

SKILLS: GOOD TECHNIQUE and ACCOMPANYING BEST PRACTICES

- a. What makes a good musician???? PRACTICE!!!
 - i. Remember that every musician, including master musicians, practice regularly.
 - ii. Regularly practice ALL repertoire, but do not neglect scales, etudes, etc. KEEP YOUR MUSCLES IN SHAPE!!!
 1. Practice carefully and intentionally. Take the time to figure out fingerings and write them in, to practice with a solid, consistent fingerings, articulations, etc. Settle on a practice method that works for you and utilize it every day.
 2. Be attentive to your body: your posture, your hand, wrist, and arm position, and work on fine tuning this part of your technique.
 - iii. Know and understand your limitations→ You are not the best musician in the world. I am not the best musician in the world. Never think that your skills are above practice. Know how much you need to prepare in order to perform WELL.
- b. What makes a good accompanist?
 - i. An accompanist is a collaborative musician. They collaborate with the person whom they are accompanying.
 - ii. An accompanist prepares→ This means doing research on the music you are performing. Perform with stylistic integrity! Know the difference between playing Bach, Chopin, or Rachmaninoff.
 - iii. An accompanist simultaneously leads and follows.
 1. An accompanist is the foundation for a soloist. The accompanist sets the tempo, tone, etc, yet is sensitive to the soloist.
 2. An accompanist aims to anticipate what the soloist is going to do, but is efficiently reactive to sudden changes and nuances.
 - iv. An accompanist breathes with the soloist
 1. This is an advanced skill, yet an essential one to being a good accompanist. Learn to “live inside the body or bodies of the soloist or ensemble”
- c. What does this mean for pastoral musicians?
 - i. Accompanying an assembly during worship is not the same as accompanying a soloist.
 - ii. An accompanist is able to lead an assembly in song, rather than follow what the assembly is “going to do”

d. How do you accompany an assembly effectively?

i. Preparation

1. Make your “musical roadmap” ahead of time.
 - a. Write in dynamic levels, *ritards*, changes in the score, cues, etc.
2. Write out or mark introductions, interludes, endings, etc.
 - a. A good introduction “introduces” the assembly and other musicians into the song/hymn you are playing.
 - b. Introductions should be relatively brief (Often they are but a four-bar phrase of the beginning or end or a combination of both.)
 - c. The introduction should be in tempo, clearly introducing the melodic content.
 - d. Bring the introduction to an obvious cadence (Should be a strong cadence (PAC, IAC, Half)
 - e. BREATHE: If you breathe with the music, the assembly will breathe with you and come in with you at the right time. Sometimes, you must add in breaths between verses to give the assembly a moment to catch their breath. Remember: they are not professional singers.
 - f. Communicate with cantors, choir, etc.

ii. Practice

1. Practice the music striving for precision, accuracy, and beauty.
2. Account for every note.
 - a. Be attentive to both the vertical (When notes occur in time) and the horizontal (how you move from one note to the next)
 - b. Practice all the introductions, interludes, etc. that you prepared ahead of time.

iii. Performance

1. Know the space
 - a. The more reverberant and “wet” the space, the crisper and more detached your articulation should be. (Not that it shouldn’t be crisp and clear anyway)
 - i. Don’t park your foot on the sustain pedal.
 1. In fact, go and practice that too.
 - b. Try not to be accused of “pounding the piano”

- i. There is a season for everything- a time to play gently and tenderly, and a time to play aggressively. KNOW HOW TO DO BOTH AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.
2. Know your audience
 - a. Different assemblies will require slightly different accompanying.
 - b. Be ready to change tempo slightly from mass to mass, to change dynamic level.
 - c. Know when you need to simplify.
 - i. If an assembly seems to be floundering, SAVE them instead of ignoring them.
 - ii. Double the melody
 - iii. Simplify the harmonic progression
 - iv. For assembly playing, favor the melody first, the bass line second, and the inner voices last-remember that the goal is to foster a full, active, and conscious singing assembly.
 - v. Anticipate the needs of the assembly.
 - vi. Know when to begin, and when to stop.
3. Get comfortable with improvisation
 - a. Learn how to improvise, even at the most basic level.
 - b. Improvisation will enable you to respond appropriately to situations that are not planned.
 - c. Improvisation will lead to more affective playing
 - i. For example: Text painting
 1. Lord of All Hopefulness- Fourth Verse (gentleness, calm)
 - ii. Some skills for improvisation:
 1. Invert voices (alto line over soprano line)
 2. Change harmony
 3. Add more rhythmic variety
 4. Add passing tones, embellishments, ornaments etc.
 5. Subtract notes/ utilize rests
 - iii. MOTION CONTROLS (sustained notes do not control tempo, but moving notes do.)
 - d. Here are some resources for improvisation:

- i. Keyboard Improvisation for the Liturgical Musician by Jeanne Cotter, GIA Publications
https://www.giamusic.com/search_details.cfm?title_id=3479
- ii. Improvising: How to Master the Art by Gerre Hancock
<http://www.ohscatalog.org/gerhanimhowt1.htm>
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