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The Analyzation and Production of Christian Folk Music

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THE ANALYZATION
AND
PRODUCTION
OF
CHRISTIAN FOLK MUSIC

Submitted
through the
Honors Program
to
Mr. John Halbert

A Joint Project
by
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Rodney R. Miller
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THE ANALYZATION AND PRODUCTION OF CHRISTIAN FOLK MUSIC

A Word About Christian Youth Musicals

If you have been active in a church during the last six years, you have either heard or participated in several contemporary Christian youth musicals like "Celebrate Life" and "Purpose." Musicals like these have provided many meaningful experiences for many people. Here is some background information on these musicals.

When Bob Oldenburg compiled and arranged "Good News" in 1967, a phenomenon known as the Christian folk musical swept the country. Youth choirs that formerly had sung hymn arrangements, choruses, or anthems began singing music unlike anything their congregations had yet heard. Robes were hung up and the youth began to appear in sporty, look-alike ensembles. Church buses and caravans of cars began to make odysseys to shopping centers, resort areas, air-ports, bus stations, parks-- wherever the kids could find a crowd of listeners. A new item appeared in many church budgets: tour expense.

Churches that had had trouble finding enough kids to form a softball team suddenly had teen-agers all over the place, regularly attending practice sessions in order to learn the latest musical. Many of those newly organized groups accepted choir responsibilities for the worship services of their

church, and the piano and organ were supplemented or replaced by guitars, autoharps, tambourines, trumpets, drums, and whatever other instruments it took to produce the new sounds.

When in 1970 Broadman Press released a taped accompaniment to the musical "Now Hear It A-gain," professional music ensembles invaded the sanctuaries by way of the tape playback system. Any church, regardless of size, now could provide the best available professional musicians to accompany their amateur singers.

Somewhere along the way the phenomenon received a new name: the youth musical. Then, with increased use of acting, lighting, and the staging, it was logical that some should be called music-dramas. As the authors of musicals have matured, so have their texts, resulting in a more mature version of the musical--the pulpit drama. In any form, the elements of drama, lighting, and the staging introduced new dimensions for congregations to accept--or reject.

The kids may own the amplifiers, but the adults still control the churches. There have been incidents in which the performances were stopped and youth singers informed that "such going-on are not permitted in this place." That, of course, resulted in a divided congregation, frustrated youth leaders, a vast widening of the generation gap, and a group of embarrassed youth who could hardly wait until they were old enough

never to set foot in such a "narrow-minded" place again. The possibility of such an unfortunate incident could have been lessened with better understanding about youth musicals.

Youth musicals are sermons presented through the medium of music and drama, with or without lighting or staging. The music is in a popular idiom, and the text or dialogue is a presentation of the claims of Christ in contemporary language. To those whose concept of good church music is great poetry properly wedded to their favorite types of rhythm, melody, and harmony, youth musicals must seem a colossal mismatch.

Some music directors and some youth workers who have led musicals apparently did not realize that there are different kinds of musicals for different purposes. Some were never intended to be sung at the Sunday worship service of a church, but rather were created to speak to unsaved people through music with which they could identify. Someone has likened this circumstance to witnessing to a non-English speaking person in his native tongue. He cannot otherwise understand.

There are musicals that are appropriately presented to the church family. They are specifically aimed at making the child of God aware of the needy world around him. If the congregation has qualms about staging such an event in the worship place, another location should be chosen.

Although most of the composers of youth musicals are young

adults, one of the best-known composers of this type of music is middle-aged Ralph Carmichael. Speaking to the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference meeting at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on June 9, 1969, Mr. Carmichael said:

"In advertising, I had seen music used to sell products and services; in politics, I had seen music used to sell a candidate; in war time, I had seen music used to sell patriotism. And then I saw something else. I saw the purveyors of anti-God, anti-flag, anti-Bible, anti-morals, anti-everything decent and good begin to use the current pop forms of music to infect the kids with diabolical ideology. So, why couldn't we use this new form of music to communicate to this new generation?"

With a conviction based upon this premise, Mr. Carmichael and his composer brethren went to work, producing a Christian witness set to music that sounded like the "Top 40" music the popular radio stations play.

The evidence supports their actions. The kids like the music, and they heard the message. Since 1967, thousands of youth and not a few adults have been won to Christ through the witness of youth musicals performed across America and around the world. Many, many more Christian youth have recommitted their lives because of the ministry of a musical.

Spiritual blessings have come to those involved in the production of musicals, undoubtedly because of the repetitive

learning experience in rehearsals and performances and the joyous growth that comes in watching others commit their lives to Christ. Even the most severe critics of musicals do not deny that they have been the means of turning many youth to Christ.

There is an interesting comparison to be made concerning the criticism of youth musicals: "There is too much rhythmic accent." "The harmonies sound too much like popular music." "The text is too personal, too colloquial, and not always in good style." "They are not appropriate for worship." Sound familiar? The same criticisms were leveled at the nineteenth-century "Sunday School songs" of Bradbury, Doane, and Lowry and the twentieth-century "Gospel songs" of Bliss, Sankey, Coleman, and B.B. McKinney. It is ironic that many adults who warmly embrace the gospel songs that were popular in their youth denounce the music being sung by today's youth as "too rhythmic," "too much like popular music," "not worshipful," and so on.

Evidently, one's perspective is important. "I don't know music, but I know what I like," usually means, "I don't know music, but I like what I know." "I don't like that man; I must get to know him better," is a much-used quote that might appropriately be paraphrased, "I don't like that music; I must get to know it better."

Many adults are listening to what the youth are saying

through music, and they like what they hear. In any event, like it or not, the end seems nowhere in sight.

If one regularly attends church, he stands little chance of escaping a youth musical performance. As the summer youth worker, you might try to schedule the performance of one of these youth musicals in your church this summer. It's a good way to help youth as well as the adults grow in their Christian faith.

Some Youth Musicals

Good News - Oldenburg (Broadman)
Purpose - Landgrave (Broadman)
Tell It Like It Is - Carmichael-Kaiser (Sacred Songs)
Happening Now - Oldenburg (Broadman)
Natural High - Carmichael-Kaiser (Sacred Songs)
Life - Skillings (Lillens)
Now Hear It Again - Burroughs (Broadman)
What's It All About, Anyhow? - Wyrzten (Singspiration)
Real - Allen-Oldenburg (Lexicon)
Love - Skillings (Lillenas)
Hello, World - Red (Broadman)
I Wonder - Wells (Crescendo)
Celebrate Life - Red-Courtney (Broadman)
Encounter - Seabough-Cates (Broadman)
The Namegivers - O'Brien-Sellers-Willcoxon (Broadman)
The Searcher - Milham-Burroughs (Broadman)
Joy - Seabough-Cates (Broadman)
Who Is My Neighbor? - Wells (Crescendo)
Lightshine - Red (Word)
Living in the Spirit - Landgrave (Broadman)
Show Me - Owend (John T. Benson)
Come Together - Owens (Lexicon)

Musicals do not begin to limit the extent of folk music of today. Composers are taking Biblical passages and problems of today's youth and putting them to today's musical style in single

pieces of music. There is no possible way for an individual to keep up with the oversupply of this type of music coming off the press as there is no possible way for a literary person to read every current magazine in print.

These singles, as well as musicals, are filled with spiritual depth and outreach. Thus, we have felt the need of a musical group originated for the purpose of furthering this type of music as well as furthering the message of Christ. The need for a group to reach youth as well as be mature enough to "bridge the gap" and reach to the adult world is unending.

It is our goal to bring together a group, select suitable music and present our musical sermon for our project.

Selection of Music

Selecting the music for a group is one of the most difficult and time-consuming tasks to perform.

The first step is to decide on the type of program - the ideas that you want to express. With these goals in mind, you can pursue music to fulfill this message.

In our program, the first idea we felt that needed to be presented was that Christ lives and loves and can help every person in a deep and personal manner. Secondly, the need to present the method of how Jesus can help you seemed important-- that is the presentation of salvation.

The third basic idea is about growth as a Christian, the excitement of sharing Christ's love with others. Stress is on the fact that Bible study and prayer are essential. Then an opportunity to come to Christ for the first time or to rededicate your commitment to Him need to be provided.

Here we take a little different approach in that we feel it is not necessary to leave the audience in a serious thinking manner. If the message is properly presented--the deep thinking will come later, hopefully as each person is more alone.

As an audience relief technique as we are showing the joyous part of being a Christian; an audience participation song needs to be selected.

Sharing about the future home in heaven proves to be a good closing.

This has been the basic idea studied for. There are hardly any restrictions except the parts that: (1) the opening and closing number must be "grabbing" (2) solos and group numbers must be intermingled. Too many solos provide a lack of interest in the audience.

With this in mind - the search can begin..

Selection of the Group

In selecting a group of this nature, one would immediately

say that the foremost quality required is singing ability. I will have to differ with that opinion only after a learning experience which required many struggles to overcome.

In studying the people for selection, it is necessary to see if they can get along with the people of the group, have an optimistic outlook, committment to Christ, and will add, not detract, or even ride along with the morale of the group. Then comes the qualities of vocal ability and stage presence. I say this so strongly because most people who sing well can be taught to make a good "folk-sound" and look pleasant on stage, but to undertake changing a clashing personality that has developed for some 18-20 years is a near impossibilities.

A group of our caliber must feel unity as we perform to others and share the unifying love of the Spirit of our God shown through Jesus Christ. Experience has shown that if the performers lack unity, the performance will be very lacking.

For this reason, I placed my selection responsibilities in this order:

1. Decide on the size of the group you basically want. Due to vocal capabilities, you need to be flexible to be willing to add or subtract a few from that original basic group.
2. Check personality--committment, attitude, congenial with group and people met in performing.
3. Then be selective in musical ability.

Togetherness

Taking a group of young people, led by another young person and pulling their attitudes, desire and goals together into one attitude, one desire and one goal is by far the most difficult task encountered.

Our first effort was our kick-off retreat. We selected a week-end for our retreat and located a retreat house on Lake Dallas in Dallas, Texas. Much planning and effort went into these three days of the group being together. The goal of the retreat was tri-fold. (1) To get to know each other, (2) to have time for Bible study and prayer, (3) to spend time protecting and setting our goals. The success of this retreat cannot be measured. Our goals were set and can be summed up in a verse of scripture found in Phillipians 2:2 - "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Our one continuing effort to unify ourselves is with our Bible study. It is necessary to conduct this regularly. This is a time of prayer, sharing your needs as well as bearing the needs of the others, and studying the Bible. We have found an hour is sufficient if it is well organized, and we have met at 5:00 til 6:00 on Mondays.

Our remaining hope is that our unity and love will grow as we work together and practice our Bible studies.

Rehearsals

We have found that rehearsals must be scheduled with regularity. Many groups of our type rehearse only when they need or want to.

Finding a rehearsal time around everyone's schedule is a tough thing to do. Setting a regular time and then building a schedule is much simpler. This does not mean we have to practice every time, but it removes the difficulty and worry of scheduling a practice. We have tried to find a time during the day, but with little success. We now exist on three hours of practice a week. Our times are

Monday 7:30 - 9:30
Wednesday - 3:00 - 4:00

Details

OUTFITS: This can provide a headache. It is our recommendation that the guys select and buy their outfits, then allowing the girls to match. We say this because the girls make theirs and it is much simpler. Outfits should be looked into far in advance because it can be a slow process.

TRAVELING EXPENSE: Most churches or organizations will expect you to have to be paid. Therefore, it is no pressure to ask for expenses to be paid. We travel in 5 cars. In most cases, there will be money left over simply by asking for expenses to begin saving for future needs.

STOOLS: A blessed relief! In a program of our nature, there are many awkward parts when solos or testimonies are being performed. Regardless of the training of the group, an awkwardness appears for those in the group not involved. We desire to use seven stools - four at 3 feet, two at 3 1/2 feet, and one at 4 feet.

SOUND EQUIPMENT: We presently own an EMC system bought from Honde's Music Co. in Little Rock along with 7 share microphones. Included with the project is material on different types of sound equipment. Our only advice is to be sure before purchasing equipment. It's a shame to invest \$1500 and still be dissatisfied. Our recommendation would rest in a Golleham, or Voice of Music system.

PROGRAM

MEDLEY: "Come Together - from the musical "Come Together" by
Jimmy and Carol Owens
"Jesus, Jesus!" - from the musical "Sho Me" by Jimmy
Owens

INTRODUCTION OF GROUP

"I Believe in Jesus" - solo by Gayle Margason - arrangement of
"I Believe in Music" by Mac Davis

TESTIMONY - by Sondra Moore

"He Lives" - arrangement of hymn "He Lives" by Lanny Allen

"I Don't Know Why Jesus Loved Me" - by Andre Crouch - solo by
Karen Lykes

TESTIMONY - by Karen Lykes

"Jesus Made me Higher" - solo by Karen Lykes - music by Michael
Omartian

"God So Loved the World" - from the musical "Come Together" by
Jimmy and Carol Owens

"Jesus, Every Hour He'll Give You the Power" - Andre Crouch -
solo by Sondra Moore

TESTIMONY - by Stephen Hatfield

"Freely, Freely" - from the musical "Come Together" by Jimmy
and Carol Owens.

"Quiet Place" - arrange by Ralph Carmichael

TESTIMONY - by Sandy Sorrells

"Lord I'm Coming Home" - solo by Larry Grayson - by Andre Crouch

"Clap Your Hands" - a group participation song by Jimmy and
Carol Owens

"Jesus is the Answer" - solo by Sandy Sorrels - music by Andre
Crouch

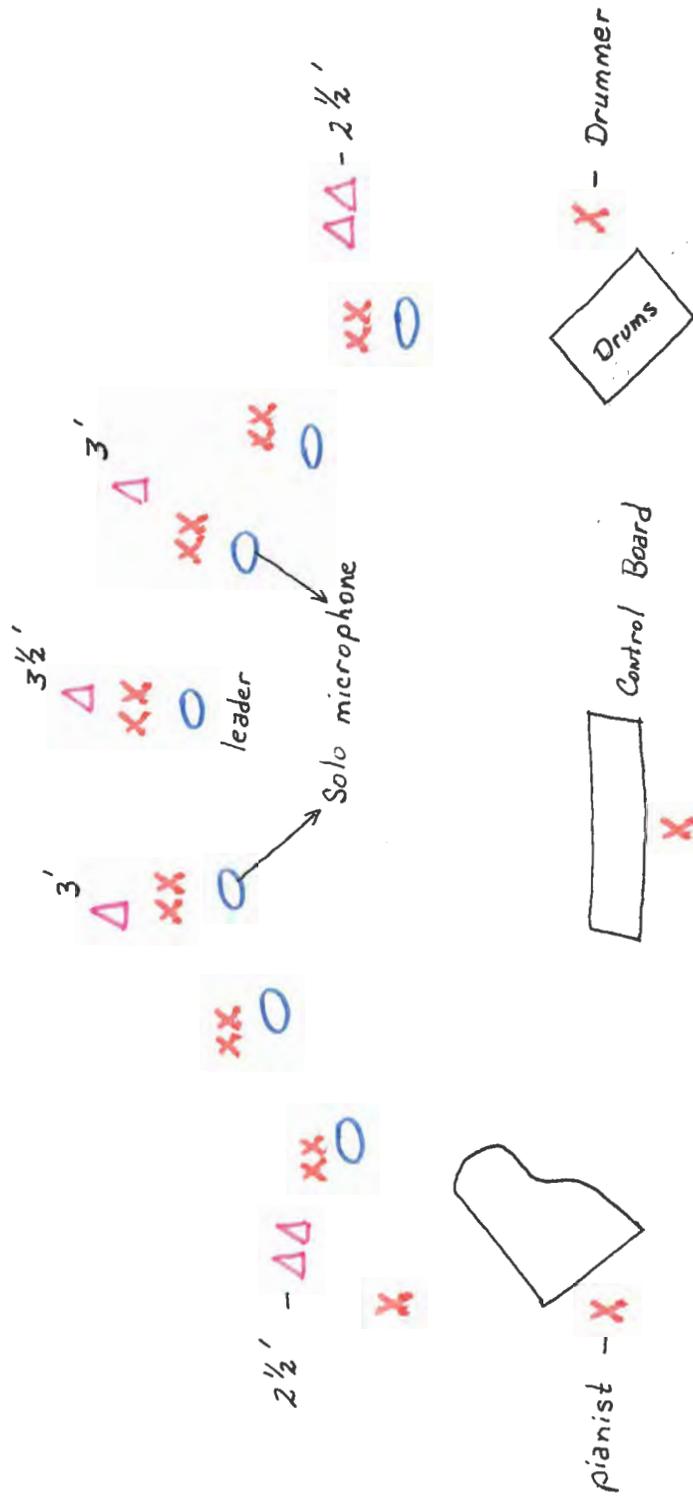
TESTIMONY - by David DeArmond

"It Won't be Long" - solo by David DeArmond - music by Andre
Crouch

"Bright New World"

CONCLUSION - by Larry Grayson

Desired Staging Set-up



X - people
O - microphones
Δ - stools