

Music for Worship

The Worship of God, with music that honors Him, is my motivation for inclusion of the audio and video on this additional page, which has been taken from the public domain, on YouTube, and/or otherwise, not under copyright. (Copyright disclaimer under Section 107 of the Copyright Act 1976).

This sacred music comes from sources other than South Norfolk Baptist, but these anthems, organ works, and hymns, have been sung and played there by the choir, pianist, and organist. They give you an excellent educational representation of what was used there on a regular basis. Several allow you to see the organist at the keyboard. Many excellent cantata's were sung by the adult and youth choirs: "Olivet to Calvary" by John Maunder; "No Greater Love," "Night of Miracles," "Behold Your King" and "Hallelujah! What a Savior!" by John W. Peterson; and "The Crucifixion" Oratorio by John Stainer. As I recall, the earliest choir robes I remember, were elegant; black with white stoles. One story I remember hearing was about the elderly organist (who preceded Gwen Whitehurst) who would fall asleep during the morning prayer, and her left foot would drop off onto one of the pedals, sounding a loud bass note!

My piano teacher for 10 years (Jim also took for several years), Mr. A. Guy Hall, Jr., who graduated from William and Mary (B.A.) and Columbia University (M.A.), told me when attending a concert, he would sit where he could see the pianist's hands on the keyboard. Mr. Hall was a gifted pianist, who was a music teacher in the South Norfolk Schools, and had parents who sang in the Chesapeake Avenue United Methodist Church choir. His music lessons laid the foundation for my music enrichment, as well as the ability to perform on the organ.

Sunday mornings during breakfast before our Family Altar of Bible reading and prayer, Mother would tune in her old AM radio to "The Old Fashioned Revival Hour," with it's spiritually uplifting music, and message by Dr. Charles E. Fuller. After Jimmy introduced Mother to FM radio, she kept the one in the kitchen tuned to the local BBN (Bible Broadcasting Network) station. The musical programs of traditional Christian music with evening sermon messages by conference speakers, were a blessing to each of us. Before the days of FM, however, Jim built his own shortwave receiver from a kit. We were able to tune into the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and listen to several Christmas Eve Services from overseas. Several selections are offered as examples on this page from previous broadcasts in the chapel at King's College, Cambridge, uploaded from public domain.

Working at three different tidewater area radio stations brought me into contact with many concert singers, pianists, organists, and church music groups. This allowed me to meet and set up recording sessions with these groups. One outstanding organist, who played an Aeolian-Skinner Organ, for Epworth United Methodist Church, Norfolk, and later at SNBC, after Gwen Whitehurst retired, was Rosa Belle Albright. She played

several organ pieces at Epworth for the radio program, "A Festival of Bach," for WFOS-FM, which Jim and I recorded. The Chesapeake Avenue Methodist Church and South Norfolk area was home to the Bel Canto Chorus, directed by Mrs. Elizabeth Lindsey, who was Choir Director of Chesapeake Avenue Methodist for 47 years, and taught in South Norfolk Schools. South Norfolk Baptist was extremely blessed to have Gwen Whitehurst, organist, and Betty LeBlanc, pianist; both of whom were gifted musicians at the keyboard, who could play from memory, and transpose music into a different key without the use of the modern electric organ Transposer. The audio sermon recording, "Men Who Minister," represents an excellent example of the organ and piano used during a Sunday night worship service, accompanying the hymn singing.

In addition to traditional hymn arrangements, Gwen played classical sacred music for offertories, preludes, and postludes. For many years, she was accompanied by Betty LeBlanc on the grand piano (also a gifted organist in her own right). I cannot begin to relate how many, many church members complimented them both on their offertory duets. Years later, I still hear many complementary remarks about the wonderful music they played. As I got older, Gwen showed me her collection of sacred religious music she used for preludes, offertories, and postludes; and indeed, it was "top drawer" music of high quality, which included Mendelssohn, Hayden, Brahms, Chopin, Alexandre Guilmant, etc. (Looking through old copies of worship bulletins, confirms the wide range of classical religious music she played.) She was so versatile on the keyboard: she could play both organ and piano at the same time! (With one hand on the Hammond Organ she toured with, and the other on a piano.) For after-church fellowships, she could play all kinds of music on the piano, in the fellowship hall. At one youth social event I attended at a teacher's house, I saw her play "Alexander's Ragtime Band" on the piano, from memory, and, while sitting on the piano stool backwards, (her back toward the keys), reaching around, with her hands, playing the music!

I want to pay an additional tribute to another musician, Ernie LeBlanc, (Betty's husband, now gone to be with the Lord), who was exceptionally talented on the piano, and was one of the Norfolk area's best piano tuners. I remember playing the piano for an offertory ("Overshadowed") one Sunday evening with Gwen on the organ, when we were broadcasting on the radio; and right in the middle of the piece, you could hear a loud "twang" as the string for middle C broke! Gwen and Dad looked around in surprise and I got on though it somehow! (Working around middle C, can be painful!) Ernie came over before the week was over and had it replaced and in good working order. On another occasion, I was visiting at a recital Mrs. LeBlanc was having for her students, and afterward, heard Ernie play....and it was outstanding. He also sang in the SNBC choir and was in a local Barber Shop choral group. South Norfolk was blessed with many talented musicians and singers.

Some of the music you will hear and see on this page includes "Toccatà from Symphony No. 5," by Widor, was used as Postlude at my Seminary graduation. "To God Be the Glory," was the opening hymn-theme, for the SNBC Sunday evening services broadcast on WXRI-FM. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name," was used at Rev. and Mrs. Hughes and Jim's funeral services. "The Lord's Prayer," was recorded at the Moody Memorial

Church, Chicago. A Christian businessman in Norman, Oklahoma, paid for Mother to attend a summer session at Moody Bible Institute, just before attending Southwestern Baptist Seminary. Mother learned music at an early age, could play the piano, and told me about listening to a soprano soloist, at First Baptist Church, Norman, Oklahoma, (where she was married), "singing sacred music from memory, with her hands resting on the choir rail."

"The Lord's Prayer" was sung by the choir and congregation at the conclusion of the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper at First Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, where Rita and I attended, while stationed in that area.

I will always be grateful for the wonderful religious musical heritage provided me, not only by the wonderful musicians and choir members of South Norfolk, but from a young age, when Mother would sing Gospel Choruses to us children, and have us learn Scripture verses. There is no substitute for Christian parents.

-Joe Hughes

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