

THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

1. Get music in advance – Preparation

2. PRACTICE 😊

PRELUDES

- Background for contemplation, not selected for entertainment value.
- Use only music appropriate for the occasion (i.e.: no wedding music in sacrament meeting).
- The church encourages hymns for preludes – find some nice arrangements or make your own.
- You are not a soloist or in the spotlight.
- Watch your presiding officer – time your prelude so you don't have to stop at an awkward place.
 1. Change your organ registration for more interest in sound.
 2. Registration is often suggested on music score.
 3. Imitate a sound you have heard on records, etc.
 4. Observe other organists playing your organ
 5. Experiment
 6. **PRACTICE**

Robert Cundick on Preludes:

1. To communicate with the listener
2. To set the mood, create a reverent atmosphere
3. To inspire religious feelings, not to entertain
4. **It should be within your abilities**

ACCOMPANYING HYMNS

GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE – Preparation, **Practice**

- Make sure you can see chorister
- Introductions: Hymnal has good intro's in brackets. Use phrases that will show the tempo, key of piece, and feeling of the hymn (“We Thank Thee O God” vs. “While of These Emblems”)
- Hymnal too difficult? Use the Simplified Arrangements.
- LISTEN!! – too loud or soft? Wrong organ registration? **PRACTICE**
- Occasionally different verses have a different counting on accompaniment. Pay attention to tied notes and differences in words. Read along with the words, if possible. (Ex. Page 82)

BE PATIENT WITH MUSIC CONDUCTOR. We're all volunteers, trying to serve.

PRIMARY

GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE – (Sound familiar? See #1 and 2 above)

- Not too much pedal
- Put an envelope pocket in front of book for assignments, etc.
- Use red pencil to:
 1. Mark your errors in sharps, flats
 2. Mark introductions
 3. Write in modulations from one song to another, if you do that (for special programs)
- Index tabs on each section – easier finding of pages when your director is patiently (!) waiting for you.
- Highlight well used pieces in index.
- From Susan Richman (wonderful Primary music director):
 1. Get a list of Sacrament Meeting program songs months in advance. Um...#2
 2. Softly play melody while director is teaching words for new song, or even reviewing the words for a well used song. This helps in reverence, as well as making teaching the melody easier.
 3. Be flexible – for occasions when you can't get music beforehand, or when choosing your favorite songs. If you can't play accompaniment, one finger is OK
 4. Keep up tempo – Director would rather you play one finger melody than slowing down.

MANY PRIMARY SONGS ARE STILL TOO HIGH FOR THE CHILDREN – transpose them down if you can.

CHORAL ACCOMPANYING

GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE – (See #2 above)

- Preplan with your conductor. Be willing to take suggestions, and gently make suggestions (but not in front of the choir, if possible). You are not the leader.
- Pay attention to DYNAMICS – you can make or break your choir.
- LISTEN – if a part is wrong and you hear it, play that part with the section that needs it, but don't pound it out
- LISTEN – pay attention to what the conductor is saying. Anticipate where the conductor wants to start.
- Always give a pitch note – don't wait for conductor to ask.
- DON'T BE SHY ABOUT PLAYING OUT – when helping learn parts.
 - However, a soft answer can turn away wrath
- GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE!
- **How do I read 4 lines at once?**
 - See #2 above
 - Train your eyes for at least 2 lines at once. Try SA, TB, SAT, SAB, etc.
 - **LEARN TO READ tenor clef. Yuck.**
- To help choir sight read new song, or learn new song:
 - GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE! See #2 above.
 - ALWAYS give pitch notes when starting – spell from bottom to top (aka B, T, A, S)
 - Play parts, not accompaniment.
 - As the choir becomes more proficient, gradually start adding chords, then accompaniment
 - Play on all a cappella sections until asked not to.
 - Try a little of each – accompaniment and parts (if the music's easy enough!)
- What's the first thing you can do when you're asked to sight-read a piece
 - Look through the score while conductor is talking to choir
 - Identify key, time signatures, tempo markings
 - Look for key changes, time signature changes
 - Be brave

DON'T ARGUE WITH OR TRY TO SHOW UP CONDUCTOR.

GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE

TIPS FOR SOLO ACCOMPANIMENT

GET MUSIC IN ADVANCE – (See #2 above)

- The accompanist is a SUPPORT and partner, not a solo effort. Collaborate.
- Listen like crazy
- You can help “tell the story”. Know what the words are about. Have it translated, if necessary.
- Don’t be afraid to tell the soloist where to stand – better ensemble.
- Reflect the singer’s words – paint musical “pictures”. Use imagination, like soloist.
- Mark the breathing spots – go over with soloist.
- If you’re sight reading, pay attention to the words to give singer or instrumentalist time to breathe.
- Adjust your style, depending on whether it’s a soloist (longer breathing time) or instrumentalist
- Photocopied music – *nope*
- Nerves – cement hands vs. Jell-O hands. PRAY.
- Smile – communicate. Gives soloist confidence.
- Show confidence, even if you don’t feel it. PRAY. This also helps give soloist confidence.
- Your talents help share the inspiration of wonderful composers. ENJOY. Have fun. Be gracious.

If you are in private lessons with their teacher, offer music suggestions where appropriate, i.e., counting, wrong notes, pitch. *Be careful when working with a private teacher to know if your comments are welcome.*

SIGHT READING

“The best way to develop your sight reading is to sight read!” – Paul Pollei

PRACTICE – At home, play through easier levels than you are capable of.

BLUFF your way through – keep going at all costs!

KNOW YOUR SCALES and cadences – maybe play scale in key of piece that you are reading.

LOOK through song FIRST – watch key changes, time changes, etc.

WATCH for intervals

COUNT – keep on going. Always be there on the downbeat to keep the choir or soloist going.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

- Offer to play in choir classes in grade school, middle, or high school. Choristers are usually so grateful to have someone else there.
- Tell vocal and instrumental teachers that you are trying to get into accompanying. Have them send you some of their students, or go to their lessons for rehearsals. Start with Middle School solo/ensemble contests.
- Nursing homes are always appreciative of your gifts of music.

Realize that our talents are God-given. We need to remember the parable of the talents, to appreciate and share. The church gives us untold opportunities to serve, and we are all “added upon” when we accept callings or assignments. YOUR TALENT WILL BE INCREASED AS YOU SHARE IT WITH THE LORD.

And...see #2 above ☺

Other Resources:

Church Music Library <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library?lang=eng>

General Handbook https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/19-music?lang=eng#title_number24

Frequently asked questions <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/callings/music/introduction-to-music/frequently-asked-questions?lang=eng>

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