

HYMN REGISTRATION FOR THE INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED ORGANIST

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The overriding goal in hymn playing is to inspire people to sing with the Spirit. Hymns are the congregation’s music; the organ should support their singing without getting in their way. “Use boldness, but not overbearance...” (Alma 38:12). The organ should provide aural leadership and encourage robust singing, but not detract from the congregation’s act of worship through song.

Effective hymn registrations should:

- Provide a foundation for good, supportive singing (start with a Principal 8’).
- Be heard by the singers without overwhelming them (use some upper-partial stops).
- Provide variety from verse to verse (and sometimes even phrase to phrase) as reflected in the text.
- Always point to the message and the spirit that it invites.

Most congregational hymns can be registered somewhere on a hypothetical grid defined by two axes:

A *horizontal axis* that provides breadth and warmth, and is generally used for quieter, introspective hymns (for instance, 100, 113, 124, 187). It is built with many available 8’ flues, with a 4’ flute (or two) for clarity.

A *vertical axis* that provides brilliance, energy and clarity. It is generally used in robust “power” hymns (for instance, 5, 72, 85, 250). This is built on the principal chorus (often including mixtures) and can include fiery chorus reeds – when judiciously employed (if warranted).

When soloing out a line (soprano or tenor), the solo voice should be clearly discernable from the accompanying voices, yet the accompanying voices should adequately support the solo voice (and the congregation).

As a general rule, avoid 16’ manual stops, full organ, celestes, and (especially) the tremulant for congregational hymns.

Some generic registrations for discussion:

1.

Gt.	Principal 8’	Sw.	Geigen Principal 8’	Ped.	Subbass 16’
	Flute 8’		Viola 8’		Bourdon 16’
	Gemshorn 8’		Bourdon 8’		Octave 8’
	Flute 4’		Flute 4’		Gedeckt 8’
	Swell to Great 8’				Swell to Pedal 8’

2.

Gt.	Principal 8’	Sw.	Geigen Principal 8’	Ped.	Principal 16’
	Flute 8’		Viola 8’		Subbass 16’
	Principal 4’		Flute 4’		Octave 8’
	Flute 4’		Oboe 8’		Flute 8’
					Choral Bass 4’
	Swell to Great 8’				

3.

Gt.	Principal 8'	Sw.	Principal 8'	Ped.	Principal 16'
	Flute 8'		Viola 8'		Subbass 16'
	Principal 4'		Flute 4'		Octave 8'
	Flute 4'		Principal 4'		Flute 8'
	Super Octave 2'		(Flute 2')		Choral Bass 4'
			Mixture IV		
	Swell to Great 8'				Swell to Pedal 8'

4.

Gt.	Principal 8'	Sw.	Principal 8'	Ped.	Principal 16'
	Flute 8'		Viola 8'		Subbass 16'
	Principal 4'		Flute 4'		Octave 8'
	Flute 4'		Principal 4'		Flute 8'
	Quint 2 2/3'		Flute 2'		Choral Bass 4'
	Super Octave 2'		Mixture IV		
	Mixture IV		(Trompette 8')		Swell to Pedal 8'
	Swell to Great 8'				

5.

Gt.	Principal 8'	Sw.	Principal 8'	Ped.	Principal 16'
	Flute 8'		Viola 8'		Subbass 16'
	Principal 4'		Flute 4'		Octave 8'
	Flute 4'		Principal 4'		Flute 8'
	Quint 2 2/3'		Flute 2'		Choral Bass 4'
	Super Octave 2'		Mixture IV		
	Mixture IV				Swell to Pedal 8'
	Swell to Great 8'				

6.

Gt.	Flute 8'	Sw.	Principal 8'	Ped.	Subbass 16'
	Gemshorn 8'		Viola 8'		Octave 8'
	Super Octave 2'		Flute 4'		Flute 8'
			Principal 4'		
					Swell to Pedal 8'

7.

Gt.	Principal 8'	Sw.	Principal 8'	Ped.	Subbass 16'
	Gemshorn 8'		Viola 8'		Octave 8'
	Principal 4'		Principal 4'		Flute 8'
	Flute 4'		Nazard 2 2/3'		Choral Bass 4'
			Trompette 8'		
			Clairon 4'		