

Skills of an Accompanist

1. General Accompanists...
 - a. Are the backbone of any piece and are usually ignored by the audience if they are good
 - b. Are supportive, not soloists
 - c. Shine as a soloist when the instrument/vocalist is not playing
 - d. Eliminate notes they cannot play well or find simpler accompaniments, as needed
 - e. Understand that the focus should be on the soloist/conductor rather than on the accompaniment
 - f. Can set the tempo (or watch for tempo cue) and adhere to it strictly
 - g. Know the piece well enough to jump to another section, if necessary
 - h. Develop listening and interpreting skills to advise group/solo performers
 - i. Know when to stop a musical performance if it isn't going well
 - j. Practice alone and with the soloist/group
 - k. Are strong advocates of their own musical abilities (and limitations) and are not required to let the conductor/soloist make all musical decisions
2. Congregational Hymn Accompanists...
 - a. Play loudly enough that all feel empowered to sing out but not so loud they cannot hear themselves
 - b. Know the basic stops and presets on the organ
 - c. Use a lot of bass to help men find their parts but avoid using the coupler
 - d. Scan the music beforehand for prelude measures
 - e. Scan the music for any cue notes, second endings, and phrasing of text
 - f. Allow for the conductor to get settled before playing short intros
 - g. Understand that they and the conductor are a team and may make decisions together
 - h. Train conductors to give them proper musical clues and phrasing, as needed
 - i. Mark their hymnals with phrasing to allow for proper text interpretation while playing
 - j. Play a variety of preludes and postludes that invite the Spirit
 - k. Do nothing that draws attention away from the Spirit
3. Primary Accompanists...
 - a. Play melody line while kids are learning
 - b. Learn to follow non-traditional cues such as voice or head-nods
 - c. Use strict tempos and skip notes except melody if necessary, to keep proper tempo
4. Ward Choir Accompanists...
 - a. Record parts for the choir members, as needed
 - b. Learn the pieces *prior* to the choir – accompanists are always foundational to the choir
 - c. Restructure the sheet music from 4 single staves to 2 easily read staves, as needed
 - d. Find simpler or more difficult accompaniments, as needed
 - e. Help conductor interpret dynamics and phrasing
 - f. Listen to parts; provide extra ears for conductor
5. Special Number Accompanists...
 - a. Practice with the soloist not just alone
 - b. Follow the soloist's dynamics and phrasing but provide musical advice, too
 - c. Consider themselves soloists on interludes, preludes, and postludes

Responsibilities of Any Ward Accompanist

1. Expect to play prelude and postlude for any meeting so carry prelude books with you
2. Learn all hymns in the hymnals so you can be counted on to sub at a moment's notice