

## C. W. Gluck

Over 73 years, I've come up with a list of favorite composers. When my nephew drew my attention to C. W. Gluck recently, I hadn't expected to be adding another to that list.

He sent me a keyboard score, titled, "Hymn of Faith", attributed to C.W. Gluck. I found the hymn had been based on a choral excerpt from Gluck's opera "Iphigenia en Tauride". Right away, I saw the hymnal score had fistfuls of notes. Highlighting the melody in such arrangements becomes a challenge.

If you're right handed, you need to devote the right hand *alone* to the melody. I do exactly that on one of two organ manuals. With my left hand on a second manual, I compose a counter melody to offset the Gluck. Finally, to underpin the two lines of melody on the manuals, I compose a third: a bass line melody, to be played with alternating feet on the organ's pedal board.

Gluck's position in the history of music was pivotal. When he started composing, music was little more than a frivolous distraction. He abjured most of the obligatory ornamental pyrotechnics that provided sure-fire entertainment for the masses. He greatly admired Handel's counterpoint, but felt he could come up with simply harmonized melodies that would serve to enhance the dramatic action of any playbook that inspired him.

Long ago, I realized, I was no Handel. I knew I was not one of the extraordinarily gifted composers. But I knew, and still know, what it takes for a melody to have maximum impact.