Dancing Fingers

An Introduction to Historical Keyboard Fingering Practices

Washington State Music Teachers Association State Conference Kilworth Chapel, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA June 20, 2019; 2:15-3:30 p.m.

Dr. Wyatt Smith
Affiliate Artist, Organ and
Harpsichord
University of Puget Sound

Joann S. Richardson, NCTM State Chair for Organ Washington State Music Teachers Association



Bergamasca

FRESCOBALDI 1583-1643

~

Applicatio

Glavier-Büchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Nr. 1

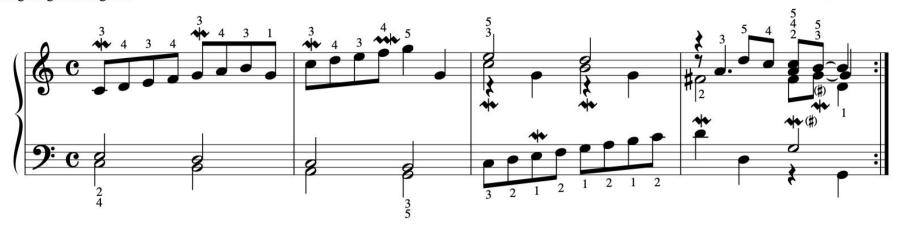
All fingerings are original. BWV 994





How would you finger this passage?

All fingerings are original.



Bach fingered it like this

http://ks4.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b3/IMSLP2227 53-PMLP178798-Bach Prelude BWV994.pdf



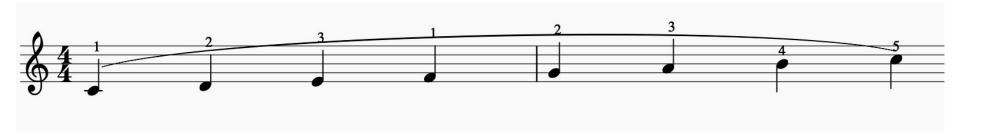
"What articulations? I played all the 16ths with a great legato."
...the late pianist Bruce Berr

Quote from article in the October/November 2009 issue of *The American Music Teacher*

Modern Technique

Emphasis on melodic, legato touch

 Uses standardized fingerings to facilitate legato playing



Legato Standard Fingering



Mozart



Chopin



Debussy



Gershwin

Pre-Classical or "Early Music" Composers Used a Different Technique









Bach

Handel

Couperin

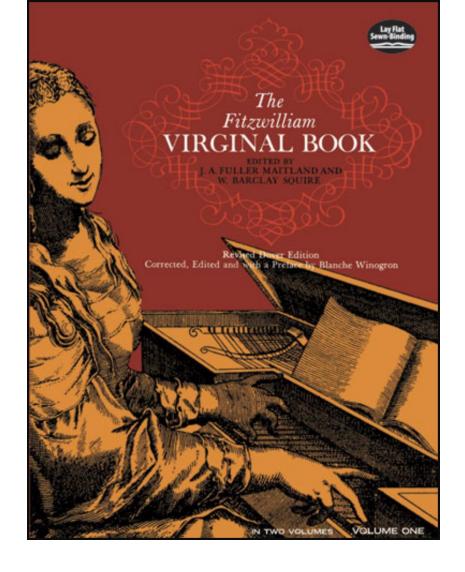
Scarlatti

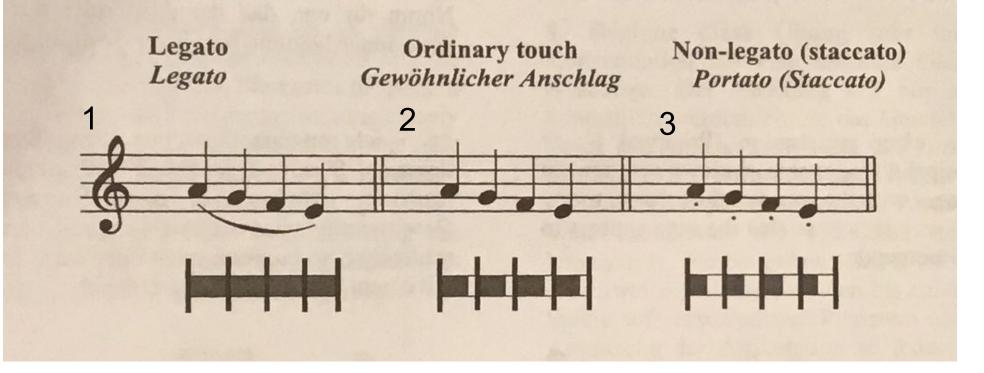


When playing early music...

Why would you want to use fingerings and technique that hadn't been invented yet?

Touch

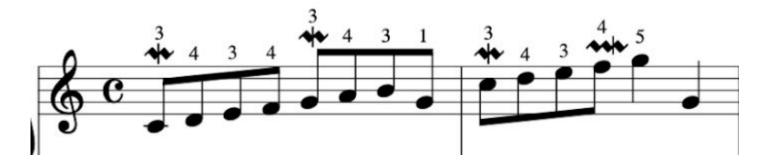




Brock, John. *Introduction to Organ Playing in 17th and 18th Century Style, Second Edition*, Colfax, NC: Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc., 2002, p. 1.

Note Grouping

- Modern technique groups the notes melodically into phrases and motives
- Early technique groups the notes to reinforce rhythmic and metric patterns





Organ Construction and Early Music Playing Technique

- The World's Oldest
 Playable Organ
- Basilica of Valère in Sion, Switzerland
- Built around 1435

Key Depth and Fingering

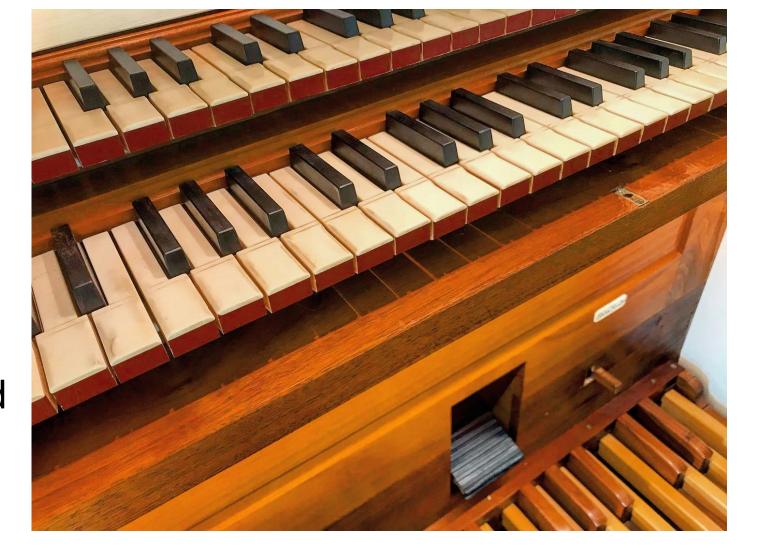
Basilica of Valère in Sion, Switzerland



https://www.youtube.com/watch
?v=jxwZTfILJDA

Bethel Schneebeck Organ

University of Puget Sound





Thumb Usage Awkward

- Adoration of the Lamb (partial)
- Altarpiece at St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium
- Attributed to Hubert and Jan van Eyck



Medieval Portative Organ

https://youtu.be /clcLZmNRYp4

Pedalboards

Modern (American)

- Concave
- Radiating

Developed for

- Legato playing
- Heels and toes





1746 Hildebrandt Organ

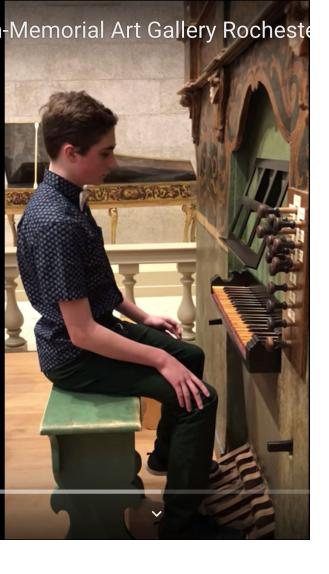
St. Wenzel Naumburg



Flat Pedalboard

Best for detached touch

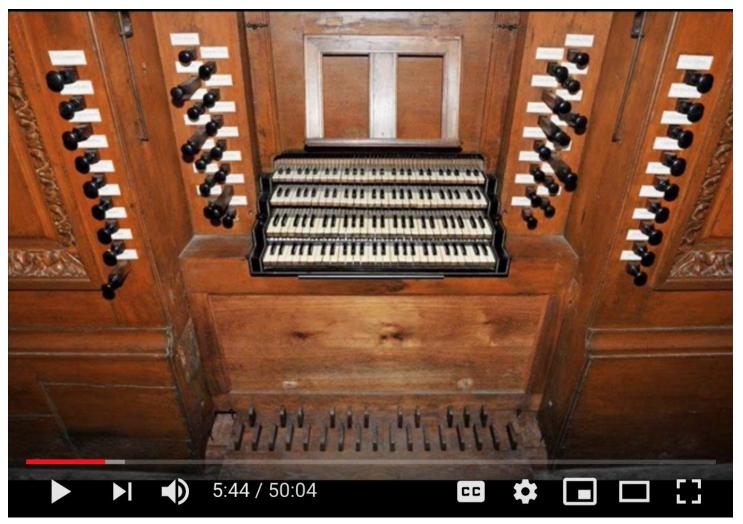
All toes (no heels)



Italian Baroque Organ

Memorial Art Gallery University of Rochester Rochester, NY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=qDKoNzfrxSU



French

Clicquot Organ, Poitiers

https://www.youtu be.com/watch?v= UPe37Al5-n4



Split Sharps Cause Their Own Fingering Issues

Nicola Vicentino: *Madonna il poco dolce*, performed by Johannes Keller on the 2016 arciorgano by Bernhard Fleig at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland.

https://www.voxhumanajournal.com/keller2018

Fingering Was Not Standardized

Differences-

- Geographically
- Numbering system
- Which was the "strong" finger

Finger Symbols



Soderlund, Sandra. *Organ Technique An Historical Approach, Second Edition*, Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc., p. 4.



Organ fingering notated on organ tablature notation

https://imslp.org/wiki/Orgel oder Instrument Tabulatur (Ammerbach, Elias Nikolaus)

Although fingering was not standardized, there were characteristics in common regarding:

- Touch
- Metrical organization
- Note grouping

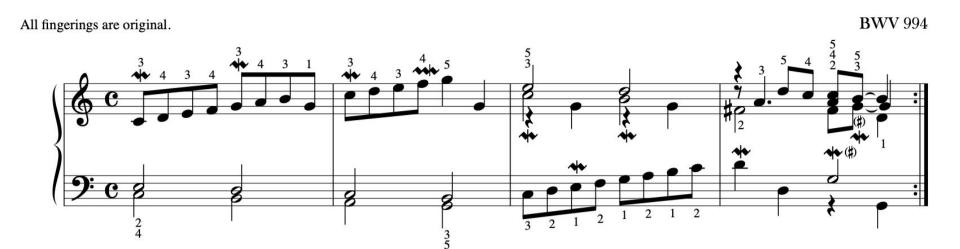


Bach and Thumbs

Yes--he used them (so did others)

Yes--he was starting to use them in a more "modern" way

No-- he did not abandon established practice



Bach: The Cantabile Question



"Forthright instruction... to achieve a cantabile style of playing..."

Title Page: Inventions and Sinfonias

Hand

- Relaxed
- Compact as opposed to extended fingers
- Very small motion—finger activates keys
- Caress the keys!

Feet (organists)

- Sit Higher than for heel/toe playing
- Play with toes only (occasional heel is used, but very rarely)
- Effect of playing this way is like a cellist bowing

Arm

- NO arm weight
- Arm only used to shift position side to side
- Exercise: Fingers touching but not depressing keys, move in lateral motion over keys

Shift, Don't Twist!

Exercise 1:

Move from one key to the next

Using one finger (also practice using different fingers)

Organists— do exercise with each individual foot

Shift, Don't Twist!

Exercise 2:

Move from one key to the next using parallel intervals

Fingers 2 and 4

Fingers 1 and 3

Other intervals (especially sixths)

Hierarchy of Pulse by Metrical Organization



Voices of Music https://youtu.be/-6N73y822dU

Baroque: Pulses organized by hierarchy of strong versus weak

Note: Bowing emphasizes strong and weak pulses

Duple

- Two pulses per measure
 - STRONG, weak
- Four pulses per measure
 - STRONG, weak, Moderate, weak (but with motion to to downbeat on 4th beat)

Triple

STRONG, weak, weak (but with motion to downbeat on 3rd beat)

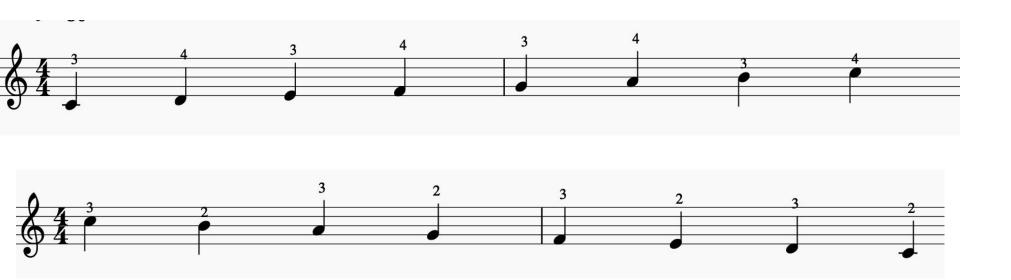
Compound Meters

- Same as duple or triple for main pulses
- Triplets within pulse are STRONG weak weak

Note Groupings By Rhythmic Value

Similar to pulse grouping:

- Eighth Notes: STRONG, weak
- Triplets: STRONG, weak, weak
- Sixteenth Notes: STRONG, weak, weak, weak



RH: Groups of 2



John Stanley: Voluntary in C

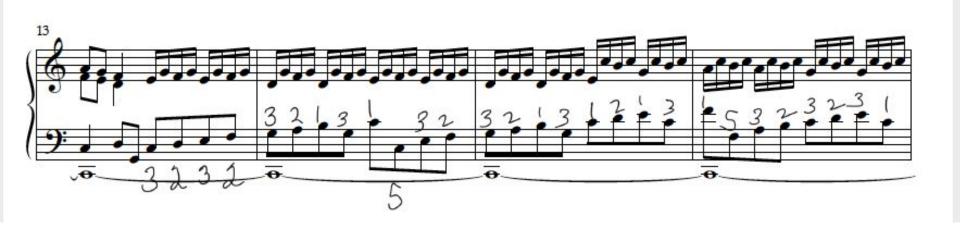
http://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/3/3f/IMSLP133636-WIMA.ca 64-Stanley Voluntary Op.5.1.pdf



LH: Groups of 2



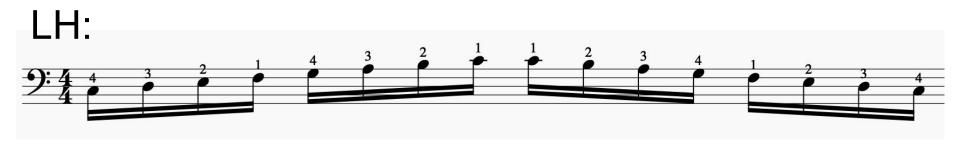
https://www.esm.rochester.edu/organ/files/Zipoli-Offertorio.pdf



Domenico Zipoli All'Offertorio

RH:





Groups of 4-- Faster



Groups of 3

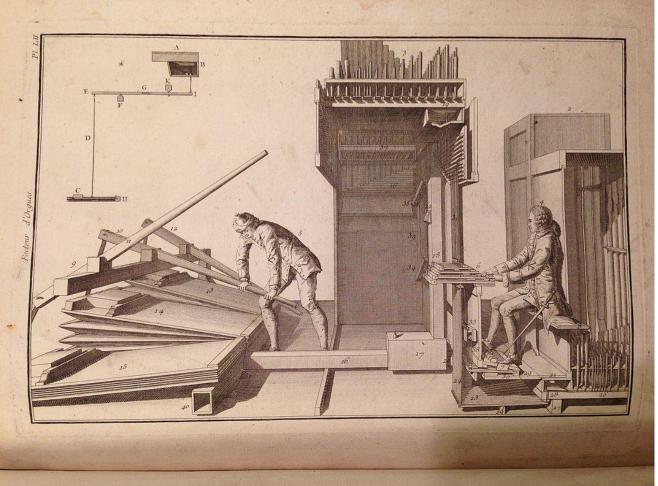
Best Instruments for Early Keyboard Technique



Tracker Action Pipe Organ Clavichord Harpsichord







Tracker-Action Organ

Direct link from key (finger) to pipe

Dom Bedos de Celles: L'art du facteur d'orgues (imslp.org)

Sub-optimal Instruments for Early Keyboard Technique



Electric Action Organs



Pianos



Electronic Keyboards

When to Pull the Plug on Early Technique (or Modify It)

If it doesn't work with action of the keyboard

If the acoustics make it sound choppy

If technically insecure





Matthias Weckmann Es ist das heyl

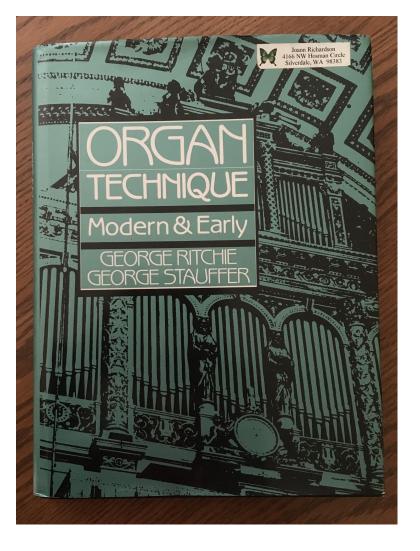
Dr. Wyatt Smith wdsmith@pugetsound.edu

Joann Richardson, NCTM organistjoann@gmail.com

Slides:

www.jrichardsonmusic.com

Resources



Organ Method Book

Early and Modern Technique

Ritchie, George and Stauffer, George. *Organ Technique: Modern* and Early, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1992.

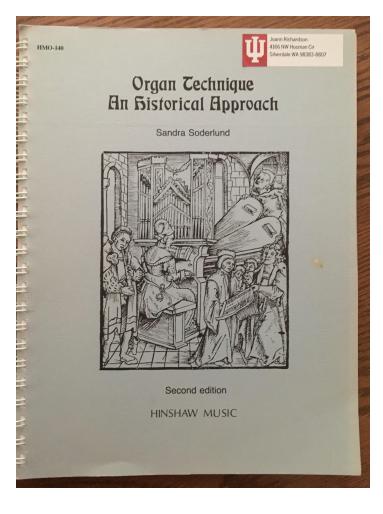
Introduction to Organ Playing in 17th and 18th Century Style SECOND EDITION Einführung in das Orgelspiel des 17, und 18, Jahrhunderts ZWEITE AUFLAGE JOHN BROCK Deutsche Übersetzung von Christian Hermann Stähr Organ Skills™, Part 7



Organ Method Book

Early Technique

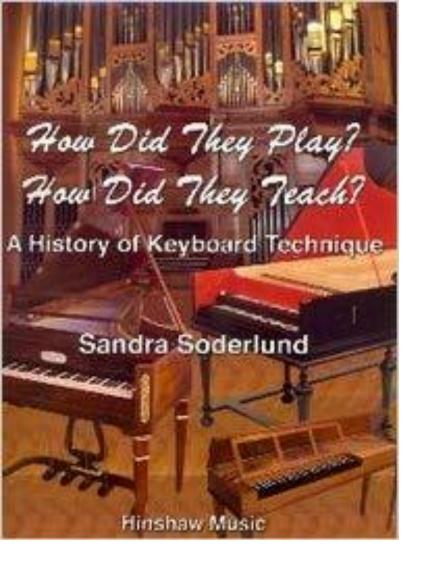
Brock, John. *Introduction* to Organ Playing in 17th and 18th Century Style, Second Edition, Colfax, NC: Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc., 2002.



In-Depth Resource/Method Book

- Musical examples not for beginners
- Covers different geographical schools
- Early and Modern Technique

Soderlund, Sandra. *Organ Technique An Historical Approach, Second Edition*, Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc, 1986.



Historical Background on Keyboard Technique

Early through Modern (includes piano)

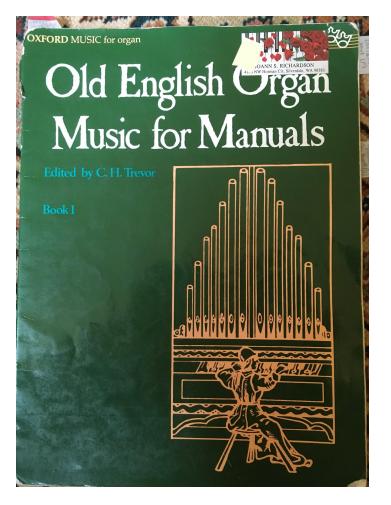
Soderlund, Sandra. How Did They Play? How Did They Teach? A History of Keyboard Technique, Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc.,2006.

Music



J.S. Bach (1685-1750) Wer nur den lieben Gott Lässt walten, BWV 642

http://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/4/48/IMSLP380369-PMLP0 8213-Bach Orgelbuchlein Complet.pdf

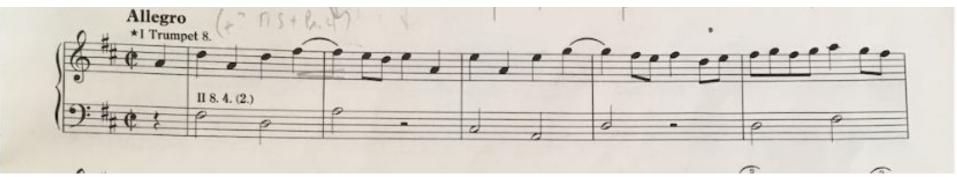


Old English (no pedals) Composers include:

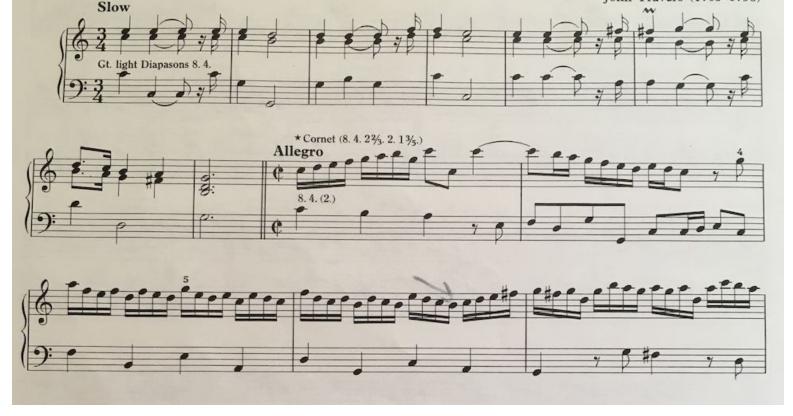
- John Stanley
- John Keeble
- William Croft
- Starling Goodwin
- Matthew Camidge
- John Travers
- Charles Wesley
- And more...

Trevor, C.H., ed. *Old English Organ Music for Manuals*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1966.





John Bennett (1735-1784): *Trumpet Voluntary*Trevor, C.H., ed. *Old English Organ Music for Manuals*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 18-19.



John Travers (1703-1758): *Cornet Voluntary*Trevor, C.H., ed. *Old English Organ Music for Manuals*, Oxford,
UK: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 19.



G.F. Handel: Passacaglia from Suite 7

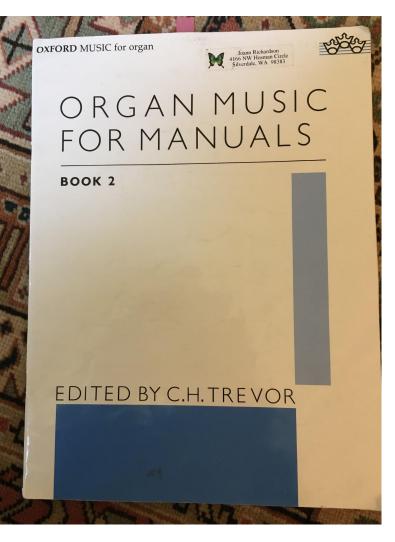
http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/c/c8/IMSLP130582-WIMA.c5cb-Handel Suite7 Passacaille.pdf



G.F. Handel (1695-1759) Sarabande from 11th Suite-Variation 2

Fingering indicated is not "early" fingering

Available on imslp.org

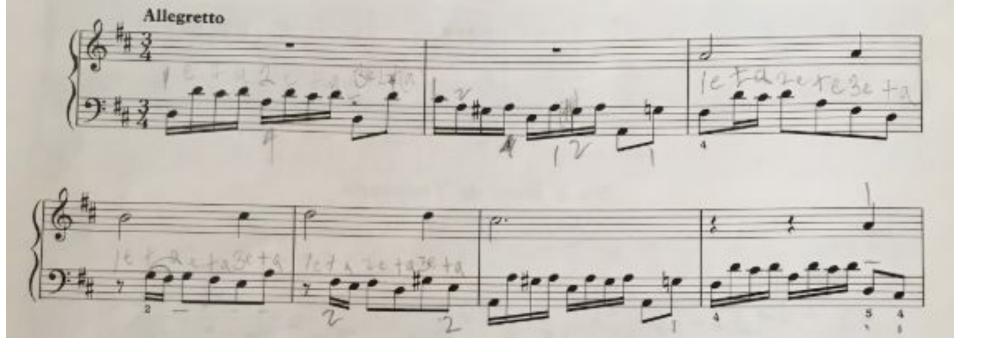


Music from Collections (not all music in this collection is early music, but much is)

Editor's fingerings are not early fingering; registrations are not all authentic

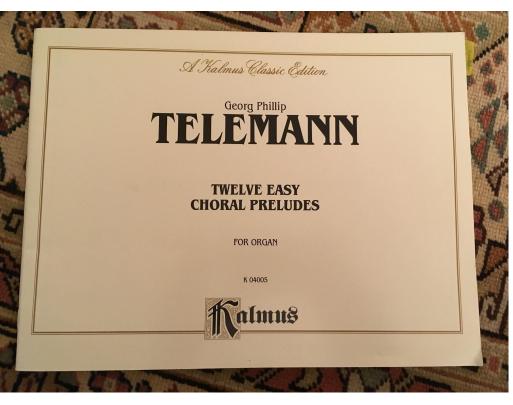
Variety of composers

Trevor, C.H., ed. *Organ Music for Manuals, Book 2*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1972.



Georg Phillip Telemann (1681-1767): Gott der Vater wohn uns bei

Trevor, C.H., ed. *Organ Music for Manuals, Book 2*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 8.



Georg Phillip Telemann

Chorale Settings (many are for manuals only)

Telemann, Georg Phillip.

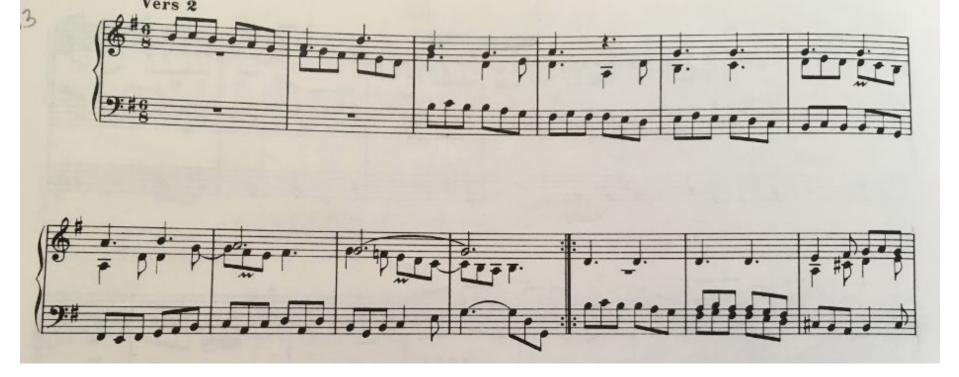
Twelve Easy Choral Preludes
for Organ, (Kalmus Edition- K
04005)



Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)

Chorale Settings (many are for manuals only)

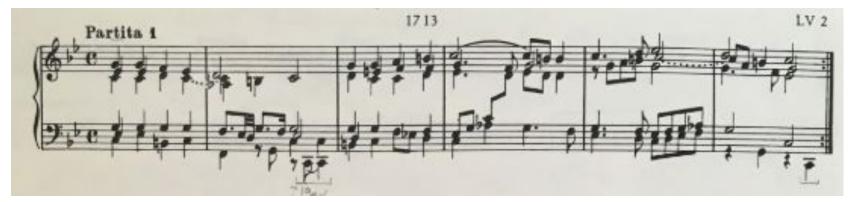
Lohmann, Heinz, ed. *Orgelwerke,* Band II: Choralbearbeitungen I-Z, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1966.

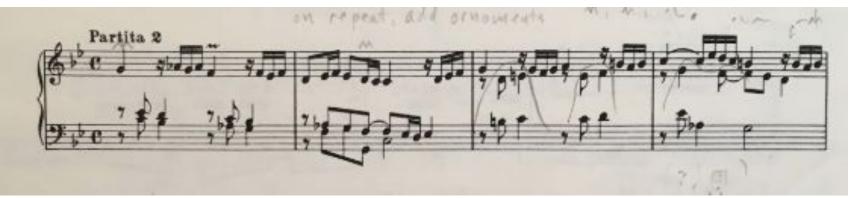


Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748):

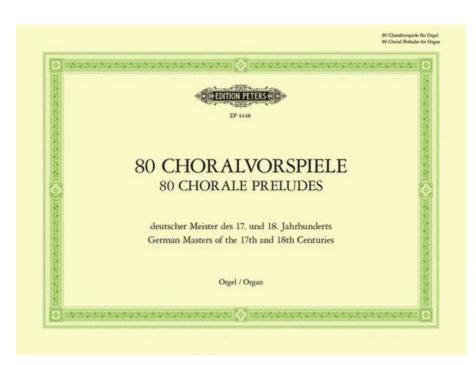
Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

Lohmann, Heinz, ed. *Orgelwerke, Band II: Choralbearbeitungen I-Z*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1966, p.120.





Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748): *Jesu, meine Freude* Lohmann, Heinz, ed. *Orgelwerke, Band II: Choralbearbeitungen I-Z*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1966, p.103.



Chorale Settings (many are for manuals only)

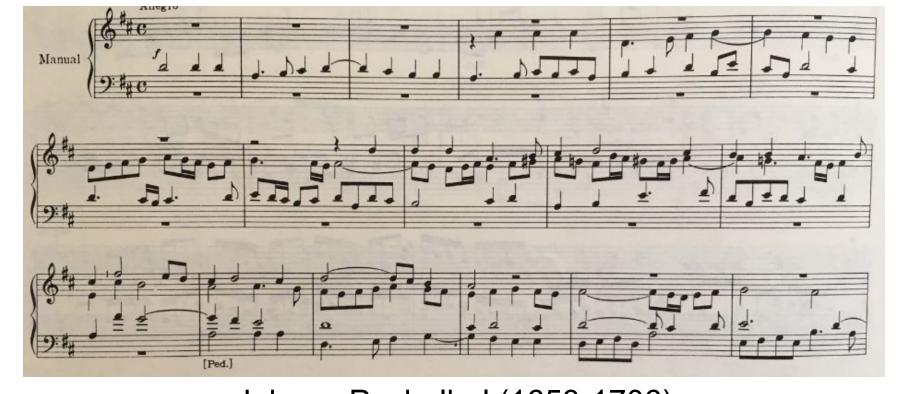
Settings from a variety of composers for use throughout the church year

Keller, Hermann, ed. *80 Choralvorspiele*, Stuttgart: Edition Peters, 1937.



Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau (1663-1712) Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr

Keller, Hermann, ed. *80 Choralvorspiele*, Stuttgart: Edition Peters, 1937, p.6.

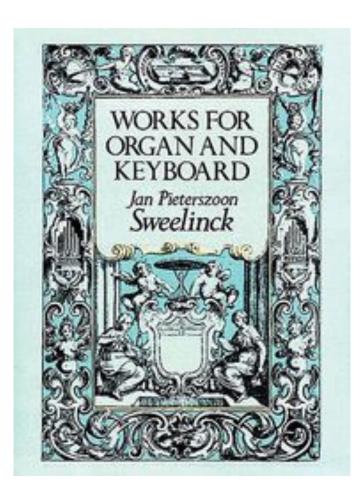


Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

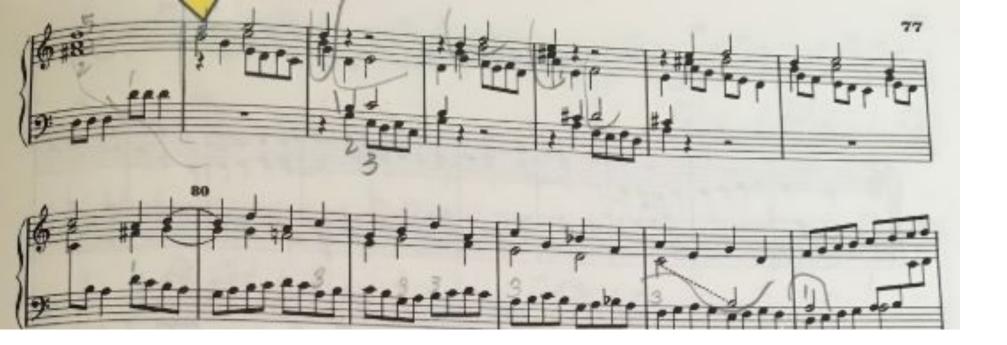
Keller, Hermann, ed. 80 Choralvorspiele, Stuttgart: Edition Peters,

1937, p.42.



Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621)

Sweelinck, Jan Pieterszoon, Works for Organ and Keyboard, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985.



Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621): Echo Fantasy in a

Sweelinck, Jan Pieterszoon, Works for Organ and Keyboard, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985, p.77.

Domenico Zipoli All'Offertorio



Domenico Zipoli

Various Keyboard Works

https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Zipo li, Domenico

This example is available at: https://www.esm.rochester.edu/org an/files/Zipoli-Offertorio.pdf