

# TIPS FOR THE YOUTH MUSIC GROUP

*Based on a workshop given in October 1999 by Brin Dunsire, and Philip Allsop, music leader at St Augustine's, Milton Keynes*

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## WHAT YOU NEED

A **leader**. At the least, someone to “count you in” - there might not be a person free to do *just* this, but an instrumentalist or singer can give the nod to various people to ensure people start and end at the right time. If they have a free hand or two, they can indicate the dynamics to the group - end, repeat, mute, drop an instrument, etc. Important then for musicians and singers to keep an eye on the leader. *(NB this is not necessarily the same function as a “worship leader” who is more often used in free-flowing worship done by experienced musicians, and can choose songs “on the fly”, command repeats and dynamics, lead prayers/declarations between songs, and generally be sensitive to the atmosphere of the occasion and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Because of the needs of liturgy, this role is not much encountered in Catholic churches, - Brin)*

**Singers** - the voices will carry most of the melody and content and are therefore the most important component. There should be at least one strong voice capable of starting off confidently, in key, and audibly, for the congregation to follow. (It should therefore be in a range that most people can find - not too high or low!) It helps if the main voice has a sense of rhythm, but that can be overcome if someone else provides a clear count-in...

**Instrumentalists**. Flutes, recorders, and trumpets can pick out the tune or harmonies, or provide short “passing notes” and “fills”. Keyboards and guitars provide chords and rhythm - not, ideally, the melody. Percussion and other instruments can also help out if they are available. Any music group needs a tune, chords and rhythm. It is important for the leader or musical director to sense when certain instruments need to be dropped. A trombone or sax may not be appropriate for a quiet song.

## HOW TO FIND THEM? - RECRUITING

The personal approach is much better than a general appeal. Work out who's got the skills you need and ask them personally for their help – be specific!

It's much easier to join a group if you know someone there, so getting someone from the group to ask each potential new member gives them a point of contact.

Support is also important; make sure that people know that they don't have to be a virtuoso and that support will be there for them.

Organising an event or workshop can attract people. A workshop organised by someone like **Jo Boyce** between a few churches or a deanery can drum up a huge amount of enthusiasm amongst musicians in the area and give them the impetus to go back to their parishes and get things moving. It's also a less intimidating place for new people to come than a normal rehearsal.

Identify potential members through contacts in the congregation or school. Who's doing Grade 3 flute, or joining a recorder group? Then approach them.

Keep an eye on other events of groups - you might find musical talent in a youth group or drama club.

## PLANNING AND REHEARSING

Work out your introductions: who's going to provide the few bars (usually from the end, or the start, of the song) which set the key, rhythm and speed? Bear in mind where it's going to fit into the service.

Make sure people in the music group, especially those who are playing the introductions know what's going on in the liturgy so that there aren't any embarrassing pauses between the priest or reader giving the cue and the music starting. Equally, make sure that the priest and reader know what music will be happening so that they can hand over to you at the appropriate point.

It's important to practice these introductions, and also the endings so that they are neat and tidy, and give a clear message to the congregation of when to start and stop.

Few groups have time to actually teach people to play instruments or sing, but you'll need to bring new players along and improve everyone's standard. If you can, ask someone to look after each weaker member of the group and help them out with tricky parts to make everyone feel part of the team. Don't be afraid of marking out sections for people and asking them to practice them individually. You're not obliged to accept everyone who volunteers into the group and whilst it's difficult for a small group to turn down an offer of help, if someone doesn't have the skills to make a contribution to the music, their skills might be better used elsewhere and though it can be difficult, you shouldn't be afraid to tell them.

Have fun as well as working hard. Tying the rehearsal to a social occasion, such as a shared lunch, will help the group to bond together and give people more reason to come regularly. Start each rehearsal with prayer.

Make sure the music supports and fits in with the liturgy, both the words and the style of music should be appropriate and integrated with the service. A liturgy planning book (such as the Calamus Liturgy Planner, publ. by Decani Music) can help with this. Look around a good Catholic bookshop. They give suggestions of appropriate music for each Sunday and feast. Remember that just because a song is your favourite, or "nice", doesn't mean it's right for that point in the liturgy!

Most congregations can't sing as fast as six young people who know the songs. Generally, slow down a bit!

*Thank* people - whether you're leading the group, or just taking part in the service. People need encouragement. Priests, heed this!

Remember, the music is there to add to the service. It doesn't have to be perfect, but as long as it's better that you were there than that you weren't, you are succeeding!

## COPYRIGHT AND LEGALITIES

Not only does breaching copyright break the law, which no Church should be involved in ... it also deprives composers of their earnings and means we'll have less new music in the future.

If you use *only* sheet music or hymnbooks you've *bought*, you don't have any problems with copyright. Most old hymns are probably out of copyright but don't *assume* that.

If you photocopy music, print words in your service sheet or on OHP acetates, or photocopy pages from the hymnbook (even "just for group rehearsals"), you need a licence.

There are different kinds of licence, and your church may have several. When you're copying a piece of music, you must make sure that:-

- The composer/publisher is covered by your licence.
- the type of copying you want to do is covered: some licences cover words and music, some just words.

Most churches should have a **CCLI licence**, which covers most of the most popular Christian music you'll come across, but you should always check with the priest or parish secretary. They are not ruinously expensive. Brin has further details of the CCLI licence scheme and if your church has any other licence, you can check with them as to what they cover. A lot of "Catholic" music (Taize, New Dawn etc) is only covered by the "Calamus" licence separately available. (01842-819830). **CJM/Jo Boyce** music is covered by a full CCLI licence; but they also have their own scheme. If your Church doesn't have a CCLI licence and doesn't think it needs one, but you want to use some of CJM's wonderful contemporary liturgical music, ring 01675-466254.

(Just to give you an idea; to obtain full CCLI and Calamus licences for a church with up to 500 attending weekend Masses (in total) would cost the parish about £370 a year. There is a sliding scale depending on size of congregation.)

Incidentally, none of the above cover the playing of recorded music, or the performing of live music (unless self-penned) outside of "divine worship", eg. at fundraising events or youth groups; for this you need a separate Performing Rights Society licence—ask Brin.)

You can find more information on related areas on our website, where there are lots of useful links and handouts to download:

- Resources - where to *get* the stuff; types of contemporary Christian music; the big names around. You'll find this at [www.nymo.org/music](http://www.nymo.org/music).
- Information about local gigs is in the events section.
- The Church PA handbook - a guide to troubleshooting amplification for your music group - is at [www.nymo.org/downloads](http://www.nymo.org/downloads)