ORGAN ESSENTIALS

Manual Technique

Sheri Peterson

sheri.peterson@gmail.com

Piano vs. Organ Tone

"…..the vibrating string of the piano is loudest immediately after the attack. The tone quickly decays, or softens, until the key is released or until the vibrations are so small that no tone is audible." For the organ, "the volume of the tone is constant as long as the key is held down; just prior to the release it is no softer than at the beginning." Thus, the result is that "due to the continuous strength of the organ tone, the timing of the release is just as important as the attack." (Don Cook: *Organ Tutor*, 2008, Intro 9 Suppl.)

Basic Manual Technique

- Hand Posture - Curve the fingers. Keep the hand and wrist relaxed. There is no need to apply excessive pressure to the keys.
- Attack and Release - Precise rhythmic attack and release are crucial. The release is just as important as the attack.
- Legato – Essential to effective hymn playing.
- Independence – Finger and line.

Important Listening Skills

- Perfect Legato – One finger should keep a key depressed until the moment a new tone begins. Listen for a perfectly smooth connection.
- Precise Releases – Listen for the timing of the release. Practice on a "silent" (no stops pulled) manual, listening for the clicks of the attacks and releases.
- Independence of Line – When playing lines (voices) together, listen for a single line to sound the same as it does when played alone.
  (Don Cook: *Organ Tutor*, 2008, Intro 10 Suppl.)

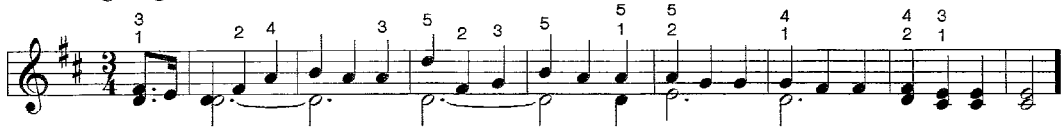
Fingering Technique

The goal of fingering is to provide for the most efficient motion as possible. The following fingering techniques are listed in order of efficiency. (Don Cook: *Organ Tutor*, 2008, Manual 44 Suppl.)

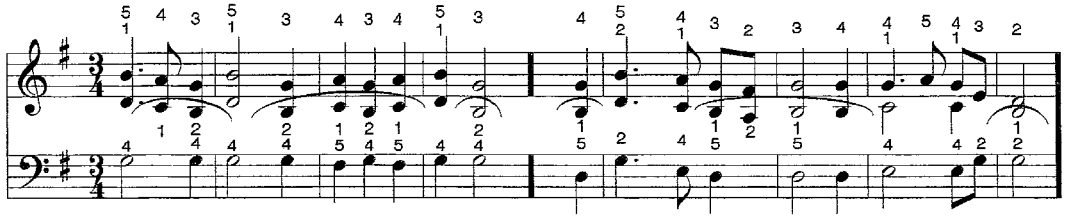
- Direct Fingering
- Redistribution of the Inner Part
- Finger Crossing
- Finger Glissando
- Finger Substitution
- Thumb Glissando
  (See handout from *The New LDS Organist*, The Six Legato Organ Fingering Techniques)

The Six Legato Organ Fingering Techniques

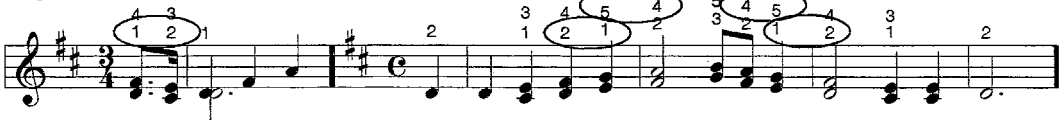
Direct Fingering



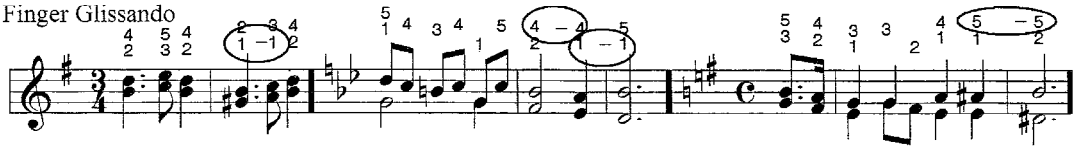
Redistribution of the Inner Part



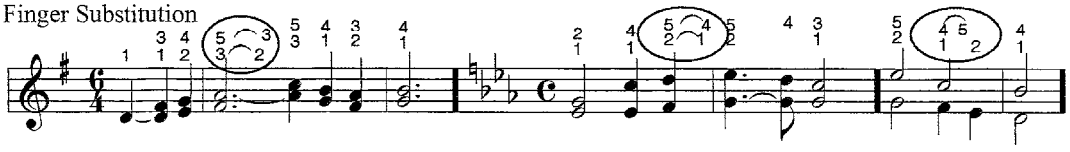
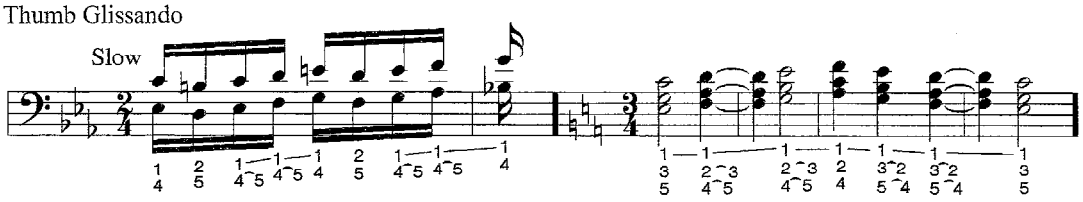
Finger Crossing *(circles added for emphasis only)*



Finger Glissando



Finger Substitution



Thumb Glissando