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**General principles for accompanying congregational singing**

• Your immediate aim is competence, not profundity.

• Almost always, less is more (re. harmonic complexity, musical motion, character of introductions …).

• Almost always, linear thinking is primary, vertical thinking secondary.

• Without exception, the point of departure is the text.

• Musical parameters (texture, timbre, harmony, phrasing etc.) must reinforce the form of text and tune.

• Harmonic strategy must create a logical architecture of cadences.

• In introductions, no marshmallow music, and no tone poems.

• Intonations and introductions should communicate the key, tempo, and tune to the congregation. (Exceptions include proportional tempi worked out with a cantor, and introductions to songs so familiar that the tune need not be cited per se.

• Regarding all of the above, remember that supporting a congregation’s singing is a highly contextual task dependent among other things upon:

1. the traditions of the community
2. the acoustics of the space
3. the capabilities of the instrument to yield musical results
4. the function of the piece in the liturgy.

• Even in context of working out basic skills, you should begin to develop your original voice. You do not play for seventeenth-century North German congregations, or for nineteenth-century French congregations, or for Edwardian English congregations. Your approach may draw upon or allude to these and any number of other dialects, but outright imitation is, in my opinion, a bizarre anachronism in the service-playing context.

• Finally, consider this remark from Johannes Tinctoris, *Art of Counterpoint* (1477), admittedly out-of-context but for our purposes not out-of-place:

Horace says in his *Poetics*: “One who sings to the kithara is laughed at if he always wanders over the same string.” Wherefore, according to the opinion of Tullius [Cicero], as a variety in the art of speaking most delights the hearer, so also in music a diversity of harmonies vehemently provokes the souls of listeners into delight; hence the philosopher [Aristotle], in his *Ethics*, does not hesitate to state that variety is a most pleasant thing and human nature in need of it. (*Art of Counterpoint* [*Liber de arte contrapuncti*], cited in Alexis Luko, “Tinctoris on Varietas,” *Early Music History* 27 (2008): 129.

… and also Cicero’s concept of public speaking, which furnishes Tinctoris an important model:

No single style is fitting for every case or every audience or every person involved or every occasion … when choosing a type of speech — a fuller or more slender one, or indeed the middle type — we should see to it that it is adapted to the problem at hand … the capacity to do what is appropriate is a matter of art and natural ability, but to know what is appropriate at each time is a matter of intelligence. (*On the Ideal Orator* [*De Oratore*, 55 BCE], cited in Ibid., 113. Emphasis mine.)

**Some strategies for hymn playing**

Basic techniques à4 *Kantional* as written, or simplified from written

1. One manual (8’) and pedal (16’ or 8’)
2. One manual without pedal (8’ or 16’)
3. Tune RH on Man. I (8’), AT Man. II (8’) and Ped. (16’ or 8’)
4. Tune Ped. at 4’, ATB on manual

Textural variations with minimal harmonic variation (chromatic inflections)

1. Tune in soprano, harmony as full chords punctuated (à4–6+), +/– Ped.
2. Monophony
3. à2 bicinium on a single manual (8’ or 16’) species 1–5
4. à2 bicinium, tune RH on Man. I (8’), free counterpoint on Man. II (16’ or 8’), 5th species
5. à2 bicinium, tune LH on Man. I (8’ or 16’), free counterpoint on Man. II (8’), 5th species
6. à3 trio on a single manual (8’ or 16’) species 1–5
7. à3 trio, tune RH on Man. I (8’) free counterpoint on Man. II (8’), +/– Ped. (16’ or 8’), 5th species
8. à3 trio, tune LH on Man. I (8’) with counterpoint on Man. II (8’), +/– Ped. (16’ or 8’), 5th species
9. à4, tenor tune LH on Man. I (8’), SA on Man. (8’), B in Ped. (16’ or 8’)
10. Combinations of all the above, progressing from monophony to à2—à3—à4, delineated by phrase or otherwise

More advanced harmonic variation

1. Isolated altered chords that depart from the written text (any texture)
2. Invented bass lines in *Kantionalsatz* à4, texture as (1.) above

Other techniques, applied to the above as appropriate

1. Ornaments and other decorations of the tune
2. Echo arrangements
3. Pedal points

Intonations (partial tune), introductions (whole tune), and postludes

1. Approaches that draw upon any of the above, alone or in combination
2. Ostinato figures derived from the tune (bass or otherwise)
3. Tune-derived points of imitation, BTAS or otherwise (S or B always last)
4. Phrase expansion by tune-derived fughetta, BTAS or otherwise (S or B always last)
5. Derivation of substantial independent motives for use with 20.–23.