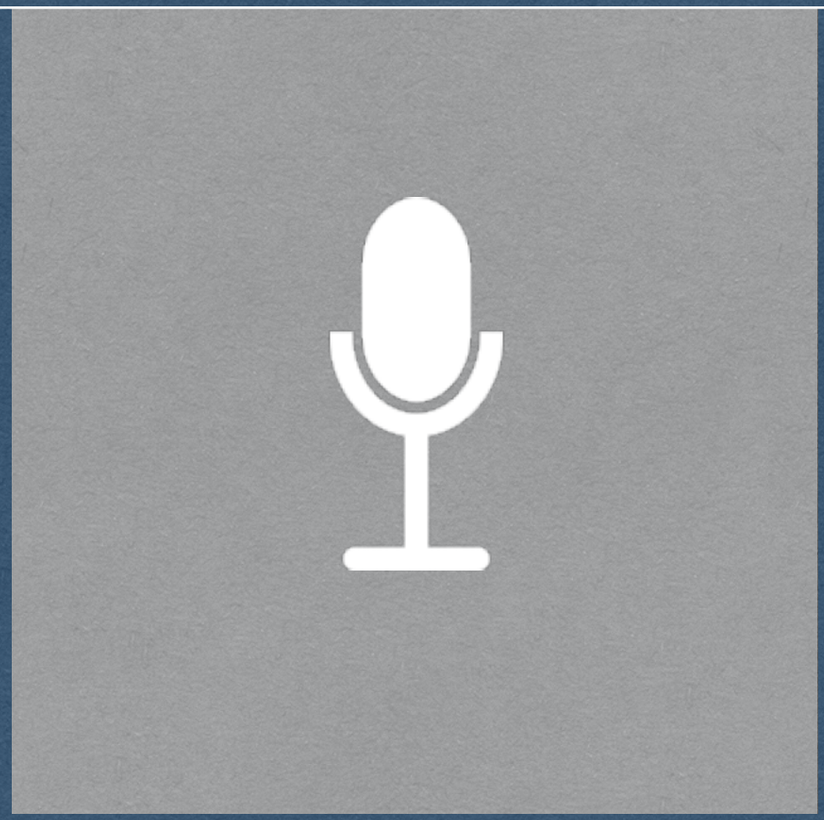
THE
ESSENTIALS IN WORSHIP
TOOLKIT



4 SMART STRATEGIES FOR ARRANGING A SMALL BAND

worshiptraining

INTRODUCTION

How do we arrange for a small band?

You may be in a setting or congregation where you don't have many musicians. This doesn't mean that your sound has to be any less rich or compelling!

Think of all the small bands, ensembles, or even one-person singer-songwriters that are making beautiful music today. You can do it, with whatever tools you have.

Here are four smart strategies for arranging a small band – and doing it well.

INTRODUCTION

1. Nail the essentials.

2. Approximate the groove.

3. Honor space.

4. What you have is enough.



STRATEGY 1 - NAIL THE ESSENTIALS

Nail the essentials.

As you listen to a song, you'll hear foundational elements that you'll want to think through. Listen to what the kick drum, drum kit and bass are doing – this is the groove of the rhythm section.

Think about how you can mimic this in a way that grabs the essence of the groove without trying to do everything else that surrounds it. Try to play an approximation of that groove on your instrument.

Once you've identified those essential elements, you'll be able to build on top of them.

STRATEGY 2 - APPROXIMATE THE GROOVE

Approximate the feel and the groove.

Once you've dissected the song a bit – where the vocals come in, where the chorus comes in, what kind of sound and feel this song has – you'll want to approximate that feel with what instruments are available to you.

Start thinking of the song in terms of layers. Once you've understood the essentials of the basic rhythm, you can begin to layer in the instruments you have that come the closest to the instruments you hear in the recording.

Let's say you have a djembe, a guitar, and a piano. On the recording, you may be hearing electric guitar, acoustic guitar, drums, bass, keyboard pads, piano, etc. Once you've found the groove, you'll need to approximate the bass and drums with your own instruments. The keyboard could play a few bass notes with the djembe picking up the rest of the groove. Layer on the inside rhythm, and mimic this part with the acoustic guitar.

STRATEGY 3 - HONOR SPACE

Honor space.

Don’t attempt to pull off the fullness of sound that goes on in the recording – you don’t have the instrumentation.

As soon as you try to replicate the energy in that song, your small band will begin overplaying to compensate.

Relax into the sound you have, and honor the space that you’re creating in the music.

In other words, do something special with what you have.

STRATEGY 4 - WHAT YOU HAVE IS ENOUGH

What you have is enough.

Here is what one worship leader said: “I was in a setting recently where I had an acoustic guitar, a mandolin player, and cajón player. We were playing some songs that, in the recordings, are full with orchestral sounds and layered elements. We resolved that our instruments were enough. We weren’t going to try to replicate the song; we were going to capture the essence of its energy. The cajón player took the essentials and connected the groove with a rhythm that felt similar in keeping with the track. We then approximated the feel of the song, identifying when the music rose in a crescendo and when it fell into quiet melody.

The three of us worked to honor the space. We recognized that a mandolin doesn’t have the capacity to mimic the fullness of keyboard pads. With an acoustic guitar using open chords and a mandolin keeping inside rhythm, our music swelled in warmth and tone to more than it seemed the three of us could accomplish!”

The instrumentation that’s been given to you can be used to create beautiful music.

ACTION STEPS

> Try at least one idea for the next time you meet.

Most of the songs we use in corporate worship have strong melodies, a solid sense of progression, and dynamics that can be mimicked by a smaller band.

Get that basic rhythm of the groove down. Approximate the sound of the song with the instruments you have available. Honor the space of the music – don't overplay and don't try to recreate the whole sonic event that's on an mp3.

Create beautiful music together with open space, so your instruments can express their unique qualities.

Decide at the front end that what you have is enough, and you'll be all set to arrange your small band.

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