

## Hymn Playing in the Sustained Style

Parley L. Belnap

1. The characteristics of hymn playing in the sustained style are a perfect legato, precise attacks and releases, and independence of lines.
2. A legato touch is characterized by a smooth connection between notes. It involves releasing a note at the same time the next note is depressed, so there is no distinct separation or overlapping between the notes but they are smoothly and cleanly connected one to another.
3. Various degrees of separation between the notes create the characteristics of staccato or non-legato touch.
  - Legato—two or more tones are connected without a break
  - Non-legato—two or more tones are separated by small breaks
  - Staccato—two or more tones are separated by larger breaks
4. In order to achieve a perfect legato, the attacks and releases must be precisely executed.
5. There are many degrees of separation possible between two or more tones, but this course will focus on the legato, sustained style which is basic to good hymn playing as well as other aspects of organ playing.
6. Independence of line is extremely important for good legato, sustained-style hymn playing. The soprano, alto, tenor, and bass lines must be cleanly and clearly performed. Think of your hands and feet as you would a choir—performing each part with exactness and ease.
7. Guidelines for the performance of repeated notes:
  - a. When the main note value of a hymn is a quarter note, divide the quarter note in half.
  - b. If the repeated note is dotted, replace the dot with a rest.
  - c. If the hymn is slow, make the rest a quarter of the value of the repeated note.
8. Make a plan for your fingering and pedaling, test it on the organ, and write it in your hymnbook. Understand the various types of fingerings and pedaling and use the most efficient ones.
9. Modification of repeated notes
  - When a hymn has many repeated notes, selective tying can be done in two out of the three lower voices. Such tying should emphasize the metric accents of the measure (for example, beats 1 and 3 in a 4/4 measure). The character of the hymn will help you determine how much to modify the repeated notes.
10. Study the text; determine the overall mood or feeling and choose a registration and phrasing to reflect this meaning to the congregation.
11. Practice carefully and systematically to learn the hymn well. Use the 15-step method and/or the seven-step method in small sections to internalize the hymn-playing techniques.
12. While you are learning the hymn techniques, use the hymn-playing shortcuts in the Sunday services.