

Production Team

Audio Artistry

v1.1 October 2019

audio production principles

- **You are a professional distraction killer.** The way you mix, communicate, curate, cross-fade, transition, and facilitate queues matters. When nobody notices anything, that's a win!
- **The message is the most important element.** Curating each event's plan, playlist, creative elements, and teaching content is intentional. Every element is thoughtfully planned and carries a message by design. Hearing that message is mission critical.
- **The lead vocalist carries the message.** Failing to clearly identify the leader's lyrics or melody if failing to hear the message.
- **Not hearing every instrument or every vocalist is normal.** Everyone has an important role to play, and that role may be, at times, a background role. Everyone on the worship team is a worship leader. Leading may happen without being seen or without being heard, but you want to notice if they aren't in the mix. A good balance is everything.
- **Prioritize excellence.** Only Jesus reached perfection. In everything we do, our aim is excellence. Focus on what you know; if you don't know how to use it, don't use it. Treat rehearsals like the real thing. Experimentation is highly supported, however, a live event is not the appropriate moment.
- **Consistency matters.** Eliminate week-to-week distractions by following these principles. For those with a trained or discerning ear or who are production value observant, even the most subtle differences between events will be noticed. Focus on the principles. Learn from one another. Pay attention at each event how your mix style can align while.

vocal artists

vocal parts

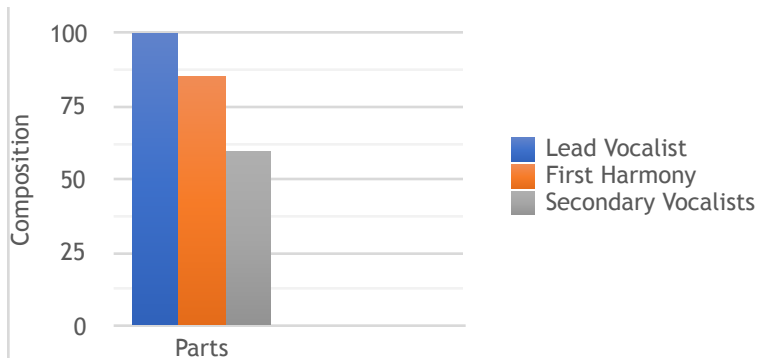
1. **Lead vocalist:** whomever is leading during a song. This could be more than one vocalist, i.e. *Raise a Hallelujah*
2. **First harmony:** whomever is carrying the lead harmony
3. **Secondary vocalists:** additional vocalists singing melody or additional harmony parts

mixing vocals

Fundamentally, the most important vocal mixing factor is ensuring the message can be heard. Your job as a production artist is to both eliminate distractions and ensure each song's lead vocalist is discernible. The audience needs to both clearly decipher the lyrics *and* the melody so that they can sing along. Without that discernment, the message is lost.

From a hearing perspective, the *lead vocalist* should ALWAYS be the most discernible voice. The *first harmony* part should be the second discernible voice, but should not

overpower the *lead vocalist*. *Secondary vocalists* form a melodic and harmonic foundation beneath the *lead vocalist* and *first harmony* parts.



producing a song

To effectively produce an individual song, write down which vocalist will play which part during each song. The queue sheets normally call rolls out. For clarity, ask the principle worship leader before or during rehearsal.

⇒ **advanced skill:** record snippets for each song to recall vocalist faders and effects

thoughtful effects

Effects enrich the production value and often complement a song or lyric intent. Common effects used at 2Rivers include reverb and delay. Be mindful using effects - they are easily overused and distraction inducing. Consider these guidelines:

Vocal Part

Effect

Lead Vocalist

Reverb - subtle for warmth and space filling as needed. Avoid distraction inducing or overpowering such that lyrical clarity becomes distorted. Helpful for slower songs. Not much needed because of our space.

Delay - as fits the song. Decay speed must be compatible with song time signature and desired effect.

⇒ **advanced skill:** use triplets for 6/8 time signatures and dotted 1/8 notes for 4/4 time

First Harmony

Reverb - as needed, compatible with lead vocalist.

Delay - as needed, compatible with lead vocalist.

Secondary Vocalists

Reverb - recommended to facilitate secondary vocalist blending.

Delay - none recommended

instrumental artists

instrument parts

Continuing the consistency theme, our instrumentation mix philosophy is that percussion and bass guitar carry songs. They bring both rhythm and energy. Therefore, when mixing, these instruments lead audible clarity.

When not present during a song or song section, the lead and secondary instruments carry the song. At times, these instruments will intentionally be used as subtle foundations rather than carry the momentum. Listen to the recordings to recognize these moments; pay attention to the message and atmosphere a song creates, both clues towards an ideal mix.

1. **Percussion:** generally, the drum kit. During acoustic moments could be other instrumentation. On rare occasions percussion elements are driven by tracks.
2. **Bass:** bass guitar.
3. **Lead instrument:** typically, this is the instrument carrying the melody. This could be more than one instrument, i.e. *example here*, wherein the keyboard carries the melody during some parts and the lead electric guitar during others.
4. **Secondary instruments:** one or more instruments that add *significant* dimensions to a song. Examples include: tracks, acoustic guitar strumming patterns, keyboard pads or melodic complements, rhythm guitar, brass or stringed instruments adding melodic complements. If you're unsure about secondary instruments ask the band leader.
5. **Additional instruments:** all other instruments

mixing the band

Fundamentally, the most important band mixing factor is ensuring the vocal message can be heard *through* your mix. Not necessarily *over* your mix, as the sonic space instruments occupy should differ from the vocals.

Your job as a production artist is consistently to eliminate distractions and ensure each song's lead vocalist is discernible. In band mixing, the audience should feel the song's energy. Typically, songs in major keys that create an energetic atmosphere are driven by percussion and bass. For those in minor keys, or those that create a more serious or contemplative atmosphere, other instruments may drive the energy.

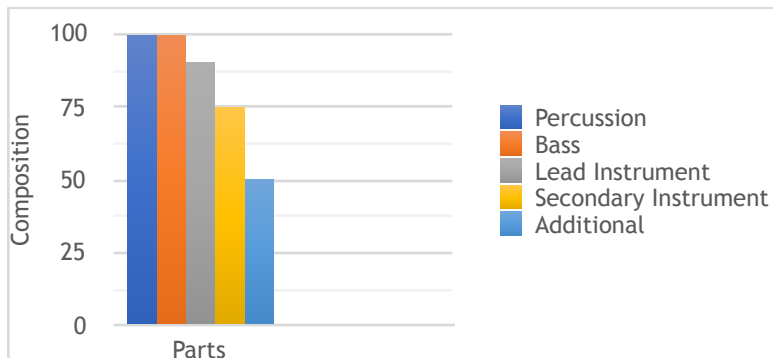
After capitalizing on the energy driver, focus on the lead instrument. Ensure the melody line is discernible. Note, however, the melody instrument need not equal or overpower the vocal melody. Think of the lead instrument as a complement to the vocal melody, when vocals are present. In the absence of vocals, ensure the lead instrument is clearly audible.

Secondary instruments should also be discernible, but to a lesser extent than that of the lead instrument, energy drivers, and lead vocalists. Not every audience member will clearly recognize secondary instruments throughout an entire song. And that's perfectly acceptable.

☑ **example:** keyboard use

At times, the keys will carry a pad or melodic device that carry reflective or transitional song portions. Mix the keys so that they are clearly discernible during these portions. They need not be discernible at the same level during the song remainder where other instruments lead the energy and melody.

Additional instruments are foundational. Remember, everyone on the worship team is a worship leader. Leading may happen without being seen or without being heard. "Less is more" is a band philosophy. At times, additional instruments may not even play during some song portions! That is both normal and expected.



rehearsal preparation

To effectively produce an individual song, here are recommended tips:

1. Listen to the original recording, noting the following:
 - a. Song flow, dynamics, energy, and atmosphere
 - b. Which instruments carry the energy
 - c. Lead instruments
 - d. Secondary instruments
 - e. Lead vocalist parts
 - f. First harmony parts
 - g. Any vocal effects significant to the song's production value
2. Check the Planning Center notes
 - a. Study the band and vocal team
 - b. Review theme and atmosphere notes
 - c. Review service flow
 - d. Review individual song notes. Look for:
 - i. Lead vocalist

- ii. First harmony
- iii. Lead instrument
- iv. Track queues
- v. Pads needed

3. Clarify anything required by reaching out to the primary worship leader