

# Hymn Introductions that Inspire Singing

BYU Organ Workshop 2011 – Daniel Kerr

## Functions of hymn introductions:

- identify the hymn
- establish the key
- establish the tempo
- establish the mood
- *invite and encourage the congregation to join in singing!*

## Don't neglect the basics:

- tempo must be steady, secure, and appropriate to the text and tune. The tempo of the introduction is the tempo that will be sung by the congregation. Unduly slow, dragging tempos discourage singing.
- The rhythmic energy from the end of the intro to the beginning of the first verse must be predictable.
- while the registration for an introduction might be relatively quiet, it must provide enough supportive sound to encourage congregants to join in singing.
- energetic hymns can incorporate an *appropriate* amount of non-legato playing (in appropriate voices) to add excitement and clarity to the rhythm.

## Some ideas for “carefully creative” introductions:

- solo out the soprano voice
- solo out the tenor voice (if appropriate; for example, not for #241!)
- invert the soprano and tenor voices (soprano down an octave; tenor up an octave)
- use a pedal point (usually on tonic or dominant)
- addition of non-chord tones (passing tones, suspensions, etc.)
- subtle re-harmonizations of the hymn tune
- for the more “adventurous”: find a high-profile motif (melodic or rhythmic) and use it as a sequence to build a compelling introduction (see example).

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in 4/4 time, and the bottom staff is in 3/4 time. Both are in the key of G major. The music features a steady, rhythmic accompaniment with some melodic lines in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The bottom staff ends with the word "Come,".

In no case should the introduction detract from the spirit of the hymn or the spirit of the meeting. Introductions should never call attention to themselves or to the organist; rather they call attention to the text that will follow and the message that text carries.