

Lesson 12: Continuing Your Organ Training

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Materials needed: About Your Calling; Organ Training Resources; Internet Resources for Organists

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 12: Continuing Your Organ Training. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips, but it is not necessary to be seated at the organ console. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

[The call to serve]

A call to serve in the church as an organist is unique. Whether you are all ready called as an organist or simply preparing to serve, understanding the call is critical. You might think of the call as a tall tree with two deep roots of equal importance. The loss of either one will eventually weaken the tree. The first root is the spiritual side of the call. It draws its nourishment from the Lord Himself, who calls members of the church to serve through His priesthood leaders. Elder Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offers three things that one who is called to serve must come to know:

First, you are called of God. The Lord knows you. He knows whom He would have serve in every position in His Church. He chose you. He has prepared a way so that He could issue your call. . . .

. . . The second thing . . . is that the Lord will guide you by revelation just as He called you. You must ask in faith for revelation to know what you are to do. . . .

There is a third thing you need to know: Just as God called you and will guide you, He will magnify you. You will need that magnification. Your calling will surely bring opposition. . . . There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. Well, you are inadequate to answer a call to represent God with only your own powers. But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone. (*Ensign*, November 2002)

The second, and also very important root is musical training. Few callings require more training in addition to learning gospel principles than the calling of organist. As you know, it usually takes many years of training to learn music before fingers or feet ever touch the organ keyboards; and even more years of training and experience to reach true mastery. But is mastery really desirable? Consider these statements. First, from Elder Boyd K. Packer, who leaves no room to question the importance of our callings:

Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them. (*Ensign*, November 1991)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks recognizes the need for a skill level that will allow us to play in a flowing manner:

We depend on our choristers and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Too slow or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood. (*Ensign*, November 1994)

And President Gordon B. Hinkley inspires us to rise above mediocrity:

I speak of the need for a little more effort, a little more self-discipline, a little more consecrated effort in the direction of excellence in our lives.

This is the great day of decision for each of us. For many it is the time of beginning something that will go on for as long as you live. I plead with you: don't be a scrub! Rise to the high ground of spiritual, mental, and physical excellence. You can do it. You may not be a genius. You may be lacking in some skills. But so many of us can do better than we are now doing. We are members of this great Church whose influence is now felt over the world. We are people with a present and with a future. Don't muff your opportunities. Be excellent. (*Ensign*, September 1999)

[What kind of training do you need?]

There are many different ways to “be excellent”—to sharpen your skills as an organist. Before committing yourself to one, however, decide what sort of organist you will become. You may have very limited time right now to dedicate to organ practice and study, yet you would like to perform the duties of your calling in a respectable manner. On the other hand, you may be able to spend several hours per week increasing your skill level and building your repertoire. Or perhaps something in your experience has inspired you to pursue serious organ study, and you can dedicate ten or more hours per week in practice and study. Skill level and time available are two of the most important factors to consider. There are at least three others. For your reference, take the time right now to answer these five questions as they apply to you at this time in your life:

1. What sort of organist will you become?
2. How much time per week can you dedicate to organ practice and study?
3. Do you prefer to learn in a small class situation, private lessons, on your own, or in a combination of these ways?
4. What practice organ can be made available to you?
- and 5. What financial resources are available to you for organ study?

You will be happiest in your continued study when your goals as an organist—including the answers to these questions—are in harmony with the ways that you decide to continue your training. So after you answer them, find out which of the available training options are the best match for your situation. Let's explore some of the best options.

[Find out what is available in your community; options for continued training]

The first, and most obvious possibility, would be to finish this course. If you needed to skip lessons 6 through 9, which focus on learning hymns in polish mode, taking the time to work through those lessons would be an excellent “next step.” You can do this on your own or, even better, with the assistance of a qualified private or group organ instructor. Where can you find such assistance?

Local communities vary widely in their abilities to provide organ training, as do the local church areas, stakes, and wards. First, find out if priesthood-directed training is available in your own ward, stake, or area. Contact your ward music chairman or bishopric first; and then the stake music chairman, stake music adviser (a high councilor), or stake presidency.

The instructions from the *Church Handbook* regarding music training state:

With the approval of priesthood leaders, stake and ward music chairmen may arrange for music training courses, seminars, and workshops. They may recommend to priesthood leaders the names of qualified instructors who could provide this training. Training may also be provided to individuals as needed. No fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.

Church-sponsored training can often be tailored to organists of various backgrounds and goals, and with various levels of time commitment. The small-class format is most common, but sometimes they may be able to provide free private lessons. Most stakes will arrange to provide key access for practice on the church organ (the Stake President has this prerogative). And, as mentioned above, no fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.

If your stake or ward does not provide such training, you might consider making a request. However, you may need to seek out training that is not sponsored by the church. Such training will usually involve professionals who must charge a fee—and the *Church Handbook* makes allowance for fee-based lessons held in church buildings:

When there is no reasonable alternative, priesthood leaders may authorize the use of meetinghouse pianos and organs for practice, paid private instruction, and recitals involving members of the units that use the meetinghouse.

Private instruction by a well-qualified organ instructor is a time-honored approach that has many benefits. The individual accountability and the fee provide motivation to practice regularly. The instructor can focus on your particular needs. Also, the interactions and friendships between teacher and student can enrich the lives of both.

The most valuable resource for finding qualified organ instructors is a referral from a trusted organist. The BYU organ faculty maintains a growing list online at <www.organ.byu.edu>. The local chapter of the American Guild of Organists—the AGO—can also provide referrals. For a list of local AGO chapter deans, visit <www.agohq.org/regional/index.html>. Organist hired by local colleges and large churches may also provide useful referrals.

If you would like the idea of private lessons in cooperation with a BYU Independent Study organ course, there are six levels of courses available. These courses are designed to provide motivation and instruction by working towards specific goals in technique, hymn playing, repertoire, organ registration, music theory, etc. Levels 1 and 2 are each available in free “self-study” versions and low-cost “certificate” versions (Music 71 and 72); or in college-credit versions (Music 399R sections 1 and 2). For more information on these courses, visit <www.organ.byu.edu/handout_programs.pdf>.

The main text for Levels 1 and 2 of the Independent Study organ courses is *OrganTutor Organ 101*, a computer-based resource for instruction in manual and pedal technique, hymn playing, and organ registration. A workbook of nearly 300 pages contains written exercises, studies, and instructions that were originally designed for the BYU group organ classes. *OrganTutor* is best used with the support of a private or group instructor, where students can use the video and audio examples, the extensive text and graphics, and self-testing to make more efficient use of the time between lessons or classes. More information can be found at <www.organtutor.byu.edu>.

Other method books offer valuable help to those who enjoy learning on their own. *Hymn Studies for Organists* by Dr. Parley L. Belnap is a course in hymn playing designed specifically for LDS organists. He provides meticulous instruction, fingering and pedaling in the first hymns. As one works through the book and more advanced topics are covered, the details are gradually left behind. For more information, search “Hymn Studies for Organists” on the Internet.

For those attending BYU Provo, private lessons are available (Music 160R), group organ instruction (Music 115, 116R), and other organ courses for the non-music major. BYU-Idaho has similar offerings by excellent instructors. BYU also has strong undergraduate and graduate programs for the organ major, with intensive training in performing the organ masterworks, in hymn playing, organ registration, history, theory, organ pedagogy, etc. Visit <www.organ.byu.edu> for more information.

Workshops, seminars, and weekend training events are occasionally offered by local AGO chapters, BYU, or other organizations. Watch for announcements of training-oriented events by your local AGO chapter, which is very interested in promoting the art of organ playing. BYU hosts the BYU Organ Workshop each year in early August, which attracts hundreds of LDS organists for an intensive four-day workshop. Its classes and events center on the requirements of the Independent Study organ courses, although enrollment in these courses is not necessary. The opportunity to associate with other LDS organists of similar interests is particularly valuable. Visit <organworkshop.byu.edu> for more information.

Numerous other resources are available. Three important Internet sites provide ready access to many of these resources:

1. The Organ Study at BYU Website <www.organ.byu.edu>, which is directly associated with this course and with all organ instruction offered by the university.
2. The American Guild of Organists website <www.agohq.org>, which has an extensive online store with educational materials. And
3. Pipe Organs and Related Topics <www.albany.edu/piporg-1/>, which is an excellent gathering place for everything related to the organ. Of particular interest are the links, “Individual Organs and Organ Tours,” and “Publications and Discographies.”

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 12: Continuing Your Organ Study. The lesson began with a brief discussion of the call as an organist, and a reminder of the great potential for good that accompanies that call. You were then lead through a series of questions designed to help determine what kind of training is most appropriate for you at this time. Several possible ways of receiving organ instruction were then explored, including church-sponsored training, private instruction, BYU Independent Study organ courses, and more.

Most importantly, this lesson marks the end of only the beginning. We hope that this introductory course has helped you catch the vision of the organ world that will lead you into a lifetime of fascination, learning, and service as an organist. We challenge you to take the time *now* to decide which form of continued study best meets your needs, and to make arrangements *today* to get started.

Happy practicing!

About Your Calling

A list of suggested readings and resources for the LDS organist

Addresses by General Authorities

- Eyring, Henry B. "Rise to Your Call." *Ensign*, November 2002.
- Hinckley, Gordon B. "The Quest for Excellence." *Ensign*, September 1999.
- Jensen, Jay E. "The Nourishing Power of Hymns." *Ensign*, May 2007.
- Kimball, Spencer W. "The Gospel Vision of the Arts." *Ensign*, July 1977.
- Oaks, Dallin H. "Worship through Music." *Ensign*, November 1994.
- Packer, Boyd K. "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord." *Ensign*, August 1976.
- Packer, Boyd K. "Reverence Invites Revelation." *Ensign*, November 1991.

Official Church Communication

- LDS Church Music website <www.lds.org/churchmusic>
- Frequently Asked Questions <<http://www.lds.org/pa/display/0,17884,6755-1,00.html>>
- Guidelines from the *Church Handbook of Instructions*
<<http://www.lds.org/cm/display/0,17631,4987-1,00.html>>
- Quotes from Church Leaders and the scriptures about music
<<http://www.lds.org/cm/quotes/0,18328,5084-1,00.html>>

Other Resources

- Organ Study at BYU website <www.organ.byu.edu>
- Resources for LDS organists <<http://www.geocities.com/ddstone48/>>
- LearningOrgan (Internet discussion group) <<http://groups.google.com/group/LearningOrgan>>
- Howarth, Paul R. "Tips for Beginning Organists." *Ensign*, September 2002.

Organ Training Resources Available through Brigham Young University

MAIN WEBSITE

The Organ Study at BYU Website—Visit <http://organ.byu.edu> and then click LDS Organists and Teachers

BOOKS AND SOFTWARE

Hymn Studies for Organists (Belnap). <http://creativeworks.byu.edu/catalog/ViewItem.aspx?item=SM004> (\$15.95 + shipping)

Three-Stave Hymn Accompaniments (Cundick). <http://creativeworks.byu.edu/Catalog/ViewItem.aspx?item=SM003> (\$10 + shipping; free downloads <http://www.organ.byu.edu/3StaveHymns/index.htm>)

Manual-Only Hymns for Organ, and Transformations. <http://lds.org/cm/display/0,17631,4774-1,00.html> (free downloads)

OrganTutor (Cook) (visit <http://organtutor.byu.edu> and then follow the specific links)

OrganTutor Organ 101 Complete

Computer tutorial on CD-ROM (for PC and Mac) and Workbook (\$69.50 + shipping)

Computer tutorial and printable Workbook (pdf files) on Internet (\$20-\$30 per year)

Computer tutorial only (no Workbook)

On CD-ROM (for PC) (\$50 + shipping)

On Internet (\$25 per year; \$15 per 6 months)

Workbook only (no computer tutorial)

Printed (\$19.50 + shipping)

Printable on Internet (\$6)

Organ 101 Introduction (free selected lessons)

On CD-ROM (for PC) or on Internet

ORGAN COURSES THROUGH BYU INDEPENDENT STUDY AND THE INTERNET

Visit <http://organ.byu.edu> and then click BYU Independent Study Students and follow the specific links.

College-credit courses:

Music 399R Sections (Levels) 1-6 <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/courses/university.cfm?subject=10000066>

Noncredit courses (free or low cost) <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/courses/free.cfm>

Organ 71—Beginning organ for pianists with little or no previous formal organ training, or who need help in applying what they have learned in their organ playing.

- Certification track (a \$40 non-credit version of Music 399R Level 1 that offers a certificate)
- Self-study track (a free non-credit version of Music 399R Level 1 that does not offer a certificate)

Organ 72—Review of basics for those with organ training, but who would benefit from a review of basic legato organ technique, repertoire, hymn playing, and registration. Should be able to sight-read single-line melodies.

- Certification track (a \$40 non-credit version of Music 399R Level 2 that offers a certificate)
- Self-study track (a free non-credit version of Music 399R Level 2 that does not offer a certificate)

The New LDS Organist (A free “quickstart” organ course in 12 podcasts & packet) Visit <http://organ.byu.edu/newldsorganist>

Creative Hymn Playing Techniques (Music 116R podcasts—audio lessons) visit <http://organ.byu.edu/116podcasts.htm>

ORGAN WORKSHOPS

The BYU Organ Workshop (for adults, first Tuesday thru Friday of August annually) — <http://organworkshop.byu.edu>

The BYU Young Musicians SummerFestival (for ages 14-18, annually in mid-June) — <http://summerfestival.byu.edu>

Internet Resources for Organists

General “Hot Spots” of Organ-Related Web Resources

- **Pipe Organs and Related Topics** www.albany.edu/piporg-l
Links of topical interest www.albany.edu/piporg-l/piplinks.html
Individual Organs and Organ Tours www.albany.edu/piporg-l/organs.html
- **American Guild of Organists** www.agohq.org
Educational Resources <https://agohq.org/store/index1.html>
- **Organ Study at BYU** www.organ.byu.edu

Specific Areas of Interest to Organists

- **BYU**
Organ Study at BYU organ.byu.edu
BYU Organ Workshop <http://organworkshop.byu.edu>
BYU Young Musicians Summerfestival <http://summerfestival.byu.edu>
The New LDS Organist <http://organ.byu.edu/newldsorganist>
OrganTutor www.organtutor.byu.edu
Independent Study Organ Courses, Levels 1-6
College-credit courses: <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/courses/university.cfm?subject=10000066>
Non-credit courses (levels 1-2 only): <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/courses/free.cfm>
Belnap *Hymn Studies for Organists* <http://creativeworks.byu.edu/Catalog/ViewItem.aspx?item=SM004>
- **LDS organist**
Organ Training Resources <http://www.organ.byu.edu/trainingresources.pdf>
Discussion group for organ students and teachers <http://groups.google.com/group/LearningOrgan>
Resources for LDS Organists (DeeAnn Stone) www.LDSOrganists.info
Early LDS Hymns <http://www.earlyldshymns.com/>
1835 hymnbook online http://www.earlyldshymns.com/A_COLLECTION_OF_HYMNS.pdf
Temple Square Organs <http://www.mormontabernacleorgan.webs.com/>
Jackman Music www.jackmanmusic.com
Online Music for the LDS Organist www.wardorganist.com
A Blog for LDS Organists <http://organlessons.blogspot.com/>
- **Organ Music**
Organ Historical Society www.ohscatalog.com
Jackman Music www.jackmanmusic.com
Kelvin Smith online music library www.untraveledroad.com/music/music.htm
Where to Buy Organ Music www.organ.byu.edu/wheretobuy.htm
- **Recordings and broadcasts**
Organ Historical Society www.ohscatalog.com/recordings.html
Pipedreams Program Archives <http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/listings/>
JAV Recordings www.greatorgancds.com
Pro Organo www.proorgano.com
Bach Organ Works (free online recordings--Kibbie) <http://www.blockmrecords.org/bach/>
- **The organ itself**
Encyclopedia of Pipe Organ Stops www.organstops.org
Organ History <http://www.concertartist.info/organhistory/>
A Young Person’s Guide to the Pipe Organ (The Pipe Organ Guide) www.agohq.org/guide/index.html
- **Miscellaneous**
PIPORG-L (to join the group) <https://list.uiowa.edu/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=piporg-L&A=1>
A Wiki resource on organ playing <http://organplayingwiki.byu.edu>
BACHorgan.com www.bachorgan.com
MIDI primer http://arts.ucsc.edu/EMS/Music/tech_background/MIDI/MIDI.html