

Arranging Essentials For The Worship Musician

Lesson 6: Self-Arranging For The Band

“Self-arranging” can mean a couple different things:

1. It could mean that each instrument determines where and what they should play based on what they're hearing on the recording.
2. It could also mean that the band comes together and creates their own arrangement.

The core of self-arranging is essentially that every player in the band understands these arrangement concepts and are able to apply them to their instruments.

When each person in the band, and even among the vocalists and techs, understand these arranging concepts, it's not all on the worship leader or musical director to dictate what every part does.

Understanding self-arranging will allow for 3 things:

1. More efficiency. (rehearsals won't be about figuring out and micromanaging parts)
2. More creativity. (it lets you as a team break away from recording and do something that fits your church and your culture)
3. More spontaneity - When those moments come where you open things up and maybe move into free worship, the band knows what to do--they can contribute without overplaying and killing the moment.

Rules for Self-Arranging

1. Intentionally find your place on the sonic and rhythmic spectrums.

Finding your space in the sonic and rhythmic spectrums does not mean you never play in the same register or play the same rhythm as another instrument. You can share space, you just need to be intentional.

2. LISTEN. LISTEN. LISTEN. Listen to each other.

3. Talk to each other.

4. Carry your weaker brother or sister.

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

Gal 6:2-3 (NLT)

It doesn't serve the song or the congregation to stubbornly hold on to what we think we should be entitled to play.

"Carry your weaker brother/sister" doesn't mean that you should let people stay mediocre. Challenge one another in love to grow and develop.

5. Take only your slice of the pie.

The more instruments you add, the more you have to make space with each other.

The pie illustration doesn't work out mathematically in the actual arranging of music, but it's a great illustration to keep us from the sin of OVERPLAYING.

Less is most often more. There are a few moments of songs when we can all be full on, but 95% of a song requires restraint from the instruments if the arrangement is going to be good.

6. Play In Time.

A good sense of time makes for tight sound.

7. When it comes to dynamics: think addition and subtraction and not just volume.

The mark of a mature musician is knowing when to fold their hands and just wait. It's the fine art of laying out.

8. Simple and well-executed is better than complex and sloppy.

We're accompanying worship, not trying to win Grammys. Simple is usually better.

9. Pay attention to your tone.

A good sound engineer can do wonders with EQ, but they're not magicians. You need to give them something decent to work with.

10. Start from the same chart (or reference recording).

11. Come to rehearsal with your part prepared.

Practice is personal; rehearsal is relational.

Wrap Up:

Self-arrangement skills require you to be prepared, to be giving and selfless, but also to be confident and know what your instrument brings to the song.

Arranging a song is a great picture of how we are to operate as 'the church'--the body of Christ. Each one of us brings something unique.

Sometimes, we're called upon to take the lead or to carry something. Other times, we play small supporting roles, or even step aside to let other people's gifts be utilized.