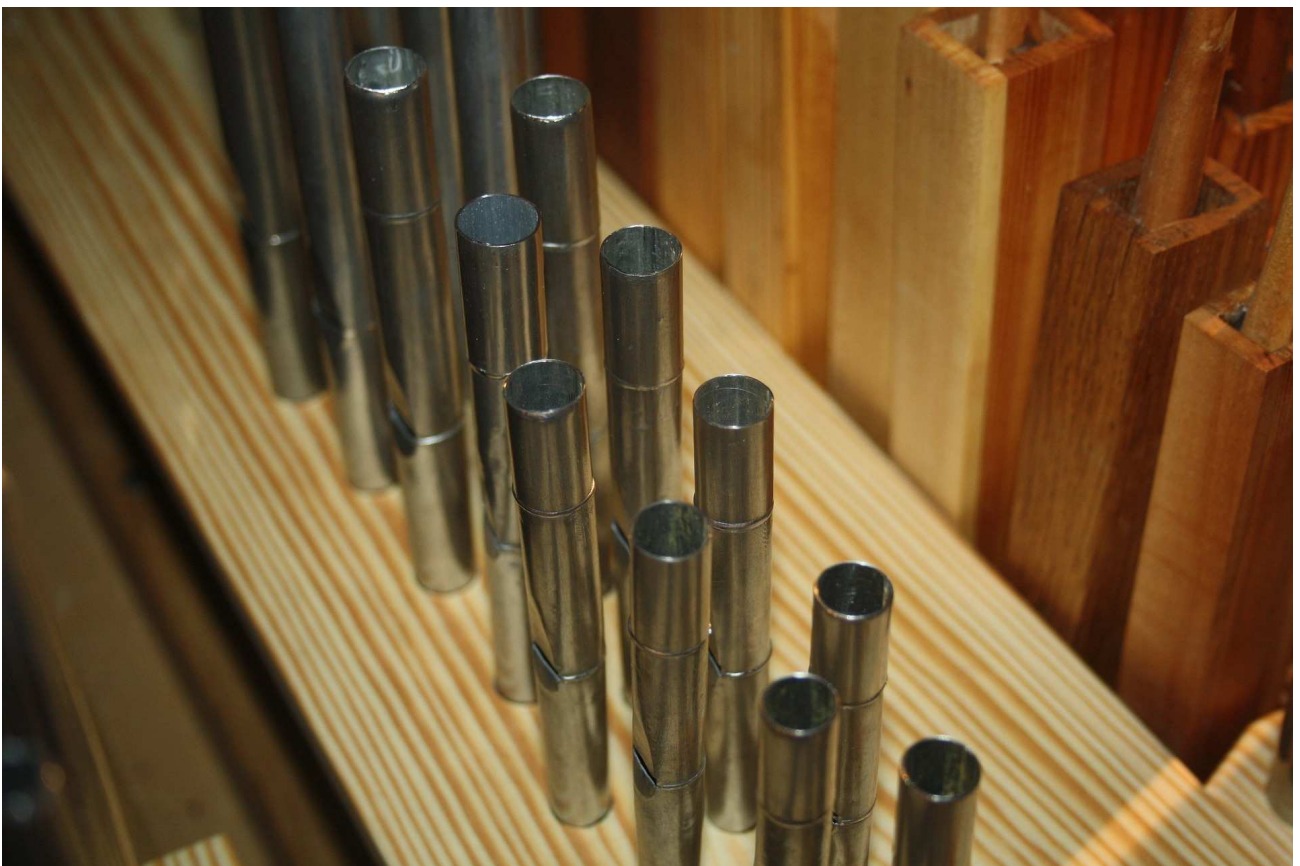


Rob Peters

(b. 1969)

Liber Organi II



40 organ preludes
based on Gregorian chants

opus 186 (2018)

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Preface

In my first *Organ Book (Liber Organi)*, written 4 years ago, I offered organists a collection of 24 organ pieces, to be used as free service preludes, interludes and postludes.

In this second volume I have tried to achieve a closer link to the ancient core of Catholic church music, Gregorian chant. Presented here are 40 short preludes, based on some of the most familiar antiphons, hymns and sequences.

Style

The pieces are fairly uniform in style and make use of simple composition techniques: almost invariably there is an exposition of the *cantus firmus* in eight-note values, with imitations in canonic or fugal form and followed by a quotation of the theme in the pedals, in double note, i.e. quarter note values.

In contrast to these strict contrapuntal forms, reminiscent of early baroque music, there's a liberal use of harmony. The harmonic patterns don't adhere to established formulas but tend to be free-flowing, not unlike the Gregorian melodies themselves.

Performance

All pieces are suitable to be played on one manual with pedal, though in the cases of the two trios (nos. 37 and 38), two manuals and pedal can be used.

One will notice the complete absence of performance indications. This doesn't mean that all the pieces should be played in a bland *one-fits-all* style. On the contrary, experiments

with different uses for these pieces are encouraged: as preludes, anticipating the actual chant, as free interludes, or even as *sorties*, at the end of the service. These variable liturgical functions naturally warrant different registrations, ranging from the most intimate 8-foot stop combinations to full organ with reeds and mixtures.

It's tempting to play the meditative preludes slower than the festive ones, but be warned that the music does not attempt to illustrate the textual content of the chants. The chosen tempi should reflect those of the original chant, which means a close range between *andante* and *moderato*. So no *largo* or *presto*!

The music makes use of the baroque principle of *complementary rhythm*, and I am aware there's a certain danger of monotony if the performer chooses to play "on the metronome". But like Gregorian chant itself, these pieces much benefit from a light rubato execution, which follows the natural flow of the Gregorian melodies. Since the *canti firmi* are present in almost every measure, all the organist has to do is applying the appropriate subtle variations in tempo (which he would use to embellish the chants if he were a choir singer) to the musical structure. Since this requires some skill and experience with performing and accompanying Gregorian chant, I don't consider this music for beginners, even if the technical demands are very modest.

Rob Peters

Valkenburg (the Netherlands), on the first day of Advent, December 2, 2018