

Basic Organ Registration

Registration is the act of combining organ stops for a desired sound. It can be one of the most difficult topics to understand in organ playing

When becoming familiar with registration, a good place to begin is at the organ console. Start by listening to each stop and comparing the tonal colors to each other. On an electronic organ, each stop or tab will control one set of sounds. On a pipe organ, each stop or tab will control one rank of pipes. For example, in most cases, the 8' Principal on the Great manual will control sixty-one notes, the 8' pitch being the lowest note and progressing to the top C.

Some stops are unified or duplexed. This means that they are borrowed stops.

For example: On my organ the "Bourdon Doux is a 16' Flute in the pedal and a 16' Flute on the swell. The Octave 8' in the pedal and the Octave 4' on the great" are unified. Identify these stops on your organ.

Families of Organ Stops

There are four basic families.

1. Diapason or Principal family
2. Flute family
3. String family
4. Reed family

Diapason or Principal Tone

The Principal is the foundation tone of the organ. It is the only family not imitating other orchestra sounds. The Mixture stops are a combination of small principal pipes.

There are many different Principal sounds. Some have a flutier sound and others have a more stringy sound.

Flute Tone

Flutes are slightly softer than the Principal or Diapasons. There is a certain crispness with them. They combine rather well with the Principal tones.

String Tone

Strings have a soft, rich, full, smooth sound. Because Strings are softer, they are generally not used in hymn accompaniments because you can't hear them. Many organists love the string sound so much that they incorrectly play entire preludes and postludes with them.

Reed Tones

Reeds add fire and brilliancy. They can be used with a full principal chorus which includes a mixture. Reeds are reserved for the climatic part of a Hymn, anthem or solo.

Hybrid Stops

When stops are in more than one family, they are hybrids. For example: The Gemshorn is a cross between a flute and string tone with a diapason likeness.

Mutation Stops

Stops written Twelfth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth are mutation stops in the Diapason family. Stops that have a fraction under their name are Flute mutation stops. They make interesting effects.

Celeste Stops

Some organs have a Flute Celeste and/or a String Celeste stop which are unturned slightly above the pitch of the other organ stops. A warm, rich tone is produced when you add another 8' Flute stop to the Flute Celeste or a 8' String stop to the String Celeste. These stops are not used in congregational singing because the Celeste is detuned.

Non-speaking Stops

These stops don't make any sound by themselves. Couplers and Tremulants are the most common non-speaking stops. Couplers enable the sound of one manual to be added to that of another manual or pedal. A Tremulants causes the normally straight, sustained tone of the organ to waver at a regular rate, something like the natural vibrato of a singer.

Basic Registration Types

Chorus or Ensemble Registration

“Chorus registration” means combining stops of different pitches within the same family. Most Hymns are played using a chorus registration. All voices are played on the same manual, and the pedal, where the bass is played. The pedal is registered to be very similar to the manual.

The Principal Chorus is a combination of the Principal 8', 4', 2' stops in the manuals and can include a Mixture stop when a brighter sound is wanted. For the pedal you start with a 16' and build upward. This basic Principal chorus can be further developed “vertically” by adding higher pitch stops or “horizontally” by adding additional 8' and/or 4' stops.

For clarity use only one stop in each pitch 8, 4, 2. For warmth use the “horizontal” method 8, 8, 4, 4, 2, 2 or the Pyramid method 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 2

On electronic organs always begin with a Principal 8' in the manuals. On a pipe organ, start with a flute 8', then a principal 4' stop. In the pedal start with a 16'

8' pitch is the pitch level at which we sing – at which the piano and most instruments play.

8' refers to the longest pipe in a set of principal pipes that play at that pitch. Smaller numbers indicate shorter pipes played at higher pitches. A 4' stop is an octave higher than the 8' stop and a 16' stop is an octave lower than the 8' stop. Generally 16' stops are used in the pedal only to add depth.

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

*Division: Pedal, Swell, Great

*Pipe type: flues, then reeds

*Pitch: 16,8,4, 2, Mixtures-(roman numeral), Reeds

*Family of tones: principal, flute, string, reeds

*Loudness

*Non-speaking stops

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

Solo-Accompaniment Registration

Many hymn preludes/postludes require one voice to stand apart from the others. The solo is registered on one manual and an accompaniment stop or ensemble is registered on the other manual. The accompaniment manual is often coupled to the pedal which usually includes a single 16' stop. The pedal can be registered independently to balance the accompaniment manual but always use at least one 8' stop and sometimes it's nice to leave the 16' off.

Some Solo Registrations

1. Viola Celeste. Viola 8
2. Flute 8, 2 2/3
3. Flute 8, 2
4. Oboe
5. (Cornet) is created with swell flutes. Flute 8, 4, 2 2/3, 2, 1 3/5
6. Trumpet
7. Flute Celeste, flute 8
8. Cromorne
9. Principal 8'

Depending on the strength or volume of the solo voice, the accompaniment may range from a single 8' stop to a small chorus of flutes and strings at 8' and 4'. A string celeste is a favorite accompaniment sound but don't over use it.

Trio Registration

Three independent voices are registered, one on each of the manuals and one on the pedal. The manual voices should contrast distinctly but usually not dramatically. In most trios, the contrast should be one of timbre (tone color) more than volume. If the bass voice is active, it should be registered to 'hold its own' against the manual voices. If it is passive a single 8' stop or a soft 16' and 8' together is usually sufficient.

*People in the chapel will soften the brightness of the organ so don't be afraid to use the Principal 2', Mixture stops with some Hymns.

*Learn your organ stops and what family they belong in.

*Play with pedals. This gives a balance to singing. For Variety, one verse may be played on the manual only.

*Changing registrations through the Hymn adds color and interest but you must practice these changes just as you practice playing the notes.

COMMON STOP NAMES LISTED BY PIPE CATEGORY AND FAMILY OF ORGAN TONE

<i>FLUE PIPES</i>			<i>REED PIPES</i>
Flute family	Principal family	String family	Reed family
Blockflöte	Choral bass	Aeoline	<i>Chorus reeds</i>
Bourdon (Contre bourdon)	Diapason	Cello	Basson (Contre basson)
Bourdon doux	Doublette	Fugara	Bombarde
Clarabella	<u>Dulciana</u>	Gamba	Clairon (Clarion)
Copula	Fifteenth	Salicet	<u>Dulzian</u>
Cor de nuit	Geigen diapason	Salicional	Fagotto (Fagott) [bassoon] (pronounced "fuh-GOT")
Flautino	Geigen principal	Unda maris	Hautbois [oboe]
Flauto dolce	Montre	Viola	Oboe
Flûte à bec	Octave (Oktav)	Viola da gamba	Posaune [trombone]
Flute celeste	Open diapason	Viola celeste	Rankett
Flûte ouverte	Prestant	Viola pomposa	Tromba
Flûte harmonique	Principal (Prinzipal)	Violone (Contre violone)	Trompette (Trompete)
Gedeckt (Gedackt)	Quint(e)	Voix celeste	Trumpet
Harmonic flute	Spitz prinzipal		<u>Waldhorn</u>
Höhlflöte	Super octave		
Koppelflöte	Twelfth		<i>Solo reeds</i>
Larigot			Clarinet
Lieblich gedeckt	Chorus mixtures		Cromorne
Melodia	(Plein jeu, Mixture,		English horn (Cor Anglais)
<u>Nachthorn</u>	Furniture, Cymbal,		Festival trumpet
Nazard (Nasard, Nasat)	Scharf, Acuta)		French horn
<u>Octavin</u>			Krummhorn
Open flute			Regal
Orchestral flute			Rohr schalmei
Piccolo			Schalmei
Pommer			Tuba
Quintaton (Quintadena)			
Quintflöte			<i>Others</i>
Rohrflöte			Vox humana
Siffflöte			
Spillpfeife			
Stopped <u>diapason</u>			
Subbass			
Tibia			
Tierce (Terz)			
Traverse flute			
<u>Waldflöte</u>			
Solo mixtures--Cornet II or III, Sesquialtera II (These are usually flutes unless they are found on the Great, in which case they are usually Principals)			
Hybrid stops (share characteristics of more than one family)			
Erzähler			
Gemshorn, Gemshorn celeste			
Spitzflöte			

Some stop names that can easily be identified with the wrong family are underlined.

PEDAL STOP	FAMILY	SWELL STOP	STOP FAMILY
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
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11			
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GREAT STOP		GENERALS	
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