

THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC MINISTRY HANDBOOK:

**A Comprehensive Guide for the
Instrumental Music Ministry**

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About the Author

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I

Introduction

This instrumental music ministry handbook is a product of over 30 years in ministry, personally guiding church instrumentalists in the worship of three different churches, and observing the instrumental music ministries of colleagues all over the country. After being trained as a band director, and spending one unfulfilling year directing middle school band, God providentially called me into ministry in 1982 and I never looked back.

Serving in the instrumental music ministry of the church has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, but most of it has been a product of “on the job” training. Even though I spent three years getting a seminary degree, after my one and only year as a middle school band director, it didn’t really prepare me for ministry. When I came out of seminary, there were only a handful of full-time instrumental directors around the country, and there were no written resources for instrumental music ministry available. These directors were my resource, along with adapting my limited seminary training and my background in music education.

I am grateful for the annual meetings of the Metro Instrumental Directors Conference, where church instrumental directors from all over the country meet to share ideas and encourage one another. That, along with God’s blessing, and simply figuring it out in my own church environment, contributed to my success in ministry. This handbook is a product of that success, but I cannot take the credit for it. To God be the glory, great things He has done!

II

The Three Purposes of the Instrumental Music Ministry

(Trinitarian design)

There are three basic purposes for the instrumental music ministry of the church, and these purposes reflect a Trinitarian design, as they magnify God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

1. To glorify God through instrumental music

Johann Sebastian Bach routinely initialed the end of his musical manuscripts with the letters, “S.D.G.” or “*Soli Deo Gloria.*” “To God alone be the glory” was more than just a trite religious slogan to Bach; it was a sincere expression of personal devotion. This is the primary calling of the church instrumental music ministry, which is a much higher calling than the community band or orchestra. For the local secular group, their purpose is simply to entertain or educate, but for the church group, our purpose is first and foremost to glorify Almighty God!

As a performing group, in a church setting, we run the risk of taking some of that glory for ourselves. Innocently, congregational members will praise us, or even praise the music we play, when that praise should be reserved for God alone. How do we effectively deflect that praise to the One who is worthy of all praise?

Dr. Stephen Newby, Director of the Center for Worship at Seattle Pacific University, has developed the concept of “expository worship leading,” in response to this concern. Most of us are familiar with expository preaching, which is preaching that explains scripture. Expository worship leading explains elements of worship, such as musical selections, by pointing people back to God’s Holy Word. Obviously, if you can’t identify the scriptural basis for any element of worship, or any musical selection in worship, then perhaps you should question whether or not it should be used in worship.

A simple way to put this into practice is to project scripture that relates to a musical selection, while it is being played in worship. Most hymnals will provide a related scripture to each hymn or chorus, or even a simple Google search might give the desired information.

2. To lead the church in worship and praise of Jesus Christ

Whether they realize it or not, each instrumentalist is a worship leader. They may not be up front, leading the singing, but they are an integral part of the leadership team, helping to lead worship each and every Sunday. In the Old Testament, these worship leaders were known as the Levites, chosen and set apart as the Tabernacle or Temple musicians. Many of them played musical instruments in praise and glory of Almighty God.

The Levites were set apart, initially by the Lord’s direction to Moses, as servants in the worship of ancient Israel. Deuteronomy 10:8 says:

At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day.

Later, under the reign of King David, the Levites were “appointed over the service of song in the house of the Lord” (1 Chronicles 6:31). David specifically directed the Levites to lead worship with instruments of music in 1 Chronicles 15:16:

Then David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives the singers, with instruments of music, harps, lyres, loud-sounding cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.

In addition to being set apart for the service of the Lord, the Levites were also ritually cleansed, “that they may qualify to perform the service of the Lord,” as noted in Numbers 8:5-11. As modern-day Levites, church instrumentalists need not worry about being subjected to this ritual cleansing today, but each one should examine their heart before entering worship, to “see if there be any wicked way in me” (Psalm 139:23-24).

It is an awesome responsibility to lead the church, the body of Christ, in praise and worship of Jesus Christ, and it is a privilege not to be entered into lightly!

3. To provide opportunities for instrumentalists to exercise their gifts of the Spirit in Christian service

Without an orchestra or a band, many instrumentalists would not have an outlet to use their gifts for God’s glory. God has obviously blessed them with tremendous musical gifts, as well as called them to be a part of His kingdom, and the ultimate act of gratitude and thanksgiving is to use those talents for His glory. Churches without this outlet for Christian musicians run the risk of quenching the spiritual giftedness of their members, and potentially losing membership to other churches who offer this musical outlet in worship.

An integral part of being a part of the church is serving in ministry. Each member should strive to find a place of service in the body of Christ. This place of service should reflect the giftedness of each member, but if the church does not offer a ministry to exercise that giftedness, then that gift of the Spirit is quenched, and the member's ability to serve is frustrated. A healthy church will seek to offer a variety of opportunities for service, including a vibrant instrumental music ministry for talented instrumentalists.

III

The Three Functions of the Instrumental Music Ministry

In addition to three basic purposes of the instrumental music ministry, there are three basic functions of instrumental music in corporate worship. These three functions are reflected in healthy, vibrant music ministries across the country, but some churches choose to focus on only one or two of these functions.

1. Congregational accompaniments

Congregational singing holds the distinction of being the only thing the church does that actively involves the entire body of Christ. Every other activity may involve some people actively, but others passively, such as teaching a Bible study class, or preaching a sermon, but congregational singing involves everyone actively. Therefore, this is the most important function of the instrumental music ministry, even though at times it may be the least fulfilling. Because the instrumental group is simply serving in an accompanimental role, there may not be as much satisfaction as playing a prelude or an offertory piece. In addition, accompaniments for congregation tend to be less complex than choir or vocal accompaniments, therefore less challenging for the instrumentalist. Despite all these factors, accompanying congregational worship can and should be the most exciting and uplifting thing a Christian instrumentalist does in worship. When the congregation is singing with heartfelt devotion and enthusiasm, and the instrumentalists are unified with the singers, there is nothing more satisfying or rewarding! The best Biblical example of this is in 2 Chronicles 5:11-14, at the dedication of Solomon's temple,

“when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord... so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.“

2. Choir/Vocal accompaniment

Accompanying the choir or vocalists is more important than prelude/offertory music, but less important than congregational music, because it involves the vocalists and the instrumentalists actively, but the congregation only passively. Instrumentalists must keep in mind their role when accompanying vocal music: they must support the singing and allow the words to take preeminence. The message of our music must be heard and understood!

Accompanying the singing of praises to God is one of the two functions of instrumental music in worship demonstrated by instruments in the book of Revelation. The harp is very prominent in the heavenly worship of Revelation (5:8, 14:1-2, 15:2-3a), and always accompanies the singing of the saints to the risen Lamb of God.

3. Prelude/Offertory music

Playing prelude or offertory music in a worship service can be most fulfilling for Christian instrumentalists, but they must keep in mind that it is the least important thing they do in worship. This is primarily because it only involves the orchestra or band actively, while everyone else is passive in their participation. Despite this subordinate function in worship,

instrumentalists need this outlet to express their personal praise to God, and if possible, on a weekly basis.

The trumpet is the other instrument mentioned in the book of Revelation (chapter 8), and it represents the second function of instrumental music in the heavenly worship of Revelation, as the trumpets announce the seven judgments of God. This heralding of God's revelation is the function of the prelude or offertory in worship, as it signals the congregation to "listen up," as God is about to speak truth to those gathered for worship. The prelude is at the beginning of the service and heralds God's revelation throughout the entire service, while the offertory is often before the sermon, heralding God's revelation through the spoken words of the preacher.

IV

The Biblical Foundations of Instrumental Music in Worship: Four Pillars

(This material may be used as a devotional series in your weekly instrumental rehearsals, and is an excerpt from a larger work by the same title, published by Outskirts Press and available online from Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com)

As Christians, we are people of the Book, but as we devote ourselves each week to praising the Lord with our instruments, are we clear on what the Bible says about the subject of instrumental music in worship? If we were asked to provide biblical support for the instrumental music ministry in our church, do we understand all that the Bible has to say on the subject?

The biblical foundations for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship are found in four distinct areas in Scripture. These “four pillars” can be presented in the form of rehearsal devotionals, over four weeks, as you challenge your instrumentalists to understand the biblical basis of what they do each Sunday, leading the congregation in worship.

1. The Psalms

The first pillar in the Biblical foundations of instrumental music in worship is the Psalms. When considering the Psalms and instrumental music, most instrumentalists think of Psalm 150, but there are actually a total of twenty-four psalms that mention the use of instruments in worship, either in the psalm heading or in the text itself. We won't take the time to examine all those

psalms, but let's take a closer look at two of the more familiar psalms that mention musical instruments, Psalm 150 and Psalm 33.

Psalm 150 concludes the book of Psalms with a chorus of praise, including every family of instruments: woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings:

Praise Him with *trumpet* sound;
Praise Him with *harp* and *lyre*.
Praise Him with *timbrel* and dancing;
Praise Him with *stringed instruments* and *pipe*.
Praise Him with *loud cymbals*
Praise Him with *resounding cymbals*.
(Psalm 150:3-5)

Pipe, trumpet, timbrel (or tambourine), cymbals, harp, lyre (similar to the harp), and stringed instruments, representing all four families of instruments and all used in praise of almighty God! Even though this psalm mentions instruments in each of the four families, note the conspicuous absence of singing. Commentators on this psalm have seen this as undeniable Biblical support for instrumental praise alone.

Psalm 33 is the first psalm to mention instruments, and connects the worship attitudes of joy, thanksgiving, and praise with the use of instruments:

Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.
Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully *with a shout of joy*.
(Psalm 33:1-3)

Take special note of the latter half of verse three in this particular psalm: "Play skillfully with a shout of joy." We are to play skillfully as we worship the Lord. The famous British preacher,

Charles Spurgeon, comments on this verse, “It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have.” Let us remember this Biblical mandate to minister with excellence each and every Sunday!

2. Davidic Worship

Closely related to instrumental music in the Psalms is the use of instruments in the worship practices of King David, or “Davidic worship.” This is the second pillar in the Biblical foundations of instrumental music in worship.

King David is called “the sweet psalmist of Israel” in 2 Samuel 23:1. On top of that, he is the most frequently mentioned individual in the psalm headings throughout the book of Psalms. David is also largely responsible for the Old Testament tradition of instrumental music in worship, which began as he ascended the throne of Israel, and extended to the time of Christ.

Prior to King David, worship in ancient Israel was relatively silent, largely without the use of instruments. Beginning with David’s reign as king, though, there was an explosion of instrumental music, as evidenced in a wide variety of passages in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. In 1 Chronicles 16, David formed a small orchestra of eight strings, two trumpets and one cymbal player to accompany the worship before the Ark of the Covenant. Seven chapters later, in 1 Chronicles 23, this orchestra seems to grow to four thousand players! How’s that for tremendous orchestra growth? Actually, some Biblical scholars think that figure may be an exaggeration on the part of the writer of Chronicles. Others feel that the Hebrew word, translated “thousand,” is

more accurately understood as a clan or group. In 1 Chronicles 25, a more reasonable orchestra of twenty-five players is listed, closer in size to what we are accustomed in our worship.

The group of Israelites appointed by David as instrumentalists were from the tribe of Levi. These Levites were ancient Israel's worship leaders, responsible for the care and transportation of the wilderness tabernacle and all its furnishings under Moses. Once the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were in their final resting place, the Levites' job description changed. They were no longer the moving crew for the Tabernacle. Instead, David set about training the Levites to sing and play instruments, and then set them apart for the service of the Lord through music. 1 Chronicles 25:1 and 6-7 says:

Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals; All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the direction of the king. And their number who were trained in singing to the Lord, with their relatives, all who were skillful, was 288 (there's that word skillful again!).

After the reign of King David, there were periods of moral and spiritual decline, followed by times of revival under kings like Hezekiah and godly leaders like Nehemiah. With these times of revival, worship was restored in the manner of King David, and that always involved the use of musical instruments. You can read about this in 2 Chronicles 29, Ezra 3, and Nehemiah 12.

Finally, one of our goals, when we gather each week for worship, is to glorify God and seek His presence among us. When Solomon dedicated the first Temple, he did it with musical instruments in the tradition of his father, David. In 2 Chronicles 5:11-14, we read:

And when the priests came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, *with cymbals,*

harps, and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

The Temple dedication service reached its climax when the instruments and singers were unified in praise of almighty God, and God, in turn, put His stamp of approval on the gathering by filling the house of God with His glorious presence, in the form of a cloud. Let us, as instrumentalists, seek to be unified in our praise, as we glorify God and seek His presence!

3. New Testament Implied References

We have established that there are abundant references to instrumental music in the Old Testament, specifically in the Psalms and under the Davidic tradition of worship, but what about the New Testament? Some denominations claim that there are no references to worship with instruments in the New Testament, and since we are under the New Covenant, we should not use instruments in Christian worship, but is this really true? Let's look closer, by examining two familiar New Testament worship passages, which are pillar three in the Biblical foundations of instrumental music in worship.

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (Ephesians 5:19)

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

Notice that both of these passages encourage the use of psalms in worship, and what have we learned in pillar one about the use of the Psalms? Many of them are associated with the use of

musical instruments, either through the psalm headings or direct references in the text. The most notable one is Psalm 150, with its reference to all four families of instruments. Through this link to the Psalms, we see that both these passages contain an implied reference to the use of instruments in worship.

As we look a little closer at the latter half of Ephesians 5:19, we discover an even more direct reference to using instruments in worship. The apostle Paul, who wrote both Ephesians and Colossians, says that we should sing and “make melody” with our heart to the Lord. The Greek word, translated “make melody” in the NASB, is *psallo*. The original meaning of this word is “to pluck the strings of an instrument.” In fact, one of the most respected commentators on the book of Ephesians, Markus Barth, translates this verse, “Talk to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Sing *and play* to the Lord from your heart.” This is more than just an implied reference to instrumental music; it almost sounds like a direct command to praise God with instruments!

Finally, let us examine the context of the verse in Colossians, by looking at the verse that follows it, Colossians 3:17: “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” *Whatever* you do, including playing an instrument, can and should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, with a thankful heart.

4. The Book of Revelation

Did you know that the book of Revelation contains more instruments by name than the rest of the New Testament combined? Instrumental music in the book of Revelation, therefore, is the fourth pillar in the Biblical foundations of instrumental music in worship.

Harp are mentioned three times in Revelation, the same harp that was associated with worship under King David and with the singing of the Psalms. In fact, the harp or the lyre (a form of harp) is the most frequently mentioned instrument in the entire Old Testament. The three passages in the book of Revelation all depict harps in the heavenly worship of the victorious Lamb of God:

And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, *having each one a harp*, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:8)

And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like *the sound of harpists playing on their harps*. (Revelation 14:1-2)

And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, *holding harps of God*. And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb. (Revelation 15:2-3a)

The other instrument mentioned repeatedly in the book of Revelation is the trumpet. Just as the harp in Revelation had its foreshadowing in the Old Testament, this trumpet is the same trumpet that was used by the priests in ancient Judaism. This time, though, it is the seven angels in Revelation 8, announcing the seven judgments of God.

So as we examine instrumental music in the book of Revelation, we see harps accompanying heavenly worship, and trumpets used in fanfares, heralding God's revelation. As mentioned in the preceding section, these are the two distinct functions in worship that can be applied in our churches today. We accompany worship, in the form of choir and congregational accompaniments, while instrumental preludes and offertories herald God's revelation.

One final point must be made, based on this clear picture of worship in the New Testament: If instrumental worship is acceptable in heaven, then why not on earth? Jesus even taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Our limited, temporal worship on this earth is but a preparation for our eternal occupation in heaven, and if we base that on the Biblical model in Revelation, it should include the use of musical instruments for His glory!

V

Setting Policies and Procedures

One of the primary considerations when setting policies and procedures for the church instrumental group is determining the qualifications for membership. Should the band or orchestra have the same membership requirements as the church, or are there other factors to consider? Should church instrumentalists always be born-again believers, or is the church band or orchestra an outreach tool that can be used effectively to attract unbelievers to church, and ultimately win them to Christ? We examine two models that both have valid points to consider.

Christian vs. Non-Christian Musicians: Two Models

1. Levitical Model

This model maintains that band or orchestra members are modern-day Levites, set apart as worship leaders, therefore they should only be born-again believers. A worship leader's role is to lead people into God's presence, and they must be familiar with the way. Worship leaders say, in effect, "Come, go with us, as we enter into worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Therefore, as a leader, they must know Jesus Christ as their Savior, and truly understand what it means to worship Him "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

2. Evangelical Model

This model allows for the fact that the band or orchestra may be the only way to get some unbelievers to participate in the church, and very well may be used by the Lord to win them to Christ. Many musicians are so passionate about playing that they will jump at any opportunity to play, especially if they feel needed. An invitation to join the church band or orchestra might be just the right incentive to get unbelievers inside the walls of the church, when nothing else will draw them in. Once they are in, through the message of the Gospel, and the love of the body of Christ, they are in a better position to consider and accept salvation in Jesus Christ.

Audition vs. Non-Audition: Requirements for Membership

Another consideration, when determining qualifications for membership in the church instrumental ensemble, is whether or not to require an audition for membership. With smaller bands or instrumental groups, with one on a part, this may be absolutely necessary. In larger groups, though, there are advantages to having an “open door” policy. The church band or orchestra has the opportunity to be a reflection of the body of Christ, where all are welcomed in.

There are other considerations that may justify having an audition for membership. The bar may be set very high, in the instance of television ministry, and auditions may be necessary, to insure the highest quality musical performance during broadcasts. For those churches who do not have a broadcast ministry, an interview may be all that is necessary, rather than an audition, to determine the qualifications of an individual. Most instrumentalists will remove themselves from the group, if they realize they can't keep up with musical demands that are out of their reach.

Hold Members Accountable on Absences

Absences are a fact of life in any ministry, and there are many good things that pull people away, including job demands, school, family needs, etc. Never give a player a guilt trip about an absence, but always make them give notice if they're going to be absent. It is important to give them multiple ways for them to notify you of upcoming absences:

1. Phone call/voice mail
2. Email
3. Attendance slip in rehearsal

Many church instrumental groups present major productions around certain times of the season, such as Easter or Christmas. Since attendance in the rehearsals just prior to these seasonal events is so critical, you may want to consider having special attendance requirements, such as 75% attendance required in the rehearsals for the month prior to the Christmas or Easter Production.

There are many good reasons why volunteer church musicians need to miss rehearsals or Sunday services. The church instrumental director should never take this personally, and strive to avoid the rather common mentality of musical directors, whether in schools or churches, high school or college, volunteer groups or professional organizations. Your instrumental group is not your kingdom and you are not the king, but most of all, your musicians are not pawns in your kingdom! Serve the Lord with humility, realizing that your musicians are fellow-laborers for Christ with you.

Seating and part assignments

When considering factors in determining seating and part assignments in the larger church band or orchestra, please consider these three criteria, all of which are equally important:

1. Tenure

Length of service in the group should be rewarded and encouraged in all your players. There is no substitution for someone who has devoted many years of time and energy to the ministry of praise and worship through instrumental music.

2. Dedication

It's better to have someone dependable playing a critical part, but maybe someone of lesser ability, rather than a more capable player that you can't count on to be there when needed.

3. Ability

All players will recognize that musical ability should be a key factor, but it's in your best interest to balance it with the other two criteria.

VI

Recruiting Players

A recurring need in most church instrumental groups is the need for more players. There are a variety of ways to recruit new players and to invite them to consider being a part of the church band or orchestra.

Current orchestra or band members are your greatest resource in recruiting. Personal invitations from them to their instrumentalist peers are most effective, or have them supply the director with information about prospective players.

Utilize the communication tools of the church to get the word out about the need for extra players: Sunday bulletin, church newsletter, church website, bulletin boards, etc.

Consider doing an “All-Church Orchestra.” This event would be open to anyone in the church who has ever played an instrument. If they don’t have an instrument, the church would supply one for them. All your current orchestra members will join all the prospective members for one rehearsal on a Sunday afternoon, followed by a concert that night. This is a great way to identify prospective players, and give them a “no obligation” taste of what it might be like to play in the band or orchestra.

Finally, consider posting notices about your church band or orchestra at local colleges and universities, particularly in music department buildings.

VII

Setting Up for Rehearsal and Worship Services

In the next chapter, we will discuss rehearsal technique, but prior to rehearsals or worship services, there are many things to consider that will insure success for both the director and the instrumentalists.

First of all, rehearse in a room where you can hear and correct mistakes (probably not your Sanctuary or Worship Center). Large rooms with high ceilings may be great for worship, but not for rehearsal. You need to be able to hear the mistakes when they happen and correct them.

Next, as you lay out the set-up for your instrumental group, don't forget to consider sight-lines. Everyone in your group must have an unobstructed view of the conductor, in both rehearsal and worship. It is also important to remember that some instruments require more space than others. String players need more room for bowing, especially cellos and string basses. Other instruments just simply take up more space, such as harp, drums, timpani, and tuba. Guitarists need extra room for amps and pedal boards.

Try to centralize your drummer and/or rhythm section, if possible. If this is not possible with your set-up, make sure the entire orchestra can hear the rhythm section through well-placed monitors. Give the instrumental director control over the level of these monitors in worship, rather than your sound technician.

A practical suggestion for the layout of your typical church orchestra is to arrange the strings to the conductor's left, woodwinds down the center, and brass to the right, with percussion in the back. There are several advantages to this arrangement. For the strings, the f-holes will be facing out towards the congregation, enabling them to be heard easier. The louder brass section is on the other side of the stage, farther from the strings, and blowing across the stage, rather than straight out. The woodwinds, which are less directional, are best placed in the center of the ensemble, with the percussionists, who often stand, in the back for better sight-lines. Finally, this arrangement allows each family of instruments to hear each other better, and makes for easier cuing from the director. The use of this set-up assumes that most church orchestras don't have a full complement of strings, and would not use a traditional orchestra set-up model.

It is absolutely essential that the rehearsal room is completely set up well in advance of rehearsal time, with everything that the volunteer instrumentalists need in place, including chairs, stands, music, amps, and musical instruments. This will insure that the rehearsal can start on time, run smoothly, and that the director is available to meet and greet the instrumentalists as they arrive, rather than scrambling at the last second to complete the set-up.

The competent church instrumental director must be well-organized for each rehearsal, so musicians are free to do what they have been called to do: play their instruments for God's glory. Please consider using these valuable organizational tools in rehearsal each week:

1. Rehearsal Notes: This should include the rehearsal order for that rehearsal, upcoming dates that they need to be aware of, and maybe a list of everything that should be currently in their folder, as well as other pertinent information.

2. **Worship Script:** The weekly worship bulletin does not have enough information for the instrumentalists. They need to know things like who's doing the introduction, what key they're playing in, and how many times they're playing the piece.

3. **Attendance Slip:** This can include not only a place for them to register their attendance, but also a place for them to make a note of anticipated upcoming absences, prayer requests, and music needed.

Finally, please provide and encourage the use of a pencil. If they make a mistake once, there's a good chance they may make it again, unless they mark their music. Consider purchasing music folders that have a place for a pencil.

VIII

Rehearsal Technique

Rehearsal time for most church instrumental groups can often be at a premium, and the instrumental music director must make a decision between allowing personal warm-up time for players or guiding them through a group warm-up. There are advantages and disadvantages to each option. Many directors use warm-up chorales and scale exercises to warm-up their group together, but this uses valuable rehearsal time that sometimes cannot be spared. Others embrace the philosophy of a community band or orchestra, leaving warm-up to each individual player. If your group is less advanced, with numerous young players, you may want to consider beginning rehearsal with a brief group warm-up time. Otherwise, trust your players to warm-up in the way that best suits them.

Always strive to keep rehearsals fast-paced and fun! The players are there to play, and if they have too much idle, non-playing time, they'll get bored and won't come back. Granted, some of your more advanced players may appreciate the "woodshed" approach to rehearsal, taking apart the music piece by piece, and putting it back together, but most players will get frustrated if there is too much stopping and starting in rehearsal. Introduce music early and rehearse it often. Only stop to woodshed the obvious things. Simple repetition, week-to-week, will fix everything else.

It is extremely crucial that church instrumental groups rehearse congregational music each week, whether you're playing the piece for the first time or have rehearsed it a hundred times. This reinforces the concept that congregational accompaniment is the most important function an

instrumentalist performs in worship. A suggestion would be to use your congregational worship pieces as the warm-up each week in rehearsal, fulfilling two purposes: providing a simple group warm-up, and making sure the congregational music is adequately prepared each week.

After beginning the rehearsal with congregational music, consider rehearsing pieces in chronological order, first devoting more time to pieces only one or two weeks away, then lesser time to those that are programmed farther down the road on the calendar. On the rare occasion when pieces are programmed that don't call for the entire ensemble, place those pieces last in the rehearsal order, so you can dismiss those who aren't called for on those pieces. This communicates to your volunteer players that you value their time, and they will surely appreciate the opportunity to go home early.

Finally, make your rehearsal time fun! Keep the mood light, encourage the group to fellowship together before and after the rehearsal, and make sure it is a positive experience for all, so they will come back each week, expecting to have a great time!

IX

Where to Find Music

There are many excellent published resources available for church instrumental groups. Most all of these are available online, and those web addresses are listed. Please note that this is not a comprehensive listing, but reflects a wide variety of acceptable literature for church bands or orchestras.

Prelude/Offertory Music – Orchestra

Exaltation Series (for four or more instruments), Lifeway (www.lifeway.com)

Easy Orchestra Series

1. Jubilation Series, Lifeway (www.lifeway.com)
2. Sunday Sounds Series, Word (wordmusic.com)
3. Silver Series, Allegis/Lillenas (www.lillenas.com)

More Difficult Orchestra Series

1. Celebration Series, Lifeway (www.lifeway.com)
2. Coronation Series, Word (wordmusic.com)
3. Gold and Platinum Series, Allegis/Lillenas (www.lillenas.com)

Benson Orchestra Series, Brentwood-Benson (www.brentwoodbenson.com)

Integrity Symphony Series, Integrity

Sanctuary Symphony Series, PraiseGathering (www.praisegathering.com)

Prism's Light Orchestra Series, Prism (www.prismmusic.com)

Jeff Cranfill Music (www.jeffcmusic.com)

Dan Goeller Music (www.dangoellermusic.com)

Camp Kirkland Productions (www.campkirkland.com)

David Winkler Music (www.davidwinkler.com)

NextGen Orchestra (www.richardkingsmore.com)

Prelude/Offertory Music – Jazz Band

Gloryland Band Series, Prism (www.prismmusic.com)

Barncharts Music (www.barncharts.com)

Jericho Horns Series, Brentwood-Benson (www.brentwoodbenson.com)

Prelude/Offertory Music – Praise Band

Power Praise Band Series, Lifeway (www.lifeway.com)

Barncharts Music (www.barncharts.com)

Benson Praise Band Series, Brentwood-Benson (www.brentwoodbenson.com)

Prism Praise Band Series, Prism (www.prismmusic.com)

Congregational Accompaniments

The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration/The Instrumental Hymnal, Word (wordmusic.com)

The Celebration Hymnal, Word (wordmusic.com)

The Baptist Hymnal, Lifeway (www.lifeway.com)

Songs for Praise And Worship, Word (wordmusic.com)

More Songs for Praise and Worship (multiple volumes), Word (wordmusic.com)

www.PraiseCharts.com

Choir/Vocal Accompaniments

When choosing choir anthems with instrumental accompaniment, encourage your minister of music to stay with major publishers. Most major publishers have acceptable standards, with regard to instrumentation, ranges, and level of difficulty. Church choral literature must reflect sensitivity to the limitations of the average church orchestra and most amateur musicians.

Relatively small string sections are common in most church orchestras. Use string reductions and simplified string parts to make up for the lack of strings and players with limited ability. The string reduction is a reduction of all the string parts into a piano score that can be played on a keyboard with a good string sound. This not only reinforces the string section, but also provides additional opportunities for keyboard players in the instrumental music ministry.

X

Organizing your Instrumental Music Library

A huge part of the instrumental music ministry is maintaining an organized instrumental music library. We are called to be good stewards of the resources God gives to us, and this includes the music that we use in worship. Instrumental music repertoire should be organized appropriately, so that it can be located quickly and efficiently, and stored securely for future use. The following guidelines are suggested, with these goals in mind.

First of all, it is absolutely essential that you keep your originals and copies separate – never give out originals! Consider the possibility of having two separate filing systems, one for masters and the other for the copies; even separate sets of shelves or filing cabinets.

There are a variety of ways available to store your instrumental music, such as file cabinets and envelopes or shelves and boxes. Choose the one that works best for you and stick with it.

Keep parts in standard score order and include inventory of parts in each envelope, so you can see at a glance what the instrumentation is for a particular piece. There are small variations in score order, but this is the most accepted arrangement:

Flute/Piccolo
Oboe
Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon
Alto Saxophone
Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone
French Horn
Trumpet
Trombone
Baritone/Euphonium
Tuba
Percussion/Drums
Piano/Rhythm
Harp
Violin
Viola
Cello
String Bass

Notice that each family of instruments is listed together, with woodwinds first, then brass, percussion and strings. In general, instruments in each family are listed from highest to lowest.

There are plenty of great database software options available to help organize the instrumental music library. Use the database software to classify each piece according to categories (Orchestra, Praise Band, Choir Accompaniment, Congregational Accompaniment, etc.), then cross reference choir accompaniments with the choral library number in database. This makes it much easier to make sure you have the orchestration that correctly matches the appropriate choir anthem. Separate each piece in collections/musicals, with reference to the name of the collection/musical in the database.

Increasingly, instrumental music ministries are considering a digital library option. The advantage of this system, as you scan all your parts and store them in a computer database, is the elimination of huge files or shelves of hard copies. In addition, many publishers are moving towards providing a CD of orchestrations in PDF form, rather than paper copies. This library

option also affords the advantage of being able to send your players a PDF copy of any part in your library, as an attachment to an email.

The instrumental music director must be aware of acceptable part substitutions, to create parts for orchestrations that do not include a part for every instrument. Learn these options for providing appropriate substitute parts:

1. No bassoon part – use a cello part.
2. No bass clarinet part – transpose the bassoon or cello part (up a major ninth, into the treble clef).
3. No baritone sax part – give them a tuba part, play it as if in the treble clef, and have them add three sharps or take away three flats.
4. No baritone or euphonium part – if they play bass clef music, give them a trombone part, or if they play treble clef, give them a tenor sax part.
5. No tenor sax or baritone treble clef part – transpose a trombone part (up a major ninth).
6. No alto sax part – transpose the French horn part (up a major second).

XI

Achieving Unity in the Band or Orchestra

The modern church instrumental group should reflect the same diversity as the body of Christ, the church. Consider this familiar scripture passage, which is Paul's encouragement to the Corinthian church for Christian unity:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (1 Corinthians 12:12-25)

Now consider this "orchestral translation" of the same scripture passage:

For even as the orchestra is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the orchestra, though they are many, are one orchestra, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one orchestra, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the orchestra is not one member, but many. If the second clarinet should say, "Because I am not a first flute, I am not a part of the

orchestra,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the orchestra. And if the third trumpet should say, “Because I am not an first trombone, I am not a part of the orchestra,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the orchestra. If the whole orchestra were a violin, where would the percussion be? If the whole were percussion, where would the sense of melody be? But now God has placed the instruments, each one of them, in the orchestra, just as He desired. And if they were all one instrument, where would the orchestra be? But now there are many instruments, but one orchestra. And the first flute cannot say to the second clarinet, “I have no need of you”; or again the first trombone to the third trumpet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the orchestra which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the orchestra, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the orchestra, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the orchestra, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

With this in mind, encourage your players to respect each and every member of the band or orchestra, as vital members of the musical ensemble, and equal members of the body of Christ. There is no room for the same competitiveness and jealousies in church instrumental groups that you see in secular community bands and orchestras. Instrumentalists must be encouraged to value each other’s giftedness equally, and realize that all of their gifts come from the same Creator. On top of that, our supreme motivation in church music is the glory of God, and not ourselves, so there is no reason for any behavior that exalts the individual. Keep your players focused on this higher goal, as they serve as one small part of the body of Christ!

XII

Creating Fellowship and Personal Ministry Experiences

Because the church instrumental ensemble is a reflection of the body of Christ, the experience of participating in the church band or orchestra should include more than just musical preparation and worship leading. It is important that the instrumental music director create opportunities for instrumentalists to encourage one another in Christian fellowship. The director should program specific fellowship events or times of fellowship connected to existing events. Such events may include a time of fellowship at the end of rehearsals, maybe quarterly or even monthly. A separate event, such as a Christmas or New Years party at the home of a band or orchestra member, is always a popular option. Foster a sense of community among members of your group through these events, and encourage them to get to know one another better.

In addition to the priority of leading in worship, the instrumental music ministry can also be mobilized to fulfill other functions of the church, such as outreach. The instrumental director should consider these outreach options, as a way of furthering God's kingdom, and creating personal ministry experiences for instrumentalists:

1. Ministering through music to those in need - prison trips, nursing homes, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, etc. It is always healthy to venture outside the four walls of the church and focus on the needs of others, rather than our own needs.

2. Pops concerts and other outreach events into your local mission field. Make sure your goal is more than just entertainment. Explore creative ways to present the gospel. This may be the “first touch” for someone who may visit your worship services later. Send them home with information about your church in the form of a keepsake program. A unique example of this for an outdoor concert is a fan, with the program printed on one side and church information on the other side (service times, address, phone number, web address, etc.).

3. Musical mission trips – across the world or across the country. There is nothing quite as fulfilling for a Christian instrumentalist as going on a mission trip and getting to play your instrument at the same time!

XIII

Ministering to the Instrumentalist

This final chapter focuses on ministering to the instrumentalist, not just as a musician, but as a member of the body of Christ. The instrumental director music, whether he is an ordained minister or not, must consider himself a pastor first and a musician second. You are the shepherd and the church band or orchestra is your flock. Here are four suggestions for ministering to your instrumentalists:

Consider bringing a weekly devotional in rehearsal. These times of devotion can be expressions of the director's personal walk with Christ, or he may choose to delegate this responsibility occasionally to others in the group. Be very careful about your choice of those who share in this responsibility. They must have the gift of teaching, and demonstrate unquestionable spiritual maturity and integrity.

Read the words to the choir anthems and vocal accompaniments. Encourage your musicians to be aware of what you're trying to communicate on any particular piece. Take the time in rehearsal to stop and read the words to a choir anthem, so instrumentalists can be a part of the communication process. This will also enhance their personal experience in worship.

Encourage them to sing when they are not playing in the service. Remember, instrumentalists are worship leaders too and must lead through their example. Stress to them that congregation members are looking to them for cues, and if they aren't singing when they're not playing, it

may encourage someone in the congregation to not participate. On the other hand, if they sing with a joyful countenance, it encourages the congregation to enter into worship with joy and enthusiasm.

Minister to their personal needs. These needs may include hospitalization, bereavement, job loss, etc. Because church instrumentalists are the flock, and the instrumental director is the shepherd, he should be the first to call or visit them, when they are going through times of crisis. The director should also consider sharing these personal needs, only with the permission of the instrumentalist, with other members of the instrumental ensemble. This encourages instrumentalists to pray and care for one another. What all this communicates to members of the church band or orchestra is invaluable, and absolutely essential in church ministry.

XIV

Conclusion

With the ever-changing face of ministry in today's churches, and the advances of technology, this handbook is bound to be outdated, even before it is published, but hopefully it has stimulated ideas for creative and productive ministry in its readers. Although the methods may change, the purposes, functions, and foundations of instrumental music in the church should stay the same.

Church instrumental directors should strive to pursue excellence in ministry, and never be afraid to change methodologies to meet the needs of changing culture. There is one thing that should not change though, and that is the message that we are entrusted with, as servants of Christ. We live in a world that is searching for truth, and we know the One who is "the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Instrumental music is a glorious way to enhance the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ, and to glorify the God who is the Creator of all things!

Soli Deo Gloria