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THREE MOVEMENTS FROM STEFANS GROVÉ'S *AFRIKA HYMNUS* CYCLE:

instruments, obstacles, and solutions



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ABSTRACT

The *Afrika Hymnus* cycle, three expansive concert works for solo organ by the eminent South African composer Stefans Grové (1922–2014), is a peerless achievement in the organ repertoire. Although the composer worked as an organist throughout his life, he wrote little for the instrument initially, and it seems that it was only his late-career ‘conversion’ to a style incorporating African elements into his music that sparked an interest in composing for the organ on a large scale. Despite its originality and undisputed quality, the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle remains neglected by performers, because the demands of these works are such that most may regard them as beyond their abilities. This article sets out to challenge this notion by highlighting a movement from each work in the cycle that should be within the reach of many organists at a technical level – that is, in terms of simply playing the notes. However, even interested performers may subsequently face what they perceive to be the limitations of their instruments, since the works seem to require the type of instrument that may be inaccessible to them. Furthermore, they may also puzzle over some aspects of the scores. For example, one of the movements has subtle but troublesome textural problems in need of resolving, while another provides limited and sometimes inconsistent details about registration. But with the composer’s knowledge of the instrument beyond doubt, there is nothing in the works beyond what is achievable. The aim of this article is thus to provide information that could help performers at a very practical level, and hopefully encourage them to take on the movements in question. For each piece, some background information is given, including discussion of the instrument for which it was conceived. Potential obstacles are identified, followed by suggestions for how to overcome them. Some of these suggestions may seem counterintuitive, even contentious, such as altering registration or redistributing parts of the score (the latter of which may seem to go against the composer’s ideas about idiomatic writing), but there are grounds to argue for their legitimacy. Ultimately, these are solutions and tools of which all competent organists should maintain a working knowledge. For one of the pieces, a full registration scheme is provided, and this may be compared to a recorded performance using that exact registration.

KEYWORDS

Stefans Grové

Afrika Hymnus

Registration of organ music

Stefans Grové

AFRIKA HYMNUS II

Fünf Tonbilder aus dem ländlichen Afrika

für
Orgel
1997
§



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STEFANS GROVÉ: ORGANIST-COMPOSER?

The year 2022 marks the centenary of the birth of Stefans Grové (1922-2014), one of South Africa's greatest composers. Details of his life and career have been related many times and will surely be known to readers of this journal: born into a family of some musical standing; recognised early on as a composer that would have a significant impact on South African art music; the first ever South African recipient of a Fulbright scholarship; studies with Piston and Copland; for decades a respected and admired teacher at a highly regarded institution in the United States; an eventual return to his country of birth; and, in the mid-1980s, a 'Damascus Road' experience that led him to incorporate African elements into his music – one of the first leading South African composers to do so. What may be less well known is that he was also active as organist throughout his musical life, becoming organist of a local church at the age of 17, obtaining his UNISA licentiate at 20 (along with his licentiate for piano), and working as a church organist throughout most of his career, both in South Africa and abroad. Positions he was known to have held include those at churches in Bloemfontein, Klerksdorp, Rondebosch, Franklin Street Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, and, after settling in Pretoria in the 1970s, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St Paul – at the latter for over 30 years. He was a member of the Lutheran church himself and devoutly religious – major works bear the closing inscription 'Jesu Juva', 'J.J.', or 'S.D.G.' along with the date of completion. Yet, up to the 1990s, works for solo organ numbered only a few: *Ritual* (1969) was withdrawn; a single chorale prelude, the rather austere two-page *Trio on Psalm 42:3* (1975), remains unlikely to find its place in the liturgical organ music canon; and the blistering *Rhapsodic Toccata* (1977) seems more a canvas for experimentation than a fully-fledged work (although there are many elements anticipating works to come). It is worth taking note of the role of the organ in the bold orchestral work *Kettingrye* (1978): it makes a surprise entry and proceeds to have a substantial, virtuosic part in the work's final section, entitled *Cadenza IV*, taking what Rörich (1987:97) describes as a 'concertante' role. There is also a small collection of published psalm intonations, which, though well-crafted, are not of much interest beyond their intended purpose. In church, Grové preferred to improvise. An amusing anecdote by his American student Elam Sprenkle, whom he recruited to be one of the choristers at Franklin Street Presbyterian Church, underscores Grové's skill at improvisation: 'The opening preludes, for example, he improvised, as he did the closing postlude. He had long before invented a series of pseudonyms and passed off the weekly make-it-up as the work, say, of some obscure Austrian Baroque composer. The church bulletin would list these names – and their dates of birth and death [...]' (Muller & Walton, 2006:32).

The move to what Grové called his 'Afrocentric' style seems to have sparked a different type of relationship with the organ. *Afrika Hymnus*, 'A fantasy for concert organ' (1991), was expanded from its original version as a single-movement work by the addition of two further movements in 1993. It subsequently became the only one of his works for which he wrote follow-up works bearing the same title. Thus, *Afrika Hymnus* became *Afrika Hymnus I*, and to the cycle was added *Afrika Hymnus II* (1997), comprising five movements, and *Afrika Hymnus III* (2008), comprising three movements. In between, there were also chamber works with organ: *December Fragments* (2003) for flute and chamber organ, and *Conversations* (2005) for organ and piano, the latter counting among its five movements one for organ solo.

The three works in the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle were undoubtedly written for the concert platform, and Grové seems to revel in showing off the instrument's capabilities as well as giving performers the opportunity to show off their technical prowess. Each *Hymnus* is of symphonic breadth (the first two are both around 30 minutes in duration) and Grové obviously aimed to create works that were simultaneously idiomatic and trailblazing. He achieves this while applying a musical language that is accessible and fairly orthodox in a post-tonal context, but also distinctive and highly personal. Gerrit Jordaan, a champion of Grové's organ works and the dedicatee of *Afrika Hymnus II*, notes, however, that the technical difficulty and level of detail that are present are likely to discourage organists from tackling these works (Jordaan, 2013:158). It is undeniable that they pose tremendous challenges to aspiring performers, but coming from a composer clearly at home on the instrument, there is nothing outside the realms of what is achievable. On the contrary, once challenges are overcome, there is much to relish and pleasure to be found in performing such well-crafted music. The received opinion that Grové's organ works are only for the most advanced, virtuosic of performers has led to them being undeservedly neglected. This article is an attempt to address this, because within each work in the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle, there is at least one movement that I would consider well within the reach of an industrious performer, even if they haven't reached the highest level of technical ability yet. It would be a pity for Grové's organ works to remain considered as being beyond the reach of all but the most technically adept (and then only those with a taste for 'modern' music).

However, there is no denying that aspiring performers may encounter some pitfalls. First of all, the instrument, and, with it, registration. These works seem to ask for a very large instrument – one with at least three manuals, preferably with more than one division under expression, and with a large selection of playing aids to help manage

the seemingly endless array of registration changes. What if you have only a modest instrument at your disposal? At this point, consider the fact that Grové's own instrument at St Paul's, where he was organist when he composed these works, was small and had many unit stops (Jordaan, 2008:110). The works were of course not conceived for this type of organ – or, indeed, written *at* the organ (see Pelser, Appendix B, viii) – but the movements discussed below can certainly be given convincing renditions on instruments of moderate dimensions. Some lateral thinking is required, but the suggestions to be offered entail skills that should be present in every organist's toolkit, as it were, as far as registration and adapting to different instruments are concerned. Quite separately from actually performing the pieces to be discussed, there is much to gain from refreshing one's knowledge in this area. Secondly, close inspection of one of the pieces reveals some subtle flaws in the texture and registration as presented in the score, and part of the discussion entails how to overcome such problems. The aim is thus to provide information that could help performers at a very practical level and make these works more accessible. A handful of other technical issues are also examined, including idiomatic handling of the organ.

DISCUSSION OF THE WORKS

1. *Song of an Old Woman in Her Hut at Dawn*

The score of *Afrika Hymnus I*, published by UNISA as part of the 'UNISA Organ Collection', states that the work was composed with the organ of the Dutch Reformed Church Universiteitsoord in Pretoria in mind, and includes that instrument's stop list. The registration and manual indications in the score closely reflect the disposition of the Universiteitsoord organ, although there are a few cases where the stops indicated do not correspond exactly to found stops on the organ. The organ, built by SAOB in 1967, has three manuals and pedal, with the Swell division under expression.

The second movement, entitled *Song of an Old Woman in Her Hut at Dawn*, paints a stunningly evocative picture of nature: at the break of dawn, a gathering of birds make their calls, very carefully transcribed to be as accurate as possible, in counterpoint to the woman of the title's pensive song. The programme in part resembles one of Grové's short stories¹, entitled *Oggendhimne* – 'Morning Hymn' (the title in itself

¹ From the 1975 collection *Oor mense, diere & dinge*, published by Human & Rousseau. With the composer's permission, Gerrit Jordaan reproduces the story in its entirety in his DMus dissertation (Jordaan, 2008), having recognised its significance in relation to the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle. Credit is also due to De Winnaar (2006) for her discussion of the story and its references to music.

may also reveal something of the origin of the title 'Afrika Hymnus'). The story sketches the atmosphere of an early morning on the composer's smallholding. He describes various birds in musical and, occasionally, devotional terms. (Note: All text originally in Afrikaans has been translated in this article.) For example, four crows 'raise their voices' ('verhef hulle stemme' - the language brings to mind the singing of an anthem, even if the sound is far from pleasant) and a guinea fowl 'recites, rather solemnly, its morning prayer'. Another bird alights in a tree in order to 'practise'. Later on, one reads:

Then we sit again, we timeless ones, and listen to the silence. The guinea fowl has already said Amen and the crows are gone too, but somewhere still a turtledove is cooing its soft and melancholy song.

In the distance, the author sees a thin trail of smoke, and he hears a black woman singing with a thin voice ('met 'n ylerige stemmetjie') - as slender and timeless ('slank en tydloos') as the aforementioned trail of smoke. Further on in the story, he also describes a young woman who is singing softly with a high voice while working. Correlating to the women singing in the story, the 'song' of the title first appears in the right hand on a distinctive solo registration, and later in the pedal part on the 4' flute².

It is worth summarising the structure of the piece, to aid the discussion below.

Table 1: *Song of an Old Woman in Her Hut at Dawn* - structure

Section	Bars	Description
A	1-18	After a few bars that establish the accompaniment, the main theme (the 'song' of the title) enters at the end of bar 5
B	19-33	Bird calls; reappearance of the main theme in the pedal line (at bar 27)
A ₁	34-37	Return to section A's texture; abridged reappearance of the main theme

² For the sake of consistency, English terms and commonly used stop names (and abbreviations) are employed as far as possible in this article.

The movement features depictions of singing, musical instruments, and natural elements. The composer himself described these elements in a lecture about the work (Grové, 1995):

- Throughout the movement, the chord in the left hand represents the environment.
- In the A-sections, the repeated B flat in the pedal part depicts a high-pitched little drum, used by the woman to accompany herself.
- The woman also accompanies herself on a musical bow – ‘an instrument of enormous delicacy’. Since the pedal part is identified as a small drum, this must refer to the notes played by the left-hand thumb in the A-sections.
- The main theme is a depiction of a ‘Xhosa woman’s song of a mourning nature’.
- Section B portrays the calls of several birds, with the last continuing into section A₁.

The sustained left-hand chord is secundal and sharply dissonant, but the effect is not harsh. It is played on the Swell’s 8’ flute, marked **pp**, and, as noted, its purpose is to establish the environment – the background murmur or ‘buzz’ found in nature. This is often the case in Grové’s works for chords such as these that are in the background, resemble clusters³, and are largely static.

³ I would argue that classifying these chords as tone clusters is overly simplistic, because there are subtle differences in the distribution of intervals between adjacent chords, and because they can be shown to participate in chord progressions, albeit non-traditional ones.

Example 1: *Song of an Old Woman*, bar 5-9

(Lento misterioso) (♩. = c. 63)

5 Pos: Vox H. or Qd.8' or Sal.8' Fl.4' + trem.

Sw: Bd.8' (pp)

Gt: Gamba 8' (secco) (pp)

Ped: Gd.8' (secco) (p)

p *mf*** *p*

* C♯ for small hands (ed.)

** Dynamics are optional

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Three options are given for the registration of the main theme in section A:

- Vox Humana 8' (for which the Kromhoorn 8' on the Universiteitsoord organ effectively provides a substitute)
- Quintadena 8'
- Salicional 8' + flute 4'

All three have a sound that is rather 'thin' (fitting the description of the woman's voice)

in *Oggendhimne*) and to which the tremulant adds a suitably expressive quality. If the details about registration provided in the score are taken at face value, however, we encounter some contradictions. Firstly, the third registration option is clearly for stops on the Swell; the others correspond to stops found on the Positive (as it is named in the score, instead of 'Rugwerk'). But on the Universiteitsoord organ, the left-hand chord cannot be on any other manual than the Swell, with the swell box shutters completely closed, since it is essential that the chord is as soft as possible so that it remains in the background. On any other manual it would simply be too intrusive. Secondly, although a footnote states that they are optional, the hairpin *crescendo* and *diminuendo* signs that indicate dynamic shading by means of an expression pedal (see example 1) cannot be executed on the Positive, since the corresponding division is not under expression on the Universiteitsoord organ.

There is something to be gleaned from the fact that the composer provides different registration options for the main theme: when searching for the right sound, different solutions can often emerge. On the other hand, the sound Grové had in mind to depict a musical bow on the Great is so specific that he specifies a stop that doesn't exist on the Universiteitsoord organ, namely a Gamba 8' (perhaps also wishing to make the correlation, albeit somewhat tenuous, of a string stop with a stringed instrument – the musical bow). Naturally, this requires a compromise: in the delicate sound-world that is established, the only viable option on the Universiteitsoord organ is the 8' flute on the Great (Roerfluit 8').

In section A, the left hand is required to play on two manuals at the same time – a relatively common idiomatic device of which many examples exist in the organ literature (for one, in the second movement of Widor's famous Symphony No. 5). Only the thumb is active, playing a succession of staccato notes on the Great; the four-note chord played on the Swell by the other fingers is completely static. This makes the passage not at all difficult to achieve – it is easy for the thumb to reach down to the manual below, and all the notes inhabit the same register, together spanning only a perfect 5th (enharmonically notated as C sharp to A flat). With the left hand's little finger on the C sharp, some players may struggle to reach certain keys on the manual below (especially the G), so the UNISA edition suggests playing a C natural instead. Another option would be to insert (carefully!) a small wedge or other suitable tool as soon as the C sharp has been played in order to hold down the key; this can be removed at the end of the section (in bar 18) while the little finger once more takes the C sharp. Section A₁ is simpler in this regard. In both A-sections, the pedal line is simply a repeated staccato note on the 8' stopped flute, representing the small drum.

With one hand by itself already requiring two manuals, there is another obstacle: having access to an organ with only two manuals and pedal. Is it not an inescapable fact that each of the four layers in the texture (environment; drum; musical bow; song) needs its own distinctive timbre and, therefore, a separate keyboard? Having performed this piece all around the world, often encountering instruments quite different from what I expected, I have many times been obliged to find ways around such seemingly immutable requirements.

It bears repeating that, whatever the situation, the chord in the left hand should be as soft as possible, and therefore must be played on an enclosed division – even if the stops you would ideally want for the ‘song’ are on that very division. Therefore, taking a typical two-manual organ with the Swell as the upper manual as an example, all that will be available for everything else is the Great and the Pedal. It has already been established that there is some flexibility around the solo registration for the main theme, and that the ideal sound has a ‘thin’ and somewhat nasal quality (like the Vox Humana or Quintadena). But it is worth experimenting simply with whatever is available: a solo 8’ flute could work, or flute 8’ + 4’. If you have a $2\frac{2}{3}$ ’ stop that is not too strong, this could work well in combination with an 8’ flute to approximate the Quintadena with its prominent third harmonic. An 8’ principal might be too ‘thick’, but a 4’ principal played an octave lower could prove to be convincing.

As for the rest, the line for the left-hand thumb and the pedal notes can easily be combined and played by the feet only, an octave lower on 4’. The ‘small drum’ line already differentiates itself by being on a single note, B flat, which does not appear in any of the other parts. That line and the one formed by the left-hand thumb, which will be played by the right foot, therefore maintain their own identities. Since they appear on neighbouring staves in the score, reading them as a single unit also presents little difficulty.

Example 2: *Song of an Old Woman*, bar 3-5, alternative arrangement (1)

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Ped: Fl. 4' (right foot)

(p) (left foot)

Another potential solution: if the main theme is to be played on a solo 8' flue stop, then the left hand can play the pedal notes on the same manual as the solo, with the feet playing only the left-thumb notes.

Example 3: *Song of an Old Woman*, bar 3-5, alternative arrangement (2)

This would be a better solution than playing the main theme and the left-thumb notes on the same manual, because the lowest notes of the theme come too close to the range inhabited by the left-thumb notes, and, towards the end of the section (from bar 14), the theme encroaches on that range. On the other hand, if you are preparing for a performance on a three-manual instrument where you will in fact be playing the left-thumb notes on the manual below the left-hand chord, then it would of course be sensible to *practise* in the equivalent configuration, playing right hand and left thumb on the same manual.

What would not work, however, would be to play either the pedal notes or the left-thumb notes on the same manual as the left-hand chord. Some of the left-thumb notes are already being sustained (the C sharp and D sharp/E flat); lifting the keys in order to play the notes again would undermine the very purpose of the left-hand chord. And, in any case, the notes would be too soft to make their presence felt.

The middle section, featuring a variety of bird calls, each on a different registration, is actually not especially problematic. There are many registration changes, but before each there are rests during which the changes can be made. It is therefore even feasible to perform the piece without registration aids or an assistant – there is generally enough time to change the registration, and it is reasonable to take a little bit of extra time in places if needed. The fact that mostly single stops or small ensembles are used is also helpful. The first two bird calls ask for 4' flutes on different manuals, but playing on the same manual, using the same stop, is still convincing, since the figures are so different in terms of melodic content (as well as tessitura). To achieve variety in this

section, one can experiment with playing in different octaves – for example, playing a passage with a 4' indication an octave higher on an 8' stop, or the other way around. The same can be tried with 2' or even 16' stops. For example, a Quintadena 16' can be played an octave higher if a Quintadena 8' is not available. The same can be done in the pedal part: bar 22 asks for a 4' flute, while bar 24 asks for an 8' flute, but to save a registration change, the pedal part of bar 24-25 could simply be played an octave lower, keeping the same 4' registration as before. For the more complex combination in bar 31 (Flute 4' + Quinte 1 1/3' + Sesquialtera), one could simply use whatever mutation stops or mixtures are available.

Finally, it is worth pointing out a few typographical errors in the UNISA edition:

- Bar 22, left hand: The chord should have the same accidentals as the one in the following bar, to which it is tied.
- Bar 23, right hand: A sharp should be A natural to match the previous bar. The second note-group needs a triplet bracket to match previous instances of the same figure.
- Bar 24, right hand: The *tr* might be better notated as in example 4. The alternating notes should clearly be B and A sharp, to match the notes that precede and follow it.

Example 4: *Song of an old woman*, UNISA edition, errata

2. Afrika Madonna

In the overall five-movement design of *Afrika Hymnus II*, its second movement, *Afrika Madonna*, serves as a 'slow movement', along with the fourth. Following the example of using the Universiteitsoord organ as a point of departure in *Afrika Hymnus I*, registration and manual indications in the score of *Afrika Hymnus II* reflect the disposition of the Rieger organ in the ZK Matthews Great Hall (formerly the Old Mutual Hall) at the Muckleneuk (Pretoria) campus of the University of South Africa (UNISA). The instrument had been completed in 1994, just a few years before Grové's work. The manuscript even provides the disposition on the contents page (albeit without speci-

fyng the instrument). Manuals are indicated using Roman numerals; it is clear from the score that 'I' refers to the Great, 'II' to the Swell, and 'III' to the Positive.

Grové was highly impressed by the capabilities of the UNISA Rieger organ, both in terms of the range of colours available and the modern capture system that makes it easy to store a very large number of combinations and easily switch between them. Gerrit Jordaan recounts how, at their first session working together at the organ, Grové was 'elated' and wanted to try out every conceivable combination (Jordaan, 2014a). This is evident in the work as a whole - there are a great many registration changes and some highly unusual combinations. However, *Afrika Madonna*, a very subdued work, uses only a small subset of what is available - only soft flute and string stops. Once again, to aid the discussion, the structure could be analysed as follows⁴.

Table 2: *Afrika Madonna* - structure

Section	Bars	Description
A	1-6	Chordal figures in manuals; double-pedal figures
B	7-11	Entrance of the primary melodic material
B ₁	12-18	Continuation of the primary melodic line; development of accompaniment's texture
B ₂	19-21	Further continuation of primary melodic line; further development of the accompaniment's texture
C	22-23	Contrasting interlude that links section B ₂ and A ₁
A ₁	24-27	Return to opening texture, but now with only a single pedal line

The main body of the movement comprises the three successive B-sections. They are set apart from one another by subtle changes in texture and registration, and by the way the material evolves. Since the main melodic material only enters at the start of this long, composite B-section, section A has the quality of an extended introduction.

⁴ The analysis and discussion of this movement has been adapted from Jordaan, 2021.

Although the final section (labelled A₁ here) repeats melodic material that appears in the B-sections, it has commonalities with section A in terms of registration, texture, vertical aspects, and melodic content, even if this may not initially be obvious.

Black Madonna, a 1929 sculpture by the South African artist Ernest Mancoba, served as inspiration for this movement, and the composer states in his programme notes that it is 'an expression of the timelessness and peace that emanate from the sculpture' (Muller & Walton, 2006:115). Grové frequently exploits the organ's capacity to sustain sound indefinitely, particularly in movements and sections at a low dynamic level. This is evident here in the long, sustained chords, the compound pedal points that stretch across multiple bars, and even the long note durations that form part of the rhythmically more diverse primary melodic line. Widor speaks of how the organ can 'put forth the same volume of sound indefinitely and thus inspire the religious idea of the infinite' (Near, 2019:15), and this correlates with the sense of timelessness expressed in this piece. It also applies to *Song of an Old Woman* (the sustained left-hand chord) and, along with it, *Oggendhimne*, which repeatedly touches on the idea of timelessness ('ons tydloses'...'die harmonie van tydoosheid'...'slank en tydloos'...'Ons is twee tydloses'). Coincidentally, the fourth movement of *Afrika Hymnus II* is about 'the infinite night'.

Writing for double pedals is a feature almost throughout. In section A, the feet are at opposite ends of the pedalboard – the composer jokingly called this movement 'the skirt-ripper movement' (Jordaan, 2014a). In subsequent sections they are close together, with one foot holding a pedal tone and the other active around this. The interval between two successive notes for the same foot never exceeds a 3rd, which is comfortable and reasonably easy to play. The pedal part nowhere sounds at the pitch that it is notated: because it uses a 4' or 2' stop, it sounds either an octave or two octaves higher. For much of the time it is at the top of the texture, while the right hand, at 8', is at the bottom, making its lower notes the *de facto* bass.

The registration is minimal and subdued throughout; changes are subtle. The A-sections have the same registration: Bourdon 8' on the Swell for the manual part; Rohrflöte 4' coupled from Positive for the pedal part. The Pedal division on the UNISA Rieger organ does have a 4' flute, but one on the Positive is used instead, presumably because that division is under expression and the dynamic level can be regulated to *mp*, as indicated in both section A and A₁.

Example 5: Afrika Madonna, bar 1-2

Largo e piacevole ♩ = 54

II: B 8' *pp*

III: Rfl 4'
III/P *mp* *leg.*

Like the feet, the hands also start out at opposite ends of the keyboard, creating a hollow and otherworldly backdrop. After nearly a minute and a half of introductory material, the main melodic line finally enters in the left hand, on a strikingly distinctive gapped solo registration of 16' + 2' flutes, again embodying an otherworldly hollowness and in a way also evoking sonically the wooden material of the sculpture. The score stipulates for it to be played on the Great, using the Great's Bourdon 16' with the 2' flute coupled from the Positive. (The 16' is removed in bar 19, so that the 2' flute sounds on its own.) The Positive 2' flute is also coupled to the Pedal and used on its own for the pedal part in all three B-sections. Furthermore, the right thumb plays a line on the same 2' stop in section B as part of the accompaniment – staccatissimo notes that form a piquant counterpart to the sustained tones in the background.

Example 6: Afrika Madonna, bar 7-8

[B 8'] *p*

III: Wfl 2' *p* *staccatissimo*

I: B 16' III/I *mf*

[III/P] *p*

The main right-hand part on the Swell has the following registrations.

B: Bourdon 8' (right thumb: Positive Waldflöte 2')

B₁: Gamba 8'

B₂: Voix Céleste 8'

It is unusual for the Voix Céleste to be used on its own, without adding another 8' string to produce the characteristic undulating sound of the stops combined. Presumably, the intention was to effect a change in timbre but retain a thin string sound and subdued dynamic level. In practice, the fact that the Voix Céleste is tuned at a slightly different pitch is not too bothersome in this context; it even contributes to the ethereal atmosphere. Instead, it is the use of the 2' that turns out to be problematic. In the composite B-section, if the indications in the score are followed, the same 2' flute used in the left-hand melodic line is simultaneously also used in two other parts, as noted above. For the accompanimental parts (right hand and pedal) on their own, this does not present a problem – they remain distinct from each other because they never converge, and because their character and articulation are so different. However, the left-hand melodic line occasionally contains notes that do converge with the accompaniment, and this can be disruptive – the texture is too transparent for it to go unnoticed. The following situations occur.

- Bar 11: The left-hand D flat is already being sustained in the pedal part.
- Bar 17: The left-hand E is already being sustained in the pedal part.
- Bar 18: The left-hand F is already being sustained in the pedal part, and shortly after that, the E in the pedal part is already being sustained in the left-hand part (see example 7).
- Bar 19: The A flat that appears at two points in the left-hand melodic line is already being sustained in the pedal part⁵ (see example 8).

⁵ Gerrit Jordaan (in Grové, 2011) gives a registration for section B₂ in which the pedal part is played on a 4' flute coupled from the Swell. This doesn't appear in the manuscript score. Even if sanctioned by the composer, I find this registration unconvincing in comparison to the original, because of how it alters the established texture, and because of the harmonic implications of the pedal part sounding in a different octave.

Example 7: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 18, left hand and pedal

Example 10

LH
[III/I]

[III: Wff 2' (notated at sounding pitch)]

[I: B 16' (notated at sounding pitch)]

Pedal

[III: Wff 2' (notated at sounding pitch)]

Example 8: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 19, left hand and pedal

III: Wf 2' (notated at sounding pitch)

LH 19a

Pedal (b)

III/P: Wf 2' (notated at sounding pitch)

In bar 11, 17, 19, and at (i) in bar 18, one solution might be for the sustained note to be released to make way for the melody, so that the note can be sounded anew; it should then be sustained again. However, when the melodic line proceeds to the next note, it will sound as though the previous one is still being sustained so as to overlap with the following note. At (ii) in bar 18, the sustained note in the left-hand melodic line should be released to make way for the one in the accompaniment (which will not be heard otherwise), but this would distort the melodic line – it would sound as if the melodic line's E is played a third time. It is curious to find these flaws in such a transparent and carefully crafted texture, and knowing the care that the composer takes in general. Jordaan (2008:57) recounts how the fact that the 2' tone colour had to be borrowed from the Positive made the pedal part problematic to register, and that some of the pitches of the staccatissimo figures in section B had to be changed because they overlapped with the sustained pitches in the pedal part. These cases would have been immediately obvious, while the ones identified above are more subtle. Also relevant is the statement by Schoeman (2016:289), writing about Grové's piano music, that Grové never revised any works, and that this sometimes led to him

overlooking editorial mistakes. Grové was fond of using 4' and 2' stops on their own in the pedal parts of more subdued movements or sections to create colourful and idiomatic textures. Being intent on doing the same here may have stopped him from looking for other solutions. Furthermore, casting the right-hand and pedal parts in opposite roles – the right-hand part providing the lowest notes and the pedal part the highest of the harmonic background throughout the composite B-section – has a kind of destabilising effect on the performer that contributes to the otherworldly effect of the piece – perhaps also part of Grové's intention. If a 2' flute is available on another division that can be appropriately balanced against the other stops, using that in either the accompaniment or the solo registration could provide an ideal solution. Having various soft 8' string stops available on a division other than the Swell could also prove useful. But these propositions imply a fourth manual. Failing such resources, the following options can also be considered.

Firstly, for the left-hand melodic line, it is worth considering simply using whatever 2' flue stop is available on the Great (rather than coupling from the Positive), even if its sound is more pronounced than would be ideal. Depending on the instrument and the space, it may be more musically beneficial to separate solo and accompaniment completely. If the work is to be performed on a two-manual instrument, or the Positive is not enclosed, such a compromise would be needed anyway.

A second possibility is to redistribute the parts as follows: In section B (bar 7 to 11), switch the right-hand and pedal parts. Use an 8' flute or stopped flute on the Swell and couple it to the Pedal. Play both parts at the pitch they *would* sound if using the registration indicated in the score. That is, if using an 8' flute, play the right-hand part (originally the pedal part) two octaves higher. Play the staccatissimo notes, originally played separately on the Positive, on the same manual as the rest.

Example 9: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 7, alternative distribution and registration (1)

Sw: Fl. 8' (originally the pedal part)

7

p

(16'+2')

mf

Sw/Ped.

U

U

(originally the right-hand part)

Alternatively, use a 4' flute and play both these parts an octave lower. This would make the pedal notes easier to reach.

Example 10: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 7, alternative distribution and registration (2)

In this way, the solo line and accompaniment can be kept completely separate, with no convergence of notes.

Keep the same configuration in section B₁ as described above, switching to a soft string stop on the Swell, with the Swell still coupled to the Pedal. The difference in timbre between the two parts is lost, but the distance between the parts compensates for this to some degree, and the result is still convincing. The right-hand part is entirely playable by the feet, since the left foot can comfortably take the minor-3rd interval of F sharp and A.

Example 11: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 12, alternative distribution and registration

If a suitable 4' stop is available (or an Octave coupler + Unison off), this can be used and the pedal played an octave lower, which is, again, more manageable.

Section B₂ requires a different redistribution. Here, the right-hand part can be played by the left hand, and the pedal part once again by the right hand; the solo melodic line can be played by the feet, with the 2' stop that has been used now coupled to the Pedal. If playing both accompaniment parts on the Voix Céleste is irksome, the same soft string 8' from the previous section can continue to be used, or some experimentation could yield an alternative solution.

Example 12: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 19, alternative distribution and registration

A final suggestion: if there is no 16' stop available on any of the manual keyboards, the solo melodic line can be played reasonably comfortably by the feet, using a soft 16' on the Pedal, although a perfect legato may not always be achievable. The use of foot glissando between black keys will be necessary.

Example 13: *Afrika Madonna*, bar 10, left-hand part with pedalling suggestions

Solutions such as those suggested entail an element of compromise – a reality for organists who are often faced with instruments that do not conform to the resources that are called for in a particular work. As a counter to potential objections to redistributing parts in the ways described above (and also for *Song of an Old Woman*), consider that the practice has historical legitimacy: someone of such stature as Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654) had no qualms about redistributing and transposing parts in this way. Commenting on Scheidt's preface to his *Tabulatura Nova* of 1624, Owen (1997:79) notes how Scheidt 'cite[s] some alternate ways to play four-part composi-

tions, such as playing the soprano on the Great, the alto on the Rückpositiv, and the tenor and bass on the Pedal [...] He not only has no compunction about playing two parts on the Pedal but also thinks it a nice idea to let it play the alto part, while the right hand solos the melody on the Positiv and the left hand plays the tenor and bass on the Great.' Even though tone colour and content often go hand in hand in Grové's work, I would contend that the content by itself is strong enough to weather this kind of open-minded approach, and encourage keeping in mind Grové's enthusiasm for discovering novel sounds and combinations.

3. *Circle Dance around the Sacrificial Flame*

Afrika Hymnus III is somewhat shorter than the other two works in the cycle, and more serious in character, especially the sombre second movement. Gerrit Jordaan recalls the following about the work's creation (Jordaan, 2014a):

One day he [Grové] showed me an organ work that was neatly copied, finished with articulation detail and dynamic indications. He asked if I knew the work. It looked to me like an African interpretation of a trio that was probably written shortly after the *Second Hymnus*. He then wrote "Voices from the darkness" and "Liberation" and called the work the *Third Afrika Hymnus*.

The first movement, *Circle Dance around the Sacrificial Flame* (hereafter shortened to *Circle Dance*), is therefore somewhat set apart from the rest, and it works well as a stand-alone work. The composer depicts 'a dance ritual at night' (Grové, 2011); the third movement of *Afrika Hymnus I*, entitled *Night Ritual*, calls to mind a comparable scene.

This piece has much to recommend it, and would be a good introduction to Grové's music for performers of intermediate to advanced ability who don't want to limit themselves to the naturally more manageable slow movements discussed above. Of all the 'fast' movements in the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle (the outer movements of each work, along with the middle movement of *Afrika Hymnus II*), it is certainly the most manageable from a technical perspective. It is also relatively short, and the structure (see below) is easy to grasp, resembling a rondo⁶.

⁶ The analysis and parts of the discussion have been adapted from Jordaan, 2021.

Table 3: *Circle Dance* – structure

Section	Bars	Description
A	1-14	Presentation of the main material
B	15-23	Contrasting material
C	24-48	Independent section with new material presented and developed
A ₁	49-53	Return to material and texture of section A
B ₁	54-58	Similar to section B
D	59-74	Second independent section with new material presented and developed
A ₂	75-82	Return to material and texture of section A

The B-sections are short, flowing directly from the A-sections, but are marked by a shift in style and content. Section C and D are extensive and self-contained, seemingly unrelated to the A-sections and each time introducing new material, but also referencing and developing figures from the B-sections.

The piece as a whole could be said to be in an E-based tonality, with quasi-tonal elements. The melodic content often links together different transpositions of pentatonic scale, and this is also reflected in the vertical dimension, with many of the chords based on pentatonic collections (although this is often counteracted by sharply dissonant added notes). Bar 11 to 14, for example, is entirely based on a single diatonic collection, corresponding to the natural minor scale on E. There are sections that contain material that returns (either transposed or at original pitch level) with only minor alterations. Furthermore, the tempo is fairly moderate, there is some predictability in the asymmetrical rhythmic groupings, and there are even long sections with a steady crotchet pulse, such as the second half of section C and the whole of section D (although bar lengths vary).

A notable feature is the double-pedal writing in the first and last A-sections, made more intricate by the fact that certain notes are to be sustained while the others are short and marked staccato. In section A, only notes played by the left foot are sustained, but in bar 76 of A₂ they alternate between the feet. The level of difficulty is further increased in A₂ by having certain notes from the chords in the right-hand part similarly sustained. Coordinating the note lengths and articulation between the hands and the feet makes for a genuine – but not insurmountable – challenge. Fortunately, these passages are relatively short. A useful recommendation here would be simply to mark the sustained notes with lines, to simplify reading.

Example 14: *Circle Dance*, bar 76-77, sustained notes marked

Apart from this, a significant challenge that performers will face is the registration. Unlike its predecessors, *Afrika Hymnus III* has only general instructions regarding registration: dynamic level, which manuals to use, and occasional pitch indications for stops, but without specifying any stop names. In contrast to the meticulously worked-out and notated registrations of *Afrika Hymnus I* and *II*, most decisions are therefore left up to the performer. A knowledge of Grove's registration practices in the earlier works will be indispensable as a foundation for the task of working out a registration for *Afrika Hymnus III*. For instance, one should be aware of his fondness for including mutation stops in ensembles; his use of gapped registrations; his apparent preference for brightness and clarity – relying on mixtures instead of reeds on the manuals at higher dynamic levels; and, in general, a keenness to discover novel combinations and avoid making the instrument sound too 'traditional'.

Whether the work was written with a specific instrument in mind is not known, although the indications make it clear that there would ideally be three manuals, with two divisions under expression. The latter is relevant only for the second and third movements; in the first movement, use of the swell pedal is limited to a few bars. As in *Afrika Hymnus II*, manuals are indicated by Roman numerals. It would be reasonable

to assume that these refer to the same manuals as in *Afrika Hymnus II*, although in many cases it seems like 'II' and 'III' are used interchangeably.

Gerrit Jordaan has collaborated with the composer in preparing performances of all the works in the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle, and has collected notes and instructions based on this, including a detailed registration scheme for *Afrika Hymnus III* (including, of course, the movement under discussion). The first performance of the work⁷ was on the Rieger organ of the ZK Matthews Great Hall at UNISA, and the registration scheme documented by Jordaan (in Grové, 2011) reflects the disposition of that organ. The registration is much expanded from what is indicated in the score, in which indications are fairly minimal – there are more frequent changes, and some apparent contradictions and omissions are resolved. I used it as the point of departure for a recorded performance of the work (as part of the full cycle). The full registration used in that recording is provided in the series of examples that follows, with the aim of nudging along interested performers by providing explicit information on at least this aspect of performance. Readers can judge the effectiveness of the result, and some may subsequently make their own, differing decisions – engagement of this type is to be welcomed. Not everything from the registration scheme documented by Jordaan could be replicated, and naturally one must adapt to the instrument itself. A further constraint was that the registration had to be prepared, as well as executed, with no assistance whatsoever and under significant time constraints, as strict Covid-19 restrictions were in effect at the time in the United Kingdom, where the recording was made. The recording is available online via the following address:

<https://www.hermanjordaan.com/sakov2022.html>

A note about the registration indications: To save space and hopefully facilitate readability, the labels used are for generic stop names as far as possible. That is, 'Pr.' is used for all types of principal stops (so the stop named 'Octave 4' on the organ is labelled 'Pr.4'), and 'Fl.' for flute stops. However, 'Bd.' (Bourdon) or 'Gd.' (Gedackt) is sometimes used to indicate a stopped flute as it might appear on a modern 'eclectic' disposition. 'V.' refers to 'Viola', a string stop. Reed stops used are the following: 'Hb.' Hautboy; 'Tr.' Trumpet; and 'Fag.' Fagotto (a mild 16' reed). All editorial additions (registration and manual indications) are boxed to distinguish them from indications in the original score, which are also included.

At the start, the dynamic markings and manual indications appear to contradict the

⁷ A recording of the performance is available online – see Jordaan, 2014b.

foreground status of the left-hand line, which captures the main melodic interest: it is on the Swell ('II' in the score), marked *mf*, while the right-hand part, with its clipped, abrupt chords, is on the Great ('I' in the score), marked *f*. Jordaan notes that the composer 'had the idea of a soft reed in the LH and not too bright colours in the RH [*sic*]' (Grové, 2011), and a soft reed would of course most likely be found on the Swell or Positive. In the registration shown here, it is played on the Swell. The indication to play the accompaniment on the Great suggests that it should not be lacking in presence, as confirmed by the dynamic marking.

Example 15: *Circle Dance*, bar 1; bar 6

Sw: Pr.8' Fl.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' N.2⅔' Hb.8'
 Gt: Fl.8' Gd.8' Fl.4' Ch/Gt.
 Ch: Pr.8' Pr.4'

Ped: Bd.16' Pr.8' Gd.8' Gt/Ped. Ch/Ped.

The registration documented by Jordaan actually has the left-hand part on the Positive, using an ensemble that includes the Cromorne 8', and with the accompaniment incorporating the Hautbois 8', which adds a satisfying 'bite' to the chords. However, this could not be replicated on the organ used for the recording, since the Cromorne stop on the Choir couldn't be made to speak with the necessary promptness.

Section B has an indication to play both hands on the Great. A registration change to reflect the changes in style and content is appropriate. The lack in the score of a similar indication from section A₁ to B₁ could simply be an oversight. The B-sections juxtapose contrasting elements, and one should consider 'playing this up' with appropriate registration and manual changes, as shown in example 16.

Example 16: *Circle Dance*, bar 15-17; bar 20-21

Sw: Pr.8' Fl.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' N.2½' T.1¾'
 Gt: Pr.8' Fl.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' Q.2½' Pr.2' Sw/Gt. Ch/Gt.
 Ch: Gd.8' Fl.4' Fl.2' Sw/Ch

15 20

Gt I Ch Gt Sw: +Pr.2'

Ped: Pr.16' Bd.16' Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Fl.2' +Gt/Ped.

ff

Section C requires a trio registration with the right-hand part in the foreground. The pedal part has the first appearance of a pitch indication in the work, namely 8'. It would be reasonable to assume that this means an 8' *basis*, as opposed to the standard 16' basis (which, by implication, would be in force otherwise), and that stops at a higher pitch level could be included for clarity and colour.

Example 17: *Circle Dance*, bar 24-27

Sw: Pr.8' Fl.8' V.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' N.2½'
 Gt: Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Pr.2' Cornet V
 Ch: Gd.8' Fl.8' Fl.4'

24

III Sw *mf* Gt *f* 3

mf Ped: Pr.8' Ch/Ped.

After both hands move to the Great in bar 31, the trio texture resumes two bars later, but there is no indication of a return to the previous configuration with the left hand on a separate manual, something that should certainly be considered in practice.

Bar 36 has the only other pitch indications in the movement: 8' 4' for the right hand and 4' 2' for the left hand. There are no manual indications here either, but playing

on different manuals is obviously required. Bar 38 has a sudden shift to *ff*, with both hands on the Great, for the chord that interrupts the contrapuntal texture. For the recorded performance, I decided to play on the Great from the start of the bar, since the figure in the right-hand part foreshadows a motif that will be very important in the other movements.

Example 18: *Circle Dance*, bar 36-39

Sw: Pr.4' Fl.4' Pr.2' Fl.2' Gt: Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Fl.4'	Sw: Pr.8' Fl.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' N.2½' T.1½' Octave Gt: Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' Q.2½' Pr.2' Sw/Gt. Ch/Gt. Ch: Gd.8' Fl.8' Pr.4' Fl.4'
--	--

Ped: Bd.16' Pr.8' Gd.8' N.5½' Pr.4' Gt/Ped

The shift back to *f* in bar 39 has been construed as simply reflecting the return to a sparser texture, and not requiring a registration change. *ff* is reached again in bar 45, this time with the addition of stops.

Example 19: *Circle Dance*, bar 44-46

Sw: +Pr.2' +Mix.

+Sw/Ped. +Ch/Ped.

It would seem entirely logical to reproduce the same registration for all three A-sections, but it also stands to reason that this could come across as an overly traditional approach, lacking in the colour and variety so greatly valued by the composer. Jordaan documents the same registration for section A and A₂ (the latter representing

a partial recapitulation), but a registration without any reeds for A_1 that is softer but brighter and less harsh.

Example 20: *Circle Dance*, bar 49-50

Sw: Fl.8' Fl.4'
 Gt: Pr.8' Fl.8' Gd.8' Q.2⅔' Fl.2'
 Ch: Gd.8' Fl.8' Fl.4' L.1½'

49

Ped: Bd.16' Pr.8' Sw/Ped.

Bar 56 has a sudden contrast, with both hands on the Great (this comes a bar later in the registration documented by Jordaan).

Example 21: *Circle Dance*, bar 56-57

Sw: +Pr.8' +Pr.4' +N.2⅔' +T.1⅓'
 Gt: +Pr.4' +Sw/Gt. +Ch/Gt.

Ped: Pr.16' Bd.16' Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Fl.2'

+Fag.16' -Fl.2'
 +Gt/Ped. +Ch/Ped.

The beginning of section D (from bar 59) is very similar to a passage in the third movement of *Afrika Hymnus I* (*Night Ritual*, bar 32-33), which has a cornet-like registration of 8', 4', 2⅔', 2', and 1⅓'. Accordingly, a similar combination was used.

Example 22: *Circle Dance*, bar 58-60

Ch: +Pr.8' +Pr.4' Sw: Pr.8' Fl.8' V.8' Pr.4' Fl.4' N.2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' T.1 $\frac{3}{4}$ '

58

Ch III *ff* Sw II

From bar 62, the indication is *ff* with both hands on the Great. This section sees the introduction of the 'onbeat-iamb' motif (a designation chosen in order to highlight the fact that the short first note is in an accented position, appearing *on* the beat) – a recurring motif throughout the *Afrika Hymnus* cycle, and indeed Grové's entire *Music from Africa* series.

Example 23: *Circle Dance*, bar 62-63

Sw: [no change]
Gt: Pr.8' Fl.8' Gd.8' Pr.4' Pr.2' Mix. Sw/Gt. Ch/Gt.
Ch: Pr.8' Gd.8' Fl.8' Pr.4' L.1 $\frac{1}{2}$ '

62

Gt I *ff*

Ped: Pr.16' Bd.16' Pr.8' Gd.8' Pr.4'
Ch/Ped. Gt/Ped.

Bar 66 features separate lines in each hand that cross, but the indication to play with both hands on the Great is still in force. It would make more sense to separate the lines, which would also call out the contrast with the surrounding material. In the recording, the left-hand part is played on the Swell and the right-hand part on the Choir, without any changes in registration.

Bar 69 initiates a *crescendo* towards the end of the section. The registration documented by Jordaan also underscores the increasing tension from this point on with the addition of stops, including Trumpet 8' on the Great at bar 71. Personal prefer-

ence saw a more gradual build-up, with the addition of the Trumpet only at the climax (see example 25).

Example 24: *Circle Dance*, bar 69-71

Sw: +Mix.

Sw II *f* 3

Gt I *ff* 3

+Sw/Ped

Sw: +Pr.2' +Hb.8'
Gt: +Diap.8' +Q.2 2/3'

Example 25: *Circle Dance*, bar 73-74

Gt: +Tr.8'

73

3

3

Ped: +Fag.16'

As noted, section A_2 has the same registration as the beginning. The dynamic marking for the left-hand part is *p* (as opposed to *mf* at the opening); this has been interpreted as simply marking the contrast with the *ff* at the end of the preceding section. The dynamic level jumps back to *ff* for the movement's concluding gesture in bar 81, and the final bar was given further 'punch' with the addition of reeds.

Example 26: *Circle Dance*, bar 81-82

Sw: +V.8' +T.1 $\frac{3}{5}$ ' -Hb.8'	Sw: +Hb.8'
Gt: +Pr.8' +Pr.4' +Pr.2' +Sw/Gt.	Gt: +Tr.8'
Ch: +Gd.8' +Fl.8' +L.1 $\frac{1}{3}$ '	

Ped: +Pr.16' +Pr.4' +Sw/Ped.

The lack of more detailed registration indications from the composer himself is a somewhat disappointing aspect of this movement and of the work as a whole, compared to the others in the cycle. If Grové had in mind a soft reed for the left-hand part at the opening, then he could have provided this guidance in the score – a general indication such as ‘soft reed’ would have sufficed. A complete registration scheme, or even naming specific stop families, is not always necessary, but pointers such as ‘a nasal sound’ or ‘bright’ provide enough information to organists to greatly facilitate the often daunting task of working out the registration for a complex score.

CONCLUSION

Organists often face the challenge of striking a balance between realising a composer’s intentions and dealing with the realities of the instruments accessible to us. Using a specific organ as a template for registration in a score can be very helpful, but can be inhibiting if it differs greatly from what is available to the performer. And conversely, a lack of indications can be equally intimidating. Hidden textural problems may also raise questions and hesitations about our reading of a score. Such obstacles should not stop us from attempting works as important as those by Grové, however unconventional some of the solutions may turn out to be. I have provided suggestions for overcoming challenges such as those noted above, and advocated for using them when approaching some of the movements in Grové’s outstanding *Afrika Hymnus* cycle. Grové’s works deserve our attention, and merit any effort towards performing them, as they remain unsurpassed in the South African organ literature.

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