

Canadian Anglican Cursillo

MUSIC IN THE CURSILLO MOVEMENT



Purpose of Music

Music is mentioned frequently in the Bible, from the "Song of Miriam" in Genesis; through the Psalms, to the "Song of the re-deemer" in Revelation. Music has been called a window into the soul. It has the power to reach into places within us and draw out a response. It can be used to enhance a verbal message, and as a way to help the words of Scripture stay with us, because of the power of rhythm to aid memory. When people sing together it is a way of strengthening the bond of common purpose. Music can be used to set the atmosphere for a talk or discussion. It also has a purely "functional" purpose, such as helping to change the focus, provide a "bridge" between different sections of a meeting, or "gather" people together. All of these purposes of music apply to any music in the Church, not just to music in Cursillo. In fact, there is no such thing as "Cursillo music." Music is a ministry offered to God, not a personal performance.

Selection of Music

Selection of music is an awesome responsibility, because if it is done well, it can greatly enhance the verbal messages that are being presented; if done poorly, it can detract from the intent of a gathering.

Discernment is extremely important in selecting music. On Cursillo Weekends, the music should reflect on the theme, but even more

importantly, on the flow of the talks throughout the weekend. Have plans for what music you will use during different parts of the weekend, but be flexible and prepared to change those plans if your prayerful discernment shows that something else is called for. In Ultreyas, there should be a balance of music reflecting piety, study, and action themes, which will be discussed further below.

New songs should be made as easy as possible to learn. Don't introduce too many new songs at once. Play a new tune ahead of time. Have a strong song leader who clearly enunciates the words. The "step" method, using hand gestures to indicate when the melody goes up or down, is one way of teaching a new melody line.

Always remember that the music is not for the musicians. It's for the "congregation" -on weekends, the candidates; at Ultreyas, the whole community. So if something isn't reasonably "singable" - don't use it Don't choose rhythms that are too complex. Save those for choirs. Don't choose songs that are pitched too high for the majority of people to sing. Some good rules of thumb:

- The tune should be "good music" -not the same melody line over and over, but not too complex.
- The words should be Scripturally based or sound theology, neither trite nor sensational.
- Songs should be "singable" by the average person with a middle voice

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range, who does not have professional musical training.

"Balanced" Music

The Cursillo method includes the balance of piety, study and action. Similarly, music in Cursillo should also be balanced.

Strive for a balance of "old" and "new" music

Don't lose sight of the old hymns that have sound Biblical teaching and uplifting tunes.

Use some "contemporary" music, but don't use it exclusively. Remember that there is no such thing as "Cursillo music"—The music of Cursillo is the music of the Church (the suggestions here are applicable to parish music as well). Not all music used in Cursillo should lead to hand-holding, swaying, clapping, or other actions. In particular, be cautious not to use subtle pressure to almost "force" people into participating in actions that may make them uncomfortable, such as taking their hands without permission and raising them, or subtly implying that they are less "spiritual" if they don't raise their hands — be respectful of individual's choices. There are many styles of worship, all of them legitimate, and the Cursillo community should be able to embrace them all at different times.

Select music that reinforces the balanced method of piety, study, and action.

Specific music can be selected to emphasize each of these areas. Imbalance in any one leaves a void.

Piety

There is a wide selection of music available which relates to piety. This kind of music creates a response of adoration of God, or creates an atmosphere to go inward to a quiet place inside yourself and be reflective or meditative, or invites confession to God. Always remember that the purpose of such music is not

just to create an emotional "feeling" of being spiritual - that is quite different from actually "being" spiritual. Therefore, avoid overuse of songs that repeat the same phrase endlessly, or repeating the same song many times. Such uses tend generally to create a "spiritual high" that mesmerizes more than it opens us to God. There are far more possibilities than can possibly be explored here, so for the sake of illustration, only one song that could be used to achieve each of these purposes of piety is included:

To lead in adoration of God: *Father, We Adore You*

To invite reflection: *Be Still*
To lead to an openness to confession: *Create in Me a Clean Heart*
To praise God: *Majesty*

Study

When looking for music that reinforces the Cursillo method of study, in particular look for lyrics that SAY something. This might include songs whose words are taken directly from Scripture. Because music has "penetration ability," singing words from Scripture is an easy way to commit them to memory, because the rhythm of the music makes it easier to learn. It's a good idea to include the Biblical reference when using such music, so people will know it comes from Scripture. Look for songs with words that are theologically sound. There are good and bad examples of this in both old and new music! Sometimes putting new words to an old familiar tune in the Public Domain, or an alternate tune from the hymn book helps people to focus on the words, which they might otherwise almost sing by rote because they have become so familiar. An example is a lovely musical setting to the Collect for Purity, *Almighty God*, which gives new meaning to words that we say every Sunday.

Action

It is somewhat harder to find songs that exhort us to act on our faith, and live the fourth day, but with

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a little effort, we can find them. These include songs that encourage us to support one another, and songs with a "mission" flavour. Songs that encourage Christian community include examples such as *The Servant Song*, *Life 'is a Journey*, and *For I'm Building a People of Power*. Songs which exhort us to follow the Great Commission, and share the message of Christ with our world include, for example, *Go, Sent Forth by God's Blessing*, and *Will You Come and Follow Me*

Consider Balance in Technical aspects of the music

Musicians should always remember that they are not "performing" - they are "leading" the group in song. Instruments should not be so loud that they overwhelm the voices. Consider a balance of loud and soft songs and parts of songs. Lead in a way that encourages the singers to think about the meaning of the words, simply by the volume and tempo by which you lead. Some songs are most effective with many instruments and loud voices, while others are most meaningful sung very softly, or even a cappella.

Don't overuse "De Colores."

De Colores is simply a Spanish folk-song. It has become a "musical mascot" of Cursillo, and can be overdone!

Music on Weekends

When selecting music for Cursillo Weekends, all of the selection principles above apply. In particular on weekends, the flow and progression of the weekend should be considered, and the music should relate to the focus of the talks throughout the weekend. It is wise to be prepared, with a plan of music for the entire weekend, but also be prepared to be flexible!

Thursday evening music should be low-key. Candidates are unfamiliar with the setting, each other, and likely somewhat nervous. Stick to familiar songs, including some traditional hymns, to create a comfort level and help people relax.

Friday's theme is what is fundamental for being a Christian, emphasizing the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. Music on Friday should still be low-key, largely reflective, presenting Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Saturday's theme is about how to live a life of grace. The musical focus here should invite a personal response and involve the individual. Songs that relate to piety and study would predominate. By the end of Saturday the talks focus on action and leadership, so more upbeat music with those themes can be introduced.

On Sunday, the theme is how to structure Christian life and be an apostle. There is also an emphasis on living and working in community with other Christians. The focus is action, and the Church on the move to change the world for Christ. Music on Sunday needs to reinforce this message.

Music at Ultreyas

Again, the general principles for selection apply. A balance of music related to piety, study and action would be a good approach for Ultreyas. Opening music might be largely related to piety, perhaps starting with rousing praise, and leading into adoration and focus on Jesus. Music prior to the Witness Talk should be action focused. While music is important at Ultreyas, the music should not "take over" or be the predominant feature.

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Organizational

Issues Secretariat

Someone on Secretariat should have accountability for music in the Cursillo Movement. This responsibility includes keeping songbooks updated, and ensuring that copyright laws are obeyed. Those who write music rely on the royalties as their livelihood. Using either tunes or lyrics without permission is a form of theft. The Cursillo Movement should have its own copyright license, not simply use a license that belongs to one of the parishes, there are two major sources of copyright licenses, which between them cover a wide variety of music and allow copies in local songbooks and overhead transparencies. The Movement must have in possession at least one copy of the original published work in a book, for copying to be legal. The two most common licenses are:

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI)

17201NE Sacramento Portland, Oregon
97230
1-800-234-2446 (503)257-2230
www.ccli.com

LicenSing

Wood Lake Books Inc. 9025 Jim Bailey
Road, Kelowna, BC V4V1R2
(250)766-2778 Fax (250) 766-2736
info@woodlatce.com

When designing songbooks, consider a format that allows easy addition and subtraction of songs. If using overheads, make sure they are big enough to read, include composer and publisher credits.

Ultreya

There should be someone responsible for overseeing music at Ultreyas. This might include actually leading the music, or ensuring that there is a music leader at each Ultreya, planning the focus of music with them, and ensuring that the leadership is effective. It might also include having songbooks or transparencies physically available and set up at the Ultreya site. Collaborative effort between Ultreya Leader and musician is most effective.

Weekends

One person should have overall accountability for music to the Weekend Lay Leader. Again, a collaborative effort between music leader, lay director and clergy makes for the best selection of music.

Further References

National Episcopal Library: Music and Cursillo