

Lesson 4: Effective Hymn Playing—An Overview

A podcast by Shinji Inagi, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu

Materials needed: Hymn Registration Shortcuts; Hymns 6 and 166 (*Hymnbook*)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 4: Effective Hymn Playing—An Overview. My name is Shinji Inagi, representing the Organ Area of the Brigham Young University School of Music.

This lesson will cover working with directors, basic organ registration for hymn playing, registering for richness, and some important standards in hymn playing.

[Purpose as organists]

Before discussing effective hymn playing, let's first consider our purpose as organists. According to the Church Handbook, it is to "invite the spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord." There are many important principles and skills that will enable you to accomplish all of the things mentioned in that statement.

[Choosing hymns]

The first step in effective hymn playing is to choose hymns that are appropriate for your ability level and for their function in the service. Normally, a ward music director receives a theme for each Sunday from the bishopric, and he or she suggests appropriate hymns for each sacrament meeting. It is essential that an organist become involved in this process, because hymns vary in difficulty, and some require more preparation time. You might consider offering your music directors a list of hymns that you would be able to play comfortably.

[The director]

Another important element in effective hymn playing is learning to work with the director. Each director conducts music differently, and the two of you must become unified as you lead the congregation. Discuss together how to set the appropriate tempo, how to cue the beginning of the hymn, the end of each verse, and the final ending of the hymn. It is essential to meet with the director regularly to go over specific issues that may determine the effectiveness of the music in the service. Some of these issues might include how to begin the introduction of the hymn, what the conducting beat pattern will be, how to deal with fermatas, and how long to rest between verses.

[Hymn registration]

Now, let's talk about registration for congregational hymn playing. Do you remember "registration for clarity" from Lesson 2? When registering for clarity, we use only one stop per pitch. If you are building a basic "principal chorus," you would use principal 8', 4', and 2' on the Great, and principal 16', 8', and 4' in the Pedal. Let's hear how it sounds.

As an alternative to registering for clarity, you can also register for richness. In this approach, use a “pyramid” configuration; that is, use more than one stop at the lower pitch levels. For example, you can use principal 8’, flute 8’, principal 4’, flute 4’, and principal 2’. This approach reduces the clarity of the sound, but produces a broader and warmer sound. “Richer” does not necessarily mean “louder.” Listen, for example, as we compare a “clear” combination of 8’, 4’, and 2’-foot stops and a “rich” combination of 8’, 4’, and 2’-foot stops.

Do not include celeste stops in this “pyramid” because their “fuzzy” character does not contribute towards a supportive organ foundation—the first goal of congregational hymn accompaniment.

O.K. now let’s register on your organ. First, build a stop combination for “clarity” on the Great. After you have done this, add some 8’ and 4’-foot stops to make the sound “richer.” Pause the lesson and build your combinations.

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Now let’s talk about some general guidelines for hymn registration. Please remember that the principal chorus is the backbone of organ sound and should be the basis for registration in congregational singing. You may add mixture stops to the principal chorus to add “brightness” to the sound. After adding a mixture stop, you may add 8’ (and possibly 4’) reeds in order to add fire to a bright principal chorus, or 8’ and light 16’ reeds to add gravity to a more foundational principal chorus. These options are commonly used for jubilant hymns.

Let’s hear some examples. I will first play with the principal chorus 8’, 4’, and 2’ and then I will add a mixture for brightness.

In this next example, I will first play with the bright principal chorus 8’, 4’, 2’, and mixture, and then I will add 8’ and 4’ reeds.

Now let’s add *gravity* to the principal chorus. I will first play with the bright principal chorus from the last example, and then add 16’ and 8’-foot reeds.

Now you know how to add brightness, fire, and gravity to the principal chorus for jubilant hymns.

Let’s talk about meditative hymns. Sacrament hymns are mostly meditative hymns.

In meditative hymns, stops from the flute chorus might be substituted in place of principal stops to minimize sharpness, especially at the 4’ and 2’ level.

Listen to the following example of a meditative hymn. I will first play with the principal chorus 8’, 4’, and 2’, then substitute principal 4’ and 2’ with flute 4’ and 2’.

Now, pause the lesson, and practice building combinations for both a jubilant hymn and a meditative hymn.

***pause

[Hymn playing standards]

The primary role of the organist in hymn playing is to support congregational singing. The flowing lines that are sung by the congregation are best supported by a smooth approach to hymn playing. For this reason, legato touch is a widely accepted standard for hymn playing. An organist who plays all four lines of a hymn in good legato style creates a solid background that inspires confidence in the singers. Specifically, if one note *moves to a different note* within the same voice, connect these two notes in legato style. When one note is *repeated* within the same voice, repeat the notes clearly and distinctly. When practicing in polish mode, plan on spending much of your practice time making this happen in all four voices independently. Be aware that many situations will arise in which some repeated notes may need to be tied in order to help the music flow in a more legato style. This is discussed in other lessons.

Finally, but very importantly, how are the four voice parts distributed between the hands and feet, and among the manuals and pedals? In the normal arrangement of parts, soprano and alto are played by the right hand and tenor is played by the left hand. The left hand occasionally plays some alto notes. Both hands are normally played on the Great manual. The feet play the bass part in the Pedal. Note that the left hand does not play the bass part, allowing the hands to focus on three legato lines instead of four.

In this lesson, you have learned how to work with directors, basic organ registration for both jubilant and meditative hymns, and some important standards in hymn playing.

In our next lesson, we will discuss Hymn Playing in Shortcut Mode—Playing Hymns Right Now.

Hymn Registration Shortcuts

Following is an easy-to-use “shortcut” plan for selecting stops in either meditative or jubilant hymns for congregational singing. It can be used with most pipe or electronic church organs.

A FEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

1. **Support** the congregation with confidence, but do not overpower
2. Let the **text** guide the registrational plan for the hymn
3. Begin with stops from the **principal chorus**, especially at the 8’ level
4. **8’ and 4’ pitches** are minimum for the manual; 16’ and 8’ are minimum for the pedal
5. In **meditative hymns**, substitute flutes for principals at 4’ and 2’ levels as needed to reduce sharpness
6. Use **changes of registration** between verses and/or between verse and chorus

BASIC HYMN REGISTRATION

MEDITATIVE HYMNS: Begin with this basic combination

Great: Principals 8’ and 4’ (the stops may be called Principal, Diapason, Octave, or Prestant)

Pedal: The main 16’ stop (may be called Principal, Subbass, Bourdon, or Gedackt), and Great to Pedal

JUBILANT HYMNS: Add the 2’ principal on the Great to the meditative hymn combination, resulting in—

Great: Principals 8’ 4’ and 2’ (the 2’ stop may be called Super Octave, Fifteenth, or Doublette)

Pedal: The main 16’ stop, and Great to Pedal

FOR A SINGLE CHANGE OF REGISTRATION BETWEEN VERSES

MEDITATIVE HYMNS: Couple the Swell chorus 8’ 4’ 2’ to the Great

Begin with the Basic Hymn Registration for Meditative Hymns (above). Also, prepare the following:

Swell: flutes or principals 8’ and 4’, and flute 2’, resulting in—

an 8’ stop (Bourdon, Gedackt, Geigen Prinzival, or Diapason)

a 4’ stop (Flute, Nachthorn, Spitzprinzival, Octave, Prestant, or Kloppelflöte)

the available 2’ stop (Piccolo, Blockflöte, Flute à bec)

Later, between verses or between a verse and the chorus, add the Swell to Great coupler

JUBILANT HYMNS: Add the Great chorus mixture

Begin with the Basic Hymn Registration for Jubilant Hymns (see above)

Later, between verses or between a verse and the chorus, add the Great chorus mixture (usually called Mixtur[e], and always followed by a Roman numeral)

For yet another change, you might add a chorus reed 8’ on the Great or Swell (Trumpet, Trompette, Tromba, or Fagott)

Redeemer of Israel

Confidently ♩ = 84–100



1. Re - deem - er of Is - rael, Our on - ly de - light, On
 2. We know he is com - ing To gath - er his sheep And
 3. How long we have wan - dered As stran - gers in sin And
 4. As chil - dren of Zi - on, Good tid - ings for us. The



whom for a bless - ing we call, Our shad - ow by day And our
 lead them to Zi - on in love, For why in the val - ley Of
 cried in the des - ert for thee! Our foes have re - joiced When our
 to - kens al - read - y ap - pear. Fear not, and be just, For the



pil - lar by night, Our King, our De - liv - 'rer, our all!
 death should they weep Or in the lone wil - der-ness rove?
 sor - rows they've seen, But Is - rael will short - ly be free.
 king - dom is ours. The hour of re - demp - tion is near.



5. Restore, my dear Savior,
 The light of thy face;
 Thy soul-cheering comfort impart;
 And let the sweet longing
 For thy holy place
 Bring hope to my desolate heart.

6. He looks! and ten thousands
 Of angels rejoice,
 And myriads wait for his word;
 He speaks! and eternity,
 Filled with his voice,
 Re-echoes the praise of the Lord.

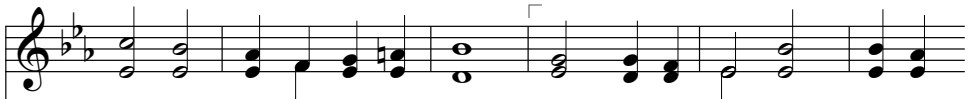
Abide with Me!

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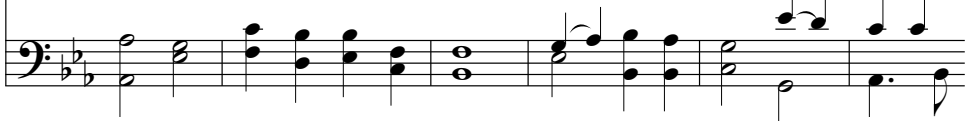
Reverently ♩ = 72-84



1. A - bide with me! fast falls the e - ven - tide; The dark-ness
 2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day. Earth's joys grow
 3. I need thy pres - ence ev - 'ry pass - ing hour. What but thy



deep-ens. Lord, with me a - bide! When oth - er help - ers fail and
 dim; its glo - ries pass a - way. Change and de - cay in all a -
 grace can foil the tempt-er's pow'r? Who, like thy-self, my guide and



com - forts flee, Help of the help - less, oh, a - bide with me!
 round I see; O thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me!
 stay can be? Thru cloud and sun - shine, Lord, a - bide with me!



Text: Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847

Music: William H. Monk, 1823-1889

Luke 24:29

John 15:4-12