

Coloring Time for Organists

Kevin Murset - (435) 862-3880 - kevinmurset@gmail.com

★ Questions? What are they? Tell me – and write them down – so they can be answered!

Music as an artform: A painter uses canvas and paint – organists use stops and *time*. A painter studies color theory to understand the interactions of different hues, the importance of contrast, and the context the combinations are used in. This is our course in color theory and will provide the foundation for one to understand the complexities of the organ, and the art of registration.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- 1) Registration
- 2) Technique

How many different combinations can there be?

- Stops have two states: on or off.
- An organ with 4 stops - possible combinations:
 - $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 16$ (including no stops)
 - 10 stops 1,023 combinations
 - 20 stops 1,048,575 combinations
 - 30 stops 1,073,741,823 combinations
 - 40 stops 1,099,511,627,780 combinations (approx.)¹

Some Science-y Bits

- Series of overtones: the explanation for every sound you have ever heard
- Two tonal families: Flue and reed. Most stops are imitative of orchestral instruments.
 - **Flue**
 - Flute - not very strong on overtones, and are close to a pure sine wave
 - String - mostly overtones
 - Celeste stops. Two sets of identical pipes with one being slightly out of tune with the other (usually sharp) giving it an “undulating” quality
 - Principal - A near 50/50 mix of flute and string sounds
 - Strong fundamental and overtones
 - **The main sound of the organ, and unique to it**
 - **Reed** - strong overtones
 - Chorus or Ensemble (trumpets and tubas)
 - Solo (oboe, clarinet, French horn)
 - Bonus category: non-speaking stops (harp, chimes)

Context of the Performance

Context must be considered when planning registration and overall texture:

- What type of event will you be playing at, and what will your function be?
 - Service playing, funeral, wedding, concert/recital?
- Your thoughtfulness and careful preparation will support and magnify the spirit of the event.

Resources:

1. Organ Studies for the Beginner, Darwin Wolford
2. An Introduction to Organ Registration, James Engel
3. Pedal Mastery for Organ, Joyce Jones
4. Allen Organ Company LD-34 Owner’s Manual
5. “Lessons for the New Organist” – American Guild of Organists - YouTube playlist²

¹ https://www.johnsorganworks.co.uk/blog/read_39841/the-science-of-registration.html

² <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSJ9JGJlHsPJukIW5F3yEQSXhpJzPgAJcL>

Solo Registration: Prelude and Postlude

The goal is to choose contrasting but balanced stops

Some unique and uncommon combinations:

- 8' Principal stop played in the tenor range
- "Fonds d'Orgue" all 8' stops, all manuals, coupled
- 16' stop played an octave higher than written
- 4' stop played an octave lower than written
- Gaps between pitch levels - 8' and 2' or 16' and 2'
- 2nd voices (French horn, Clarinet)

Example combinations³: demonstration

Ensemble Registration: Hymn Playing

"Ensemble" or "chorus" sound

- Flute
- Principal
- Reed (added to principal chorus)

Building an effective texture:

- For clarity, register vertically using only one stop per pitch level (Principal 8', 4', 2')
- For richness, use a "pyramid" configuration with more than one stop at lower pitch levels (Principal 8' and Flute 8', Principal 4' and Flute 4')
- Swell shoes are generally fully open during singing
- Economy: avoid adding stops that make no audible contribution to the ensemble

Use couplers to adjust dynamics quickly and effectively:

- Example: start the hymn with no couplers, then add as the hymn progresses through each verse

Use the hymn text to guide registration choices

Example combinations: demonstration

AMERICAN CLASSIC

PEDAL

		<u>2nd Voices</u>
1	32 Contre Bourdon	
2	16 Diapason	16 Violone
3	16 Bourdon	
4	16 Lieblichgedeckt (Sw)	
5	8 Octave	
6	8 Flute	8 Gemshorn
7	4 Choralbass	4 Flute
8	Mixture III	
9	32 Contre Posaune	
10	16 Posaune	
11	16 Waldhorn (Sw)	
12	8 Trumpet	
13	4 Clairon	
14	Great To Pedal	
15	Swell To Pedal	
16	Pedal 2nd Voices	
	MIDI On Pedal	

SWELL

17	16 Lieblichgedeckt	16 Viola
18	8 Gedeckt	
19	8 Viola	
20	8 Viola Celeste	
21	4 Octave	
22	4 Nachthorn	4 Viola Celeste II
23	2 2/3 Nasard	8 French Horn
24	2 Piccolo	8 Solo Tuba
25	1 3/5 Tierce	8 English Horn
26	Fourniture IV	
27	16 Waldhorn	
28	8 French Trumpet	
29	8 Oboe	4 Clairon
30	HARP	
31	Tremulant	
32	Swell 2nd Voices	
	MIDI On Swell	

GREAT

33	16 Violone	
34	8 Diapason	
35	8 Gemshorn	
36	8 Harmonic Flute	
37	8 Erzähler Celeste II	8 Flute Celeste II
38	4 Octave	4 Flute Celeste II
39	4 Spitzflöte	
40	2 Fifteenth	2 Flute
41	Mixture IV	
42	8 Tromba	8 Solo Tuba
43	8 Krummhorn	8 Clarinet
44	Chimes	
	PIANO	
45	Tremulant	
46	Swell To Great	
47	Great 2nd Voices	
	MIDI On Great	

Technique ⁴	Memory levels
1. Legato	Two memory levels are set from the factory:
2. Release: shorten repeated notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allen: 15 and 16 • Rodgers: 1 and 2 • Johannus: 1 and 2
3. Finger substitution: hand spaghetti	
4. Voice leading: combine nos. 1 and 2 above	General pistons
5. Pedals: use both feet!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-5: prelude and meditative hymns • 6-10: hymns: <i>mf</i> to <i>ff</i> congregational singing
6. Non-legato: Baroque music and solo works	

³ Wolford, Darwin. "Suggestions for the Use of Stops." In *Organ Studies for the Beginner*, 54, 1st ed. Shawnee Press, INC., Delaware Water Gap, PA., 1978.

⁴ Wolford, Darwin. "The Legato Touch." In *Organ Studies for the Beginner*, 7, 1st ed. Shawnee Press, INC., Delaware Water Gap, PA., 1978.