

# AGO Super Saturday

Saturday, April 29, 2023

9 a.m.

Jim Kasen's Outline

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- I. Initial Questions from class members
- II. Music education vs. Spiritual education
  - a) Gifts come to us in raw form the vast majority of the time and they require our devotion and development.
  - b) Who should take responsibility for their development?
  - c) The Church provides an outlet for us use our gifts.
  - d) Worship begins with the first note of prelude and ends with the final note of postlude.
  - e) We must prepare ourselves every time we engage in a worship experience if we are going to expect the congregation to engage.
- III. My process for writing (see text to LDS Hymnal #293)
  - a) LDS hymn arrangements were not abundant when I was 16. (Alexander Schreiner's 3 volumes, Easy Arrangements of Roy Darley)
  - b) I began writing in my late teens. Some ghastly compositions.
  - c) After earning my master's in music, I came to understand how to arrange. Here's what I do now.
  - d) I carefully consider what the hymn is saying to me personally.
  - e) Pulling from my experience to determine what the author is saying?
  - f) What about the melody? Does it have possibility? Does it work to allow for harmonic development?
  - g) I ponder on the music to find something that can become a motif and develop it.
  - h) It's important to understand the composer's harmonic progression.
  - i) I then decide on a framework...
    - Intros and interludes: 0 measures, 2, 4, 6 (rare) 8, (10 maybe), 12
    - How many times will I write in the melody and how will I present it?
    - Will there be a modulation and where will the modulation go?
    - How will I end the piece?
    - Will everything I do reflect the text?
  - j) Always keep in mind the trap of "worshipping the creations of your own hands."
  - k) Start simple but start and don't give up.
  - l) Editing will continue on long after you have finished writing, even after publication.

#### IV. Some questions and some answers:

- a) How often do you compose? *Depends on the need. I usually write a new piece each month and then work on various things like intros for worship services.*
- b) How much time do you spend on writing the average arrangement? *It takes me about 10 days and then I let it marinate before doing some additional editing.*
- c) Why do you compose? *Creativity is something that every human being needs to do if they are going to connect more profoundly with Deity. That's what they do constantly. I compose to give life (create) to my thoughts and feelings. It's an important outlet. Not everything I create needs to be imposed on the world, though.*
- d) Is the motivation to create consistent? *No. It's like every other emotion. Emotions are not tangible. They are like the wind. They come and go and I never know when it's going to appear. Remember that inspiration doesn't come when we're motivated. Experience has shown me that it tends to come when we are "doing when we start moving with the process."*
- e) What affects your motivation? *Thoughtful pondering. It's such a good place to start.*
- f) How do you know when a composition is good? *That's a tough one! You'll come to know. Not everything I have published is good. Some of the pieces speak more deeply to me than others. It's okay to not compose something that's good all the time. Even Bach wrote some not so good pieces.*
- g) Do you compose at the organ, piano, computer? *I compose at the organ and engrave at the computer. I use Dorico. I use manuscript to initially do sketches, writing down motifs, some harmonic progressions. Composing is a process not an event.*
- h) How much of what you compose do you hear in your mind first or discover? *I tend to hear them in my mind and then refine them at the console.*
- i) How does one learn to compose? *I started by becoming educated in 18<sup>th</sup>-century music theory, and then began to write. I paid the price to study with great composers and arrangers. They were critical of what I was doing and because I was trying to learn and refine, I kept doing all I could to learn from them.*
- j) What qualities do we need to possess when being a composer/arranger? *The key quality must be curiosity. It will lead us to learn from so many sources.*

This QR code will take you to the website to learn about the book, *To Belong to Him*

