



Las Cruces Chapter  
The Southwest Region  
American Guild of Organists  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church  
Barbara Harbach, narrator  
Lynn Moorner, videographer

## ***Historical and Contemporary Women Composers for the Organ***

Dr. Barbara Harbach, Curators' Distinguished Emerita  
Professor of Music, University of Missouri-St. Louis

### **1. Gracia Baptista – *Conditor Alme***

Very little is known about Sor Gracia Baptista except that she was a Spanish nun. Her brief setting of the hymn *Conditor Alme* ("Creator of the Stars of Night"), published in 1577, is the earliest known keyboard work by a woman composer.

### **2. Miss Steemson – A Dirge for Funerals.**

Nothing is known about Miss Steemson, except that she was an organist at Lancaster (at a parish church) and wrote this funeral procession piece c. 1780. It is also quite attractive played at a quicker tempo, such as *Allegretto*.

### **3. Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel – Prelude in F Major**

Fanny Hensel (1805-1847) was the sister of Felix Mendelssohn and received the same musical training as her brother. A composer of lieder, piano pieces (including programmatic character pieces, songs-without-words, and a sonata), choral partsongs, a piano trio, and an oratorio, she enjoyed the opportunity of hearing and performing her own works at Sunday concerts in her home. However, her father and brother strongly discouraged any interest she might have had in publishing these works, although she had her husband's support to do so.

### **4. Elizabeth Stirling – Psalm 104 (Hanover) Chorale and Fugue**

Elizabeth Stirling (1819 – 1895) was an English composer. She was born in Greenwich, London, and studied music at the Royal Academy of Music with Edward Holmes, W.B. Wilson, J.A. Hamilton and Sir George Macfarren. In 1837, she performed a recital at St. Katherine's Church, Regent's Park, which was reviewed by *The Musical World*. In 1839, she took a position as organist at All Saints' Church, Poplar.

### **5. Clara Josephine Wieck Schumann - Prelude and Fugue in D Minor, Op. 16, No. 3**

From an early age, Clara Schumann's (1819-1896) career and life was planned down to the smallest detail by her father. She daily received a one-hour lesson (in piano, violin, singing, theory, harmony, composition, and counterpoint) and two hours of practice, using the teaching methods he had developed on his own. In March 1828, at the age of eight, the young Clara Wieck performed at the Leipzig home of Dr. Ernst Carus, director of the mental hospital at Colditz Castle. There she met another gifted young pianist who had been invited to the musical evening, Robert Schumann, who was nine years older.

6. **Dame Ethel Mary Smyth – *O Gott du frommer Gott* (O God Thou Faithful God) Chorale and Canon**

Ethel Smyth, DBE (1858 – 1944) was an English composer and a member of the women's suffrage movement. Smyth was born in London, as the fourth of a family of eight children. Her father, J. H. Smyth, who was a Major-General in the Royal Artillery, was very much opposed to her making a career in music. Undeterred, Smyth was determined to become a composer, studied with a private tutor, and then attended the Leipzig Conservatory, where she met many composers of the day. Her compositions include songs, works for piano, chamber music, orchestral and concertante works, choral works, and operas.

7. **Amy (Mrs. H. H. A.) Beach – Prelude on an Old Folk Tune**

A well-known American composer, Amy Beach (1867-1944) was the first American symphonist to quote folk songs as themes. She began harmonizing tunes at the age of two, composing at the age of four, and could readily transpose at the age of six. She insisted on being known only as Mrs. H. H. A. Beach. She was largely self-taught, and achieved considerable fame in her lifetime, with numerous international appearances and Beach fan clubs throughout the country.

8. **Jeanne Demessieux – (Prelude and) Fugue en Ut**

Born in Montpellier, in southern France, Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968) took private piano lessons with her elder sister, Yolande, and Jeanne entered the Montpellier Conservatoire in 1928, and, in 1933, began her studies at the Paris Conservatoire, studying piano, harmony, counterpoint and fugue, and composition. The same year, she was appointed titular organist at Saint-Esprit (12th arrondissement), a post she held for 29 years. She also studied organ privately with Marcel Dupré, whose organ class at the Conservatoire she joined in 1939. After receiving a first prize in organ performance and improvisation in 1941, Demessieux studied five more years privately with Dupré in Meudon, before she played her début recital at Salle Pleyel in Paris in 1946. This was the beginning of her career as an international recitalist. She left behind more than 30 compositions. Many of these were written for the organ.

9. **Mary Jeanne van Appledorn – *Shabat Shalom***

Mary Jeanne van Appledorn (1927-2014) was an American composer of contemporary classical music and pianist. She composed numerous works for various instrumental combinations and also composed computer music. Her works are generally tonal, although she also used the twelve-tone technique, and she frequently utilized string piano

techniques in her piano music. She studied at the Eastman School of Music, receiving her Ph.D. in music theory in 1966. She served on the music faculty of Texas Tech University from 1950 until 2008.

**10. Emma Lou Diemer – Go Tell It on the Mountain**

Born in Missouri (1927- ), Emma Lou Diemer has fulfilled many commissions (orchestral, chamber ensemble, keyboard, choral, vocal) from schools, churches, and professional organizations. She retired from University of California, Santa Barbara in 1971. Although she has written many large pieces for organ, she has also composed many short settings of familiar hymns for service playing.

**11. Gwyneth Walker – In Celebration**

Upon completing her academic training, Gwyneth Walker (1947- ) joined the faculty of the Oberlin College Conservatory. She left academia in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For the past years, she has lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont and now lives primarily in New Canaan, Connecticut, her childhood hometown. Gwyneth Walker has written over 300 compositions for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, solo voice, and individual instruments. Her works, while appealing to modern sensibilities, is traditional and accessible in the unadorned style of American composers such as Aaron Copland and Charles Ives.

**12. Barbara Harbach – Wade in the Water**

This African American Spiritual begins with a strong statement of the opening phrase followed by a flourish leading into the second phrase. The verse is plaintively written in a lower range before embarking on the fugue motive that is based on the opening phrase of the hymn. A full-organ conclusion ends with the chorus of the hymn. 2004

**13. Barbara Harbach - Go, My Children**

*Ar Hyd Y Nos* (Welsh traditional) begins as a trio with the melody in the tenor followed by an exciting, rhythmic setting with the melody in the pedal alternating with the melody in the tenor. 2002

**14. J. S. Bach - Nun seid ihr wohl gerochen, (Now Vengeance Hath Been Taken)** from the Christmas Oratorio, S. 248, by J. S. Bach (1685-1750). In this arrangement, the trumpet and timpani parts are played as written. The organ subsumes the orchestral and choral parts. Notable is Bach's majestic treatment of the chorale melody *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*, with each line of the chorale stated on full organ, interspersed with elaborate trumpet *ritornelli*. Arranged by Barbara Harbach for three trumpets, organ, and timpani. Trumpets: Barbara Butler and Charles Geyer with Sean Lowery, trumpet, and Christopher Norton, timpani.

**Dr. Barbara Harbach (S.B.)**, Curators' Distinguished Professor Emerita of Music at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, has a large catalog of works, including symphonies, operas, string orchestra, musicals, chamber ensembles, film scores, modern ballet, organ, harpsichord and piano, choral anthems, and many arrangements for brass and organ of various Baroque works. She is also involved in the research, editing, publication and recording of manuscripts of eighteenth-century keyboard composers, as well as historical and contemporary women composers. Her work is available in both recorded and published form through MSR Classics, Naxos Records, Gasparo Records, Kingdom Records, Albany Records, Northeastern Records, Hester Park, Robert King Music, Elkan-Vogel, Augsburg Fortress, Encore Music Publishers, Art of Sound Music, Agape Music and Vivace Press. Harbach serves as editor of the *WomenArts Quarterly Journal*. “Harbach’s music astonished me for its heavy reliance on the lyric and the beautifully (and cogently) framed melodic line. I could listen to her music for hours” (*American Record Guide*, March/April 2008). “Harbach has distinguished herself as one of the preeminent American composers of any generation. (*All Music Guide*, December 2007).

In June 2009, her musical, *Booth!* was premiered at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in New York City where it won a competition at the Tisch School of the Arts. *O Pioneers! – An American Opera* was premiered in October 2009, at the University of Missouri–St. Louis in the Touhill Performing Arts Center. “*O Pioneers!* is an excellent opera that was admirably performed by the lead players and a fine chorus” (*St. Louis Classical Music Examiner*, October 2009).

Harbach has toured extensively as both concert organist and harpsichordist throughout the United States and Canada, and overseas in Belgium, Bosnia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Romania, Serbia and Russian Siberia. Her lively performances and recordings have captured the imagination of many American composers. The body of work written for and dedicated to Harbach is substantial. *Musical America* has called her “nothing short of brilliant,” and *Gramophone* has cited her as an “acknowledged interpreter – and, indeed, muse – of modern harpsichord music.” She was host of the weekly television music series *Palouse Performance* seen throughout the Inland Northwest.

Harbach holds academic degrees from Pennsylvania State University (B.A.), Yale University (M.M.A.), Musikhochschule (Konzertdiplom) in Frankfurt, Germany, and the Eastman School of Music (D.M.A.). In 2002, she received an honorary doctorate in music, *Honoris Causa*, from Wilmington College, Ohio for her lifetime achievement as a composer, performer, editor, and publisher.

Barbara Harbach initiated *Women in the Arts–St. Louis*, a celebration of the achievements of women creators. Over 800 events by various cultural organizations in the St. Louis region provided audiences with new and historical examples of the work of women writers, composers, and artists. In 2006 for her work *Women in the Arts–St. Louis*, she was the recipient of the Arts Education Award from the Missouri Arts Council; the Missouri Citizen for the Arts Award; the Yellow Rose Award from the Zonta International Club of St. Louis; and the University of Missouri–St. Louis Faculty Excellence Award in the College of Fine Arts and Communication. In 2007, she was awarded the Hellenic Spirit Foundation Award, and, in 2011, she was awarded the Grand Center Visionary Award for “Successful Working Artist,” the Argus Foundation Award, and the YWCA Leader of Distinction Award in the Arts. In 2014, Harbach was named a University of Missouri Curators’ Distinguished Professor of Music as well as National Arts Associate Distinguished Member of Sigma Alpha Iota (ΣAI), an International Music Fraternity, Buffalo Chapter. In 2016, Ranker chose her as one of the 30 Most Innovative Women Professors Alive Today, and the number one Famous Female Organist in the World.

Examples of Harbach’s compositions: [Harbach Music](#)