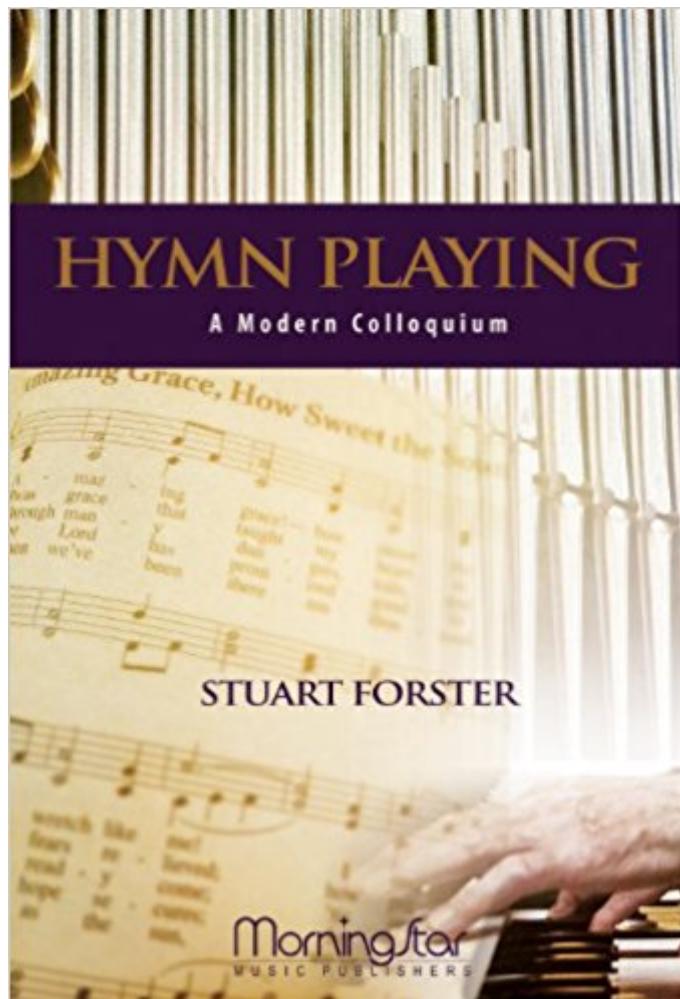


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# Hymn Playing A Modern Colloquium



## **Synopsis**

Playing hymns on the organ is a centuries-old tradition that has been passed down largely through osmosis and guesswork. To address a growing need for more explicit instruction, Forster surveys available resources about hymn playing, and then launches a discussion expounding twenty vital aspects encompassing the art of hymn playing. To equip the organist with a palette of tools for every occasion, he has amassed the expertise of eleven leaders in the world of hymn playing. The panel considers everything from learning and teaching hymns through the instruments and people involved in growing a community of engaged singers within a congregation. The character and artistry of the participants is revealed through frank anecdotes from their collective 300+ years of experience. Here, we learn from David Cherwien, Mark Dwyer, David Erwin, John Ferguson, Peter Jewkes, Stephen Loher, Walden Moore, Bruce Neswick, John Scott, Jeffrey Smith, and Tom Whittemore.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A dedicated church musician, Stuart Forster has been Director of Music and Organist at Christ Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, since 1999. He has performed throughout both hemispheres as an organ soloist, accompanist, and conductor. As a composer, he has written congregational music and choral anthems; Paraclete Press currently publishes some of these pieces. Dr. Forster has also composed more than 100 hymn arrangements and numerous organ transcriptions; his landmark organ transcription of Dvorák's Ninth Symphony, "From the New World," was published by Éditions Chantraine, Belgium. He has been broadcast around the world and has

recorded numerous CDs, including solo performances on the JAV and Pro Organo labels. Vesper Light, a CD featuring the Christ Church Cambridge Evensong Choir, was recorded live on tour in some of America's finest ecclesiastical buildings. After considerable study and several appointments in his native Sydney, Australia, Forster traveled to the United States in 1996 to study with Professor Thomas Murray, earning two degrees from Yale University, as well as the Faculty Prize and the Robert S. Baker Scholarship from the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and from the Yale School of Music the Julia R. Sherman Prize for excellence in organ playing. In addition to earning qualifications from the University of Sydney, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and Trinity College of Music, London, Forster has won the Sydney International Organ Competition and been awarded numerous other accolades, including the Scarf Foundation Award, the University of Sydney Organ Scholarship (awarded twice), the Alice Bryant Organ Scholarship (for two terms of three years each), and the Ruth and Paul Manz Organ Scholarship. While studying at Yale, Forster served as Fellow in Church Music at Christ Church, New Haven, Connecticut; his work at the University included appointments as Marquand Chapel Organist, accompanist to various choruses and graduate courses, and teacher to numerous undergraduate and second-instrument organ students. He recently earned a Doctorate in Sacred Music at the Graduate Theological Foundation, with a focus on the congregation's experience of music and flow within liturgy; his dissertation documents and analyzes current practices of hymn leadership and accompaniment with the organ. Details of Dr. Forster's compositions, performances, and recordings may be found on his website.

This was an interesting book. I'm making my way through it. I like that the book draws from organist from several traditions and perspectives. As may be expected, sometimes the organists' advice or commentary run directly counter to one another. This isn't a bad thing. Competent hymn playing isn't exact, and we must each find what works best for our own style, organ, and church. I did find myself often disagreeing with some of the commentary. Again, I don't see that as a big problem. The book serves well to challenge your thinking. And most of all, it highlights that to play hymns well takes a LOT of thought and practice. Because of the discrepancies between the different organists, I don't know that I would suggest this book for a beginning organist. Get a good teacher and a method book. Learn to play hymns well one way, then you can explore other approaches. One small note, I noticed that all of the organists consulted were men. While they are all fantastic musicians and at the top of their craft, it would have been nice to hear the perspective of some of the many stellar female church musicians working in the U.S. today.

Reading this book is like sitting around the kitchen table with friends who happen to be organists, and who all have opinions about how to play hymns for a church service. If you fit in that group, you must have this book!

Stuart Forster selected an excellent variety of professional musicians to emphasize the various methods of hymn playing and performance. This excellent reference guide will help musicians to develop a better understanding of hymn playing by the use of various methods in registration, modulation and hymn tune key changes.

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