

Giving Hymns a Lift

Mike Carson

AGO Super Saturday, April 25, 2009

Harris Fine Arts Building, BYU

Hymn Introductions

- Variety and creativity are the secrets of exciting hymn playing. Try something different, like beginning with a hymn introduction that provides the opportunity to reflect the spirit of the hymn and present a fresh interpretation of its text before the congregation begins to sing.

Demo: #109 The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare (from *Hymn Preludes for Organ*, Bk. 2, Manookin)

- Hymn introductions are meant to introduce the tune, tempo, mood, and volume of the first verse. The end of the introduction, which leads directly into the singing, should be straightforward and easy for the congregation to "hear" when the singing should begin.

Demo: #66 Rejoice, the Lord Is King! (from *Hymnal Plus*, Bk. 4, Cundick/Longhurst)

- Try a "prelude" to the introduction:

Demo: #134 I Believe in Christ (from *Hymnal Plus*, Bk. 5, Cundick/Longhurst)

Hymn Interludes

- Short segments of music to bridge the verses of a hymn, usually improvised and related in concept to the hymn itself.
- A rest for the singers, a second wind.
- Can end on dominant chord for stronger lead-in to final verse. Demos:

#134 I Believe in Christ (from *Hymnal Plus*, Bk. 5, Cundick/Longhurst)

#117 Come unto Jesus (from example sheets *Giving Hymns a Lift*, pg. 4, Carson)

#92 For the Beauty of the Earth (from example sheets *Giving Hymns a Lift*, pg. 4, Carson)

Pedal Point

- A note, usually in the bass and on the tonic key tone or the dominant (fifth) tone, sustained during harmonic changes in the other parts. Has a strong tonal effect, "pulling" the harmony back to its root. Points the harmonies to the cadence. Creates suspense, anticipation.

Example: Play the soprano, alto, and tenor parts of hymn #125, How Gentle God's Commands, while sustaining the tonic note (low F) in the pedal. Then repeat while sustaining the dominant note (C) in the pedal. End the final chord with "F" in the pedal.

For more examples of hymn introductions and interludes and use for pedal point, refer to the example sheet, *Giving Hymns a Lift*, by Mike Carson.