

Advanced Organ Registration

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“Get to know all the stops on your organ. Make them your friends.” —Alexander Schreiner
(source unknown)

Questions to ask / Things to listen for:

- What does a melody sound like in the middle range? An octave higher? An octave lower?
- What do chords sound like in various registers?
- How effectively can it accompany itself?
- How articulate is it? Does it lend itself better to slow, sustained playing or to more rapid passages or a non-legato touch?
- How does it relate to other stops? How does it blend? How does it contrast?
- How does the swell pedal affect it? Differently from other stops?

To register a piece of music - questions to ask:

- What historical style? (Organs of Bach’s time had neither celestes nor swell boxes)
- Is it authentic organ music or a transcription or arrangement - orchestral in concept?
- Musical texture? 3, 4, or 5 consistent voices? Should one voice be made to stand out?
- Tempo/energy? (*Your* energy should match that of the registration you choose).

Solo and accompaniment registration

- Soprano solos can be almost anything
- Tenor solos are best with a principal or reed (or a broad string – rare)
- Bass (Pedal) solos usually require at least an 8' reed, often 16' as well.

Trio registration

- Three distinct voices.
 - Reed vs flute?
 - Mutations (upper voice) vs unisons/octaves?
 - High pitches vs low pitches? (Avoid higher pitches in LH than in RH).
- How active is the bass (Pedal) voice? Is it just bass and long notes, or is there a melody there?
- Try leaving 16' off, especially if the bass line is busy. Sometimes this enhances clarity and balance.