

Arranging For Specific Instruments

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Acoustic Guitar:

- When using multiple guitars, have some guitars play with a capo or play in a different “position” to give a different timbre to each instrument.
- Look out for “Strumming Sam” – be sensitive.
- Get your guitar players to learn how to finger pick.
- Not every guitarist needs to play on every chord of every song – accent beats.
- Have each guitarist invest in a pickup for their guitar.



Electric Guitar:

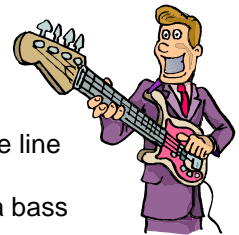
- ◆ Play wide “chime” chords in the background.
- ◆ Use warm distorted power chords to boost chorus energy.
- ◆ Try an E-Bow.
- ◆ Improvise countermelody lines.
- ◆ Do not flail wildly with a pick like an acoustic guitar.
- ◆ Caress the strings.
- ◆ Think of yourself as a sweetener instrument. You don’t always have to
- ◆ Try a rhythmic muted part.
- ◆ Turn it down. You can angle the amp towards you like a personal monitor.



play.

Bass Guitar:

- ◆ Remember - the kick drum and the bass are to play so tightly together that they sound like one instrument - work with your drummer. Stand by the drummer and keep up good eye contact. Schedule drum and bass only practices.
- ◆ The main purpose of the bass is firstly rhythmic. Secondly it is harmonic as the bass is usually the one that outlines the harmonic progression by playing the root note.
- ◆ Play like a bass instrument - stick mainly to roots and 5ths.
- ◆ If one chord is played for a long period of time it may be possible to find a nice line to play overtop, otherwise primarily stick to the root.
- ◆ Usually, the lower the bass sounds the better it sounds. Exceptions include a bass introduction or interlude.
- ◆ If you do not have a bass guitar, an inexpensive synthesizer (i.e.: Casio) can be used to play one note bass lines with great success.



Piano:

- ◆ In a group, piano accompaniment from a book seldom works effectively. Our Break Forth Songbook is written specifically to work with a band.
- ◆ Try to pick up parts from albums. It will help you with ideas for the music and help develop a more contemporary style. Focus on your part, and try



to hear only your part. Play up and down the scale of the key it's in. Only tackle small sections at a time. This will take a while to learn, so don't be immediately discouraged. Scribble notes to yourself so that you don't lose the part you've already learned.

- ◆ Get a metronome and practice with it. Many pianists aren't used to playing with the strict time of a band. This works fine in when you're playing on your own but absolutely **kills** a band.
- ◆ Try to make sure you stay in relatively the same two octaves the whole song through. This helps give band members a clearer idea on what octave to play in. There are only rare cases where playing all over the keyboard is acceptable. For example, songs where the piano is playing lead or during the occasional fill.
- ◆ Be careful of playing too busily in the left hand or it will interfere with the bass player.

Arranging Ideas

- ◆ Be willing to "sit out" at times - for verses or even entire songs.
- ◆ Play different verses in different octaves.
- ◆ Work in conjunction with the guitar player. One of you can take a rhythm part and the other provides fills.

Synthesizer:

- ◆ The synthesizer can be the most versatile of all the instruments in the band and the most challenging. Your goal is to try to imitate the real instrument.
- ◆ Listen to recordings to see how to orchestrate. Listen to brass, string, synthesizer, woodwind parts on a recording - copy these styles.
- ◆ Here are common synthesizer sounds that work well in a praise band:
 - ◆ **Electric piano** - especially nice for soft ballads.
 - ◆ **Strings** - for almost any song to fill in and make it sound more majestic (use sustain pedal for this - it will make it smoother). Mainly play fluid, open, long held lines and sometimes arpeggiate.
 - ◆ **Pad** - primarily a sustaining sound in an otherwise rhythmic world, provides nice contrast over top of the drums and other rhythm instruments.
 - ◆ **Poly Synth** - a more aggressive version of a pad. Often plays parts similar to a brass section.
 - ◆ **Organ** - played rock style, use two or three fingers in right hand and use the modulation wheel to create the rotating speaker effect. Grace notes and glissandos work well on these kinds of parts.
 - ◆ **Harmonica/Accordion** - great on Hebrew/country/celtic styles.
 - ◆ **Trumpet and Brass** - for shots and fanfares.
- ◆ Buy a quality instrument. Look for realistic sounds and practical features. Consider an instrument that has a professional-level 'sequencer' built in. Consider purchasing an instrument which offers General MIDI (GM) features.
- ◆ Before the service starts make sure you have all your setting numbers written down. (which patch to go to next) You don't want to still be searching while you're supposed to be playing.



Single-Note Instruments

- ◆ These are the uses that each of these single-note instruments seem best suited for:
 - ◆ Winds (except saxes) - soft, light songs.
 - ◆ Brass & Saxes
 - ◆ shots in rock, gospel/soul, swing.
 - ◆ with the use of mutes it is possible to create many colors with brass.
 - ◆ brass works well as a melody double on power songs (some hymns).
 - ◆ Strings - extremely expressive, can fill almost any area if played in a complementary fashion.
- ◆ Single note instruments are generally accents to everything else that is happening. They do counter-melodies to the vocal melody and fill



holes.

- ◆ In voicing orchestrations for single instruments, the tones of a chord should have wide spaces in the lower register with intervals coming closer and closer as they approach the upper register. These closer voicings also seem to suit faster music and the open voicings slower music.
- ◆ Complete orchestral arrangements are available for over 700 songs in the Celebration hymnal released by Word and Integrity.
- ◆ Make sure the music is written in the right concert key. For example, a C on the piano is really a *Bb* on the Tenor Saxophone. Make sure you ask your musician so that you transpose the music to their key and their instrument's range.

Drums and Percussion:

The drummer is the "motor" of the band. His or her job is to firstly keep time and secondly support and set up rhythmic structures of the songs.



Personal Practice

- ◆ Get a metronome and practice with it - timing accuracy is critical. An in-time drummer with great feel and control is a band's best friend.
- ◆ It's difficult as a drummer to practice alone. So, it is helpful to use a CD or tape player and play along. If you want to improve, stop sections when they're difficult, listen and work on that section until you've mastered it. Listen to drummers and isolate the parts. One of the best ways to get new ideas is to listen to what other drummers are doing.

How to do:

- ◆ **Fills** – mainly happen leading into or out of sections – don't cover the lead melody or instrument. Be careful of timing. Come back in on beat one. If you are a beginner, learn to do a few simple ones and master them. Use fills to help create the mood the music is moving to. For example, high energy for the chorus and low for the bridge or verse. Faster fills are not necessarily better. You also do not have to hit every drum and cymbal you have.
- ◆ **Rim shot** - These are mostly used during laid-back parts of songs or particular styles like country.
- ◆ **Shots** - Shots are used to emphasize parts of a song. They are usually played in conjunction with the entire band.
- ◆ **Endings** - The last note of a song is what people tend to remember most. Make it tight and defined. Watch the worship leader closely for signals of when choruses will be ending. You act as a signal to the rest of the band. Some different ending effects are: definite shots, ritards, cymbal swells, trashcan endings, etc.
- ◆ **Swells** - Cymbal swells are used to create mood, especially in ballads. It is best to use mallets. If these are not available use the rubber side of your brushes or your sticks.

Playing with a Band

- ◆ The drummer and bass player must practice together. They are the basis of a strong rhythmic feel so the kick drum and bass pattern should be synchronized in most cases.
- ◆ Don't play all the time. During quieter songs you can lightly touch the cymbals occasionally to add mood.
- ◆ To control your volume you can buy light drums sticks, "blastics", simply don't hit as hard, buy "O" rings for your drum heads to dampen the sound, and dampen the kick drum with a pillow inside. There is also the option of an absorptive wall for volume control or a Plexiglas shield for volume redirection on the platform.
- ◆ Another option that some churches have tried is electronic drums.
- ◆ Performance and a worshipful attitude for the drummer are also important. Just because he or she hides behind a set of drums does not give them the license to not enter into worship.

Some techniques for building energy are as follows:

- ◆ Build the song to a climax on one of the last choruses, and then break it down to just drums keeping a beat behind a cappella vocals on a chorus, then the instruments all kick back in with a wallop on another chorus.
- ◆ Hold back (play less and lighter) on the beginning of a song, particularly verses. As the chorus approaches, throw in a nice appropriate fill and then play louder on the chorus.

- ◆ Don't play at the beginning of the song until the middle of the verse or just a bar before the chorus.
- ◆ Lightly tap cymbals during the first verse
- ◆ "Four on the floor" - Just the kick is played on every quarter note of a 4/4 feel

Percussion

- ◆ Percussion instruments include shakers, eggs, tambourines, congas, cabassas, etc.
- ◆ If you play percussion, practice with a metronome. They are difficult to play well.
- ◆ If there is a drummer, you should practice together.
- ◆ Tambourines should be used more in high energy songs than ballads. Play them with tight hand movements, striking an object on the beat to add definition. During soft parts just tap it. They are tremendous energy drivers. If the tambourine is too loud, tape together a few of the little cymbals around the circle. It should be played on the strong beat, usually 2 & 4.



Vocals:

- ◆ Vocalists should do a warm up for at least ten minutes before practices and performances. Concentrate on exercises for the following areas:
 - ◆ Breathing & Control
 - ◆ Tone Quality - lip buzz, humming
 - ◆ Dexterity (vocal range and flexibility) - scales
- ◆ Sing with Feeling - people are drawn in more by emotion than exactness. Learn to sing with passion - project your personal experiences into a song in order to maximize the meaning of the song.



Vocal Arranging

- ◆ If you are not able to pick up harmonies by ear, have someone make up practice tapes with each harmony part sung with accompaniment. The harmony vocalists can then practice with the tape as they drive, etc. until they learn the parts.
- ◆ Very few contemporary songs use a bass vocal part.
- ◆ Have a portable tape deck at every practice so you can record what you are doing.
- ◆ Use added harmonies and voices to build the song to a crescendo.
- ◆ In arranging vocals, be careful not to add harmonies too soon. If a congregation is just learning a song it may be better just to sing melody until they catch on. Any harmony that is higher than the melody (such as a descant) should be sung softly as most people's ears tend to gravitate toward the highest note. Be sure the congregation knows a song well before you add a higher part.
- ◆ Don't sing every verse, or even every chorus. You could have a soloist on a quieter and more personal piece. This makes the song more personal. Also experiment with people singing unison on verses and parts on the chorus to help develop the dynamics of the song.



Practicing Together

- ◆ Practice away from the microphones so you learn to blend naturally without the sound man doing your job for you. Practice singing in a circle facing each other to achieve a nice blend.
- ◆ Try practicing blending exercises; if all you can hear is yourself, you're probably too loud. If you can't hear yourself you're probably not loud enough.
- ◆ The first thing to do when learning a new song with the vocalists is speak the rhythm.
- ◆ Have vocal practices apart from the band to nail your parts.

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