

INSPIRING HYMN PLAYING & CREATIVE REGISTRATION

Austin 2019

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OBJECTIVE

To prepare ourselves as organists to invite the spirit in our congregations through inspiring hymn playing and creative registration.

This class is for those who feel they are experienced organists.

The goal for this session is for us to better understand how we might enhance our hymn playing through the use of varied treatments of a hymn so that we can further invite the spirit into our congregations. This session is for “more experienced” organists. ►

ORGANISTS

- Invite the Spirit
- Be a Leader
- Teach the Gospel

It is our job to invite the spirit in our congregations as we play. The more prepared, practiced, skilled, and sensitive to the spirit within the worship setting that we are, the more we are able to accomplish our goal. ►

HYMN TEXT

- Understand the text
- Read through the text of each verse as poetry
- Look for important words

We should begin by understanding the hymn text. Reading through the text of each verse, as poetry, with meaning and emphasis. We can look for important words and phrases as well as specific verses that we want to highlight musically. ►

MUSICAL TREATMENT

- Technical Foundation
 - Legato Playing
 - Precise Releases
 - Independence of Line
- Registration / Volume
- Tempo - SING IT!
- Variety
- CONFIDENCE - Be Prepared!

It's our job to take a hymn and to bring it to life by how we play it. ► First, we must have the technical foundation and be solid especially in our legato playing, precise releases (ie repeated notes) and independence of the voices. ► How we register the hymn is of course a huge part of how we convey the hymn appropriately and in an engaging and inspiring manner as well as the volume we play. Not too loud so as to drown out the congregation but well-supported to allow for the congregation to sing out comfortably without reservation. In general, I find that organists don't play loud enough. The more volume we can provide (tastefully of course) the more comfortable the congregation is to really join in. ► Additionally, our choice of tempo is crucial. Too fast and the congregation doesn't have a chance to grasp and reflect on the text and feels rushed. Too slow and they are gasping for air every few notes or at worst are uninspired by our playing. I think it's difficult to set a good tempo if you haven't sung through the hymn yourself. Is it comfortable for us to sing? ► We can also vary our treatment as we will see in just a bit which will really take our playing to the next level. ► Throughout all these things we must be confident which means we must PREPARE ahead of time!

CREATIVITY

- Introductions
- Verses

I'd like to spend the remainder of our time discussing creativity and variety in our hymn playing. We will first look at varied treatments of introductions and then of verses. There are of course limitless ways that you could treat a hymn. So much depends on the hymn itself and also your congregations ability and familiarity with variety in hymn playing and singing. If the congregation has never heard the organist play anything but the hymn straight out of the hymnbook then it may take some weeks and months to help them feel comfortable and confident in singing to varied treatment of hymns. As a side note often one of the best times to introduce new things is Christmas time. ►

INTRODUCTIONS

- Soprano solo (trumpet)
- Melody in octave unison, then break to 4-part harmony
- Alternate introduction

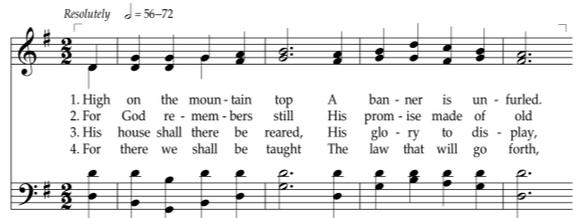
First, some things we can do with introductions. ►

SOPRANO SOLO

- Hymn - #5 - High on the Mountain Top
 - First 6 notes - play soprano voice on Swell 8' Trumpet
 - Last 6 notes of first line - play as SA duet on same trumpet

5 High on the Mountain Top

Resolutely ♩ = 56-72



1. High on the moun-tain top A ban-ner is un-furled.
2. For God re-mem-bers still His prom-ise made of old
3. His house shall there be reared, His glo-ry to dis-play,
4. For there we shall be taught The law that will go forth,

- Last part of intro - play SATB both hands on Great with full registration



On Zi-on's mount be-hold it stand!
Of all the world in lat-ter days.
O-bey his truth, and learn his word.
And save our-selves with all our dead.

MELODY IN OCTAVE UNISON

- Hymn - #242 - Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow
 - Play melody of first phrase in octaves on Great
 - Play last phrase SATB

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow 242

Majestically ♩ = 58-72

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system of music has the lyrics: 'Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise him, all crea-tures here be-low;'. The second system of music has the lyrics: 'Praise him a-bove, ye heav'n-ly host; Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost.' The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes in the bass line.

Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; Praise him, all crea-tures here be-low;

Praise him a-bove, ye heav'n-ly host; Praise Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost.

ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

- Hymn - #66 - Rejoice, the Lord Is King!

The image displays a musical score for the hymn "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" (Hymn #66). The score is titled "Joyful" with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 100$. It begins with an "Introduction" section. The score is arranged for three parts: Manuals, Pedals, and Organ. The Manuals part includes a "Solo 8' Tpt." line and a "Full accompaniment" line. The Pedals part includes a "Full accompaniment" line. The Organ part includes a "Both hands - Full accompaniment" line. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

You can either compose/arrange your own or you find prearranged ones. At the end I will discuss what I consider are good sources for introductions/interludes and hymn harmonizations.

VERSES

- Tenor solo
- Manual only
- Soprano solo
- Alto up an octave
- Soprano/Tenor switch
- Harmonizations (free accompaniments)

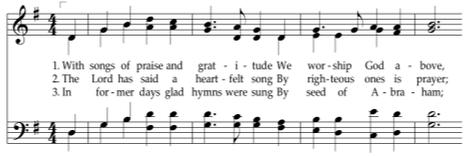
Now, let's look at some varied treatment of verses including: tenor solo, manuals only, soprano solo, alto up an octave, soprano/tenor swap, and harmonizations ►

TENOR SOLO

- LH plays tenor on separate manual with solo registration
- RH plays soprano & alto on different manual
- Feet play bass

With Songs of Praise 71

joyfully ♩ = 92-108



1. With songs of praise and grat - i - tude We wor - ship God a - bove,
2. The Lord has said a heart - felt song By righ - teous ones is prayer;
3. In for - mer days glad hymns were sung By seed of A - bra - ham;

- Effective when the tenor line is melodically or rhythmically interesting
- Can be applied for all or part of a verse
- Most effective on an internal verse (ie 2 or 3), after the congregation has become accustomed to singing the hymn
- The congregation can sing in unison or in parts

MANUALS ONLY

- Both hands on 1 manual with no pedal

O God, Our Help in Ages Past 31

With dignity ♩ = 69-80



1. O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,
2. With - in the shad - ow of thy throne, Still may we dwell se - cure,
3. Be - fore the hills in or - der stood, Or earth re - ceived her frame,
4. O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,

Choose a hymn that doesn't have large skips that would be unplayable by hands only.

- Mastery over legato fingering techniques required to play with independence of line
- Creates a somewhat lighter, suspended effect
- *Dramatic variation* - smothered swell; begin verse with expression pedal closed, then gradually open throughout the verse
- Can be used on a more reflective verse, internal verse, introduction, etc.

SOPRANO SOLO

- RH plays solo on 1 manual
- LH plays alto & tenor on different manual
- Feet play bass

Choose a hymn that doesn't have large intervals between alto and tenor voices.

85 How Firm a Foundation

With dignity ♩ = 100-112

1. How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,
2. In ev - 'ry con - di - tion—in sick - ness, in health,
3. Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dis - mayed,

Is laid for your faith in his ex - cel - lent word!
In pov - er - ty's vale or a - bound - ing in wealth,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'How Firm a Foundation'. It includes a soprano solo line and piano accompaniment. The score is in 4/4 time and features three verses of lyrics. The tempo is marked 'With dignity' and the metronome marking is 100-112. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

- More difficult for the LH (has to play alto and tenor; bass in pedals)
- Can be used in introduction, verse one, or other verses.
- Can be used in part or all of the verse

ALTO UP AN OCTAVE

- RH plays alto up an octave and soprano
- LH plays tenor
- Feet play bass



The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Oh, bless me now, my Sav - ior, I come to thee!". The score is written in G major and 4/4 time. The right hand (RH) part is written in the alto clef (C4), which is one octave higher than the soprano clef. The left hand (LH) part is written in the tenor clef (C3). The lyrics are: "Oh, bless me now, my Sav - ior, I come to thee!".

- Provides an effect of descant above soprano line
- Most effective when the alto line has interest (i.e. moving alto line)
- Can be effective at the end of the final verse

SOPRANO/TENOR SWAP

- RH plays tenor up an octave and alto as written
- LH plays soprano down an octave
- Feet play bass

Abide with Me!

Reverently $\text{♩} = 72-84$

1. A - bide with me! fast falls the e - ver - time.
2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day.
3. I need thy pres - ence ev - ry pass - ing hour.

- Effective when the tenor line is melodically or rhythmically interesting
- Can be applied for all or part of a verse
- Most effective on an internal verse (ie 2 or 3), after the congregation has become accustomed to singing the hymn
- The congregation can sing in unison or in parts

HARMONIZATIONS

- Should largely preserve the melody
- Congregation should sing melody
- Typically played on last verses but can be used as introductions and interludes

A hymn harmonization is an alternate arrangement of the hymn which usually changes harmonies and sometimes rhythms and adds embellishments. There are some good hymn harmonizations (or free accompaniments) available. Not all harmonizations are created equal. It's important obviously that you have the skill level to play well whatever harmonization you choose. Also, it's important that for the most part a harmonization still favors the melody. If it wanders off too much from the melody it can actually detract from the hymn singing experience more than enhance it. Generally, the congregation will sing melody when a harmonization is played. They will instinctually over time figure this out especially when the harmonies are changing enough and they realize they can't sing hymnbook parts. ►

EXAMPLES

- Let Us All Press On
- The Lord Is My Light

REGISTRATION CHANGES

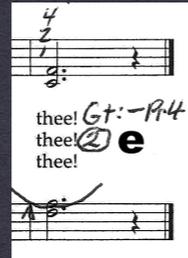
1. Create variety in hymn playing
2. Emphasize meaning of the text with registration changes
3. Change stops rhythmically

It is nice to make registration changes within a single hymn between verses or between verse and chorus. This can be done to: ►

1. Create variety in hymn playing through volume, pitch, and quality — any variety should be related to the hymn and should never be a matter of chance which means you need to preset your stop changes. ►
2. Emphasize meaning of the text with registration changes. Please remember that changes in registration should be subtle and apply to the overall character of the hymn, not to individual words or phrases. ►
3. If registration changes are made within a single hymn, practice making stop changes as you would practice accuracy of notes. Make changes of registration between chords, not while notes that will be affected by registration changes are sounding. ►

CHANGE STOPS

- Take last chord in one hand so other hand can press piston
- Release chord and quickly press piston
- Begin playing next verse



Physically take a breath between verses. Breathe with the congregation.

Coordinate with your chorister so they no to allow you breathing room for you to press piston changes.

RESOURCES

- Hymn Harmonizations
 - <https://hymnharmonizations.com>
 - orders@hymnharmonizations.com
- Ward Organist
 - <https://wardorganist.com>

There are a number of resources for hymn harmonizations however these 2 target LDS hymns instead of a broader base of Protestant hymns and both websites allow you to instantly purchase and download the music. These are personally my go to resources. I created hymnharmonizations.com for LDS organists to have better access to very high-quality (melody preserving and harmony-rich) arrangements for varying skill levels. If there is ever a specific hymn that you would like to have harmonized please contact me via the website and I will give your request serious consideration.