

HYMN PLAYING SHORTCUTS: REGISTRATION

Sometimes pianists are called upon to play the organ for a church service before they feel completely ready. They may have no choice but to use one or more “survival skills” while they take the time it requires to really learn how to play the organ. Following is an easy-to-use plan for selecting stops in either meditative or jubilant hymns for congregational singing. It can be used with most pipe or electronic church organs.

A FEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

1. **Support** the congregation with confidence, but do not overpower
2. Let the **text** guide the registrational plan for the hymn
3. Begin with stops from the **principal chorus**, especially at the 8’ level
4. **8’ and 4’ pitches** are minimum for the manual; 16’ and 8’ are minimum for the pedal
5. In **meditative hymns**, substitute flutes for principals at 4’ and 2’ levels as needed to reduce sharpness
6. Use **changes of registration** between verses and/or between verse and chorus

BASIC HYMN REGISTRATION

MEDITATIVE HYMNS: Begin with this basic combination

Great: Principals 8’ and 4’ (the stops may be called Principal, Diapason, Octave, or Prestant)

Pedal: The main 16’ stop (may be called Principal, Subbass, Bourdon, or Gedackt), and Great to Pedal

JUBILANT HYMNS: Add the 2’ principal on the Great to the meditative hymn combination, resulting in—

Great: Principals 8’ 4’ and 2’ (the 2’ stop may be called Super Octave, Fifteenth, or Doublette)

Pedal: The main 16’ stop, and Great to Pedal

FOR A SINGLE CHANGE OF REGISTRATION BETWEEN VERSES

MEDITATIVE HYMNS: Couple the Swell chorus 8’ 4’ 2’ to the Great

Begin with the Basic Hymn Registration for Meditative Hymns (above). Also, prepare the following:

Swell: flutes or principals 8’ and 4’, and flute 2’, resulting in—

an 8’ stop (Bourdon, Gedackt, Geigen Prinzipal, or Diapason)

a 4’ stop (Flute, Nachthorn, Spitzprinzipal, Octave, Prestant, or Klappelflöte)

the available 2’ stop (Piccolo, Blockflöte, Flute à bec)

Later, between verses or between a verse and the chorus, add the Swell to Great coupler

JUBILANT HYMNS: Add the Great chorus mixture

Begin with the Basic Hymn Registration for Jubilant Hymns (see above)

Later, between verses or between a verse and the chorus, add the Great chorus mixture (usually called Mixtur[e], and always followed by a Roman numeral)

For yet another change, you might add a chorus reed 8’ on the Great or Swell (Trumpet, Trompette, Tromba, or Fagott)