

Enhancing Church Growth through Music Ministry

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of church music on church members' numerical and spiritual growth. Numerous scholars have recently shown an interest in the relationship between excellent church music ministry and church growth. For many churchgoers, music is an essential component of the worship service. Music also has a powerful impact on membership retention, new member recruitment, and community building inside the church. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the effectiveness of the music ministry in the church and the growth of the church, with a particular emphasis on how effective music ministry can result in higher attendance, greater participation in church activities, and deeper relationships between church members. The study also looks at the different components of a successful music ministry, including the choice of appropriate music, the musician's abilities and education, and direction of music leading in worship and means of promoting church growth through music. The study adopted qualitative methodology by collecting non-numerical data to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of church members regarding the impact of music ministry on their spiritual growth and involvement in the church. The results show that supporting a top-notch music ministry can favour church growth and should be a key component of any church's outreach and engagement initiatives.

Key Words: Impact, Excellent, Church Music Ministry, Church Growth

Introduction.

People have argued about and discussed how music should be used in Christian churches for ages. In the church, music may foster a sense of community and a spiritual atmosphere that draws people closer to God. With the popularity of contemporary worship music, many churches have made significant investments in their music departments in an effort to draw in new members and give their congregations a meaningful worship experience. This study investigates the effect of excellent and church music ministry on church growth, focusing on how excellent music ministry can boost attendance, enhance engagement in church activities, and strengthen relationships among church members.

The role of music in the church is pervasive in the sense that music is utilized in many aspects of church life. The Church is influenced by music in several aspects of her life to the extent that Christianity has been dubbed “the singing faith, or singing religion.”¹ Hence Christians are “singing people.” In every Christian gathering, music is used for “unity, worship, giving of substances, praising God, and praying. Music is also used at weddings, funerals, births, and even a blessing before eating. Music is a strong weapon in the church that can greatly impact its growth and development; as Millard J. Erickson noted that music can stir up powerful feelings and foster a sense of community among Christians.² Similarly, Constance M. Cherry emphasizes the value of good music ministry in developing a worship experience that is both meaningful and interesting for

¹ George Janvier, *Leading the Church in Music and Worship*, second ed. (Jos: ACTS, 2007),1

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*.2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 321

the congregation³ which has the potential of adding value to church growth.

Music finds its expression through singing hymns, choruses, choir anthems, musical instruments etcetera. Except in moments of extreme persecution when the church is forced to be silent in worship (even at that, God's people still make melody in their hearts), any church worship service without music is considered incomplete. Michael Hawn's research emphasizes the influence of music on the multiracial church community. He asserts that through uniting people in worship and promoting a feeling of community, music can serve as a bridge between various cultural groups.⁴ Music ministry necessitates excellence if the full benefits are to be reaped. Church music when excellently executed can enhance church growth.

Clarification of Concepts

Excellence

The term excellence implies different things especially when used in different contexts. Generally, to be excellent is to be outstanding, to have high performance, something beyond the ordinary. Marilyn J. Biery defines excellence as "doing the best you can with the resources you have available" and emphasizes that excellence is not about perfection but about striving to improve and give your best effort.⁵ Jon Nicol posits that excellence is subjective because a local church of two hundred or fewer cannot be rated at the excellence standards of larger ministries. Unfortunately, most churches still do. Relatedly, excellence is easier to judge than practice. People often assess

³ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2010), 121

⁴ Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship* (Dallas, Texas: Choristers Guild. 2010), 116-137

⁵ Marilyn, Biery, J. *The Church Musician: Level 3* (Kansas City, MO, Lorenz Corporation, 2010), 1.

others' ministries based on their standard of excellence. Team leaders as well as members of the team also toll the path of judging their lack of excellence. Moreover, when excellence is seen as the end goal, it is idolatry.⁶ Team leaders often claimed that their quest for excellence was to glorify God, but in most cases, it is for self-aggrandizement.

In order to attain a high degree of performance, quality, or ethical behaviour, people, organizations, or society may refer to a set of guiding principles or norms as the principles of excellence. An excellence-focused commitment entails having high expectations for oneself and working hard to meet them. It entails making improvements through time and learning from errors. Depending on the setting, objective, and target audience, excellence in music ministry can be characterized in a number of different ways. On the other hand, the following could serve as some general criteria for excellence in music ministry:

Technical Mastery: For performers to produce high quality performances that captivate and motivate audiences, a high level of musical skill and understanding is necessary. Having a solid foundation in musical education and concepts like harmony, rhythm, sight-reading, conducting, and voice and instrumental skills is required. Daniel Levitin points out the importance of "technical proficiency as a prerequisite for expressive communication in music. It is the tool musicians use to convey the emotions, the ideas, and the message of the music. Without technical mastery, they cannot express themselves fully or communicate the essence of the music to listeners."⁷ William Westney that "technical mastery is a lifelong pursuit for the serious musician who must constantly

⁶ Jon Nicol "Forget excellence in worship: Three Big Problems in the Pursuit of Excellence

<https://www.musicademy.com/forget-excellence-in-worship/> Accessed on 25/11/2021

⁷ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Dutton Penguin 2006), 205

strive to improve their skills, refine their technique, and deepen their understanding of the music they play. This requires discipline, dedication, and a willingness to learn and grow."⁸ However, church musicians are responsible for maintaining balance between the technicality and spirituality of their ministry. Constance Cherry notes that "excellence in music ministry requires both technical proficiency and spiritual sensitivity. Church musicians should be skilled in their craft, but also attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit, in order to use their gifts to bring glory to God and minister to the needs of his people."⁹ Unfortunately, some church musicians have gone to the extremes of show-off due to their mastery of some technicalities of their music. "Technical mastery is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The goal of technical training is not to show off skills or impress others, but to better serve the music and the message being conveyed."¹⁰

Creative Expression: Music ministry should evoke a sense of artistry, creativity, and emotional depth that speaks to listeners' hearts and spirit. This necessitates knowledge of the musical genre's artistic norms, traditions, and aesthetics as well as the capacity to communicate a sense of spiritual meaning and purpose through music. Worshipers of God are enjoined to "praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals."¹¹ Robert E. Webber opines that "the church needs to be a place where creativity is celebrated and encouraged, where people are free to use their gifts to worship God and serve the

⁸ William Westney, *The Perfect Wrong Note: Learning to Trust Your Musical Self* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press 2003), 89

⁹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, 137

¹⁰ Nancy Hill Cobb, *Making Music with Your Life* (San Francisco, California: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 74

¹¹ Psalm 150:3-5

community."¹² The creation account states that “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”¹³ He also gave the man “skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them skilled workers and designers.”¹⁴ Therefore, “creative expression is a gift from God, and when it is used for God’s purposes, humans participate in His work of renewing all things.”¹⁵ This enables man to create through arts to express their love and emotions during worship.

Church Music

This refers to music that promotes the beliefs and practices of the church as laid down in the Bible and sung by church members. Such music can be vocal or instrumental and includes genres such as hymns, choruses, and choral works. The term "church music" describes the musical customs and practices associated with religious worship and activities in Christian churches. Hymns, psalms, chants, anthems, gospel music, and modern Christian music are just a few elements of the variety of different musical genres that can be used in church music. Eric J. Alexander notes that “in the singing of the hymns, the worshipping congregation is brought together in a corporate act of praise and worship, with the Holy Spirit brooding over the assembly.”¹⁶ The power of unity is demonstrated in the singing together of the church. As observed by Kauflin, Bob, “singing together is a visible expression of our

¹² Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006) 107

¹³ Genesis 1:27.

¹⁴ Exodus 35:35

¹⁵ Dawn, Marva J. *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 153

¹⁶ Eric J. Alexander, *Theology of Church Music*. (Phillipsburg, NJ, P&R Publishing, 2000), 103

unity in Christ."¹⁷ When the church congregates and worships God with their voices,

Through congregational singing, the church worships. "The goal of congregational singing is to engage the heart, mind, and emotions of the gathered church with the beauty and greatness of God."¹⁸ Church music has been a key part of Christian worship through the ages, inspiring worshipers and delivering theological messages. Depending on the denomination and the particular church, music in worship services might vary. Still, it is frequently done to foster community and shared experience among the congregation.

Excellence in Church Music Ministry

The need for excellence in church music underscores the fact that music ministry in each local church needs overhauling. Excellence in church music requires a combination of technical proficiency, musical artistry, and spiritual sensitivity. Marilyn, Biery notes that musicians must be skilled in their craft but also must be able to communicate the meaning and message of the music to the congregation.¹⁹ The purpose of church music is gradually giving way to the demands of two major factors that tend to cripple the goal of church music.

- a. Tradition: church music did not grow out of a vacuum, it has its history, and each local church has her own way of music performance. Change is usually resisted and can be termed worldly or unbiblical, particularly by conservative adults. Every genre of music performance is good if Spirit-inspired innovation is brought into it.
- b. Contemporary excesses: the era in which we are is a time where sensuality is taken for spirituality among

¹⁷ Kauflin, Bob, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God*. (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2008), 91

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 28

¹⁹ Marilyn, Biery, J. *The Church Musician: Level 3*, 2

gospel artists. Gospel artists are directly influencing church music and indirectly dictating the flow of worship in church gatherings.

However, Psalm 33:3 commands the church “to sing new songs to the Lord and play skillfully.” It is a call on the part of worship leaders and congregations to put in their best during worship. The Psalmist can be interpreted to mean that recycling the same song should be replaced by new ones during worship. The quality and quantity of music being performed in the church should be based on the understanding that God deserves the best. “While excellence is good and necessary for a thriving music and worship ministry, care must be taken on the idea that excellence is for worshippers’ or musicians’ benefit. It should be for God. The reason for excellence in worship is because God is worthy of it and so much more. Worship is not about us; it is about Christ.”²⁰ If church music ministry will be excellent, it should of necessity derive its pattern from the Bible. The Bible is replete with the mention of music at various books of the scripture. Findings reveal that out of the 66 books of the Bible, 44, which translates to 66 percent of the books, refer to one aspect of music or the other.²¹

The first use of music in creation is recorded in Job 38:7 that there was joyful singing when earth’s foundation was laid. The use of music here is for the praise of God. God is portrayed as a Musician by Gabriel Ademola Oyeniyi in an article, “Music as a Creative Teaching Tool.” God is referred to as the “first composer” and author of creative use of music as a teaching tool to communicate certain truths to the children of Israel.²²

²⁰By Jonathan Jones, Excellence in Church Music Ministry (August 27, 2020)

<https://www.experiencingworship.com/articles/general/2014-12-excellence-in-church-music-ministry.html>, Date Accessed: 25th November, 2021

²¹ Eveline F. Miller, *Building An Effective Church Music Ministry* (Ibadan: Publishing Board, Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1993),30

²² Ademola Oyeniyi, “Music as a Creative Teaching Tool,” *The Ogbomoso Baptist Christedu*, November 2012, 14.

Alluding to the fact that during the last days of Moses' ministry on earth, he was instructed, with these words by God himself: "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be witness for me against the children of Israel." (Deut 31:19). The content of the song, as later taught to the children of Israel by Moses is found in Deuteronomy chapter 32. It teaches among other concepts; praise and adoration of the great God, state of corruption of the people, history of God's faithful dealings, the impending judgment over unrighteousness, and the promise of hope for gentiles to rejoice with God's people: Commenting on Deuteronomy 31:19 and chapter 32 Corbitt notes that God's instruction to Moses was not just a mere opportunity for the Israelites to practice singing but to deliberately teach them the way of the Lord and his expectation in man's relationship with Him.²³ This example implies that God excellently used music for teaching, warning the Israelites of the danger of their disobeying His commands.

King David's leadership had a profound influence on the music of temple worship of the Israelites. "King David in the Bible is acknowledged to have had a great influence on the worship and social life of the nation of Israel through his musical giftedness and his passion for employing music in the worship of Yahweh, an influence which outlived him and still reverberates today."²⁴ Due to David's taste for excellence in music ministry, he instructed singers were to sing loudly with harps, lyres and cymbals through instrumental praise. The four thousand musicians David set up were not just musicians; he chose competent leaders to lead and as choir members (1 Chro 15 and

²³ Nathan J. Corbit, *The Sound of the Harvest: Music in Church and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998),198

²⁴ Gabriel Ademola Oyeniyi, King David's Musical Leadership Influence on Israel and Implications for Apex Church Leaders in Emiola Nihinlola and Folasade Oloyede (Eds.) *Principles and Practice of Christian Leadership* (Ogbomoso: Kingdom Impact Publishing and Media, 2021), 203.

16). He engaged professionals in the praise of God: Chenaniah, leader of the Levites was to direct, for he understood how to offer praise with the instruments David had made (1 Chron. 23:5). Other prominent musicians were Herman, Asaph, Ethan, Jeduthun and their children. David provided musical instruments for the praise of God (2 Chro 25). How can those involved in our churches' music ministry play musical instruments skillfully if the church does not provide the instruments?

King Solomon followed up on the arrangement made by his father, David, thus recording great success as the choir ministered with the priests in the temple. God's glory was greatly revealed (2 Chro5). In the time of Jehoshaphat, the role of music in worship and warfare was employed as the choir was called upon to minister singing "The Lord is good, his mercies endure forever" there was mighty deliverance (2 Chro 25).

Relatedly, King Nebuchadnezzar used Music as Call to Worship. King Nebuchadnezzar used music effectively to achieve his selfish purpose. Through the instrumentality of music, he called people to worship the golden image he set up. All bowed down for his image except God's people:

Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up..... (Dan 3:4-6 NIV).

The focus here is the elaborate provision made by the king for the worship of his image. He provided the latest musical instruments of the time: "the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music."

Not much is written about music in the New Testament, particularly the involvement of Jesus in music while on earth. However, it could be inferred that he did not oppose the use of music. He used flute and dirge as illustrations and also sang a hymn with his disciples before going to the Mount of Olives (Matt 17: 11; 26:30). Paul's admonition on the use of music to the Colossians is that believers should be filled with the word of God and songs should be used to admonish and teach and also make melodies in their hearts in the worship of God.²⁵ Paul together with Silas had a practical demonstration of the use of hymn of praise in prison. They and others were miraculously delivered and lives were brought to Christ.²⁶ The book of Revelation gives a glimpse of the lyrics that can be employed in church's praise songs. The worship account in heaven was heavily loaded with songs of praise of him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb of God.

Areas of Excellence in Church Music Ministry

Paul Ryan raises the question on what constitutes excellence in church music. Is it about musicians' idea of excellence which is based on "musical perfection or professional quality?"²⁷ Some worship leaders or choristers want to sing like studio-quality and copy artists in order to sound being perfect and impress the congregation. Although God deserves the best, it should not be a show of self-aggrandizement, rather, God's glory. The following are important towards having excellent music ministry in our churches:

Pastoral Leadership

A church that will experience excellent music must have a pastor at the helm of affairs who is musically literate and has

²⁵ Colossians 3: 16

²⁶ Acts 16:24-31

²⁷ Paul Ryan, In Pursuit of Excellence, <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/september-2010/pursuit-excellence>, Date Accessed: 25th November, 2021

strong passion for excellence in music or at least has strong interest in excellent music. A pastor who is not interested in music will not pursue excellence and his or her action will have negative influence on the music of the church.

Spirituality of Music Team

Church music is a ministry to God and His people. It is not a talent show, not for entertainment or business venture. Church musicians are ministers in their right who lead people to worship God. Music team should be disciplined in righteousness, humility, sacrifice, punctuality, commitment and the like to enhance excellent delivery of their ministry.

Understanding the Modes of Church Music

Church music focuses on the five areas of the church life outreach (evangelism or soul-winning), worship, fellowship, discipleship and service as seen in the scripture (Acts 2: 32, Acts 4:32) and as espoused by Rick Warren and others.²⁸ Music scholars like David Pass, Donald Hustad and Nathan Corbit²⁹ have also identified the following which also corresponds to what the church should be doing and is similar to Rick Warren's proposition:

- a. Kerygmatic music (proclamation): one of the tasks of the church is the proclamation of the gospel. There are corresponding hymns and songs that proclaim the gospel to the lost. For example "Have you been to Jesus for the Cleansing Power?" The choir rendition can also be

²⁸ The Five Basic Purposes of the Church

[https://ralphhoweministries.com/the-five-basic-purposes-for-the-church-that-jesus-is-building/#:~:text=Rick%20Warren%20made%20these%20well%20know n%20in%20his,%28evangelism%20or%20soul-winning%29%2C%20worship%2C%20fellowship%](https://ralphhoweministries.com/the-five-basic-purposes-for-the-church-that-jesus-is-building/#:~:text=Rick%20Warren%20made%20these%20well%20know n%20in%20his,%28evangelism%20or%20soul-winning%29%2C%20worship%2C%20fellowship%20) Date Accessed: 24th November, 2021

²⁹ Donald P. Hustad , *Jubilate II : Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing Company, 1993), 447.

kerygmatic in nature through which salvation message is proclaimed to worshippers.

b. Leigtourgia music (worship, praise and prayer): The Church should be worshipping hence hymns of worship, praise, thanksgiving and prayer. A hymn such as “O Worship the King” is in this mode. In addition, choruses of praise and thanksgiving that are theologically balanced are in this mode.

c. Diakonia music (Nurturing and shepherding): This is the pastoral aspect of church music a hymn like “Yield not to Temptation” is appropriate

d. Didache music: This music is the teaching aspect of church life. Songs that emphasize doctrines and other salient issues. All songs actually have a potential didache value.

e. Koinoniac music: This music corresponds with the fellowship life of the church. “Bless be the Tie that Binds” and choruses that encourage oneness and unity are appropriate.

Song Directions

Songs have different directions which can be vertical up direction, vertical down direction, horizontal direction and reflective or inward direction. Songs can have vertical and horizontal dimensions when being sung in Christian worship. With a focus on adoration, praise, and devotion to God, the vertical dimension describes the worshipper's relationship with God.

Vertical Up Direction



Regarding worship, vertical up direction emphasises lifting one's heart, mind, and spirit to God. It consists of an upward glance towards God, a posture of surrender and submission, and a desire to elevate and honour Him beyond all else. In addition to singing, praying, reading and studying the Bible, and performing deeds of service and obedience, there are many ways to express this as worship. The vertical up direction highlights God's transcendent character and the necessity for people to recognise and react to His holiness and magnificence. According to Paul Baloche, "The purpose of worship is to glorify God and edify His people."³⁰

Vertical up direction promotes participation of worshippers as observed by David Crowder when he states that "Worship is not a spectator sport; it's a participatory event."³¹ Because no one should come before God to be entertained, but to be transformed.³² When people worship and are transformed, the glory of God will radiate in and through their lives. John Piper asserts, "God's ultimate goal in all of history is to uphold and display his glory for the enjoyment of the redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."³³ Worship leaders using this direction of praise leading need to ensure carefully selected songs that address God directly. For instance, the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy, God Almighty" is a vertical upward direction which addresses God's holiness.

Vertical Down Direction



³⁰ Paul Baloche, *The Worship Answer Book: Volume 1*. (Ventura, CA: Integrity Music, 2006), 75.

³¹ *Ibid*, 118

³² Crowder, David. *Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die: Or The Eschatology of Bluegrass*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 93

³³ John Piper. *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 57.

In leading music, "vertical down direction" refers to the lyrics that emanate directly from God. The chorus "I am the Lord that Healeth Thee" and the hymn "I gave My Life for Thee" are lyrics that show God singing unto us directly. "The terms up and down are often used to describe the direction of motion in pitch space. In particular, 'vertical down' describes a descent from a higher to a lower pitch, and 'vertical up' describes an ascent from a lower to a higher pitch."³⁴ The vertical element of music describes how chords are created by piling notes on top of one another. The movement inside the chord progression or melody is called moving "down" in this context. "Vertical progression or vertical direction refers to simultaneous progress of chords. If the chords move to a lower level in pitch, we speak of a downward or descending progression. In comparison, if they move to a higher level, we speak of upward or ascending progression."³⁵ A chord progression from the key of "C" major to the key of A minor to the key of F major to the key of "G" major, for instance, would be seen as having a vertical down direction since each succeeding chord is built on a lower pitch and the harmonies get simpler as the progression descent" vertical down direction" melody begins on a high pitch and then drops to a lower note. This kind of melodic movement is prevalent in many musical genres and can aid in bringing a piece of music to a satisfying conclusion.

The vertical down direction in praise and worship songs can inspire a congregation's respect and introspection. These songs can promote a feeling of spiritual depth and introspection by highlighting the melodies and harmony's descent. The employment of descending chord progressions, such as those that go from the tonic chord (the key's "home" chord) to the subdominant chord (a chord based on the fourth degree of the scale), and finally to the dominant chord, is one approach to do this (a chord built on the fifth degree of the scale). With the

³⁴ Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), 73

³⁵ Walter Piston, *Harmony* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1941), 70.

descent of the chords, this style of progression elicits a sense of resolve and a sense of tension and release. The use of descending melodies and chord progressions in worship songs can help to create a sense of reverence and contemplation within a congregation. This movement can help focus on the lyrics' message and enter a deeper worship experience.³⁶

In praise and worship songs, falling melodies are another way to use the vertical down direction. This can be achieved by beginning a melody high and decreasing gradually or by using descending scale patterns or arpeggios. The congregation can concentrate on the significance and message of the words due to this style of melodic movement's ability to evoke feelings of reflection and introspection. "Descending melodies and chord progressions can create a sense of humility, intimacy, and introspection. The Vertical Down Direction can help draw our attention inward and focus on our need for God's grace and mercy."³⁷ Relatedly, "the use of Vertical Down Direction in worship songs can help to create a sense of spiritual depth and contemplation within a congregation. By emphasizing the downward movement of the melody and harmony, we can lead our congregations into a deeper worship experience."³⁸

The Vertical Down Direction portrays the direction in which God addresses worshippers during the service. Worship leaders should choose songs that feature descending melodies, or adapt the melodies of existing songs to incorporate a descending pattern. They can also use vocal techniques such as singing softer or gradually slowing the tempo to create a sense of contemplation and introspection. Worship leaders using this direction will choose songs that convey this message. For example, the hymn "I Gave my Life for Thee" is a reflection of

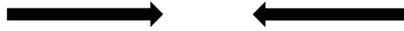
³⁶ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 103.

³⁷ Brian Doerksen, *Make Love, Make War: Now Is the Time to Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 68.

³⁸ Dan Wilt, *Essential Worship: A Handbook for Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 63.

the life, ministry and sacrificial death of Christ which challenges worshippers to be dedicated to Christ.

Horizontal Directions



The concept of a "horizontal song leading direction" is not a commonly used term in music theory or composition. However, based on the term's literal interpretation, it could refer to the melodic movement or progression within a piece of music. This term is not standard music terminology and is being coined for a specific context or purpose of this paper. Contrarily, the horizontal dimension places emphasis on the interaction between worshipers, who support and exhort one another in Christian service.

Lyrics that promote community, harmony, and group action among Christians are frequently included in the horizontal song leading direction in the context of hymns. The lyrics of these songs are meant to encourage worshipers to encourage and uplift one another as well as to take part in community service and ministry. On the other hand, singing along to songs—especially testimonies—is a popular practice in leading praise and worship. Songs that challenge worshippers to take their acts of worship seriously can either be invitational or confrontational. The horizontal song leading direction is important because it directs the congregation in singing in unison and harmony. It makes sure that everyone is singing according to the same melody and moving through the song in unison. By dictating the tempo, phrasing, dynamics, and overall musical interpretation of the song, the song leader—whether a choir director, worship leader, or conductor—plays a significant role in guiding the congregation.

The foundation for the idea of horizontal song leading direction is based on the admonition "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet

together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”³⁹ Worshipers are reminded of their shared goal as Christ followers through hymns with horizontal song-leading direction, and they are encouraged to actively take part in strengthening the community of believers and reaching out to the world with the love and message of Jesus Christ. “We Are One in the Spirit and “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” are two hymns that demonstrate horizontal song-leading direction. These hymns place a strong emphasis on love, support, and unity among believers. Worshippers address themselves through hymns or songs of praise worship to encourage one another, depending on the content of the worship services.

Reflective or Inward Direction



Songs that take this direction are those that are meditative through personal or congregational reflection on one’s relationship with God. On the other hand, the songs may be addressing oneself in relation to God’s deeds. Musicians can approach the creation of their songs in a variety of ways. One of these strategies is introspective or inward song direction, which derives inspiration from one’s events, feelings, and ideas. Introspective songwriting frequently produces intensely emotional music that speaks to the artist’s deepest emotions and challenges which can elicit similar response from the audience. “The essence of true worship is inwardness – a deep

³⁹ Hebrews 10:24–25

reverence for God and a sincere desire to know Him."⁴⁰ The hymn "Praise My Soul the King of Heaven" reflects the experience of salvation of the composer and can be sung meditatively.

Relatedly, reflective songs should be the outcome of the practice of the presence of God. Brother Lawrence notes that "the most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way."⁴¹ These songs have the potential to be extremely potent and resonant, allowing worshippers to be in spirit through worship as they express their love and affections for God through their feelings and experiences.

Songs with introspective or thoughtful songwriting can be useful instruments for musicians who wish to write real, open, and profoundly moving music in order to connect with God deeply and personally and make music that has a profound impact on them. Composers might do so by drawing on their own experiences and emotions. Thomas Merton's counsel, "Let us strive to enter into the deep of our being and discover our inward sanctuary"⁴² is appropriate to Tope Alabi's composition: "*Nigbati mo ro o, ise iyanu Re l'aye mi, mo ri pe O ga Baba, Nigbati mo ro o, anu Re l'ori, mo ri pe E ga, mo ri pe E ga, mo ri pe E ga a pupo.* (When I ponder on your miraculous deeds and mercies in my life, I discovered that you are very great).⁴³

⁴⁰ Tozer, A.W. *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg: Christian Publications, 1948), 13.

⁴¹ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Edited by Hal M. Helms. 3rd Ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1

⁴² Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1961), 24

⁴³ Tope Alabi, "Igbati Mo Ro o" Track in *Angeli Mi Album* (Lagos: Naija Music 2007).

The essence of reflective song direction is to enable worshippers to worship God in Spirit and truth. It is one thing for one to worship in the outside, yet another to reflect on the object of worship and His works in history. According to J. I. Packer, "true worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable. But it requires a mind and heart that are turned towards God, and a spirit that is humble and obedient."⁴⁴ Corroborating this, Kempis states that "there are many who know a great deal about spiritual exercises and outward practices, but because they lack inward reflection and purity of heart, they fail to grasp the essence of true devotion."⁴⁵

Through reflective worship, the essence of true devotion is cultivated and grasped. God told Samuel that He looks into man's heart not the outside.⁴⁶ That is why "true worship is not an outward performance but an inward condition of the heart."⁴⁷ God was concerned about this when He indicted the Israelites for worshipping Him with only their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him.⁴⁸ Augustine of Hippo's counsel is relevant and can help worshippers cultivate and groom inner devotions and reflections in their worship be it corporate or private. "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for God with the outward things of this world, but let us turn our attention inward and find Him in the stillness of our hearts."⁴⁹ This fuels the quality of worship which transforms the worshippers.

⁴⁴ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, (Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 115

⁴⁵ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. Translated by William Benham. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

⁴⁶ Samuel 16:7

⁴⁷ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Anaheim, California: Living Stream Ministry, 1977), 50.

⁴⁸ Isaiah 29:13

⁴⁹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press, 1991).

Multiple Directions

This is a combination of directions of vertical up and vertical down directions, inward/reflective direction, and horizontal direction. These directions can apply to hymns, praise and worship songs. Directions help us to use these songs appropriately and to good effect. The theology of praise songs is in the church need to be compatible with the directions to enhance excellence in worship services. The congregation needs to be taught aspects of use of music in worship from time to time.

Regular Training of Music Team

The value of continuous training cannot be overemphasized hence, members of the music ministry need to be exposed to trainings, seminars and workshops in order to maximize their potentials leading to excellence in the discharge of their ministries. Choristers need to know what their voice ranges are; whether soprano, alto, tenor, or bass. Other areas of voice training are voice production, voice pathology etc. relatedly, instrumental training in keyboard, piano, organ, trumpet, saxophone, violin, drums etc. are important in building a strong music team in the church. Others areas of training are sol-fa notation, conducting, music theory, knowledge of hymns, good hymn singing and the like.

Competent Personnel for the Music Ministry of the Church

To have excellent music ministry, competent hands need to handle aspects of song and hymn conducting and leading. A competent trained team or music minister should be desired and required to lead the music ministry of the church in this regard.

Church Music and Church Growth

Church Growth is the record of the church's progress marked by physical, spiritual, and financial growth indices. It deals with the health of the church that manifests in individuals getting saved and becoming mature in Christ-like living through discipleship, fellowshiping with other believers, and bringing others to the saving knowledge of Christ thereby creating more avenues for believers to gather in clusters to fellowship, share, develop ministry and reach out further in missions and evangelism.

Music is a vehicle that helps convey the various aspects of church life. All through history, music has had tremendous effects on worship life. Martin Luther, the reformist was said to have used music for liturgical, theological and pedagogical purposes.⁵⁰ Some preachers and evangelists have combined word ministrations with music to bring about remarkable results. Among them are Moody who combined well with Sankey. Preacher Billy Graham and singer Cliff Barrows. Recent collaborations include Reinhard Bonnke and the elaborate use of music at crusades. Daniel Kolenda and the use of the worship team, Enoch Adeboye and the use of mass choir, Chris Oyahakilome and the sponsorship of musicians who now constitute major influence in gospel music in Nigeria and the world and Daniel Olukoya who sponsors one of the largest choir and orchestra in Nigeria.

Church music can bring about church growth through enlisting new members into the music ministry. Engaging and uplifting music can attract new members to a church. Vibrant and well-executed musical performances can serve as an invitation for people to visit the church and experience the welcoming community firsthand. Additionally, music can be a powerful

⁵⁰Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing Company, 1993), 188-189.

tool for evangelism, as it can convey the message of faith and inspire individuals to explore their spirituality. Numerical and spiritual growth can take place as people are saved, discover their gifts, disciplined and enlisted into the choir as singers and instrumentalists. In addition, through worship service music can serve as an avenue of bringing people to making decisions to follow Jesus Christ. It should not be assumed that all who attend church services are born again. The church should leverage on the love for music by the youth especially to have excellent music and preach the gospel in word and songs then call for commitments.

Musical concerts should target young and old and should be explored for church growth as people are given the opportunity to make decisions in the course of such concerts. The church can prayerfully organize musical outreaches to neighborhood with the aim of preaching the gospel. Musical Mission Trip which involves taking a music team along with others for outreach and missionary endeavors can be intentionally organized and implemented with the sole aim of winning people for Christ and such endeavors can lead to church planting.

Conclusion

The music ministry has a great potential to impact church growth for good. Meaningful worship leading gives a taste of excellence to music ministry during services that bring people closer to God and advance their spiritual development. This entails not only picking the right music, but also directing congregational singing, interacting with the congregation, and fostering a respectful and welcoming environment. Worship is a very intimate and relational relationship with God rather than merely a ritual or performance. Church music can play a significant role in church growth by enhancing the overall worship experience and creating a sense of community among the congregation. While church music can be a powerful tool for

growth, it should always be approached with a spirit of truth, reverence, and sensitivity to the needs of the congregation.

From the foregoing, pastors heading churches need to be more interested in music ministry in the local church, continue to develop skills in it and do all it takes to support it in the so it can grow to the level of excellence. This also requires vision, planning and finance. In addition, well trained and called pastors (music ministers) should be assigned the role of music conductors and music administrators in the church as much as practicable. Such a person will coordinate the music of the church, denomination and Christian organizations in the area of technicality and spirituality for the purpose of maximizing the great potentials in the church. Church music ministry has the potential of impacting church growth as discussed in this paper. This requires support and cooperation from all. Its effect will be felt by worshippers when excellently carried out.

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