



“Beautiful and bold!”

Chorale-reharmonization at the organ reflected in a singing congregation

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ABSTRACT

Key words: Harmony, Chorale, Playing, Composition, enhancement, depletion

The purpose of this investigation is to find out where I as a church-musician can positively impact the congregation through harmonies when playing the organ. The questions are as following: What characterizes the changes of organ-notations I spontaneously do with the intention of supporting the congregational singing? How do my transcriptions impact the singing? Do I facilitate the singing or not? To begin with, I analyze in what manner I subconsciously harmonize hymns. The way I proceed to submit to the following questions is through an inquiry-sheet, survey, where the partakers will submit their results on a grading-system; I also expect them to comment on their level of perception of the harmonization. After looking through the obtained results, I subsequently calculated the results where one can fathom the information. The conclusion of this study tells me that the way one harmonizes hymns can in fact help the congregation as well as making it stumble. One must be very aware of what one is doing. Hymn-harmonizations on very famous hymns such as hymn 231 (Amazing Grace) will not severely affect the congregation in its ability to sing to. However, harmonizing a lesser known hymn such as hymn 386 can result in the congregation stumbling since it is less familiar with the melody itself. It is therefore the duty of every musician to thoroughly consider how much they can change the harmonies when playing.

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Overture

After playing at very many services, I realized that there are multiple ways you can reharmonize hymns. It boggles my mind, but meanwhile, I often wonder about the fact that rarely anyone chooses to reharmonize chorales. There are of course exceptions to this idea, such as Tomas Willstedt, former organist at Lund's Cathedral; organist emeritus. How come almost everyone omits choral reharmonization in hymn playing? Does it perplex the congregation when singing hymns, leading it astray and thus jeopardizing its security? Is it considered for virtuoso musicians only? Is it a lack of understanding in the topic of musical harmonies and stylistic genres? Is the choral proprietary to the person/people that harmonized it? Does it in a phlegmatic sense retard the speed in which the hymn is sung and thus reflecting the organist as a musically dubious person?

I find it crucial to study the importance of hymn-reharmonization since it does make an impact on the ability of the congregation to sing. Done correctly, it can enhance the singing, but done incorrectly, it makes the congregation stumble. I want to clarify that I separate music and lyrics. I don't base my chords on the text. To me, they are two separate things. Whenever I play hymns, I instinctively play using my own harmonies. In this independent project, I'd like to exhort the way I reharmonize and what impact it has whenever the congregation sings to the played hymns.

Purpose and Inquiries

The purpose behind this thesis is to look into the relationship between hymn-playing and the partaking in hymn-singing and to assess the impact that follows when rewriting a hymn. These are the following questions:

1. What characterizes the changes of organ-notations I spontaneously do with the intention of supporting the congregational singing?
2. How do my transcriptions impact the singing? Do I facilitate the singing or not?

Chorale-playing in an historical perspective and in the context of the Swedish Church

I have given examples of hymn-books versus hymn-playing. The intention is not to systematically criticize every existing hymn-book. Basis for the hymn-playing has varied; different hymn-books have provided different qualifications of different harmonizations. From a Swedish perspective, the basis for the first national Swedish hymn-book (1697) were that the hymns were notated in figured-bass. This makes it possible for the organist to harmonize the hymns. The basis in the succeeding hymn-book (1819) was that the hymns were notated in four-part-harmony. The reason being that it promoted congregational singing. This however was a difficulty for some musicians to play due to lack of experience in four-part-harmony. Four-part-harmony for hymns consisted in hymn-books from 1937 and 1986. One important thing to mention is that in the latest hymn-book from 1986, there are chords printed out above the notes. This did not occur in previous hymn-books.

Harald Göransson (1917-2004), Head of the committee for the Swedish hymnal of the hymn-book of 1986 writes in *Koral och andlig visa i Sverige* (1997) about the news that the hymn-book from 1697

was equipped with figured-bass numbers. This meant that it was possible to accompany the singing. There has been a debate on how the organ-accompaniment actually was. For example in the 19th century, a skilled organist would only play the accompaniment whilst the choir and congregation sang the melody. A less experienced organist would include the melody while playing. There were also preferences as to how one should play; by playing melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand or by playing with chords in both hands. In “*Dödshugget mot vår nationella tonkonst*,” Anders Dillmar talks about the great hymn-reformer Haeffner (1759-1833) who in 1810 talks about how one should play hymns at services in churches. He almost completely rejects the idea of using excess dissonances when playing hymns. It is written in the previous mentioned book that sometimes it is inevitable to use a specific harmony, but if one can abstain from exaggerating one should strive to abstain from “unnecessary dissonances.” Haeffner strived to obtain a clear harmony that in turn would serve the congregation since it would neither be baffled nor perplexed whenever there was a foreign harmony. Referring to Göransson, the text talks about the reform of the Swedish hymn-book from 1986 that there were two opposing forces involved in creating a new hymn-book:¹ both an academic gathering with the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* in the lead as well as musically inclined people such as composers. However, the text mentions that the inhabitants of Sweden got the hymn-book and music they rightfully asked for. On the pros, there is much to celebrate. The classical and central hymn-treasure was revised in an exceptional manner as Robin Leaver wrote in *The Hymn*, april of 1988. There is also a great religious value added to the praise.

Göransson mentions the aesthetics of hymn-playing by acknowledging the work of Haeffner with Betty Ehrenborg-Posses *Spiritual songs for children (Andeliga Sångar för Barn)*.² Haeffner changed every chord on basically every note in comparison to Ehrenborg-Posse. In Ehrenborg-Posse’s “Morgon mellan fjällen” one would hardly encounter a subdominant. This degree of simplicity consisting of only tonic and dominant facilitated a great amount when one played accordion or guitar. Göransson writes that when the experts discussed renewing the hymn-book, the thought of reharmonizing the hymns for the sake of assisting the congregation was not of any greater influence.

Methods and Materials

The methods are linked together with two phases in the study where the first one deals with hand-picking a few hymns, transcribing them and scrutinizing the rearrangements. Phase number two comprises an inquiry-sheet in which I asked a congregation on how it felt when singing my rearrangements. Down here below, I will address the approaches in detail:

The chorales: selection, transcription and analysis. This means that I first handpicked six designated hymns and subsequently rearranged them. Hymns 752, 791, 386, 490, 190 and 231. The reason why I handpicked these six hymns is that they frequently occur in masses and services. In accordance with how I reharmonize whenever I play, I chose to both write them down and analyze them. There are countless possibilities on how to reharmonize hymns. The analysis meant that I identified harmonic, melodic and rhythmic components in my transcriptions of hymns. I have also compared the transcriptions in accordance with similarities and discrepancies. I have documented the

¹ Göransson, Harald. “Koral och mässa”, i *Musiken i Sverige*, Del IV (Red. Leif Jonsson) Stockholm: T. Fischer & Co. Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien, 1994, page 126.

² Göransson, Harald. *Koral och Andlig Visa i Sverige*, Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1997.

hymns - both the original versions as well as my reharmonizations. The recording was made at the Verschueren-organ in Ohlinsalen at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg.

Inquiry-sheet meant that I created questions as to how the congregation perceived singing to my chorale-rearrangements. The inquiry-sheet consisted of open answers as well as a scale from 1-10 where one is least favorable and ten held in the highest esteem. The participants consisted solely of pupils of the church-music program and the research was done at a mutual lesson; colloquium. The group consisted of both bachelor- and master-students in organ. I only inquired answers from church-musicians. This has to do with the fact that church-musicians have an understanding on how to rearrange and understand harmonies. I had in mind asking a real congregation, but as this would extend the thesis excessively, I decided to only stick to a group of church-musicians. For a future thesis, I will have in mind asking a real congregation. The interplay with a singing congregation took place in Ohlinsalen at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg. The organ I used was the french-romantic Verschueren-organ. During this process, I decided to record. I of course announced this to the participants. None of the participants objected.

Results

The chapter that comprises presentation and results of the two research-methods is introduced with my own chorale-reharmonizations. The results from the surveys follow. Finally, I summarize the results in both methods.

Analysis of chorale-reharmonizations

I will here present the different hymns in the swedish hymn-book as well as with my transcription. Subsequently we'll follow my analysis of my transcription. Every rearrangement is followed by audio-files.

I will proceed to show the way I go about this. One could say that I don't necessarily reharmonize the hymn on its particular verses, but rather decorate the chords with "trinkets" such as adding differently colored notes to a particular chord. Do keep in mind that I don't use harmony to interpret a certain word; the *evangelic* word and the music for me are two separate things.

Hymn 791: Du vet väl om att du är värdefull

791 Du vet väl om att du är värdefull

Original sättning/Original Score

Text: I. Olsson 1978
Musik: I. Olsson 1978

Organ

5 Φ Fine

Org. *sic

9

Org.

13

Org.

Example 1: The chorale-book's version of hymn 791.

Full Score Full Score 1

791 Du vet väl om att du är värdefull

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: I. Olsson 1978
Musik: I. Olsson 1978

Example 2: Rearrangement of hymn 791.

Audio 1: Hymn no 791 - Original version and harmonized version
ZOOM0006_LR 1

Let's take a closer look at hymn 791 (the famous hymn used for christenings). As you can see, the alto-voice begins with the note A and then proceeds in quarter-notes from D to C-natural. I personally use three voices in the right hand in order for me to maximize the content in my opinion, but this however is optional. When scrutinizing the motion in the alto, you see that instead of strictly moving from D to C-natural as in the choral-book, I insert a leading-note (C#) that connects with these two

notes and gives a certain direction. I find that moving from D-C#-C-natural not only gives a chromatic linear motion, but it also in my opinion invigorates and replenishes the choral with content and in this way omits any possibility of appearing static. In the next bar, at the end I intertwine F# and E proceeding to G-G# to prepare the motion to proceed onwards to a more static shape in the following bar.

The bars before I advance into the Subdominant(as in bars 4,8,12), I stay in the Tonic-key adding the major 7-minor 7 except in bar 12. In bar 12 I move from D11 to D-9-. The way I see it is that it provides a movement leading to the more static Subdominant key.

Hymn 231: Oändlig Nåd (Amazing Grace)

Full Score Full Score 1

231 Oändlig nåd mig Herren gav(Amazing Grace)

Original sättning/Original score

Text: J Newton (1725-1807), A Frostenson 1983
Musik: Amerikansk/ 1831

Example 3: The chorale-book's version of hymn 231.

Full Score Full Score 1

231 Oändlig nåd mig Herren gav(Amazing Grace)

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: J Newton (1725-1807), A Frostenson 1983
Musik: Amerikansk/1831

Example 4: Rearrangement of hymn 231.

Audio 2: Hymn 231 - Original version and harmonized version
ZOOM0006_LR 1

Let's begin with the first bar. As you can see in the original score, the Bass-line lies stagnant on the Tonic-key for two entire bars. I avoid dullness by moving up from F-G-G#-A and finally land on B-flat at the beginning of bar two. I land on the Subdominant to reach a climactic point before I descend to a falling scale landing back on the Tonic-key. To add an ounce of color, I use a chromatic movement in the Alto-voice on the upbeat to bar two. In bar three, on the upbeat to bar four, since the Soprano- and Tenor-voices don't move, I make sure that the Alto- and Bass-voices move upwards to land on the Dominant key in bar five. Since the Bass-voice and Soprano-voice don't move, I make sure that the middle-voices ascend in order to *add color* to the content of bar five. In bar eight, I move in a melodic pattern from C in the Bass to B-natural and B-flat in the Tenor-voice. In the final bar (bar nine), instead of descending straight down in the Bass from B-flat-A-G-F, I prefer to replace G-natural in this case with G-flat. I do this so as to not repeat G-natural two times. Not only did I change the

Bass-note in the Bass-voice, I even modified the Alto-voice on beats two & three in triplets moving from C-F-C & Bb-F-Bb.

Hymn 190: Bred dina vida vingar (Spread wide your narrow wings)

Full Score Full Score 1

190 Bred dina vida vingar

Original sättning/Original Score

Text: Lina Sandell-Berg 1865*
Musik: Svensk folkmelodi

The image shows a musical score for organ, consisting of three systems of music. Each system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system is labeled 'Organ' and contains measures 1 through 6. The second system is labeled 'Org.' and contains measures 7 through 11. The third system is labeled 'Org.' and contains measures 12 through 16. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The bass line is particularly active, with many sixteenth-note patterns.

Example 5: The chorale-book's version of hymn 190

190 Bred dina vida vingar

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: Lina Sandell-Berg 1865*

Musik: Svensk folkmelodi

The image displays a musical score for organ, consisting of four systems of music. Each system is labeled 'Organ' or 'Org.'. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first system (measures 1-5) features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 6-10) continues the melody and bass line. The third system (measures 11-13) shows a change in the bass line. The fourth system (measures 14-16) concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Example 6: Rearrangement of hymn 190.

Audio 3: Hymn no 190 - Original version and harmonized version

ZOOM0003_LR 1

In bar one, I advanced the color up one notch by having a melodic motion in the Tenor-voice in contrast to the static Bass-line. In bar two, I replaced the second beat with a B7#5-chord(compared to the repetitive Tonic in the original score), leading up to the descending downward motion in the Tenor- and Bass-voices. I replaced the pause on the third beat, to add content. The pause is of course optional, but I prefer filling up the voice and preserving the rest for the soprano. In bar four I split the G-major chord emphasizing the Tonic-key. In bar eight, I made sure to add a melodic-motion to the

middle-voices (since the Soprano- and Bass-voice stand still). In the following bar (bar nine), I moved the Alto-voice chromatically from D-D#-E. The most climactic point of the entire hymn as I see it is in bar twelve. In this bar I moved the lower voices in chromatically descending sevenths. I even moved the Alto-voice from B-C to give a harmonic sensation.

Hymn 752: Över berg och dal

Full Score Full Score 1

752 Över berg och dal
Original sättning/Original Score

Text: T. Littmarck 1988
Musik: T. Littmarck 1988

Organ

6

11

14

Example 7: The chorale-book's version of hymn 752.

752 Över berg och dal

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: T. Littmarck 1988
Musik: T. Littmarck 1988

The image displays a musical score for organ, consisting of four systems of music. Each system is labeled 'Org.' and includes a treble and bass clef. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system begins at measure 6, the second at measure 11, and the third at measure 14. The organ part features a mix of block chords and moving lines in both hands, with a focus on the tenor voice in the right hand.

Example 8: Rearrangement of hymn 752

Audio 4: Hymn no 752 - Original version and harmonized version

ZOOM0003_LR 1

In the original score, you notice that the lower voices mostly move in the half-note-values. In certain bars (bars 2,3&6), I do the same, but in the remaining bars, I compliment the more static Bass-line with melodic patterns in the Tenor-voice. The most climactic bar in this choral, for me, is bar 12. Again, since the Soprano- and Bass-voices are static, I moved the middle-voices chromatically to fill out the otherwise empty space.

Hymn 386: Upp ur vilda, djupa vatten

Full Score

Full Score

1

386 Upp ur vilda, djupa vatten

Original sättning/Original Score

Text: F. Kaan 1965, B. G. Hallqvist 1977
Musik: Darmstadt 1698/Bamberg 1732

Organ

Org.

Org.

Org.

Org.

Org.

Example 9: The chorale-book's version of hymn 386.

386 Upp ur vilda, djupa vatten

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: F. Kaan 1965, B. G. Hallqvist 1977
Musik: Darmstadt 1698/Bamberg 1732

Organ

7

13

19

25

29

Example 10: Rearrangement of hymn 386.

Audio 5: Hymn no 386 - Original version and harmonized version

ZOOM0003_LR 1

The first significant bar where I'd say I differ is on the third beat of bar 11 proceeding on to bar 12. If one compares bar 3-4 and 11-12, one will find in the bass-voice that I changed the structure of the lower voices. In the bass in bar 3 leading up to bar 4, I move from G on the third beat (first time) up to A-flat. In bar 11-12 I do the opposite; I move from A-flat to G in the bass that is. I chose to use an A-flat suspension dissolving to a C7/G in bar 11-12, adding the desired color in my opinion.

Take a look at bar 15. In this bar I replace F-minor/Ab to an F-major/A-natural. This in my opinion elevates the feeling that I move around in dominant keys; F/A(dominant of the following B-flat major) to B-flat major(DD of A-flat and D of the following E-flat major) to E-flat major.

Hymn 490: Guds Son en gång i morgonglans

Full Score Full Score 1

490 Guds Son en gång i morgonglans
Original sättning/Original Score

Text: grekisk, J. Brownlie 1907, A. Frostenson 1984
Musik: engelsk 1785-88

Organ

7

Org.

12

Org.

Example 11: The chorale-book's version of hymn 490.

490 Guds Son en gång i morgonglans

Min personliga tolkning/My interpretation

Text: grekisk, J. Brownlie 1907, A Frostenson 1984

Musik: engelsk 1785-88

Organ

7

Org.

12

Org.

15

Org.

Example 12: Rearrangement of hymn 386.

Audio 6: Hymn no 490 - Original version and harmonized version

ZOOM0006_LR 1

In bars 2(1) and 5(6), I moved from E-flat to E-diminished in to F-minor.

If you take a look at bar 14, you can see a clear difference where I replaced the E-diminished with Bb/D; this marking that the hymn will commence its end. In the proceeding bars, bars 2, 7, 11 & 15 that is, I replaced the static quarter-notes as in the original with a motion using eighth-notes. This can by all means be discussed whether it is an historical accurate interpretation, but this however is how I hear music and this is the way I do. In bars 9 and 13, I made sure that the middle voices move in a certain direction, be it in eighth-notes as in bar 9 or quarter-notes as in bar 13. In bar 13 however, I make sure to move in chromatic-steps. I do this so that I don't increase any chances of dullness when one lands on the tonic (bar 9) or dominant (bar 13). The final significant discrepancy I made is in bar 16. On the second beat, the alto is lowered to a C-flat, and on the third beat of the bar, the tenor is lowered to a G-flat.

Summary of the analysis

The summary of the musical analysis presents a few similarities I use in different chorales. Changes in the chorale has through the analysis turned out to occur on particular chords, in specific rhythmical patterns and progressions through harmonic orientation. One similarity is that changes occur on particular chords viewed by the function of the key; occurrence on tonic and dominant-chords. For instance Hymn 490, bar 2(3) and bar 8(9). Another similarity between the chorales is that motions particularly occur in the middle-voices. This happens both diatonically as well as chromatically. Examples are hymn 490 bar 8(9) and 12(13); hymn 752 bar 8(9) and 12(13). A common denominator between the arrangements is that movements even include my change of harmony. Take a look at hymn 190 bar 2(3), I change the second quarter-note to a different chord instead of the original tonic. The conclusion of the musical-analysis is that I by the means of certain tools change the original chorale.

Inquiry-process

Grading-system

The inquiry-process comprised both of a grading system from 1-10 and written comments. I hereby present the results. I have collected 15 inquiry-sheets where each individual reharmonization accumulates scores between 1 and 10 where 1 is insufficient and 10 is the best. I subsequently calculated the mean value and took a look at where in the scale my marks turn up. First and foremost I played the original score and then my own transcription and this is what I compare against. One can see that the greater the marks, the more my transcriptions are valued in comparison to the original score and vice versa.

The purpose of these reharmonizations is not to replace predecesing chorale-harmonizations, but rather work as a supplement and to provide approaches that can help to inspire. From the table below I

can calculate a percentual value of how many approved of the harmonization. I subsequently take the resulting value and divide it by the greatest value (150).

Hymn 190 acquired 101,5 marks of 150 possible, equaling 67,6% that preferred this transcription.

Hymn 752 obtained 104,8 marks of 150 possible, equaling 69,8% that preferred this transcription.

Hymn 386 acquired 118,7 marks of 150 possible, equaling 79,1% that preferred this transcription.

Hymns	Marks	Results
190	101,5	67,6%
752	104,8	69,8%
386	118,7	79,1%

Tabletext: The table shows various marks of designated hymn-transcriptions.

Open questions

The succeeding shows all the ideas and comments about the chorale-rearrangements in which the participants gave. The following presents all the comments about the rearrangements which the audience listened to. I translated the comments from Swedish to English. The reason to present the answers is to make sure that the analysis is transparent. In the following, I will present the survey-results of the singers that took part in my study, accompanied by audio-files demonstrating the sounding results of my harmonizations.

The purpose of the study is to see if harmonizations can greatly influence and improve singing hymns.

Hymn no. 190

Audio no 7 - audience singing hymn 190

https://www.dropbox.com/h?preview=ZOOM0003_LR+1+Bred+dina+vida+vingar.wav

1. Beautiful! Just right amount of progress. Faithful to the original, but even more interesting. Easy to sing to. (Mark 8)
2. The transcription was very inspiring and it also sang by itself. (Mark 10)
3. Exquisite harmonies, but the rhythm could be sturdier. (Mark 6)
4. The new harmonization was more interesting and dynamic at a reasonable level. (Mark 8)
5. The reharmonization was tender, but I didn't perceive the singing to improve. Same goes to remaining two hymns. (Mark 4)
6. Very good!!! (Mark 10)
7. The jazzy touch is not my cup of tea. (Mark 5)
8. This hymn is elevated by the choice of harmonies. (Mark 10)
9. The reharmonization affects the perception a lot. The B-part was very tender. The original version is very static, but your harmonies change this. (Mark 10)
10. Superb harmonization! I'm also glad you didn't recolor the final chord but laid it to rest, compared to all that takes place previously. (Mark 9.5)

11. Content with the idea of inspiration from different genres. Beautiful and bold! ³(Mark 8)
12. No comments. (Mark 9)
13. No comments. (Mark 8)
14. No comments. (Mark 5)
15. I'd like a little more variation in the harmonization. It felt like it was only the end of phrases that were bold. (Mark 6)

Of 15 persons in total, 3 did not submit their answers. There might have been a negative experience when singing the hymns. This might have been due to the unfamiliarity of the hymn as in hymn 386. Adding colored harmonies might have caused the participants to stumble.

However, there were positive reactions as well. As in hymn 190, one answered that I was faithful to the original score, but there were of course interesting harmonies. This positive experience might have been due to the familiarity of the hymn.

By analysing the results, I can see the different reactions. But I do see that most were positive to the harmonizations.

Hymn no. 752

Audio no 8 - audience singing hymn 752:

ZOOM0003_LR 1

1. This hymn is already complete by itself, but your harmonies were interesting as a change. (Marks 5-6)
2. Very beautiful reharmonization. Fits the text perfectly. (Mark 10)
3. No comments. (Mark 8)
4. Perhaps a little too much movement in middle-voices. Works perfectly on the last verse. (Mark 5)
5. No comments. (Mark 4)
6. Could be bolder. (Mark 7)
7. No comments. (Mark 7)
8. Beautiful reharmonization which carried the song. Many melodic lines that helped to lead the song forward and emphasize certain highlights. (Mark 10)
9. Even on this hymn, the reharmonization plays a key-role. It facilitates in making the music progress. (Mark 10)
10. There wasn't a lot of difference between the original version and your reharmonization. Preferably a bold chord. There was a chord that caught my attention which I would be careful of using in a real congregation as it baffles. (Mark 2.8)
11. Nice. Lot of energy is being distributed when the accompaniment builds up and moves in the end of the phrases. (Mark 7)
12. No comments. (Mark 10)
13. Felt a bit jazzy in the middle. (Mark 7)
14. No comments. (Mark 6)
15. No comments. (Mark 5)

³ The reason I chose this statement as my title depends on the way I play hymns; to some it is considered beautiful and to others it is considered slightly bold.

Of 15 persons in total, 6 did not submit their answers. There might have been a negative experience when singing the hymns. This might have been due to the unfamiliarity of the hymn as in hymn 386. Adding colored harmonies might have caused the partakers to stumble.

However, there were positive reactions as well. As in hymn 190, one answered that I was faithful to the original score, but there were of course interesting harmonies. This positive experience might have been due to the familiarity of the hymn.

Hymn no. 386

Audio no 9 - audience singing hymn 386

ZOOM0003_ LR 1

1. Beautiful variation. Save it 'til the end. (Marks 8-9)
2. The harmonies help carry the music. (Mark 10)
3. No comments. (Mark 9)
4. I prefer the original score, but there was an interesting mediant which suits perfectly at the end. (Mark 5)
5. No comments. (Mark 5)
6. No comments. (Mark 8.5)
7. Exquisite, happy and tasteful modulations. (Mark 10)
8. This hymn is unfamiliar to most people, and the harmonies helped the congregation to stumble a bit. Still more interesting than the original version. (Mark 8)
9. Beautiful reharmonization. (Mark 10)
10. Nice reharmonization, but I'd like more colors. (Mark 8.2)
11. I'd like more. I'd prefer that you reharmonize every single note instead of a few passages. (Mark 6)
12. No comments. (Mark 8)
13. Interesting harmonies! I liked this one the best. It was as if the hymn got elevated by your harmonies. Comfortable to sing to. (Mark 10)
14. No comments. (Mark 7)
15. No comments. (Mark 5)

Of 15 persons in total, 6 did not submit their answers. There might have been a negative experience when singing the hymns. This might have been due to the unfamiliarity of the hymn as in hymn 386. Adding colored harmonies might have caused the partakers to stumble.

However, there were positive reactions as well. As in hymn 190, one answered that I was faithful to the original score, but there were of course interesting harmonies. This positive experience might have been due to the familiarity of the hymn.

Most people were content with the harmonies as is written in their responses.

Summary of answers

Amidst 15 people, 6 participants did not respond in the comments. However, 8 participants were amused and found the rearrangements easy to sing to. Participant number 8 stated that the hymn number 386 was unfamiliar for most people and thus made the participants uncertain how to sing whenever I harmonized the chorale.

Discussion

I introduce the discussion by observing the methods of the study. I subsequently proceed with a discussion of the result per se. I have also decided to relate to various hymn-books within Svenska kyrkan (The Swedish Church).

The chosen approach, experimenting hymn-reharmonizations on a singing well-inclined “congregation of specialists” turned out successfully. The participants displayed an immense amount of commitment, both in listening as well as submitting their responses. My perception is also that the approach possessed a useful material to analyze. Reflecting back on the approach, I believe the results would be more intriguing if a parish with non-musicians would have submitted their answers.

The purpose of this study was to find out where I as an organist can improve chorale-singing by replacing every possible harmony. The purpose was fulfilled by transcribing an assigned amount of hymns which were tested on a singing congregation. The result of the experiment showed that the congregation sang to my rearrangements. However the results show that perceptions of my way of playing were mixed. In what manner do my rearrangement of hymns stand out in relation to the congregational singing? Statements about the transcriptions both promoted and stimulated the singing as well as discouraging the partakers(hymn 386). The answers from the inquiry-sheets said that the colors added to the hymns make them stand out with an added touch of harmony, linear motion and rhythmical values. In most cases there is a positive reaction from the partakers. However, the negative comments might be due to an unfamiliarity with the hymn itself.

Proceeding here below, I discuss the results in relation to previous research and older hymn-books. In similarity with Haeffner which changed the harmonies in hymns from aesthetical preferences, judging them to be too simple, one can see the changes I make. One very important question to ask is how to adequately balance the amount of liberty in contrast to support the singing. There were of course liberties on my part which made the participants stumble. From this experience I learned to take precautions when it comes to harmonizing chorales.

Another subject which both Göransson and Bohlin bring up is that chorales in the hymn-book of 1697 were scored using figured bass. This way of notation gives the musician in charge the possibility to adapt the playing in relationship to the singing. One thing that happens in this scenario is that virtuoso musicians can harmonize freely, whereas a less experienced musician can barely read the figured-bass notation in the hymn-book. In the light of my transcriptions, one can see similarities with the hymn-book of 1697 since I actually harmonize using the melody and bass-line.

In “*Dödshugget mot vår nationella tonkonst*,” Dillmar mentions that that when it comes down to playing hymns in churches, the best way to serve the congregation according to Haeffner is without excessively using chromatic harmonies, unnecessary dissonances, passing notes and so forth. One can of course debate about whether it is right or wrong to include dissonant harmonies. According to the 19th century, the standards of that century would be to use clean harmony in hymn playing. However, today we are influenced by different musical genres such as jazz. I’d say that it is up to each individual to decide for themselves whether or not, dissonances are acceptable at a service. I don’t fully agree that one should avoid dissonances in hymns, but I do comprehend what he means by this.

Postlude

One ought to continue this research since it is a question that frequently occurs to what extent one can reharmonize hymns. For further studies, one could research how a congregation of daily partakers (avoid church-musicians if possible) perceive the difference.

This topic is crucial in the way of interpreting the music and giving the content added value. To avoid static movement and dullness, it is essential that the musicians know how to change harmonies to add content to the music. However, one must balance the “amount” so that the congregation doesn’t stumble. One conclusion of the entire research is that the way one plays hymns does in fact matter. **One can support the congregational singing and one can make the congregation stumble.**

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Audio-files

No 1, Original version and reharmonized hymn, Hymn no 231: ZOOM0006_LR 1

No 2, Original version and reharmonized hymn Hymn no 190: ZOOM0003_LR 1

No 3, Original version and reharmonized hymn, Hymn no 752: [ZOOM0003_LR](#) 1

No 4, Original version and reharmonized hymn, Hymn no 791: [ZOOM0006_LR](#) 1

No 5, Original version and reharmonized hymn, Hymn no 490: ZOOM0006_LR 1

No 6, Original version and reharmonized hymn, Hymn no 386: ZOOM0003_LR 1

No 7, ZOOM0003_LR 1

No 8, ZOOM0003_LR 1

No 9, [ZOOM0003_LR](#) 1