

# the YOUTH news

WINTER 2009 EDITION



## Master Class

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I hope that we will see some interesting organ compositions in the future. You will notice that a recent listing was Robert Ampt, our Sydney City Organist, who is well known for his organ duet on *Waltzing Matilda* and the many carol settings written especially for 'Christmas at the Town Hall'.

We are hoping to have a very exciting Competition on 10th October, so keep warm, keep up the practise and enjoy your music making.

## Godelieve

President,  
Organ Music Society of Sydney  
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## What Bird is That?

See if you can guess the bird song for this edition!

Last month's birdsong was that of a "Nightingale." Were you right?





# Master Class with Jacques van Oortmerssen

PROFESSOR OF ORGAN, SWEELINCK CONSERVATORY AMSTERDAM

Dear Friends,

In this issue I would like to discuss the importance of accents and how to make them.

Music without accents is like a language without accents; a text which is read monotonously does raise our interest, but does not arouse our emotions and will not deliver the message.

In music before 1800 we distinguish two different types of accent:

- the grammar accent (all grammar accents relate to bar form patterns. This pattern is characteristic for the meter)
- the oratorical accent (which is the first note after a phrasing).

In common time for example, the grammar accents appear on the first and third beat.

In triple meter it is on the first beat. Obviously there are many exceptions and it is important to learn to find them. For example, you can find an extra accent on the second beat in a Sarabande, which is a slow dance in triple meter.

It is also important to understand that grammar accents and oratorical accents are completely independent from each other.

When you are able to give each voice its own accent pattern, your interpretation will most certainly become more interesting and expressive. In exercise 12 of my book “Guide to Duo and Trio Playing” we find a fine example of both types of accentuation.

The musical score consists of two systems of music for a piano. The first system has 8 measures, and the second system has 8 measures starting from measure 9. The right hand part is in the treble clef, and the left hand part is in the bass clef. The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various accents (marked with a small triangle ^) and fingerings (marked with numbers 1-5). The right hand part features a mix of triplets and single notes, while the left hand part consists of a steady bass line with some triplets and accents.

It is clear that the grammar accents fall on the first beat in both voices.

In the right hand however the main musical figure always starts on the second beat.

This causes an accent (oratorical) on the second beat in bar 1, 3, 5, 9, 11 and 13.

The pedal voice however has a figure which one should always phrase before the third beat, causing an oratorical accent on the third beat in all bars.

You have to train your co-ordination carefully in order to be able to make all the accents and phrasing clear to the listener. When you succeed in shaping both voices according to their individual characteristics, a much more interesting and richer result will make you happy.

May I suggest that you practice the two voices separately so that you can focus on individual parts. Particularly in early music it is important

to give every voice and every motive its own character. Your most important tool in this respect is the tool of accentuation and phrasing.

This might be the moment to speak about how to make an accent.

An accentuated note is longer than an unaccentuated note. However we do not lengthen notes to make them longer, we shorten them less than the others.

It is a rule that every note in early music should be articulated. That means that all notes lose some of their sounding value. Each individual note must be divided in a sounding part (called '*Tenue*') and a non sounding part (called '*silence d'articulation*', or in English 'rest of articulation'). By making the rests longer or shorter we can make accents.

Try the first bar of *Mein junges Leben hat ein Endt* by the Dutch composer J.P.Sweelinck (1562-1621).

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Mein junges Leben hat ein Endt  
JP Sweelinck

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When playing the crochets equally long the music is rather boring. When you give accents on the second (first beat), fourth, sixth and every other crochet, the music starts to live.

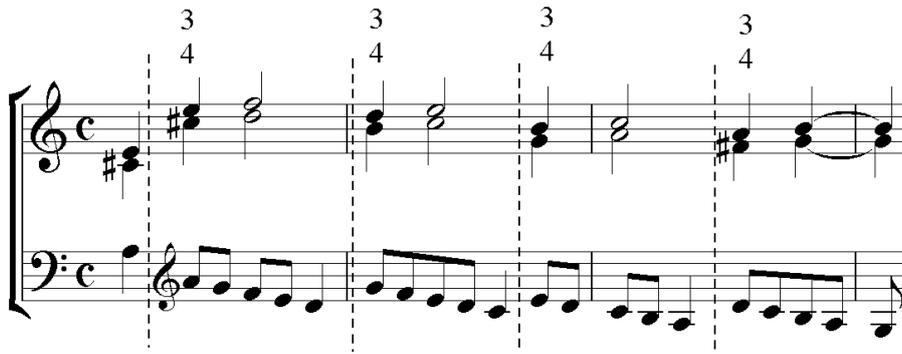
Just shorten the first (up-beat), third and fifth crochet.

Since all notes must be articulated the fingering, 5 and 1 for each interval in the r.h. is

appropriate. Try to relax the hand, try to play as singing as possible and enjoy the accents.

Obviously composers do like to break the rules and write their accents in unusual places. Please be aware of the fact that accents can pop up anywhere.

The unexpected accents are extremely enjoyable since they work like spices in food.



A good example can be found in Sweelinck's Echo Fantasia in A minor. Bar 77, 78 and 79 are not three bars in common time (4 beats). In fact we see four bars with three beats.

Normally this piece has two accents per bar, on one and three.

Please be aware of the oratorical accents which are often on two and four. (See example)



The fingering is obviously similar for the motive and its echo (bar 34-42 position fingering!)

In bar 44-45 we see accents on one and three and oratorical accents on two and four.

Try to make the first note of the motive shorter than the second note.

Obviously the grammar accents are the most important accents and have to be emphasised at any time.



Good luck with your practice!

*Jacques van Oortmerssen*



# Composer Dossier

## Do you know who this handsome composer is?

1. Who is this Dutch composer (1562-1621)?

*Jan Pieterzoon Sweelinck*

2. Where was he organist most of his life?

*Oude Kerk Amsterdam (the Old Church of Amsterdam)*

3. At what age did he start playing there and how many years did stay?

*He was 15 and served for 44 years until his death.*

4. Who did he succeed and who succeeded him as organist?

*He succeeded his father, and his son Dirck Janszoon succeeded him.*

5. Which famous English Virginal Book has some of his compositions?

*Fitzwilliam: Viscount Fitzwilliam bequeathed this set of manuscripts to Cambridge University in 1816. Most of the compositions are by English composers such as John Bull, Farnaby and William Byrd.*

6. Which English composer wrote a set of variations on a theme by Sweelinck?

*John Bull*

7. Sweelinck influenced a whole generation of organists and became one of the most important founders of the German school of organ playing. He was widely respected as a teacher of organ. Who were some of his students?

*Sweelinck's pupils included the core of what was to become the north German organ school: Jacob Praetorius II, Heinrich Scheidemann, Samuel and Gottfried Scheidt. Students of Sweelinck were seen as true musicians. Sweelinck's fame as an organist resulted in attracting students to Amsterdam from Poland, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and particularly Germany. Without these students, Sweelinck's keyboard pieces would surely have been lost to us. After all, it was these students who took copies of the music they had studied in Amsterdam home with them.*

8. He was occasionally invited to other cities? Why was this?

*He was acknowledged as an expert on the construction of organs and was called upon for advice.*

9. Where was he buried?

*Sweelinck was buried in the ambulatory of the Oude Kerk under tombstone number 100.*

10. Besides Prelude and Chorale Variations based on hymn tunes, he wrote variations on secular songs and dance tunes. Pavana Hispanica has 8 variations with 4 written by Sweelinck and 4 by another composer. Who would this be?

*Samuel Scheidt*

**Listen to Sweelinck Online!** Sweelinck on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwx5oYleM08>



## Q&A with Peter Jewkes



*Sydney organbuilder and organist Peter Jewkes answers questions from younger readers in each edition of The Youth News.*

### **Q: What are octave couplers?**

A: As the name suggests, octave couplers will play the notes an octave above or below the ones you happen to be playing on a particular manual.

### **Q: Why would you want to do that?**

In the case of Super Octave couplers, this can be used to give a brighter sound to chorus stops - for example, by adding it to an Open Diapason 8', you will get the effect of an Open Diapason and Principal 4' when playing. This can be a very useful feature on instruments where there is little or no "upperwork" (2' stops or Mixtures) and some additional brightness is required. Super Octave couplers must also be used with caution, as in most cases the high notes being played can "run out" if you play notes above the note an octave lower than the actual top note of the keyboard – giving the effect that something is missing! Also, when playing pieces by composers such as J S Bach, where counterpoint is important, problems can arise because the notes being played by the left hand will often overlap the notes being played by the right hand when the Octave coupler is in use. Octave couplers can sometimes also make an organ's wind supply sound unsteady, and can make the treble notes sound out of tune. If you have any doubt about using an octave coupler, ask your teacher, and as

with all organ registrations – if it doesn't sound good, don't use it!

### **Q: So they are just for using with choruses of loud stops?**

A: Not at all. Actually, some of the nicest effects from Super Octave couplers are from using them with soft strings stops (such as a Salicional or Gamba, perhaps also with an undulating Celeste stop added). On organs with limited resources it can be very useful to add an Octave coupler to a simple 8' Flute stop (such as a Gedact or Stopped Diapason), giving the effect of 8' and 4' Flutes.

### **Q: OK, so they all make the notes play an octave higher?**

A: No, there is also a Sub Octave coupler, which as the name implies plays an octave lower than the keys being pressed. Sub Octaves have to be used with even greater care than Octaves, as they can make very muddy sounds. They are useful for special effects in accompanying and improvising, especially when using 8' or even 16' manual reed stops. They are also very effective for playing French Romantic pieces where the hands play high up in the compass of the manuals – for example the famous Widor Toccata or the final movement of a Vierne symphony. (On some very rare organs there are even non-unison couplers, which will play notes a fifth, seventh or ninth higher than the one key you are pressing. These are known as "mutation couplers" and are for very specialised solo effects!)

**Q: So they just play on the manual on which you are playing?**

A: Usually if there are octave couplers on one manual, they will “read through” the couplers to another manual if it is coupled. For example, if you draw the Swell Octave coupler, then the Swell to Great, then play on the Great manual, you will get both the pitch you are playing coupling from the Swell to the Great, but you will get the notes an octave higher as well. On some organs there are separate couplers to couple octave pitches from one manual to another – for example Swell Octave to Great.

**Q: Do they always have the same names?**

A: In Australia we have mostly adopted the English system of naming couplers Sub, Super and so-on. which is fairly self-explanatory. French and German organs do much the same thing in their own language, but the American system is to use pitch names and to conceptualise a manual as coupling to itself – so, for example a Swell Octave coupler would be called Swell to Swell 4’, or the Swell Sub Octave to Great would be called Swell to Great 16’. That’s also a very easy to understand system once you get used to it.

**Q: And what’s this Unison Off thing all about then?**

A: The Unison Off actually stops the notes you are actually playing from sounding, so that the ones controlled by the octave coupler in use are all that will sound. This can be useful for special effects. One very obvious effect is when you have to play a chorale prelude with a Pedal cantus firmus solo scored for a 4’ reed. While your organ may not have a 4’ Pedal reed, it may for example have an 8’ reed on the Swell. If you were to add the Octave coupler plus Unison Off, then couple the 8’ Swell reed to the Pedal. you’d have your 4’

solo reed, ready for accompaniment by another manual.

**Q: All of this sounds pretty modern? How long have these things been around?**

A: Octave couplers have actually been around for several hundred years, and can be found on all sorts of keyboard instruments. In large organs they tended to make heavy key actions even heavier, especially when manuals were coupled. They became most popular in the organ therefore with the development of non-mechanical actions, and can be found on many instruments by famous builders in most countries from the 19th century onwards. The invention of electric key action made it even easier to provide octave couplers, nowadays controlled by solid state switching – often with some very unmusical results, so once again, be very careful how you use them.

**Q: OK, that’s a lot to think about. Is there anything else I should know?**

A: There are lots more things we could discuss about Octave couplers. If you have more specific questions send them in, or talk to your teacher or the person who tunes the organ on which you play. And enjoy experimenting with them in the meantime!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **10th October** Sydney Organ Competition

Uniting Church,  
Pitt Street, Sydney

### **Wed 15th July** **1:15 pm** Frank Tamsitt

*Organ Scholar, St James'  
King Street, Sydney*

\$5.00

St James' King St  
Sydney

### **Fri 24th July** **1:10 pm** Frank Tamsitt

Donation

St Andrew's  
Cathedral, Sydney

### **2nd August** **3:00 pm** Adrian So

*Organ Student at Trinity  
Grammar School*

\$5/\$2 with Tea

St Stephen's  
Anglican Church  
211 Mowbray Road,  
Willoughby



**For more info:**  
[www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com)

## Sydney Organ Competition



10<sup>th</sup> October 2009  
Uniting Church, Pitt Street, Sydney

### Junior & Intermediate Sections

Closing Date 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009  
Download Brochure and entry form  
[www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com)

## Join In!

If you have a concert or event that you'd like to advertise, or have an idea for an interesting article, please let us know.



To download entry forms and rules for the Sydney Organ Competition, see: [www.sydneyorgan.com](http://www.sydneyorgan.com)

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## YouTube's for You to Enjoy!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixRhcdMmVeA>

*J.S. Bach - Wachet Auf*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrTEo-MZYdo>

*Diane Bish plays the world's oldest playable organ*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaksZ4mv20I>

*Joy of Music - Diane Bish on a Ruffatti Organ: Demo on the King of Instruments*

*Explanation of the organ for you to pass on to your friends.*

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bS4GQKrTLkE>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8io4fyqjDWk>