

# EFFECTIVE HYMN PLAYING

## Top Priority

*Tempo, registration, and continuity are more critical than note accuracy.*

## Basic Registration Principles

The standard registration is a principal chorus with a minimum of 8' and 4' stops in the manuals and 8' and 16' stops in the pedal. The sound must be fairly bright to support congregational singing.

Avoid 16' manual stops 99.9% of the time.

The pedal must balance the manuals. Occasionally play a verse without pedals for contrast, when it seems appropriate.

If the principal chorus is too strong, substitute flutes at one or more pitches.

Use reeds judiciously, sometimes using one instead of a principal at 8' and or 4' pitches for extra brightness and color; or add one or more reeds to a full principal chorus.

Do not use the tremulant. Do not use celeste stops.

Do not use full organ ALL THE TIME.

Do not underplay the congregation, or people will be reluctant to sing out.

Open the swell/expression pedal, and leave it open.

Do not use the crescendo pedal 99.9% of the time.

## Other Considerations

Play soprano, alto and tenor parts with both hands on the same manual. Play the bass part with the feet in the pedals.

Match the articulation (legato vs. non-legato touch) to the character of the hymn.

The hymn notation is for the singers. You are not limited to right hand/treble clef or left hand/bass clef. Play where you can reach comfortably and accurately regardless of clef.

The introduction should identify the hymn and end in the right key.

Play the introduction with a steady tempo; do not ritard at the end.

Be sensitive to the text.

Breathe (phrase) with the congregation.

Avoid overdoing the stop changes.

Go for the spirit rather than the letter of the law

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*Recommended: The Organist and Hymn Playing by Austin Lovelace; Agape 1981 or Abingdon Press 1962. Out of print; available from online sources such as Bookfinder.com.*