

“Bearing Testimony Through Hymn Playing”

Utah Valley AGO Super Saturday Keynote Address

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Bearing Testimony Through Hymns (Please have a hymnbook available)

1. Good organ playing makes a huge difference in worship services
 - i. I have noticed that we as organists can be the *biggest* influence to someone’s spiritual experience in church, or, perhaps, the biggest distraction. No one wants to be that!
 - ii. If you play the hymns in a confident/supportive way, with good technique/creative registrations, etc., you’ll inspire (in my experience) 95% of the congregation. 5% will think you’re “playing too loud/showing off...but “haters gonna hate”
 - iii. If you play timidly/underwhelmingly, with no regard to organ technique, you will probably not irritate that 5%, HOWEVER, you will probably not inspire the 95%. Which would you rather?
2. How to show the meaning of the hymns and inspire singing
 - i. Play a solid introduction—This is your solo! Don’t mess it up ;)
 1. Why do an introduction?
 - a. Sets mood
 - b. Sets tempo
 - c. Establishes melody
 - d. INSPIRES SINGING (Think Clay Christiansen’s FAMOUS introductions in General Conference)
 - ii. LET THE TEXT GUIDE YOU (jubilant vs. meditative)—This is where the registrational/creative planning begins
 1. “How Great Thou Art!” #86
 - a. Overall, this is a jubilant hymn, so I’d begin with a registration of a full principal chorus
 - b. The verses that are sinister, show that in your registration
 - i. (16’ manual stops/reeds, 32’ pedals, no mixtures until chorus)
 2. “Praise to the Man” #27
 - a. Verse/Chorus registration
 - i. Add mixture/reed for chorus and take off for the verse.

- ii. Reharmonization for the last verse works very well on this hymn since it is so well known.
- iii. Follow the phrasing of the text
 - 1. If someone in a public speaking situation doesn't take breaks between sentences and talks in run-ons, it would be difficult to follow. If they stop in the middle of a sentence, and put pauses in arbitrary places, it would also be confusing to follow. So, we need to help our congregations make sense of the text by breaking where we should and not breaking where we shouldn't. Follow the punctuation
 - a. "Silent Night" #204
 - i. Remember the Silent Night example ;)
 - 1. All is Calm, All is Bright Round yon virgin..."
- iv. Rearranging voices by soloing out tenor, soprano, alto up an octave, etc.
 - 1. "Rejoice! The Lord is King" #66
 - a. This is a jubilant Hymn! Let the registration reflect that
 - b. I rearranged voices by incorporating a soprano solo, alto up an octave, and by soloing out the melody in the pedal of the third verse where it talks about "The keys of death and hell to Christ the Lord are given!"