

The Worship Team's "Other" Instruments—Greg Scheer

The guitar, piano, bass, drums and voice form the backbone of the modern worship team, but what do we do with other instruments that may be available in our churches? This session will help worship team leaders incorporate brass, woodwinds, strings, as well as such instruments as mandolins or even accordions into their team's sound.

Introduction

- Use the people God gives you!
- Don't let the instruments draw attention to themselves. Rather, use them to include more musicians, keep the songs fresh, highlight lyrics, and allow people to worship more fully.
- Find creative ways to bring contemporary and traditional musicians together. (For example, if you have an Easter brass quartet, have them accompany the praise team, too.)
- Make a file of all your arrangements. It never hurts to have a bigger "bag of tricks."

Single Instruments

Double the melody line.

- Don't overuse. Use instrumental melody for introduction, only during chorus, etc.
- Instruments don't have to repeat notes on the same pitch like the singers do.
- Two instruments can play same line for interesting textures.
- Example: "Feed Us, Lord," last phrase.

Double a harmony line.

- This is especially easy with hymns, where the voices are clear. It may take some more work to discover inner parts in a praise song's piano arrangement.
- Depending on your instrumentalist's ability, there can be a lot of flexibility. For example, play the alto line up an octave or the tenor line up two octaves.
- Support the singing. Don't use harmony until people are confident of the melody.
- Example: "Feed Us, Lord," last phrase.

Sustained notes.

- Two methods: either "connect the dots" between the notes of a printed arrangement or create your own line with smooth voice-leading.
- Once you have a smooth single line, you can add more chord tones below it.
- Examples:
 - Connect the dots on "Feed Us, Lord," middle phrase
 - Create your own line on "Feed Us, Lord," beginning
 - Add harmonies to the previous example.

Descants.

- For those leaders who want to be a little more creative.
- Descants should fill in the gaps of the melody. When the melody moves, the descant sustains or rests; when the melody sustains or rests, the descant moves. A good descant creates a dialogue with the melody.
- Example: "Feed Us, Lord," beginning

Improvising.

- For those instrumentalists who want to be a little more creative.
- Same principles as descant.
- Don't allow your musicians to overplay!

Strings

Closed Voicing.

- Strings play notes as written in hymnal, stacking notes in 3rds and 4ths.
 - S violin 1
 - A violin 2/viola
 - T viola/cello
 - B cello/bass

Open Voicing.

- Strings expand hymnal's voicing by an octave, stacking notes in 5ths and 6ths.
 - S violin 1, 8va
 - A viola/cello
 - T violin2/viola, 8va
 - B cello/bass as written
- Examples:
 - Beatles "Eleanor Rigby"
 - Shawn Colvin "If I Were Brave" (2:14 clarinet, then strings)
 - The English Beat "Save It for Later" (1:00)
 - Hooverphonic "Battersea"
 - Green Day's "Time of Your Life"
 - Scheer "Throw Down Your Crowns"

Hollywood voicing.

- Strings in their upper registers in unison or stacked in 3rds
- When creating string (and other) harmonies in thirds, use the same principles found in the vocal harmonies section of *The Art of Worship*.
- Examples:
 - Aretha Franklin "You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman"
 - Chet Baker "You Don't Know What Love Is"
 - Sister Sledge "We Are Family"

Brass

Church brass.

- Often double hymn parts:
 - S Trumpet
 - A Trumpet, Horn (Trombone)
 - T Trombone, Horn
 - B Trombone, Tuba, Euphonium/Baritone (Horn)

Brass in popular music.

- Precedents in big band jazz, Motown, funk and disco.
- The "horns" are typically trumpet, sax, and trombone.
- The horns usually move homorhythmically—the same rhythms but different notes of the chord.
- Examples:
 - Mighty Might Bosstones "The Impression I Get" (0:00)
 - VeggieTales "I Can Be Your Friend" (0:27)
 - Badly Drawn Boy "All Possibilities" (0:00)
 - Roy Orbison "Running Scared" (1:30)
 - K.C. & the Sunshine Band "Get Down Tonight" (2:50 brass/sax)
 - Pedro Altimirando "Panameña" (0:45)
 - "Feed Us, Lord" as a slow funk with brass hits

Woodwinds

- Not typically used as a unit in pop, but they appear as salt and pepper throughout the repertoire.
- In contemporary praise and worship, you'll generally want to use woodwinds as described in the "single instruments" section above.
- Examples:
 - Taizé "Stay with Me" (0:00 flute, 0:50 oboe, 1:18 clarinet)
 - Shawn Colvin "84,000 Different Delusions" (2:20, 2:40 recorders)
 - Elton John "Daniel" (0:00 flute)
 - Nick Drake "Bryter Layter" (0:40 flute on top of strings)
 - The Beatles "Fool on a Hill" (0:00 alto flute)
 - Antonio Carlos Jobim "Wave" (0:00 picc)
 - They Might Be Giants "Sleepwalkers" (0:00 bass clarinet)
 - The Beach Boys "Hang on to Your Ego" (0:00 bari sax)
 - Shawn Colvin "Bound to You" (0:00 sax and electric guitar doubled)
 - Frente! "Labour Love" (1:18, 1:50 recorder)

Full Orchestra

Transcribed hymns and "one size fits all" praise song arrangements.

- Simple harmonizations are provided in C, Bb, Eb and F transpositions.
- At rehearsal the parts are assigned on the fly. ("On verse 1, strings use 4-part open voicing, with flute playing melody an octave up. Brass take verse 2.")
- The piano often needs to add support to these arrangements.
- Try to have the full harmony in each section. That is, if the brass can cover only STB it will sound incomplete.
- Example: Scheer "How Majestic"

The "orchestrated hymnal."

- Often utilitarian arrangements that begin with a brass quartet at their core. They are one step more creative than playing from the hymnal, but because they're tied to the hymnal's harmony they often have lots of instrumental flourishes with little musical substance. And they're very expensive.
- *Hymns for Worship and Celebration* and *The Celebration Hymnal*—the latter includes a number of praise songs. Similar arrangements can be found in the orchestrated *Baptist Hymnal* and from www.churchorchestra.com.

The orchestra in pop music.

- You will probably never have a full orchestra in your church, but you can dream...
- Examples:
 - Keith Getty "In Christ Alone"
 - Metallica and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra "Enter Sandman" (3:20)
 - ELO "10538 Overture"

Keyboard substitutes

- If you're supporting acoustic instruments, put the real instrument on top (i.e. violin) and the synthesized strings underneath. This makes it sound more natural.
- "Fake" sounds often behave similarly to their real life counterparts. If you're playing sampled strings on a keyboard, voice them in open position like an orchestra. If you're doing brass hits, play them in stacked thirds in your right hand. Play the strings legato, but punch the keys for the brass.

Exemplary Pop Orchestrations:

- Aimee Mann “Mr. Harris” (strings, oboe, horn)
- The Beatles “Penny Lane” (flute choir, brass, piccolo trumpet solo, piccolo, firehouse bell)
- Antonio Carlos Jobim “Wave” (piccolo, trombone, strings)
- The Arcade Fire “In the Backseat”
- Elton John “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road” (listen to the dialogue between voice and piano)
- Thomas Dolby “I Love You, Goodbye” (synth, fiddle, banjo)
- Vanessa Carlton “A Thousand Miles”
- Sufjan Stevens “Chicago”

Further reading and resources:

To learn more about the range, tuning and transposition of each of these instruments, consult an orchestration book such as Kent Kennan’s *The Technique of Orchestration* (Prentice-Hall). The latest edition has a CD recording of all the examples in the book. Every music minister’s bookshelf should include it. Church music leaders may benefit from the specifically sacred focus of *The Instrumental Resource Book* by church orchestration guru Camp Kirkland (<http://campkirkland.com/thisthat.htm>). Instrumentation for praise teams is discussed in chapter 5 of my book *The Art of Worship*.

For jazz/pop arranging, I recommend Sammy Nestico's *The Complete Arranger* or the more in-depth *Jazz Composition and Orchestration* by William Russo. *Jazz Arranging and Orchestration: A Concise Introduction* by Leslie M. Sabina looks very promising, though I have not yet given it a close reading.

Finale and Sibelius are the two most widely used music notation software programs. Finale has a free version called “Note Pad” available for download at www.codamusic.com. It is limited compared to the full Finale program, but it should be sufficient for notating basic instrumental parts.

Paste in

Feed Us Lord leadsheet

Here

Paste in

Full piano version of Feed Us, Lord

Here

(please)