

Releasing Creativity in Your Church

How to integrate unique cultures, styles and genres in all aspects of worship **BY KEN REYNOLDS**

Some people say you are a product of your environment. But when it comes to music, I would say you're a product of what you're exposed to. Growing up, my musical tastes were eclectic. As a child, I listened primarily to gospel music mainly because my father was choir director at our church for more than 20 years. By high school, I was listening not only to gospel, but also to Earth, Wind & Fire, classical music, movie soundtracks, and drum and bugle corps (marching band music). I loved it all. And it wasn't until I started writing music that I realized how these different musical styles influenced me.

Using a variety of musical styles in worship can be beneficial in offering a multicolored sound, but as any right-brained worship leader knows, being creative in a church setting can be challenging at times. I've talked to many different worship leaders from all over the country crossing many different denominations and musical styles. Most of them are trying to diversify their music. They're either primarily rock or modern rock, trying to add a little gospel to the mix, or primarily gospel, mixing in a little rock or contemporary and anywhere in between from Latin to alternative.

We know the point is to reach people, but can you really be everything to everybody? That's a tough nut to crack, but I believe it can be done. First, be mindful of what defines your church's musical style of worship: tradition, denomination, senior pastor's desire or taste, congregation's desire or taste, demographics and the worship leader's desire or taste. These should guide you, not keep you from worshipping with different music styles.

We're all familiar with Psalm 150, which goes through a virtual orchestra of instrumental praise and concludes with this anthem: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (v. 6). As a drummer, I've always loved that passage and its inclusion of praising the Lord with "resounding cymbals." But notice that type of music isn't mentioned once.

We have the freedom to implement different genres into our expression of worship. Yet there are successful ways to expand, explore and introduce new musical styles in your church.

What you should not do:

1. Change in one week.
2. Ignore your church's history and tradition.
3. Make your whole set list in the different style.
4. Rebel against the pastor or congregation.
5. Act like you have all the answers.
6. Disregard feedback and criticism regarding any changes.

7. Frustrate your team by forcing or rushing them to get out of their comfort zone.

What you should do:

1. Pray for wisdom and discernment.
2. Work with the senior pastor and discuss a realistic plan.
3. Be upfront and talk to your team. Communicate to them the reason behind broadening your musical horizons.



4. If you're not familiar with a particular style, find someone who is and make it work.
5. Sell it. Act like you're for it, even if you're on the fence.
6. Build a strategy around a particular style.
7. Don't try everything at once; proceed slowly.

Remember, God doesn't care about the style or the method. He cares about the message. It's up to us to reach the people. Go for it, have fun, be authentic, real and approachable. God sees the heart and will honor your efforts! ■

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+ Ministry Resource

At Resurrection Life Church in Grandville, Mich., diversity is the norm. And on worship leader Ken Reynolds' *One World/One God*, that multicultural, multigenre, multicolored thread runs through every song to create a unique yet unified sound of worship.

