

## *Sustaining That Initial Spark*

By Lucy G. Ingram

On the front page of its September 6, 2000 issue, *USA Today* published a feature article about the fact that our country is in desperate need of organists. The article went on to say there are many significant organ factories in the world today, but the number of organists to play these grand instruments is quickly diminishing.

Wayne Leupold and I have taken seriously the challenge of addressing that problem. We have collaborated in creating the *Discover the Basics*<sup>®</sup> series, which is directed especially to the student who is beginning lessons on any keyboard instrument.

Often a child (3rd to 5th grades) who is fascinated by the organ (both its appearance and its many sounds) is told he/she must wait to begin organ lessons until years of piano study are completed. Thus the student is turned away, and it will be fortunate if he/she has not lost the impetus of that initial spark of fascination with the organ.

Many young students would be proud to be able to contribute musically to services in the church, even at a relatively early stage of development. Parents and the students' peers will share in that pride.

We have been pleased to learn that in certain regions of the country, organ teachers have begun to combine their forces in creating multilevel festivals, at which students have access to evaluations by qualified adjudicators—somewhat analogous to Regional Piano Festivals within states affiliated with the *Music Teachers National Association*. Our future organists are sure to profit from such experiences as these.

As *USA Today* further points out, those curious about “The King of Instruments” can begin playing, and often within a few months could be able to participate in church services, and eventually take part-time organist positions to earn spending money. The article quotes Douglas Cleveland, a professor of organ at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, as saying, “College students are beginning to choose double majors, taking up the organ while studying math, science or languages . . . They see the organ as a pleasurable way to support themselves through college and guarantee part-time work anywhere.”

*Lucy Ingram studied piano and organ at the Eastman School of Music where she majored in piano performance. Lucy has taught piano for over thirty years at all levels in both her private studio and at several colleges and universities in Greensboro, North Carolina. She brings a very wide teaching experience to her role as co-editor of Discover the Basics<sup>®</sup>.*