



National Association of Pastoral Musicians

Basic Pianist Certificate Preparation

SKILLS: GOOD TECHNIQUE AND ACCOMPANYING BEST PRACTICES

What Makes A Good Musician???? PRACTICE!!!

- Remember that every musician, including master musicians, practice regularly
- Regularly practice ALL repertoire, but do not neglect scales, etudes, etc.
KEEP YOUR MUSCLES IN SHAPE!!!
 - Practice carefully and intentionally. Take the time to figure out fingerings and write them in, so that you can practice with solid, consistent fingerings, articulations, etc.
 - Settle on a practice method that works for you and utilize it every day
 - Be attentive to your body: your posture, your hand, wrist, and arm position, and work on fine tuning this part of your technique
- 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

What Makes A Good Accompanist?

- An accompanist is a collaborative musician. They collaborate with the person whom they are accompanying.
- 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.
- An accompanist simultaneously leads and follows.
 - An accompanist is the foundation for a soloist. The accompanist sets the tempo, tone, etc, yet is sensitive to the soloist.
 - An accompanist aims to anticipate what the soloist is going to do, but is efficiently reactive to sudden changes and nuances
- An accompanist breathes with the soloist
 - 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”

What Does This Mean For Pastoral Musicians?

- Accompanying an assembly during worship is not the same as accompanying a soloist.
- An accompanist is able to lead an assembly in song, rather than follow what the assembly is “going to do”

How Do You Accompany An Assembly Effectively?

- Preparation
 - Make your “musical roadmap” ahead of time
 - . Write in dynamic levels, ritards, changes in the score, cues, etc.
 - Write out or mark introductions, interludes, endings, etc.
 - . A good introduction “introduces” the assembly and other musicians into the song/hymn you are playing
 - . Introductions should be relatively brief; they are often a four-bar phrase of the beginning or end, or a combination of both.
 - ~ For shorter hymns, or those that are new to your assembly, you may choose to play the entire hymn as the introduction
 - ~ However, this should not be the typical choice
 - . The introduction should be in tempo, clearly introducing the melodic content.
 - . Bring the introduction to an obvious cadence, and strong cadence (PAC, IAC, Half)
 - . BREATHE: If you breathe with the music, the assembly will breathe with you and begin singing at the right time.
 - ~ Sometimes, you must add additional beats between stanzas to give the assembly a moment to catch their breath. Remember: they are not professional singers.
 - . Communicate with cantors, choir, etc. so that they know what to expect
- Practice
 - Practice all music striving for precision, accuracy, and beauty.
 - Account for every note
 - . Be attentive to both the vertical (when notes occur in time) and the horizontal (how you move from one note to the next) aspects of music
 - . Practice all the introductions, interludes, etc. that you prepared ahead of time
 - . Be sure to understand the shapes of phrases, and of the piece overall
- Performance
 - Know the space
 - . The more reverberant and “wet” the space, the crisper and more detached your articulation should be. Of course, it should always be crisp and clear, anyway.
 - ~ Don’t park your foot on the sustain pedal
 - ~ In fact, go and practice that too
 - . Try not to be accused of “pounding the piano”
 - ~ 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
- Know your assembly
 - . Different assemblies will require slightly different accompanying styles
 - . Be ready to change tempo slightly from mass to mass, and to change dynamic levels to best enable your assembly to participate fully
 - . Know when you need to simplify.
 - ~ If an assembly seems to be floundering, SAVE them instead of ignoring them
 - . Double the melody
 - . Simplify the harmonic progression
 - ~ 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
 - ~ Anticipate the needs of the assembly
 - ~ Know when to begin, and when to stop
- Get comfortable with improvisation
 - . Learn how to improvise, even at the most basic level
 - . Improvisation will enable you to respond appropriately to situations that are not planned
 - . Improvisation will also lead to more affective playing
 - ~ For example: Text painting. Consider the hymn *Lord of All Hopefulness*. Consider the text of the fourth stanza (gentleness, calm), and how your playing should express that text
 - ~ Some skills for improvisation:
 - Invert voices (alto line over soprano line)
 - Change harmony
 - Add more rhythmic variety (or simplify the rhythms)
 - Add passing tones, embellishments, ornaments, etc.
 - Subtract notes/utilize rests
 - ~ MOTION CONTROLS (sustained notes do not control tempo, but moving notes do)

Resource Materials

Keyboard Improvisation for the Liturgical Musician

by Jeanne Cotter

GIA Publications: https://www.giamusic.com/search_details.cfm?title_id=3479

Improvising: How to Master the Art

by Gerre Hancock

<http://www.ohscatalog.org/gerhanimhowt1.html>