

Survival Course for the Pianist: Building Confidence in Organ Playing

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NOTES

- ★ Prerequisite: ability to play hymns on the piano
- ★ Any* organ within an LDS building will follow the same layout
- ★ Questions? What are they? Tell me – and write them down – so they can be answered!

AREAS OF FOCUS

- 1) Technique
- 2) Registration
- 3) Technique: legato and repeated notes (time permitting)

WHY

Why the organ instead of the piano?

Quote¹

WHAT

What do the numbers mean?

- What is a stop?
- How are they arranged?
- *I didn't expect math*
- Tonal families: flue and reed

What do the buttons do?

- Pistons
- How are they arranged?
- General vs Divisional
- Pedal coupler
- *Can it shoot missiles?*

Why are there three keyboards?

- Main divisions of the organ: Great, Swell, Pedal

Expression pedals. What are they?

- I can see some pipes - can they play louder or softer?

Which stops should I use?

- Two memory levels are set from the factory
 - **Allen:** 15 and 16
 - **Rodgers:** 1 and 2
 - **Johannus:** 1 and 2
- Combinations were chosen by MISC (Musical Instrument Selection Committee)
- General pistons 1-10

Ponder with me, if you will, the unique characteristics of our particular musical instrument, the organ. Its profound, gentle low tones we sometimes feel more than we hear. Its sustained, unwavering still small voice can whisper so subtly that we must be still to hear it, and yet the glorious splendor of its unwaveringly powerful chords – tuned vibrations from lowest to highest musical range – bring the almighty power of God and the glorious exalted splendor of our eternal home back before our spiritual eyes. Is it any wonder that such god-like qualities caused the great 19th and 20th century French organist and composer Charles Marie Widor to call the organ "The voice of God!"

- Dr. Clay Christiansen

* Baroque-style mechanical organs and drawknob console organs still follow similar principles, but not all.

¹ BYU Organ Workshop Keynote Address THE VOICE OF GOD
August 1, 2017, by Dr. Clay Christiansen

HOW

How do you make it louder or softer?

- Expression pedals
- → **PRESETS** ←
- It's not velocity sensitive like a piano

How loudly/softly do I play?

- The organ **supports** congregational singing – don't blast them away
- Demo: a capella singing vs. accompanied - which inspires singing for the novice?
- People generally don't want to sing alone
- It might seem too loud – you may be the closest person to the speakers

Where do I sit?

Where do my feet go?

The bench is adjustable?

How can I practice at home

- Use the piano, without the damper pedal
- Practice finger substitution
- Not having to set registration can help with concentration and focus

Do I need to learn a special technique? [Wolford, 8]²

- Yes: but it's not just "dragging everything together"
 - Repeated notes
 - Legato

Do I need to use my feet?

How do I get started with pedal technique?

Do I need special shoes?

Questions?

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. OrganTutor Organ 101: Basic Organ Skills for the Pianist, Don Cook
5. "Lessons for the New Organist" – American Guild of Organists - YouTube playlist³

GREAT

<i>mf</i> 16'	<i>f</i> 8'	<i>mf</i> 8'	<i>mf</i> 8'	<i>mp</i> 8'	<i>pp</i> 8'	<i>f</i> 4'	<i>mf</i> 4'	<i>f</i> 2'	<i>ff</i> IV	<i>ff</i> 8'	<i>f</i> 8'
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² Wolford, Darwin. "The Legato Touch." In Organ Studies for the Beginner, 7, 1st ed. Shawnee Press, INC., Delaware Water Gap, PA., 1978.

³ <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSJ9JGlhsPJukIW5F3yEQSXhpJzPgAJcl>