

Arranging Essentials For The Worship Musician

Lesson 7: Self-Arranging For The Vocalists

Rules for Self-Arranging for Vocalists

1. Layer Your Vocals in.

Your voices ARE instruments. And they need to be arranged and layered in just like the other instruments in the band.

2. Find and stay on your part.

3. Learn to blend.

Unless you're the lead voice, you've got to adapt your tone, vibrato, and phrasing to blend with the lead voice.

4. Communicate to sound tech who's singing what.

5. Practice away from the band in a circle with no instruments (or just a guitar or piano for reference).

6. Work on dynamics.

Tips to have great vocal dynamics:

- Talk about it. If your leader isn't clear, ask.
- Sing quieter. Knowing how to back off your volume to serve the song is important.
- Lay out. Not singing is a great technique for creating vocal dynamics. So talk about times when one or more of BGVs should lay out and then when to layer back in.
- Sing slightly off mic. Sometimes several full voices sung slightly off mic can be part an effective way to have multiple voices, but not too big.

7. Don't forget the power of unison.

8. Remember the men.

If the melody jumps an octave, or the song gets higher, consider keeping a male voice an octave below.

9. Phrasing.

As a BGV, your job is to match the leaders' phrasing, even if he or she isn't technically "right." Remember, like so many other areas of music, it's better to be together than right.

10. Use your microphone correctly

11. Match the chords of the song.

Your harmony needs to match the harmonic structure of the song--that is, the chords.

Your traditional harmonies of hymns may not work on new arrangements of those.

12. Vocal fills...

- Be sparing. Less is more.
- Ask, "Will this serve the congregation?"

We want to make sure we serve the congregation and encourage them to worship, rather than trying to impress them with our sheer awesomeness of talent.

- Always keep a dominant lead voice on melody
It's about serving the congregation, not our own musical whims.
- Be intentional about who's filling and when.