



PSALM 150:

JOIN THE CRESCENDO



(B) GUIDE

PIANIST EDITION

Join the Crescendo is an educational resource designed for any current and future leaders in The Salvation Army involved in music and creative arts.



**Music and
Creative Arts**



PSALM 150

Psalm 150 is the driving force behind this resource. As the psalmist depicts a sense of joy and enthusiasm, we hope that you may be able to draw from this in your ministry. God is good and we will praise him in any way possible in the hope that our efforts will join together in a crescendo of praise to the Lord.

- '1 Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Praise God in his holy sanctuary!
Praise him in his stronghold in the sky!
- 2 Praise him for his miracles of might!
Praise him for his magnificent greatness!
- 3 Praise him with the trumpets blasting!
Praise him with the piano and guitar!
- 4-5 Praise him with drums and dancing!
Praise him with the loud, resounding clash of the cymbals!
Praise him with every instrument you can find!
- 6 Let everyone everywhere **Join in the crescendo** of ecstatic praise to Yahweh! Hallelujah! Praise to the Lord!

Psalm 150:1-6 (The Passion Translation)

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WHAT IS JOIN THE CRESCENDO?

'Join the Crescendo' is an educational resource designed for any current and future leaders in The Salvation Army involved in music and creative arts.

'JtC' has been inspired and informed by frontline expressions of music and creative arts across the United Kingdom and Ireland Territory.

JtC starts with guide 'A' which is appropriate for all leaders involved within music and the arts, to help mentor future leaders or current leaders in five themes which are relevant to all. Ranging from brass and vocal groups to photography and flower arranging teams, the Guide 'A' is the resource to use for advice on **spiritual enrichment, pastoral skills, empowering leadership, artistic priorities** and **rehearsal delivery**.

This is the pianist edition of Guide 'B' and follows on from Guide 'A' with specific guidance relevant to your particular discipline.

'JtC' has been created to help enhance your ministry, to enable you and your group to experience the spiritual joy and enthusiasm that the psalmist depicts. The preceding five themes have been carefully considered to work in sequence so we can strive to help keep God integral to all that we do. We believe that whatever your art form, following the principles and advice that are set out in this resource will result in amazing, God-inspired work for his Kingdom!

“
**'FOR I CAN DO EVERYTHING
THROUGH CHRIST, WHO GIVES
ME STRENGTH.'**

Philippians 4:13 NLT

JOIN THE CRESCENDO PIANIST GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

The role of a corps pianist is unique amongst corps musicians. Whilst you may also be the accompanist for vocal groups or the keyboard player in a contemporary worship team, there will almost certainly be times when you are playing on your own during sung worship. This means that whilst you are not the leader of a specific group of people you are a leader of congregational singing. Many of the communication methods which are relevant to other music leader roles will not apply to the corps pianist, but this is a crucial role that can easily be undervalued. Your communication is achieved entirely by your playing, which presents both challenges and opportunities.

**“NOT TO US, O LORD, NOT
TO US, BUT TO YOUR
NAME GIVE GLORY”.**

Psalms 115:1

This guide is designed to support you to facilitate sung worship and encourage you to consider how to develop within that role. One of the most important ways that this guide can do this is to ask you to reflect on how you go about the various aspects of accompanying sung worship and to give you practical suggestions as to how to accompany more clearly and effectively.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Sung worship is an integral part of almost all Salvation Army meetings. The Bible continuously tells us to sing praise to the Lord. As an accompanist, your role is to make singing praise an experience which all can enter into with a spirit of true worship. For more context on why we use sung worship, consult the Join the Crescendo Contemporary Worship guide (Missional Priorities).

Your role is not to simply enjoy your own music preferences or cater for one particular demographic. As a facilitator of worship, you should aim to reflect the needs of the congregation. In any meeting there will be people present for whom music resonates in different ways.

Your playing must be sympathetic and subtle, yet at times clear and decisive. One of the most important things you can do as an accompanist is aim for clarity; clarity of the melody, structure and phrasing. To achieve this clarity, best practice includes establishing a clear tempo within your introductions, establishing tonality within the key signature and establishing clarity through the melody being played to the fore.

“PLAYING THE PIANO FOR WORSHIP IS A MINISTRY IN ITSELF AND REQUIRES ME TO ENTER INTO EACH PHASE OF WORSHIP TIME, INTO EACH PHRASE OF THE SONG MATERIAL AND INTO EACH PLACE WHERE DISCONTINUITY THREATENS TO DISTRACT THE WORSHIPPER OFF COURSE.”

Leonard Ballantine

You will seek to create an atmosphere of worship, whilst simultaneously giving cues as to when to come in, or when to repeat a chorus. You will at times be solely responsible for accompanying sung worship and at other times entirely reactive to the meeting leader. Finding the balance between these diverse skills is key to providing the most effective service as a corps accompanist.

It is clear that in order to be aware and respond to what others are doing you must be familiar with the material which you are playing. Preparation and practice are key to being able to play sympathetically and adapt appropriately. Prepare your sheet music, plan your introductions, practice the tunes and consider how you might adapt for repeated choruses or underscoring prayers. If you are predominately sight-reading your attention will be drawn to the music in front of you and could hinder worship.

Over time, you can discern where a song, prayer time or full meeting is heading and you may be able to anticipate what may happen next. By playing the material in front of you in different ways (varied tempi, dynamics, embellished arrangements) you may be able to facilitate or even encourage a change of atmosphere which is required at certain points within spirit led worship.

As you grow more accustomed to accompanying sung worship you may find that you are able to adapt arrangements for different verses of songs. Is there a more reflective verse that can be played quietly? A verse that lends itself to less busyness in the accompaniment? Do you need to adapt for a triumphant final verse? As this guide progresses there will be suggestions for techniques on how to adapt for different circumstances. It is essential to prepare for these different possibilities in your personal practice time.

“DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN THE JOY OF PLAYING AT THE EXPENSE OF WORSHIP.” Harold Burgmayer



SOLO VS ACCOMPANIST

The difference between being an accomplished solo pianist and an accompanist is significant. Developing keen listening skills and becoming responsive to those whom you accompany can elevate your contribution to worship from mere background music to a living, breathing part of gathered worship. The accompanist is often an unsung hero. People will not always appreciate the sympathetic but powerful way you are leading them in gathered worship. It is itself an art form which is understated.

It is easy to interpret written music as a list of notes which must be played, but the role is much more than this. Be aware of the lyrical content of the songs you play. This enables you to connect with the songs fully in worship. Singing through lyrics will naturally give space for breath and become more lyrical.



THE MEETING LEADER

You may know the leader of the meeting of which you will play, but if not, try to get a sense of how they lead and what indicators they give. Leaders that have a musical understanding will work with you intuitively, but not everyone will do this and some may need your help to understand and prompt a meaningful time of worship and prayer.

It is important to know when you are leading or following and when this responsibility passes between you and the meeting leader. Even if you have discussed a plan together, be aware that this can change. This ability to attune yourself with a meeting leader and adapt to their style can encourage spiritual freedom. Where possible, develop a relationship not only to understand each other but where you can bring your own ideas and are free to develop these, such as suggesting a song.

It is wise to communicate with meeting leaders as much as possible. A meeting plan before the service is to be expected and although it may seem obvious to an accompanist, some meeting leaders may neglect to give it to you with enough notice for you to prepare. Where appropriate, it would be best to ask that this plan is given as early as possible and includes essential detail such as the source of the song, tune number where required and a specified number of verses.

If you are given a meeting plan with a clear theme, it can be beneficial to have some additional songs prepared which can be added in to a meeting if necessary. When your meeting plan focuses on God's faithfulness have a bookmark in the pages 'Faithful God', 'Great is thy faithfulness' or 'Faith' from MACA resource, 'Grace'.



SPECIFICS

KNOWING YOUR INSTRUMENT

Knowing your instrument is a key factor to providing good accompaniment. Here are some pointers to help you, depending on your instrument:



Upright piano: Often these pianos provide an authentic sound but they aren't always capable of filling a room with sound; you may have to work a little harder to make sure you are heard. Often with upright pianos that are not serviced regularly the tuning can be the first problem, so check this out before you play and sound out the 'dodgy' keys and avoid them if possible.



Grand piano: A bigger sound that has potential to fill a hall if positioned correctly. Make sure the lid is open towards the congregation so the sound carries more effectively. Again, check tuning and try to avoid those notes which may be problematic.



Electric keyboard / piano: Check if the piano has built in speakers and/or is connected into a PA system. The sound can fill a hall if the setup is balanced. Make sure you can hear yourself (either a foldback speaker or built-in speakers) otherwise the compensation is that you have to work harder to hear yourself, leading to distortion of sound.

UNDERSCORING WITHIN WORSHIP

Piano underscoring is simply playing underneath something, similar to a film score. At some points in the meeting, it may be appropriate to provide some underscoring whether that is to support a Bible reading, a prayer time or response time. Here is some advice on best practice:



Be led by the Spirit – if the spirit prompts you to play a chorus which reflects what is being prayed, spoken or read, do so.

Focus – the music is not the main focus here, you do not want to distract from what is being spoken, on the contrary, the music should enhance.

Keep it simple – this will help the congregation focus on what is important at the time. Less is more!

Slow progressions - Use a slow chord progression to start with – perhaps one from a previous song or the response song in the service.

Remove the tune – again, this helps people focus on what is being said. From the chord progression, some people may 'tune into' what is being played, but removing the tune helps your playing to not be too invasive.

Time frame - Your playing doesn't have to be in a certain time frame. Practice moving between chords without a time frame – harder than it sounds, playing in this way doesn't give the congregation a pulse to 'latch' onto. Bring it back into time if you are transitioning into a song.

Discern - Learn when not to play. Learn to enjoy the space of silence, where the voice of God can also be heard.

In all of these pointers, preparation and sensitivity are key. Prepare and practice underscoring just as you would for the songs in the service. Be sensitive to the Spirit's leading, to the leader of the service and to the congregation in order to respond well.

PRACTICE POINT Try this simple progression for underscoring using various keys:

Chord	Vi	IV	I	V
Ex 1. Key of C:	Am	F	C	G
Ex 2. Key of E:	C#m	A	E	B



PLAYING SPECIFICS

Choosing an appropriate tempo for singing is crucial. Often as a soloist you can enjoy pulling the tempo of a tune around, or you can take a slower tempo to enjoy the harmonies of a piece a little more. However, when accompanying sung worship your focus needs to be on the congregation. By singing the song along in your mind you will naturally find a comfortable tempo. Songs which are played too quickly can become difficult to sing because the words are difficult to fit in, or sometimes come too quickly for singers to read. Songs which are languished over can become laborious to sing, or create issues with tuning and breath control for the congregation. By listening to your congregation, it will become clear if your tempo is suitable. That is not to say you must always follow the tempo set by a dominant singer, or group thereof. If you have particular cause for setting a specific tempo then you may choose to 'stick to your guns', but always make this choice wisely instead of from a position of unawareness.

'THE ACCOMPANIMENT MUST BE SENSITIVE OR UPLIFTING AS APPROPRIATE TO THE OCCASION. ACCOMPANYING IS A PRIVILEGE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY'.

Richard Phillips

If required, you can use body language to indicate the intended tempo, tone and style. It can be as simple as nodding to indicate when the congregation is expected to sing, or a gentle head bob to indicate the tempo.

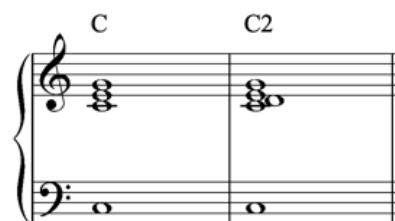
A corps pianist must be able to play in different styles. In one meeting you may have to play a traditional 4-part harmony hymn, followed by a contemporary chorus and then a songster song that has been adapted for the tune book. A good understanding of these styles and more will enhance your musicianship and abilities as a corps pianist.



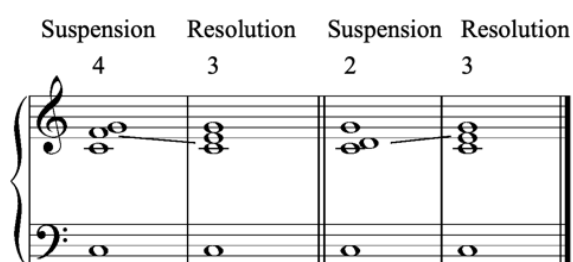
As your basic knowledge of harmony increases with playing, there are some small variations in harmony or voicings that can enhance your technique. Here are some basic examples of how to enhance your skills:

Adding the fifth in the bass - In the key of C the fifth will be G. Adding the G into the left hand creates a strong foundation on which to build your right hand. Adding to the texture in this way creates a fuller sound.

Adding 2nds in the right hand - The example right shows a C major triad. The 2nd relates to the second note of the C major scale, in this instance D. Adding the D to a C major chord warms the sound and is useful within more reflective choruses or worship songs.



Suspensions - The following examples of suspensions are the 4-3 and the 2-3 suspensions. As with the previous example, the numbers reflect the notes of the appropriate major scale. The role of a suspension is to create tension. This tension normally resolves (relaxing the tension) which the ear appreciates. However, there are occasions in more contemporary songs where you may choose to leave suspensions unresolved.





EMBELLISHING YOUR PLAYING

Like most hymn books, The Tune Book of The Salvation Army is largely notated in SATB vocal-style and not an idiomatic piano part. Part of your role as a pianist is to support and embellish these arrangements where appropriate. The following techniques can be used to this end:

Knowing when and how to use the full register of the piano is important. Using the higher and lower register in octaves can provide a more 'triumphant' sound for a last verse, but spend too long up there and it can become tiring to the ear. Adding an octave in the left hand can create a much fuller sound. Be careful not to over use this technique especially if you have a bass guitar player with you. Moving the voicings down into the lower register can produce a more reflective, gentler sound. However, using bad voicings or inversions in this register will make your sound 'murky'.


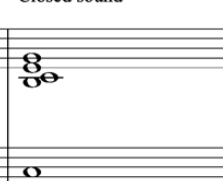
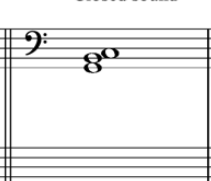
Example

Cmaj7 chord includes 4 notes: C, E, G and B. Here are good and bad examples of where in the register these chords can be played:

There is much more which could be said about how to use the register well, but the best way to learn is to practise. Listen to what works and what doesn't. Don't be afraid to attempt things – this is how we learn best!

The 2015 edition of the Tune Book includes chords above the written notation. Learning to read these will give you more information from which you can adapt and embellish the written music. Be aware that often there are more written chords than necessary to use. Learning to identify these is very much a trial and error process.

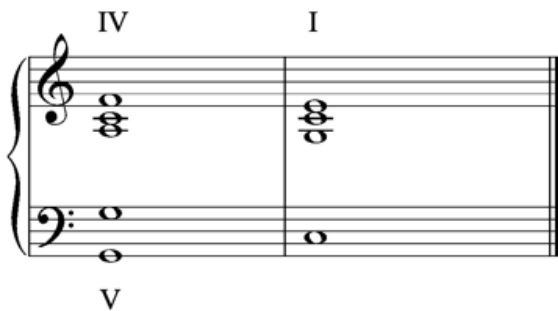
An effective way to embellish the sound is adding arpeggios. Look at the notes written and arpeggiate them underneath the melody. Experiment using this in different places during the song to find how this is best used. This is often a good technique to use in an SATB scored hymn where all parts hold a long note together. Be careful not to over use arpeggiation as this can make accompaniments too busy and distracting.

Good examples		Bad example
Open sound	Closed sound	Closed sound
		

FURTHER TECHNIQUE

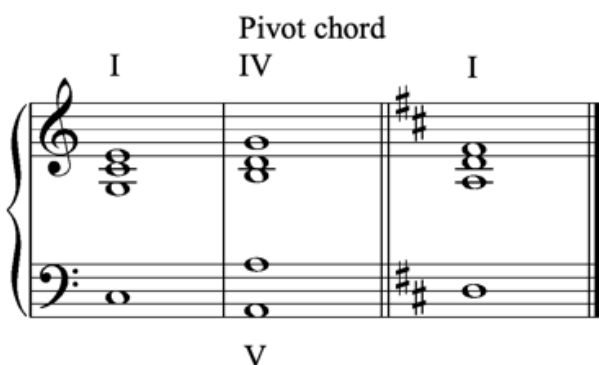
A pivot chord can be used to give the sound of continuation when moving from one verse to the next rather than the closed sound of finishing a verse and starting another. A good example (shown below) can be used to link verses and indicate to the congregation to begin the next verse or section. It is called the IV over V because it uses chord four in the right hand, with note 5 in the left.

Example 1 Take the Key of C. You have just finished a chorus finishing on the tonic and you want to return to the beginning of the song. Instead of repeating chord 1 play the pivot chord (IV/V) instead.



This naturally leads back to chord I, giving a clear indication to the congregation about when to start singing.

Example 2 This technique can also be used to change key. When moving from the Key of C to the Key of D for a final verse or to transition into the next song, simply use the pivot chord (IV/V of the new key) before arriving on chord I of the new key.



A combination of these techniques can be used to transform an SATB skeleton score into a full piano accompaniment.

TEN HELPFUL HINTS FOR PIANISTS

- 1 Know where you are going; 'begin with the end in mind' (Dr. Steven R. Covey - The habits of highly effective people)
- 2 Always make sure that your music is safely on the stand and the pages can be turned without disruption.
- 3 Always play musically. Whether playing in rehearsal or during the service, the atmosphere you create is paramount.
- 4 Know the geography, including repeats, coda, bridge, links etc, of the song prior to playing.
- 5 Know your key signatures. Practise the same chord progressions in various keys. If you play by ear this is easier but feeling the patterns under your fingers is something that can be learnt.
- 6 Learn to read both music and chord charts. Knowing the chord structure of a piece can enable you to adapt and also improves your overall musicianship.
- 7 Breathe with those who are singing or playing - you will have a much better understanding of the demands of the song and phrasing.
- 8 If you are learning a new song research a YouTube video or an audio version online, or use MACA worship tool 'A new song'.
- 9 Sometimes it can be helpful to enhance the 'flow' of sung worship by creating a link, or repeating the introduction between verses rather than stopping and beginning again.
- 10 Play with confidence - a timid approach will create a timid reaction.