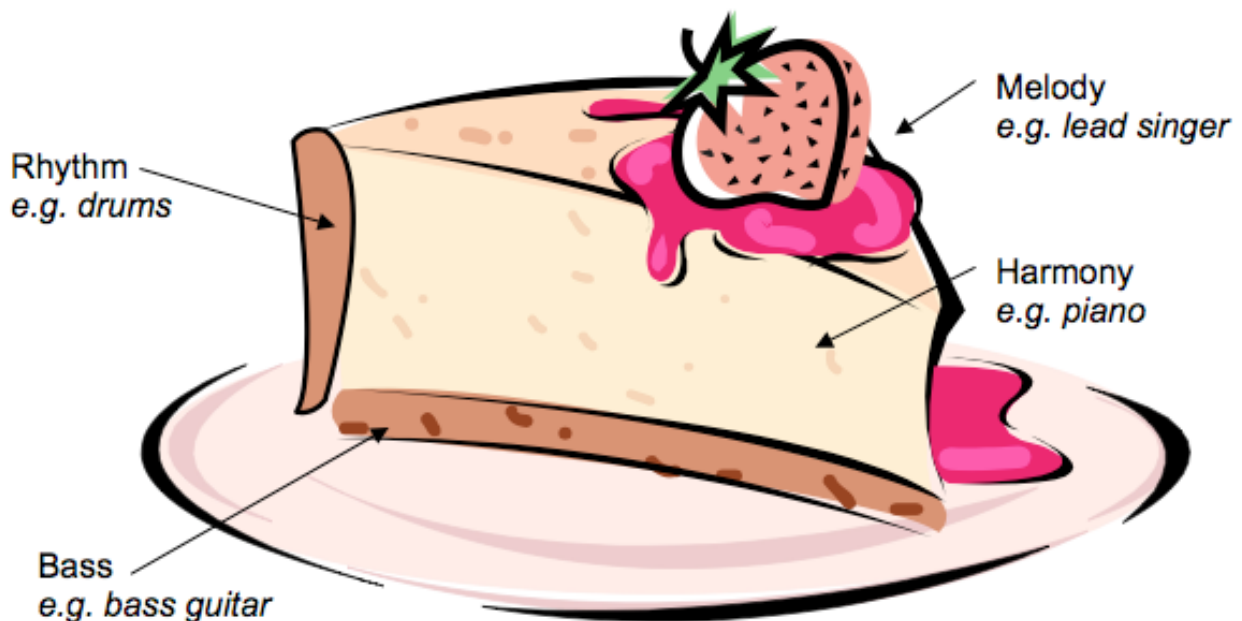


1. Why do we have instruments at church?

The goal of church musicians is to help our congregation sing. If that's not the goal then don't play.

2. The cheesecake model of music



The rules

Like a good cheesecake, the wrong amount of any one element is a bad thing. Have a listen to any song on the radio – notice how all the elements sit perfectly? That's how music should sound!

If nobody is playing the bass or harmony, then the whole thing will fall apart like a cheesecake made totally of cream and strawberries! And if nobody provides rhythm, the cheesy goodness will spill out everywhere.

On the other hand, if everybody doubles up on the same job, then the result is sickening. The worst offenders when it comes to mucking up a good cheesecake are pianists. If the bass player is laying down the bass, then don't play a left hand bass line! And if the singers are singing the melody, then don't play in unison with them!

Instruments & their possibilities

Instrument	Melody	Rhythm	Bass	Harmony
Vocals				
Piano				
Bass guitar				
Guitar				
Flute				
Violin				
Cello				
Drums				

3. Playing together

Playing music alone & together are different exercises. Its important to recognise that.

Some things to keep in mind in playing together:-

- Each team member needs to be confident in what they are playing before they come to the team. Team time is about learning to play together not as individuals. **Practice** at home.
- A **leader** is important. Someone that everyone looks to for starting & ending etc. A bit like the conductor of an orchestra but you don't necessarily need a stick!
- **Starting** together is very important. Someone needs to count in. A sloppy start is distracting to the congregation.
- **Ending** well is also important. A tight ending that everyone understands is important.
- A very important skill to develop is the skill of **listening** to the other players. Don't concentrate solely on your own instrument & your own playing... you are part of a team and you need to play as a member of a team... not a group of individuals who happen to be playing the same song at the same time.

That leads onto....

4. Arrangements- learning to share the space

Arranging music is working out how to play a song together. Very rarely do we get music which can just be played through without thought about its arrangement:

- With multiple musicians involved, we need to work out who plays what and when in order to share the space.
- In addition, the sheet music usually doesn't answer some pretty fundamental questions about the song. How many verses are there? Do we do a double chorus? What should the guitar play in each verse? How do we stop it from becoming monotonous - one dreary verse after another?

There is no point practising even a single bar of the song together until we work out the arrangement. Don't bother, it'll just waste time and (worse) discourage the players from thinking about the song as a whole piece of music (with light and shade, ridges and valleys and cliffs).

But there's rarely enough time to do this during rehearsal - so the band leader has to turn up with a general idea of where things are going to go. Democracy has its place, but too often bands fall apart without musical leadership and direction to start with.

As a band leader, you should turn up to rehearsal with a really good idea about what is going on in every song. Learn the song. Listen to some CD versions. Get an idea in your head about where things are going, so when your bass player asks you what to play, or your drummer can't remember how the chorus goes you can answer their questions without fumbling for answers. Rehearsals can be creative times too, but you need to get the ball rolling.

exercise: Highest place

	<i>Instruments, feel, effect etc.</i>
Intro	
Verse	
Chorus	
Fill	
Verse	
Chorus	
Chorus extra	
Outro	

Some things to keep in mind with arrangements

- The arrangement should help the words of the song.
 - Reflective words... slow pace... light arrangement...
 - Celebratory words... bright arrangement... big arrangements...
- Variety is good within a song & between songs
- Connecting songs together can be effective
- Less is more!
- Arrangements should be written down so that they can be played confidently.
- The style.
 - This includes things like genre ("we're going to do this as a laid back rock/pop song" or "let's do this like a Celtic romp") and feel ("do a slight shuffle beat").
- The verse structure (you might write down that there is a 4 bar intro, verse, verse, chorus, verse, chorus chorus 2 bar outro etc)
- The shape (this might go something like: intro fairly full, cut back for verse 1, build in verse 2 etc)
- The "texture"
 - The texture is what instruments are playing when to form what texture. Not everybody needs to be playing at the same time!
 - Perhaps the first verse is sparse and features an acoustic piano holding long chords (which we sometimes call "eggs" because semibreves look like eggs on the page) and a clean electric guitar doing skanks (2 and 4 rhythm) with the horns sitting out, then in the chorus we go full out with distortion power chords and bass notes doing quavers throughout in time with the kick... whatever texture you decide on, it should fit the song and help the congregation sing in a way appropriate to the theme of the words and the mood of the song.
 - Sometimes it might be appropriate for all or nearly all the instruments to sit out completely. A capella verses feature just vocals with no accompaniment, and drum breakdowns keep a steady beat going on its own.
- Other stuff:
 - stops (whole band cuts for anything from a beat to 8 bars),
 - unison hits (where drums and everything emphasise a particular beat or mime out a phrase),
 - vocal harmonies (add in a third below/above here...don't try this at home unless you have singers you can depend on... the only thing worse than not having harmonies is having bad ones).

exercise: Put a new song in my heart

5. Further help:

Check out the DVD portion of the Emu music CD?DVD- Songs for little rooms. Its designed to show how good music can be played in little rooms by small groups if musicians.

For piano players- There are 4 VERY helpful videos on the garagehymnal website to help you think about playing in church. <http://www.garagehymnal.com/training>