

## **Prelude and Postlude Protocol**

*A look at music selection and performance etiquette in LDS service playing*

**Protocol:** a system of rules that explain the correct conduct and procedures to be followed in formal situations. (The organist's actions constitute a breach of prelude protocol; he played "Climb Ev'ry Mountain" too loud.)

*Music that is carefully selected and properly presented can greatly enhance the spirit of worship.... Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings. The organist or pianist usually plays hymns or other appropriate music for five to ten minutes before and after a meeting (from Handbook 2: Administering the Church, 2010).*

### **Careful selection of hymns and other appropriate music**

The Handbook provides these additional guidelines for music selection for Sunday meetings:

- *Hymns are encouraged for prelude and postlude music. If other musical selections are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns of the Church. The text should be doctrinally correct.*
- *Music in Church meetings should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. This music is for worship, not performance.*
- *Secular music should not replace sacred music in Sunday meetings.... Also, much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.*

Hymns are the basic music for worship services. They may be played directly from the hymnbook, from simplified arrangements, or from commercial hymn arrangements, which should be carefully chosen, as some may be appropriate for the sacrament service, while others may not. The music should be measured against the standards given in the Handbook and any specifications from the bishopric.

Some postludes may be selected and played more solidly, if the registration is kept from getting too bright or too loud. Think of it as being inviting, rather than intruding. Occasionally, some organ masterworks with a foundational sound may be appropriate for postludes if they do not draw undue attention to the organist or the music. Also, non-hymn preludes may be more successful at the beginning of the prelude playing, rather than nearer the time to begin the service.

### **Proper performance**

Hymn preludes and postludes are more effective when played at slower tempos than they would normally be sung and with a sustained, legato feel. Melodies should be easily discernable.

Use appropriate registrations with a variety of textures (chorus style, solo melody style, with and without pedal, etc.). Use a variety of keys that transition well from piece to piece.

If possible, vary selections from week to week, but play often those that you know well, while continuing to learn new ones. When possible, choose postludes that reinforce the topic or occasion of the meeting.

Arrange all of the music on the organ rack or prepare it in a binder for easy transition between pieces. A few seconds of silence between selections is desirable and may even encourage reverence.

When the priesthood leader stands to begin the meeting, calmly and musically end the prelude. Abrupt stops should be avoided.

Avoid anything in the music that might distract from the spirit of the meeting or call attention to you or to the music.

### ***Quiet prelude and postlude music***

From the Handbook:

- *Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings.*

The volume of the organ is usually determined by three factors: 1) The expression pedals being open (loud) or closed (soft); 2) The choice and number of stops in the registration; 3) The texture of the music (two, three, four-part or more).

### ***Five to ten minutes before and after meeting***

Arrive at the organ in plenty of time to arrange your music on the music desk and set your registrations. Begin playing the prelude at least five to ten minutes before the service is to begin. When possible, the conscientious organist will begin the prelude as the first congregants enter the chapel. This may be as early as 20 minutes before the service is to begin. Do not use this time to rehearse hymns with the music director. There may be times when the choir or other groups will need to rehearse prior to the meeting. Unfortunately, this may diminish the length and effectiveness of the prelude.

For the postlude, stay on the bench after the closing hymn, and begin playing immediately after the benediction. Play for up to five minutes or longer, if directed by your leaders. It is not necessary to play until everyone has left the chapel, and you should not attempt to match the organ volume to the noise level in the room. Instead, set a worshipful, dignified example through your music.

Web site links for more help:

*The New LDS Organist*: <http://www.organ.byu.edu/newldsorganist/> (especially lessons 3 and 11)

“Prelude and Postlude Resources” in *The New LDS Organist* packet:  
<http://www.organ.byu.edu/newldsorganist/packet.pdf> (page 9)

NEW! *Manual-Only Hymns and Transformations* (free downloads):  
<http://lds.org/cm/pdf/manualonly-100602.pdf>  
<http://lds.org/cm/pdf/transformations-100618-eng.pdf>

LDS Hymn Preludes and Postludes: [www.WardOrganist.com](http://www.WardOrganist.com)

Creating Preludes from Hymns: <http://uvago.org/handouts.htm> (click on “Mike Carson” under the April 28, 2007, handout)