

IDEAS FOR TURNING HYMNS INTO PRELUDES & POSTLUDES

1. Make up an introduction using any of the techniques below with the first or last phrase, OR just a motive from the melody. Ending on the V^7 instead of the tonic is always effective. Overlapping the final chord with the first note of the hymn gives a smooth transition from introduction to verse.
2. Use alternating unison and four part harmony.
3. Solo out the soprano. Be willing to use a variety of solo sounds.
4. Solo out the tenor line (as written or an octave above). Make sure you have a nice, melodious tenor line worth listening to.
5. Layered or terraced phrasing for an introduction or a verse:
 - A. soprano unison; add alto; add tenor; add bass; add pedal.
 - B. 4-part on Swell with no pedal; add pedal; move right hand to Great to solo the soprano; move left hand down for all 4 parts on Great.
 Each segment can be only a few notes; doesn't need to be whole phrases.
6. Put the alto up an octave, above the soprano. Use only for two phrases or a chorus. Soprano and alto lines written in thirds or sixths work well with this. It sounds like a descant!
7. Use a Pedal Point. This is NOT tying bass notes, although that can work in some instances. Pedal Point involves holding the 5th of the chord in the pedal (example: in the key of C, G is the 5th), while playing 2,3 or 4 parts above it.
8. Use a suspension at cadences, especially a final cadence; i.e. when the tenor (or alto) moves downward at the end of a phrase, delay playing the last note.
9. Use passing tones. Look for places where notes are moving in thirds and can be filled in between with another note. Use only on the alto, tenor and bass. Bass is the most effective. However, it is best used on slower note values or slower tempo. If it sounds artificial or hurried, don't use it. It should sound natural, as if it was meant to be that way.
10. Play on manual only (no pedal).
11. Double the soprano-alto in the left hand (mirroring). Example: Hymn #192, He Died! The Great Redeemer Died--3rd phrase is soprano-alto only; double it in the left hand for variety. If you add pedal point (G in pedal) during the phrase, it is even better.
12. Change keys. Quick change: pedal moves down two more notes to V^7 of new key. Use on hymn in flats when you can just imagine key $\frac{1}{2}$ step up in sharps with same notes. OR use old hymnal which has the hymn in a higher key. This method works on moving up $\frac{1}{2}$ step, whole step, or minor 3rd equally well.
13. Use a deceptive cadence at the end. A deceptive cadence is going to the vi chord instead of the tonic for the last chord. Example: in the key of G major, e minor is the chord built on the 6th note. After playing this deceptive cadence, repeat the last phrase in regular time or augmentation. Nice!

14. Use augmentation at the end. To augment (to add to) means to play note values at double their value. Example: quarter notes become half notes, etc. Use on the last phrase of hymn. You can play the last phrase slower initially, or play it regular time and then repeat it at the slower tempo for a coda.
15. Play slower. Don't be locked into a certain tempo OR registration for a hymn in a prelude or postlude situation. For a meditative sound, play slower than a singing in the congregation tempo. Upbeat hymns are just as effective if played slower with a prelude style and registration.
16. Don't be afraid to alter harmonies if so inclined!
17. Want to make up a medley? Mix like hymns to lengthen and give variety. Mix one or two verses of one hymn, go to a verse of another hymn and then back to the first one for another verse and an ending. "Like" hymns can mean same title or same theme. Use Childrens song book in the same way--or mix and match hymns with Childrens songs.
If hymns are not in the same key, use quick change (#12) or use a common tone modulation. Example: G is the common tone between what appears to be unrelated keys C major and E-flat major. Use that note as a pivot between keys, especially if the last note of one hymn is the same note at the beginning of another hymn.
18. Published free harmony or intros and interludes mixed with plain treatment of the hymn can be effective for prelude or postlude.
19. Play one verse or just part of the hymn an octave higher (4-part harmony only). Also use Womens section in the hymnal, playing only the 3 parts (SSA) for a lighter texture.
20. MAKE IT BEAUTIFUL! Stretch at the cadences, use rubato, make it sing, play to the text. Pretend you are in the other corner and hearing it as others will hear it.