



max. 11
miller

THE FINE ART OF
SERVICE PLAYING

Max B Miller:

The Fine Art of Service Playing

I am honored to have "inherited" Max's collected hymnody works stored in his three-ring black binders.

I share these manuscripts with you unaltered so you can re-live his weekly approaches for inspired congregational singing.

– *Archivist Will Sherwood, AAGO, ChM*

FOREWORD

For forty-two years, the campus of Boston University—and most notably the nave of Marsh Chapel (with its Op 2000 1950 Casavant) — reverberated with the extraordinary musical artistry, vast erudition, and warm humanity of Dr. Max Burdorf Miller (1927–2013). To generations of students, Max was a brilliant scholar, a virtuoso organist, and a legendary mentor. To readers across the country who turned to his celebrated columns in *The American Organist*, he was the wise, witty, and deeply practical “Ask Uncle Max.” Yet, beneath his impressive academic pedigree and standard-setting performances lay the heart of a dedicated church musician. Max truly believed that the highest calling of the organist was to serve the assembly, transforming the notes on a page into a vibrant, living vehicle for corporate worship.

Born in California, Max’s early musical journey included studying at the University of Redlands, coaching with Arnold Schoenberg on the composer’s complex *Variations on a Recitative*, and spending several years in Vienna during the 1950s immersing himself in the European tradition under the eminent virtuoso Anton Heiller. After earning his Ph.D. from Boston University in 1955, he joined the faculty, embarking on a monumental dual career that bridged academia and the sanctuary. As a Fellow of the American Guild of Organists (FAGO), Professor of Organ at the College of Fine Arts, and Director of the Master of Sacred Music (MSM) program, he shaped decades of pedagogical practice and helped found the world-renowned Organ Library at the BU School of Theology.

Yet, it was in his simultaneous roles as University Organist and Director of Music at Marsh Chapel where Max’s legacy as a mentor truly shone. For Max, every student was worthy of his complete investment. Whether guiding a doctoral candidate through a monumental Reger fantasy or helping an MSM student master a modest choral prelude, he approached each individual with the same trademark mixture of gentle encouragement, profound historical insight, and occasional joyful laughter.

Crucially, his chapel assistants and organ students received a priceless, hands-on apprenticeship in pursuit of what he warmly defended as the Fine Art of Service Playing. Max understood that a service is not a recital; it requires a fluid command of pacing, text, registration, and human pastoral sensitivity. He demonstrated week-in and week-out that the true measure of a church organist is how they lead the congregational hymns.

Nowhere was this fine art more apparent than in his hymn accompaniments and treatments. Max’s playing was legendary for its rhythmic vitality, clarity of line, and text-driven color. He possessed a rare genius for breathing fresh life into familiar tunes—crafting majestic, structurally sound introductions that gave congregations the confidence and inspiration to sing, providing seamless interludes that maintained liturgical momentum, and weaving altered harmonizations that provided creative variations without distracting the singer. His own 1984 hymn tune composition, *Marsh Chapel*, stands as a lasting testament to this deep connection between melody, text, and community.

This collection of 110 of Max’s hymn arrangements—replete with his carefully crafted introductions, interludes, and varied harmonizations—stands as a practical manifestation of his pedagogical philosophy. It serves as a masterclass in print for the working church musician and student, offering creative tools designed not for theatrical display, but to uplift, support, and inspire congregational song.

As you utilize these settings in your own services, you carry forward the legacy of a man who spent his life ensuring that the organ remains a “firm foundation” for the church’s praise. For those seeking further insight into his expansive teaching and musical philosophy, a digital archive preserving his rich legacy and writings can be explored via the Worcester AGO Chapter archive at www.worcago.org/archives/MaxMiller/. May this music bring to your sanctuary the same joy, integrity, and artistic excellence that Max gifted to all of us.

HYMN TUNE TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEGEND

Hymn (score)

Opening (introduction) (“I” notation already taken for interlude)

Interlude

Descant

Alt harmonization

Variations/Chorale Prelude

if multiple versions were written through the years,
repeated letters are used; the versions were n
ot necessarily intended to be performed together
St is alphabetized as *SAINT*

HYMN TREATMENT RESOURCES

Adeste fidelis I

Amazing Grace O

Amsterdam O

Antioch A (c.f. In bass)

Arthur's seat O

Aurelia O D I

Austria O D

Azmon O O O I D

Beecher O I I D

Boylston I (C→Db) A(C)

Bradbury A (tenor obligato)

Bromley O I I D A

Bryn Calfaria O/I

Canonbury O

Christus Rex D

Comano (Proulx) I

Coronation O/I H I D

Cwm Rhondda O O O I I D + brass + Tpt in C I

Darwall's 148th I D

Diademata O H I I D A (G & Ab & Bb)

Dir dir Jehovah V

Divinum Mysterium V (alto obligato)

Dix O O I D A

Dominus Regit Me V (or A) I

Down Ampney D

Duke Street O O D D A

Dundee I (Eb→E) A

Easter hymn O

Ebenezer (Ton-y-botel) O/I

Ein fest' burg I I D A A

Ellacombe D D

Finlandia O

Forest Green O O I D D

Foundation O I D

Franconia I

French Carol A (V) D D: Tpt

Gaudeamus O I

Geneva O

Gloria D: Tpt in C (obligato) D

Go Tell It On The Mountain D
Hanover O O I D: Tpt
Hereford O
Hermas D
Holy Manna Obligato A
Hyfrydol O I D D A (+Tpt in C)
Hymn of Joy O D I A
In Babilone I A
In the Cross A
Irby I (F to G) *Also bell choir arrangement*
Italian hymn I (F to G) I/V D
Jerusalem V
Keble V/H (c.f. In bass) O I
Kingdom O
King's Lynn A/V
King's Weston O/A/V
Kremser D A
Ladue O I
Lancashire O I D (+Tpt in C)
Lasst uns erfreuen H D D D I
Lauda Anima O
Laudes Domini D D A
Leoni Tpt in Bb Descant
Lobe den herren O D D I, +various Tpt in Bb, C
Lyons I D
Mantegua (RVW) D
Marion O/A in D, F, Gb, G
Meirionnydd I
Mendelssohn D
Miles Lane D
Mit freuden Zart H I D D
Morning Song I I
Morecambe O
National Hymn O *Horn in F*
Nicaea O/A O I
Nun danket O D (Tpts in C, Bb) A
O Filii, O Filiae D
Oblation O/V

Old 100th O/V (c.f. In pedal)
Personent Hodie I (bells)
Picardy D I
Promised Land A
Ratisbon O
Regent Square D
Russian Hymn I D
St. Anne I I A A D D (+brass excerpts)
St. Denio (Joanna) O I D A (+Tpt)
St. Edmund Horn in F (obligato)
St. Elizabeth I
St. George's, Windsor D D (+Tpt)
St. Louis O
St. Michael D
St. Theodulph H I
St. Thomas I D
Saudon I
Sicilian Mariners I A A (O)
Sine Nomine O H I (FtoG) D
Slane D D A/O
Spanish Hymn D
Stuttgart H I
Terra beata D
Tidings I
Truro I I (C→D) D
Unser Herrscher O/A D D (+Tpt)
Veni Emmanuel O/A/V I A A/V A/V
Vicar I D
Wedlock O I
Wentworth (missing score)
Wer nur den lieben Gott O/A A/V
Wondrous Love O/A A A/V
W żłobie leży (Infant Holy) D (for 2 flutes)

APPENDIX A - Choral Responses & Amens

APPENDIX B - Keyboard Harmony Studies/Sequences