

All Things Pedal - Part I...of Many

Food for Thought: Learning to play the *piano* is easy in the beginning and difficult in the end. Learning to play the *organ* is difficult in the beginning and easy in the end.

Why Use the Pedals?

1. **Efficiency:** The goal of beautiful organ playing is to develop a legato touch. The feet, when used correctly, add a “third hand.” In hymn playing, the right hand can play the soprano and alto parts (Demo: #31 O God, Our Help in Ages Past) and the left hand can play the tenor part. The feet play the bass part. This makes it easier to play all parts legato. (Difficult in the beginning, but easy in the end!)
2. **Voicing:** The pedals can add a pitch an octave lower. The organ is like an orchestra; it is capable of playing very high or very low pitches. Without the pedal it would be like listening to an orchestra without the string basses or tuba. The lower pitches add depth and balance to the higher pitches on the organ (Demo: #31 O God, Our Help in Ages Past).

Why play the pedals with both feet rather than just the left foot?

1. Using both feet makes it possible to play each bass note in the written register—better voice leading (Demo with left foot only #81, Press Forward, Saints).
2. Using both feet makes it possible to play legato (Demo with both feet #81, Press Forward, Saints).

Why do we need special shoes for pedal playing?

1. Organ shoes, with their wide, one-inch heels; narrow, thin soles; and soft, flexible uppers, make it possible to play more accurately and comfortably.

Pedal Registration

1. **For preludes** use a soft 8' stop or an 8' with a soft 16' stop. Or, with the soft 16' stop, couple the softer manual to the pedal. This is like the cellos in an orchestra playing at the singing pitch and the string basses playing an octave lower—it sounds good (Demo from Manookin preludes, vol. 4, page 15, Teach Me to Walk in the Light). Using the 16' alone creates too wide of a gap between the bass and the trebles—poor orchestration (Demo soft 16' with and without the soft 8' stop). Playing with the left foot only on lower pitches may create even wider gaps. In this case try the 8' alone or coupled with the softer manual.
2. **For hymn singing** use the 16' Principal with the Gt. to Pedal coupler (Demonstrate with hymn #219, Because I Have Been Given Much, using 16' Principal with and without the Gt. to Pedal).

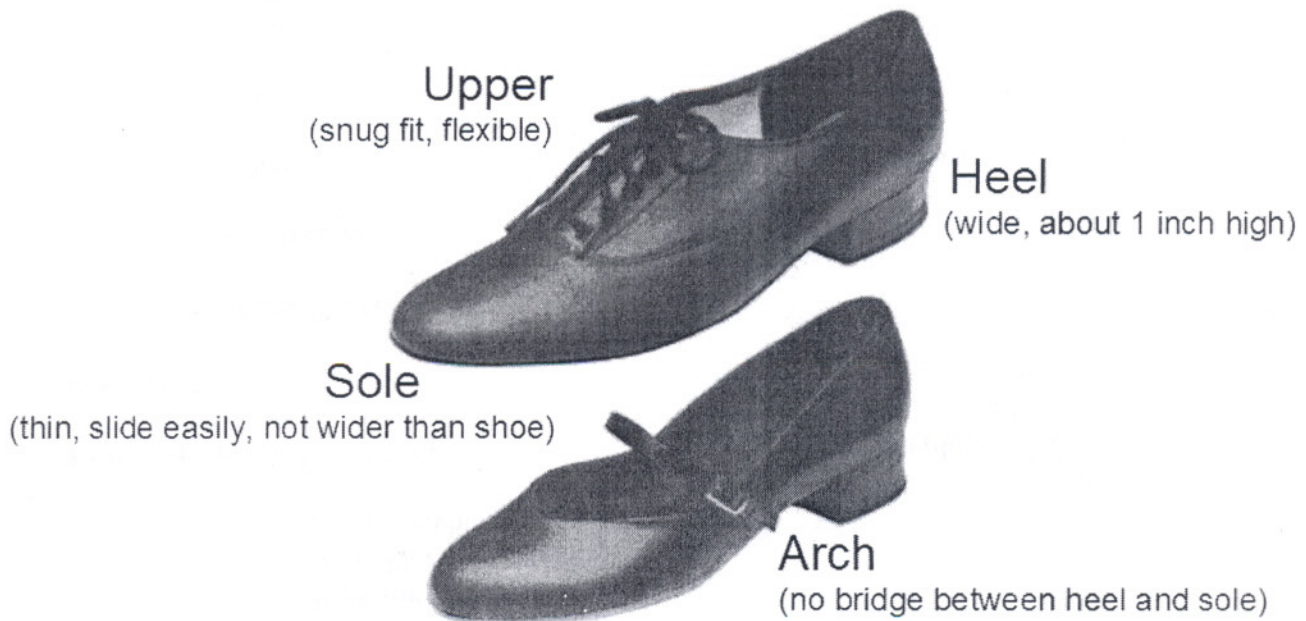
Tying Bass Notes in Hymn Singing

1. Avoid tying the bass part across bar lines (Demo: #3, Now Let Us Rejoice).
2. Try tying bass with repeated dotted rhythms (Demo: #250, We Are All Enlisted).
3. Tie choppy rhythms in the bass line (Demo: #241, Count Your Many Blessings).
4. Tie from strong to weak beats, not from weak to strong (Demo: #3, Now Let Us Rejoice).

Pedal Orientation

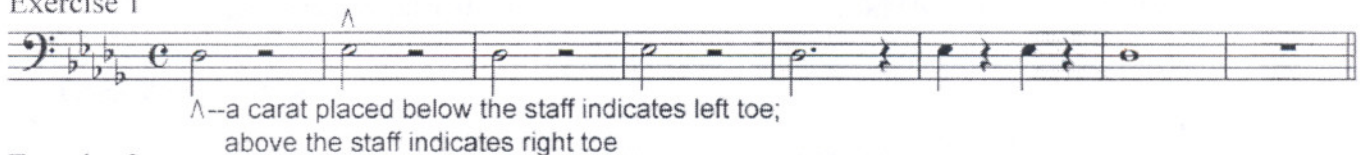
Organ Shoes

see <www.organ.byu.edu/ORSHOE.html>



Pedal Exercises for Lesson 2

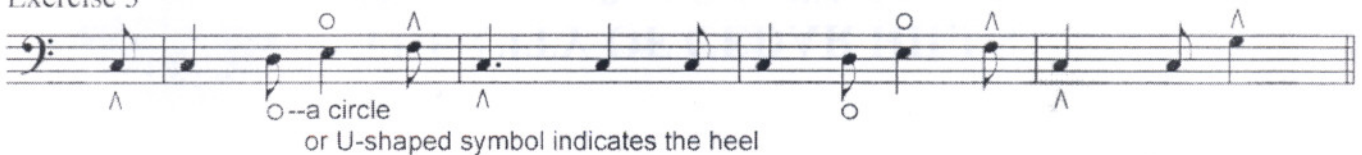
Exercise 1



Exercise 2



Exercise 3



Continue by learning the pedal line of Hymn 142, "Sweet Hour of Prayer" (simplified for organ in three parts) as described near the end of Lesson 2.

Goal #1: Basic congregational hymn registration = Principal chorus

Organ stops are classified in four basic Families of Tone: Principal, Flute, String, and Reed. (There are also hybrids combining characteristics of two families, and there are sub-classifications, such as open flutes, stopped flutes, chorus reeds, solo reeds).

Principal tone is basic and unique to the organ. It does not sound like any other instrument.

“Chorus registration” means combining stops of different pitches within the same family.

8' pitch is the pitch level at which we sing – at which the piano and most instruments play. (8' refers to the length of the largest pipe in a set of principal pipes that play at that pitch). Smaller numbers (indicating shorter pipes) play at higher pitches, reinforcing the natural overtones of the 8' foundation pitch. A 4' stop will sound one octave higher (the first overtone) than an 8' stop, and a 16' stop will sound one octave lower. 16' stops are generally used in the Pedal only, to add depth (analogous to playing octaves in the left hand on the piano or adding the double basses to the string orchestra).

The “Great” division, played from the lower manual on a two-manual organ, is the main division, and it will have the largest portion of principal stops.

On a typical organ console with stop tabs arranged in one or more rows above the keyboards, stops are grouped according to the following hierarchy, left to right:

1. Division: Pedal, Swell, Great
2. Pipe type: flues, then reeds
3. Pitch: 16, 8, 4..., ending with mixtures (Roman numerals)
4. Family of tone: principal, flute, string (reeds are already separated)
5. Loudness

The above information is enough to register a small principal chorus. Simply select the first 8' stop in the Great, then add the first 4' stop. Most likely the 8' stop will be named *Principal*, *Open Diapason*, or just *Diapason* (note: a *Stopped Diapason* is a flute); and the 4' stop will most likely be named *Octave*, *Principal*, or possibly *Prestant*.

For the bass line, to be played in the Pedal (either with feet or using the Bass Coupler), **either** select similar 8' and 4' stops (the 4' Pedal stop may be called *Choralbass*) or simply use the *Great to Pedal* coupler (which “copies” the Great stops to the Pedal); **and** select a 16' flue stop to balance, not necessarily a principal, which may be too heavy for such a minimal chorus.

This basic principal chorus can be further developed “vertically” by adding higher pitched stops, such as 2' and a mixture; and/or “horizontally” by adding additional 8' and/or 4' stops, including flutes and strings, including some from the Swell division by means of the *Swell to Great* and *Swell to Pedal* couplers.

Some things to avoid in congregational hymn registrations:

- Celestes. These stops are purposely mis-tuned to create a special, soft, “celestial” effect **when paired with one other similar stop**. (Note: A Roman numeral II on a celeste stop tab indicates that it alone controls the celeste pair – no other stops are needed). Generally they detract more than they contribute to a chorus registration, because in that context they are merely out of tune.
- Tremulant. Even worse than celestes! No one wants to sing with a wobbly organ!
- “Fancy” reed stops, such as *English Horn*. Reeds should be used sparingly anyway.
- Anything that makes the organ sound unnatural or quirky!

For accompanying softer hymns, such as sacrament hymns, substituting flute stops or combining flutes and strings – but not celestes! – in place of principals may be desirable.

Some thoughts about loudness

One of my favorite quotes (paraphrased): “The chapel is like a swimming pool; if you don’t fill it with enough sound, people will be afraid to dive in.”

When accompanying the congregation, your job is not to make the organ sound pretty, your job is to support the congregation with sound that is appropriately strong and clear, to invite and inspire, neither to overwhelm nor underwhelm.

If the organ seems a little loud when you’re practicing in the empty chapel, it might be OK when it’s full of people.

With electronic organs it’s easy to make the organ sound artificial or unnatural by “turning down the volume” with too many stops or “turning it up” with not enough stops.

If the bishop thinks it’s too loud, he may be wrong – because his place on the stand is not the best place to judge that. On the other hand, in some chapels the organ bench is in an even worse place for that! Get someone with some musical sense in the middle of the full chapel to give you some feedback.

The other three families of tone

	FLUTE	STRING	REED
Characteristics	Softer and darker than principals	Softer and brighter than principals	Brassy, fiery, spicy...
Some names to memorize	Bourdon Gedeckt	Salicional Gamba Aeoline	Bombarde Posaune (<i>Ger.: Trombone</i>) Fagott (<i>Ger.: Bassoon</i>)
Otherwise	if it can be recognized as some kind of flute or “floete”	if it has the root “viol” in its name	brass or reed instrument, incl. ancient instruments and foreign spellings

Some “horns” that are not reeds: *Gemshorn* (flute/string hybrid) and *Nachthorn* (open flute).

A New Approach to Prelude and Postlude

What I've Learned as a Temple Organist, or, Listen to the Still, Small Voice

Prelude Basics:

Play all the verses, but at least two

Change registration or manuals on every verse

Don't Compete for Volume

Keep it Simple, and Play the Hymns

Embrace Silence

Do Not Look Around

Play with the Spirit

It's HARD WORK to prepare the congregation for worship. What worked last week won't work this week, and what works this week won't work next week. The energy of the congregation changes from week to week, and from minute to minute.

Some suggestions:

Lower the volume

Change the style of the pieces (hymns, trios, full arrangements, solo/accompaniment); don't play your prelude from the same book/arranger.

Re-set the volume level of the chapel by allowing silence. Remember the quote attributed to Claude Debussy's quote, "Music is the silence between the notes."

Play reverence songs. If they don't work, play the first verse somewhat loudly, and bring down the volume significantly for the second verse.

Do something unexpected as your last prelude piece. Utilize chimes, play something upbeat, after playing from the hymnal play a new arrangement that you've carefully prepared. Mix it up as the Spirit directs.

Postlude:

At the end of the closing prayer, the congregation audibly voices, "Amen," which is followed by just a beat of silence before everyone starts to stand up, gather things together, or chat with a neighbor. Seize this precious moment! By beginning postlude at this time, the congregation intuitively feels the Spirit of the music and is guided to be more reverent and reflect on the music that is being played.

Remember: Postlude music is not exit music. It's not celebratory music that signifies the meeting is over and it's time to stretch our legs and visit. It is music that extends the spirit of the meeting.

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STUDY: Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow (#242)

By dividing the alto voice between both hands, the need for special fingering techniques is nearly eliminated, making it simpler to equitably articulate each voice.

In the first three phrases the left hand covers alto notes below middle c. Total range: f# - b, only 4 fingers!

the only finger substitution > 4-5 1 2

Here the partition between the hands shifts up, because the tenor voice rises to middle e, so the left hand now takes alto notes up to e.

Stop Winging It!

The Importance of Proper Preparation

As organists, we have the opportunity to invite people to:

- worship
- call upon the choirs of heaven, and
- join their voices in an experience of spiritual outpouring.

However, in order to accomplish these wonderful blessings, we are required to do more than just rely on some presets and a quick run-through of the hymns (if we even run through them before worship service begins).

We need to be prepared, or we can't help our congregations worship!

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord has said, “The song of the righteous is a prayer unto me.” A saying often attributed to Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo is, “He who sings, prays twice.”

It is our responsibility, as organists, to inspire our congregations to sing, and facilitate this communion with Heaven.

Think of the potential blessings for our congregations if we were to make singing the hymns a new experience for them *every single Sunday*—a new experience every single time they sing a hymn.

The act of preparing for a specific Sunday can lead to wonderful insights and experiences for you as an organist, and for your congregation.

Proper preparation :

- allows you to play with confidence
- makes it possible for you to play the hymns at their proper tempo
- invites the Spirit
- teaches the congregation to trust in your abilities and to sing accordingly

By preparing well in advance, you can also begin to paint the hymn text for your congregation. Some different techniques you can utilize include:

Soloing out the soprano or tenor line

Encouraging singing through a creative introduction

Supporting unison singing with a free accompaniment

Finding the perfect registration for each verse

Adding suspensions or other harmonic interest

Using other ideas from <http://organlessons.blogspot.com/2013/04/how-to-beautify-hymn-accompaniment.html>

Proper preparation is the foundation that frees you to act on the promptings of the Spirit.

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