

Effective Service Playing:
The Partnership
Between Organist and Congregation

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Agenda

- Principles
 - Effective use of the organ in worship
 - Organist's goals
 - The partnership between organist and congregation
 - General topics and concepts
- Demonstrations and Examples
- Your Questions

What is the organ?
Which of these best describes the organ?

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(Which least describes the organ?)

“The organ is basically a legato instrument capable of sustained tone beyond that of any other keyboard instrument.”

(Christian Worship – Manual, p. 312)

“...Unfortunately, its sustaining power becomes a liability when the organ fails to ‘breathe’ naturally like other instruments.”

Sustained Playing

- Impossible for wind players
- Doesn’t imitate the human voice (our goal)
- Fatiguing for the listener
- Better to phrase according to the text:
 - Legato (connected) when vowels span two notes
 - Articulated to match consonants (and punctuation)

Why not play vocally?

- People approach the organ as a keyboard instrument (preoccupied with technical challenges)
- It has an infinite wind supply; why not use it?
- Don’t have a concept of wind playing; or were taught not to
- Nobody ever told them it was an option!

Overarching Philosophy

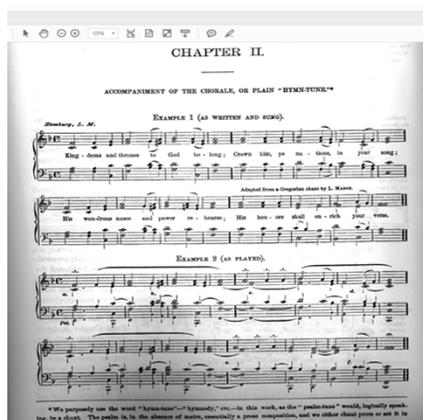
- Play vocal lines vocally
 - Reinforces the text
 - Most natural for the congregation to follow
 - Articulation conveys the pulse
 - Use a “vigorous legato” technique
- Game:
 - Name That Hymn

CHAPTER II.

ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE CHORALE, OR PLAIN "HYMN-TUNE"*

Old Habits

...

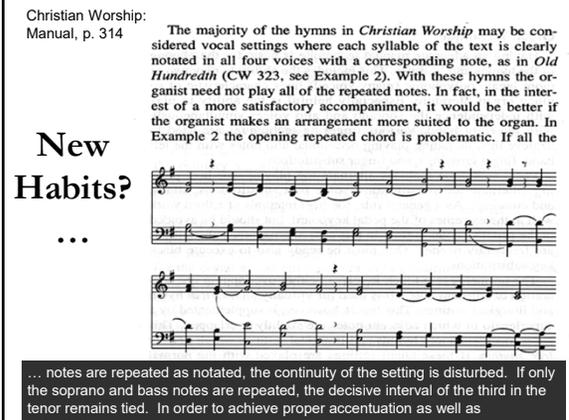


* We purposely use the word "hymn-tune" in this work, as the "pastorals" would, lightly speak, be in error. The point is in the absence of notes, usually a poor comparison, not in other cases, or as in its various forms. The hymn-tune is derived from the pastorals in a general comparison to the organ.

Dudley Buck, "Choir Accompaniment" (1910, publ. Wayne Leupold Ed.)

New Habits?

...



Christian Worship: Manual, p. 314

The majority of the hymns in *Christian Worship* may be considered vocal settings where each syllable of the text is clearly notated in all four voices with a corresponding note, as in *Old Hundredth* (CW 323, see Example 2). With these hymns the organist need not play all of the repeated notes. In fact, in the interest of a more satisfactory accompaniment, it would be better if the organist makes an arrangement more suited to the organ. In Example 2 the opening repeated chord is problematic. If all the

... notes are repeated as notated, the continuity of the setting is disturbed. If only the soprano and bass notes are repeated, the decisive interval of the third in the tenor remains tied. In order to achieve proper accentuation as well as articulation...

Another Approach

...



1. Each hymn will have its own particular tempo, which will grow out of the study of the words and music.
2. Long phrases require a somewhat faster tempo than short phrases.
3. Do not play hymns metronomically, but with a strong rhythmic pulse.
4. Hymns with many short notes should not be played too quickly, or those with long notes too slowly.
5. Consider the acoustical environment in the church.

Repeated Notes

1. To maintain clarity and a strong rhythmic pulse there should be little, if any, tying of repeated notes.
2. Never tie the soprano part.
3. A series of repeated notes may sometimes be tied in the alto and bass parts from strong to weak beats of the measure.

Amens

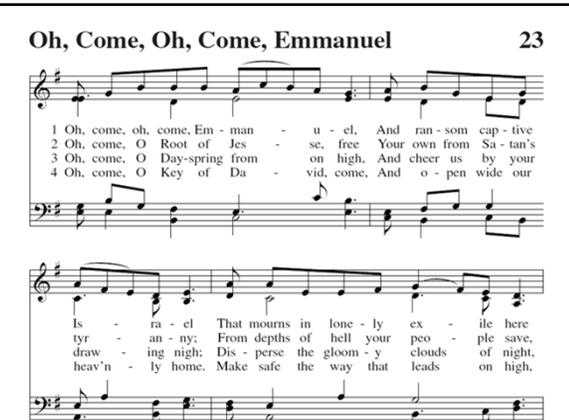
1. An Amen is...

Harold Gleason: "Method of Organ Playing", 7th ed.

Overarching Philosophy

- Demonstrations:
 - How to identify vocal lines
 - Phrase according to the text

Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel 23



253 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises



Organist's Goals

- To Lead or To Accompany?
 - "Accompany" connotes passivity
 - An "accompanist" is subordinate to the soloist
 - "Leading" could mean being ahead of the congregation
 - Or, I'm in charge – the congregation must follow me, me, me!
 - (Acoustically, you probably are ahead; else it's dragging)

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- "Support" the congregation
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 - Melody (pitch)
 - Pulse (tempo)
- Better to play the melody correctly at tempo than to try to do too much

Partnership

- Use the POLA principle – be predictable
- Respect the miracle of unrehearsed performance
- Build trust (cf. the Three Rules)

Partnership

- Three Rules to Play By

Partnership

- Three Rules to Play By
 1. Don't Confuse the Congregation
 - Watch and listen for signs of confusion
 - If not addressed, uncertainty leads to doubt, and eventually fear
 - As worship leaders, organists have a responsibility to notice musical problems and fix them

Partnership

- Three Rules to Play By
 1. Don't Confuse the Congregation
 2. Don't Trick the Congregation
 - Make entrance predictable (transitioning from introduction to verse)

Partnership

- Three Rules to Play By
 1. Don't Confuse the Congregation
 2. Don't Trick the Congregation
 3. Don't Annoy the Congregation!
 - No need to show off; balance creativity with a sense of modesty
 - Start on time; show them respect

General Topics: Text

- Combine knowledge of text and musical style to decide phrasing
 - Hymnal contains many Lutheran chorales, but also chant, spiritual, French carol, English styles
 - Read through text for sense and mood
 - Choose a matching registration

General Topics: Text

- Each verse needs its own articulation
- Breathe with the congregation; play their text
- Respect the congregation
 - Articulate when they do
 - Legato when they hold
 - Never leave them singing a solo
 - Example: A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

General Topics: Hymn Introductions

- Set up melody (pitch), tempo, and mood
- Don't play the introduction at a different (faster) tempo than the hymn will be sung

General Topics: Pulse

- Pulse is not as fast as the notes on the page
 - Usually 2x, 4x, or even 8x the smallest note value
 - Compare "Greensleeves" and "The Angel Gabriel" (both 6/8 meter)
 - Pulse matches speed of walking or dance step
 - Pay attention to mixed (duple/triple) or changing meter

General Topics: Breathing

- Breathe with the text, not the barlines
 - Keep the melody part legato while other parts breathe
- That tiny breath mark ' is not a fermata!
- Insert space on a weak beat for breath
 - Example: "Wie schön leuchtet"

General Topics: Tempo

- Pulse: the Swing analogy
 - Count! That's what they're doing too
 - Don't lose focus
 - Put yourself in the congregation's place

Transitions Between Verses

- Be a conductor without using your arms
- It takes two clicks to anticipate a third
- Those two clicks might be two pulses, or two half-pulses (depends on tempo)
- The pulse may weaken at the end of a verse, or remain steady
- Use the lift to make the entrance predictable

Transitions Between Verses

- What to do about quarter-note pickups?
 - Ex. CW 551 (For All The Saints); CW 355 (Take the World, But Give Me Jesus)
- After the last verse, hold as long as you did for the other verses

Bibliography

- Christian Worship: Manual (Accompanying the Hymns and Liturgies)
- Hymn Playing: A Modern Colloquium (Stuart Forster)
- Gleason – Method of Organ Playing

Examples for Discussion

- Tick marks: CW 242 (O That I Had a Thousand Voices)
- Pickup in tempo: CW 283 (Speak, O Savior, I am Listening)
- Chant: CW 361 (Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence)
- Articulation: CW 195 (Holy, Holy, Holy)

Examples for Discussion

- Keeping pulse through manual changes (NSS Common service Kyrie)
- Fast breaths (CW 431: I Walk in Danger All the Way)
- Mixed meter (CW 445: Ich dank Dir, lieber Herre)
- Syncopation (CW 245: Sing a New Song to the Lord)

Examples for Discussion

- Rubato (CW 256: How Great Thou Art)
- Slow enough for text, fast enough for music (CW 257: My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker)
- Keeping the pulse steady between duple and triple meter sections? (Renaissance dance style; CW 290: One Thing's Needful)

Examples for Discussion

- Notation is not inspired! Adjusting phrase ends (CW 307: Jesu, Kreuz, Leiden und Pein)
- When not to repeat notes (CW 327: God Be with You till We Meet Again)
- Odd-length pickups (CW 390: Salvation unto Us Has Come)
- Counting (CW 411: What a Friend We Have in Jesus)

Examples for Discussion

- Making sense of the pulse (CW 425: Oh, Sing, My Soul, Your Maker's Praise)