be used in a variety of different ways: (1) it can be the beginning method for a student beginning keyboard study exclusively on the organ; (2) it can be the beginning method for a student beginning keyboard study

exclusively on the piano, with no interest in ever playing the organ (in such a situation, the explanations about the organ sounds, the registration suggestions, and the suggestions for optional pedal points can be ignored) and (3) this beginning series also can be used in an approach of blending the initial teaching of the keyboard between both the piano and the organ. In such a situation, the student can use a piano for daily practice and can take his/her weekly lesson on a piano. However, in addition, the teacher also may take the student to an organ during the weekly lesson, where he/she again may play some or all of the assigned pieces on the organ, utilizing the suggested registrations and pedal points for the feet. Because of the thoroughness of the Discover the Basics® beginning series, a separate piano primer series is not necessary. A student could continue this simultaneous study of both instruments indefinitely. When he/she has finished the Discover the Basics series and has progressed to the level one books for continued organ study (see below), he/she also could progress into any standard classical piano literature series for continued piano study. This approach would give the student the exposure to and advantages of both keyboard instruments. The profound advantage of the first and third approaches, from the perspective of the organ, is that *more students* will be exposed to the organ much earlier in their educational experience than traditionally has been done in the past. Hopefully, in the long term, this approach will generate more interest in the organ among more young students who then will continue to study the organ and will eventually become active organists (amateurs and/or professionals) and church musicians.

Upon completion of *Book D*, the student progresses to *Discover the Organ*[®] in the various series of level one (*Basic Organ Repertoire, Modern Keyboard Technique, Christmas Season at the Organ, Easter and Pentecost Seasons at the Organ*, and *Organ and One Instrument*). The first two are considered basic series while the remaining three are supplemental. The levels one through four of the *Discover the Organ*[®] method roughly parallel the technical-difficulty levels of the Bastian *Piano Literature Series*, volumes 1 - 4.

The Basic Organ Repertoire series, levels 1, 2, and 3, co-edited by Wayne Leupold and Naomi Rowley, contains both free compositions and pieces based on well-known hymn tunes and spirituals. Many different cultures are represented including Early American, African American, Native American, Hispanic, Jewish, and Asian, as well as many European countries. Over one hundred composers are represented in this series. Among the living composers represented are Michael Burkhardt, David Cherwien, Emma Lou Diemer, Alfred V. Fedak, Wilbur Held, Dan Locklair, Austin Lovelace, Robert J. Powell, and Larry Visser. The compositions were particularly written to appeal to young students. Students who like to play loud pieces will be delighted with Janet Correll's Fanfare (illustration 7), Procession of Praise, and Triumphal March found in the level one volume. They also will be fascinated with the many echo pieces, which require manual changes, such as Janet Correll's Carol of the Birds, Alfred V. Fedak's Echo Dialogue and Antiphonal Hosanna, Larry Visser's Echo (illustration 8), and Randolph Curries' "Little Jesus, Sweetly Sleep," all also found in the level one volume. Levels 2, 3A, and 3B also contain similar types of compositions. Children who like to play fast with a loud registration will find many toccatas in this series beginning in level two (i.e. Toccatina by David Schack, level 2 (illustration 9); Toccata by Emma Lou Diemer, level 3A (illustration 10); and *Toccatina* on "Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather" by Larry Visser, level 3B (illustration 11). A unique feature of this repertoire series is the appearance in each level of an original sonatina for organ by Larry Visser (level 1 - Sonatina on Spiritual Themes: I "Somebody's Knocking at Your Door" II "Steal Away to Jesus" III "Standing in the Need of Prayer"; level 2 - Sonatina on Themes of Creation: I "This Is My Father's World", II "Morning Has Broken", III "All Things Bright and Beautiful"; level 3B - A Sonatina for Holy Week: I "He Is King of Kings: He Is Lord of Lords", II "Were You There?", III - "He Arose"). These compositions give the organ student exposure to many of the classical forms traditionally associated with the sonatina and sonata (i.e., sonata allegro form (illustration 12), ABA song form (illustration 13), rondo form (illustration 14), and ritornello form (illustration 15). Practice suggestions appear where needed throughout these volumes, with an introduction to the organ at the beginning and a glossary at the end of each volume. This series contains compositions in a variety of keys, textures, and styles, and is intended to expose the student to a very broad spectrum of music.

The *Modern Keyboard Technique* series, edited by Wayne Leupold, is intended to develop a solid keyboard technique on the organ. This series contains legato "organ" exercises, exercises by Hanon and Czerny, and scales and arpeggios. A unique feature of the legato exercises is the grouping of musical compositions after each exercise that emphasize within a musical context the specific technical feature presented in that exercise (illustration 16).

The *Christmas Season at the Organ* series, arranged by Alfred V. Fedak, contains carols, hymn tunes, and other seasonal melodies associated with Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany (illustration 17). Each volume also includes a preface explaining these seasons.

The Easter and Pentecost Seasons at the Organ series, also arranged by Alfred V. Fedak, contains hymn tunes and other melodies associated with Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, Reformation, All Saints, Thanksgiving, weddings, funerals, Communion, baptisms, and patriotic occasions (illustration 18). Each volume includes a preface explaining these seasons and occasions (illustration 19). Also included are easy arrangements and transcriptions of compositions all organists play, such as J. Clarke's *The Prince of Denmark's March* (illustration 20) and H. Purcell's *Trumpet Tune* (illustration 21).

The *Organ and One Instrument* series, arranged by Allan Mahnke, provides an ensemble experience for the young organ student. Many of the compositions are based on well-known hymn tunes. The instrumental parts, in both the C and B-flat versions, are of a comparable or easier level for the instrumentalist (illustration 22).

All the compositions in the entire *Discover the Organ*® method are carefully edited and fingered. The inside back cover of each volume contains a registration information page that presents an explanation of the different pitches of organ pipes and lists of the names most commonly used for the four families of organ tone. Practice suggestions, in addition to appearing throughout the beginning series (*Discover the Basics*®) and the *Basic Organ Repertoire*® series, also are in all the other series. Although primarily included to help students develop effective learning habits, practice suggestions also have been provided to assist any teachers who have had little or no previous teaching experience.

While the *Discover the Organ*[®] method focuses primarily on developing manual skills, elementary pedal concepts are introduced. The *Discover the Organ*[®] method also may be used as an introductory organ method for students who have or are presently acquiring keyboard skills through piano study. A piano student may begin simultaneous study with this organ method at any time or switch over to this method from piano study at any level.

By the time the student is in the level three materials, his/her manual facility should be sufficiently developed so that simultaneous study in a traditional organ method, such as the *First Organ Book*, may begin. This assumes that by this time the student also has long enough legs to do traditional legato, toe-heel pedaling. For the continued development of manual technique, the student should continue in the various series through levels four and five of the *Discover the Organ* keyboard method, particularly the *Basic Organ Repertoire* series and the *Modern Keyboard Technique* series. Such a constant and thorough approach will ensure the development of a masterful keyboard technique at the organ.

Many young people find the organ fascinating with all its keyboards, pedals, buttons, stop knobs, and multiple sounds. Children can become interested in the organ through exposure in their church services, demonstrations by the church organist, and different types of events presented by AGO chapters or other groups of interested individuals. When such interest is awakened, there

should be an immediate follow-up. Immediately get them on organ benches, studying and playing the organ at whatever keyboard level they are. If they have no keyboard experience, start them on the organ from the very beginning, for now there is a keyboard method available that can develop a child's keyboard ability on the organ from the very beginning of his/her study of music. (Other instruments also could be studied simultaneously, if desired.)

For the organ to remain the principal instrument in the church, we must train more organists. To accomplish this we must first expose the organ to more young people, and second, begin to teach the organ to children at much earlier ages than previously has been done. There is no reason why young children cannot begin both their musical education and the development of their keyboard skills at the organ. Let's have more children *Discover the Organ*[®]!

This is a revised and enlarged version of this article that first appeared in The American Organist (September, 2000). Wayne Leupold is president of Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc., in Colfax (Greensboro), North Carolina.

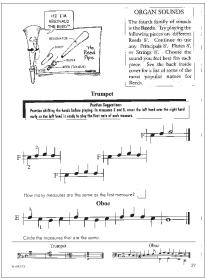


Illustration 1: Book A, page 29

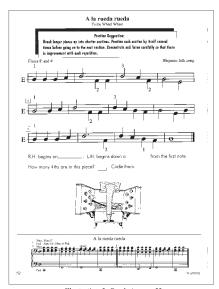


Illustration 2: Book A, page 52

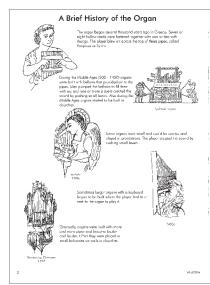


Illustration 3: Book C, page 2

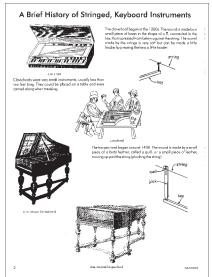


Illustration 4: Book D, page 2

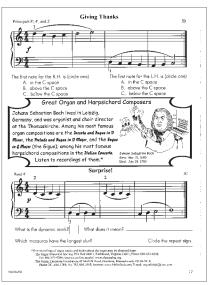


Illustration 5: Book B, page 17

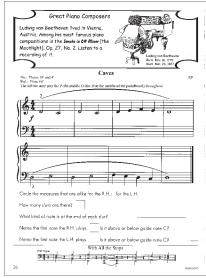


Illustration 6: Book B, page 26

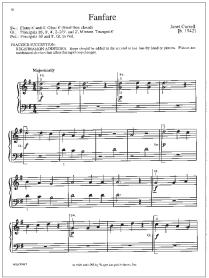


Illustration 7: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 1, page 16

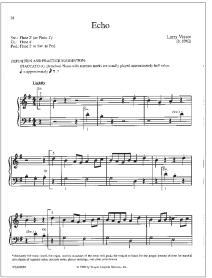


Illustration 8: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 1, page 28



Illustration 9: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 2, page 17



Illustration 10: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 3A, page 13

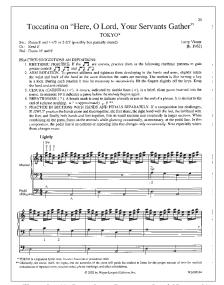


Illustration 11: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 3B, page 21

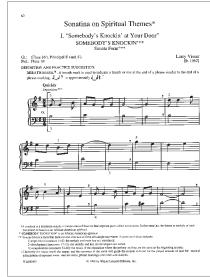


Illustration 12: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 1, page 62



Illustration 13: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 1, page 64



Illustration 14: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 2, page 53



Illustration 15: Basic Organ Repertoire, Level 3B, page 32





Illustration 17: Christmas Season, Level 1, page 20



Illustration 18: Easter and Pentecost, Level 2, page 13

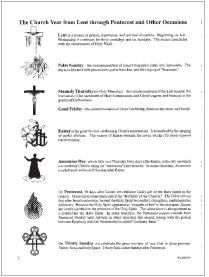


Illustration 19: Easter and Pentecost, Level 2, page 2



Illustration 22: Organ & One Instrument, Level 3, page 10



Illustration 20: Easter and Pentecost, Level 1, page 16



Illustration 21: Easter and Pentecost, Level 2, page 28