

Suite on Luther Chorales
Texts and Melodies by Martin Luther
arr. by Barbara Harbach

In 1517, Martin Luther purportedly nailed 95 theses to the door of All Saints' Church in the German town of Wittenberg. His criticisms challenged the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and led to a split with the Catholic Church, giving birth to the beginnings of Protestantism, the Reformation. As the Reformation spread throughout Europe, it was marked by horrific episodes of warfare and violence. The 500th anniversary of the nailing of the theses has led to many creative projects, and as Barbara Harbach was a Minister of Music at an ELCA Lutheran Church in Missouri, she, too, was inspired to pay homage to Martin Luther.

Harbach's seven-part ***Suite on Luther Chorales for Solo Organ*** follows the centuries-old practice of invigorating traditional melodies with contemporary harmonizations, rhythms, and orchestral colors. The melody which she uses in three of the seven movements (Parts I, IV, VII) is *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is Our God), one of the best-known hymns by Luther, who wrote the words and music sometime between 1517-1519. *Ein feste Burg* is also known as the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation" since it increased support for the Reformation movement. The second Luther hymn (Part II), *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (Our father in Heaven), is a paraphrase in German of the Nunc dimittis, the canticle of Simeon written in 1524, and often used for funerals. The third Luther hymn (Part V), *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee), was written in 1524, a paraphrase of Psalm 130.

- I. Motet - A Fortress Strong is an exuberant arrangement of the original rhythmic melody *Ein feste Burg*; it features counterpoint enunciation of each theme and a lively middle section before the echoes of the familiar theme herald the end of the first movement.
- II. Chorale on *Vater unser im Himmelreich* is a newly harmonized four-part chorale based on the tune.
- III. Reverie on *Vater unser* has an improvisatory approach with melodies that seem to implore Heaven.
- IV. Chorale Fantasy on *Ein feste Burg* is a powerful and lively setting of the second verse of *Ein feste Burg* which announces Christ as our triumphant advocate.
- V. Chorale on *Aus tiefer Not* is a new harmonization that reflects the strife of *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee*.
- VI. Rhapsody on *Aus tiefer Not* has the melody in the tenor with a soaring improvisatory right hand that seems to reach upwards.
- VII. *Ein feste Finale* marks the return of Luther's exhilarating hymn – this time with the more familiar hymn tune and features a moving accompaniment and contemporary harmonization while it retains the famous melody.

Suite on Luther Chorales

I: Principal Mixture 8', 4', 2'
II: Trumpet
III: Principal 8', 4'
Ped: Gt/Ped 16', 8', 4'

I. Motet - A Fortress Strong

Setting, Barbara Harbach
Ein feste Burg
Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

(♩ = ca. 108)

The musical score is written for three parts: Principal I (Treble staff), Principal II (Bass staff), and Pedal (Bass staff). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as (♩ = ca. 108). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6. The second system starts at measure 7 and ends at measure 12. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). Performance instructions include *I* and *II* for the principals, and *(I)* for the pedal. The piece features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The meter changes from 4/4 to 6/4 in measure 6 and back to 4/4 in measure 12.

III. Reverie on Vater Unser

I: Soft Reed 8'
II: Flutes 8', 4'
Ped: 16', 8'

Setting, Barbara Harbach

Vater unser

Tune: V. Schumann, Geistliche Lieder, 1539

Flowing (♩ = ca. 72)

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features three staves: a vocal line in the upper treble clef, a piano accompaniment in the lower bass clef, and a pedal line in the bottom bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Flowing' with a quarter note equal to approximately 72 beats per minute. The piano part begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and includes fingering indications 'I' and '(1)'. The vocal line starts with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a melodic phrase in the second measure. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern with slurs. The pedal line provides a harmonic foundation with whole notes and half notes.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. It maintains the same 4/4 time signature and key signature. The vocal line begins at measure 6 with a melodic phrase that spans across several measures. The piano accompaniment continues with its eighth-note pattern, incorporating slurs and ties. The pedal line continues with its harmonic support, featuring whole notes and half notes. The overall texture is light and flowing, consistent with the tempo marking.

VI. Rhapsody on Aus tiefer Not

I: Flute 8'
II: Soft Reed
Ped: Flute 16', 8'

Settings, Barbara Harbach
Aus tiefer Not
Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

Smoothly, with freedom (♩ = ca. 66)

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system consists of three staves: a Treble staff, a Bass staff, and a Pedal staff. The Treble staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, marked with a first fingering 'I' and a dynamic of *mp*. It contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a slur. The Bass staff has a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature, with a whole rest. The Pedal staff has a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature, with a whole note. The second system continues with a 2/4 time signature change, then back to 4/4, and finally a 5/4 time signature. It features a first fingering '(I)', a second fingering 'II', and a triplet of eighth notes. The third system starts with a 5/4 time signature, then changes to 4/4, 6/4, and back to 4/4. It includes several triplet markings and slurs across the staves.

VII. Ein feste Finale

Full Organ
 Ped: Full with light 16'

Setting, Barbara Harbach
 Ein feste Burg
 Tune: Martin Luther, 1483-1546

With brilliance (♩ = ca. 116-128)

The musical score is written for Full Organ and consists of two systems of three staves each. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system includes a first finger (I) marking in the right hand. The second system includes a 'v' marking in the right hand and 'v' markings in the left hand. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the right hand.