

## Guidelines/Rules for composing theme song

- Know the subject you're writing about. If songs are not meaningful to you, probably they will not be meaningful to others. Your lack of knowledge on your subject will show.
- Expand your vocabulary. Don't be happy with the first phrase that comes; probably there are bigger words. Live "in" the subject matter.
- Pray about it. Meditate on it. Your inner voice in silence is the best tool you have.
- You need to be vulnerable. Don't play it safe. Your songs will be shallow and boring.
- Song-writing is hard work and requires practice, study, diligence and commitment.
- Write something daily.

The most important aspect of a song is "**sing-ability**"

- Do the stressed syllables of the lyrics match the stressed beats of the music?
- Are the words you want emphasized sung with longer notes?
- Does it have a smooth melody?
- Are the intervals easy to sing? (Usually 2nds, 3rds, 4ths, 5ths and octaves are easiest.)
- Is the melody supported by the chord progression?
- Does the melody fall within the sing-able range of the majority? (Usually, not much lower than an A; not much higher than a D.)
- Is it too wordy? Too many words make it difficult to focus on the subject matter.

Some tips

- **One Theme:** stay focused on the "seed thought".
- **Repetition:** This makes the song easier for the congregation to retain and memorize.
- **Imagery:** Does it capture an image? Does it paint a picture of how you see the theme?
- **Consistent within itself:** Is the melody "saying" the same thing as the lyrics?
- **Is it "catchy"?** Is there a creative chord progression? Is there an interesting rhyming scheme? Is there a creative melody? Is there alliteration?
- **Does it use the language of the assembly?** If aimed at youth, does it "groove"?
- **Can it be sung by everyone?**
- **Is it simple?** A common mistake is to say too much. The simplest songs are the most powerful.
- If you're not happy with it, don't add... remove something.
- Ask people to listen to your song. Don't be afraid to refine it.

## STEP BY STEP IN CREATING A SONG

### Intro

No magic formula – no right or wrong.

But, honest + from the heart

Do you write lyrics or music first? Write them together?

### Step 1

Does one need to know music theory and Harmony? Not necessary.

Play some chord progressions and sing with it. See it leads you to the next chord you want or see that the next chord harmonises with the melody.

Experiment with chords and melody line.

If you're stuck, start with a song you like, change the melody using same chords and substitute some chords. (Don't recreate the same song).

Try playing some of the chords for half a bar instead for a full bar.

Try changing tempo.

Try singing the melody by inventing some words, even meaningless words.

## **Step 2**

Think about different sections of the song: verse(s), chorus, bridge.

*Verse:* try giving the meaning of the theme from the beginning. Verses should be quieter than the chorus.

*Chorus:* This should contain a catchier melody. You may build on the same chord progression of the verse. Otherwise change the chords completely.

*Bridge:* You can create a pre-chorus. Normally it is a transitional phase.

## **Step 3**

Start thinking about the theme! Choose the theme. Understand it. Don't try to finish it in one day.

Keep a diary or a note book and write what comes to your mind. Carry it with you.

Try to understand it in your everyday life. Ask others to talk about it.

## **Step 4**

The hardest part is in writing the lyrics. Here are some few tips.

Fit your words to the melody. Try keeping the number of syllables and phrases in each verse for consistency. Avoid accenting words on the wrong syllable.

Use a thesaurus for variations of words. Play over and over the melody – try singing it.

If you're happy with some lyrics that may not match the melody, try a modified melody. You may come up with a better melody. The melody serves the message you want to convey.

Rhyming is everything. Maybe not! Some songs do not rhyme at all but most do. Think where the melody needs rhyming (AABB, ABAB, ABCB, etc). Think of half rhymes – they're just fine in singing.

Don't write like you talk. Use colourful words. Use metaphors.

The Chorus should be the most memorable part of the song. Use less words or repeated words.

It's advisable to keep the same words to the chorus if you want people to sing with you.

The chorus should sum up the theme of the song.

Leave some mystery: leave a little bit to interpretation for the listener. Make clear what you're talking about but let the listener fill some blanks.

## **Step 5**

When song is ready and you're happy go to details. That's the arrangement.

Decide the order you give the sections and how many times they will repeat. (Ex. Intro – verse 1 – chorus – verse 2 – chorus – bridge – solo – chorus – chorus).

Think of the filling transitions between sections (chords, drum fill, short lead, silence).

Build on from one verse to the other. Create a climax on the chorus. Give the bridge a higher energy or the opposite.

Remember the arrangement is as important as the lyrics and melody.

Think of vocal and instrumental parts. Choose the best instrument for it.

See how you want the final product to sound: rockish, acoustic, etc.

## **Conclusion**

When a song is truly complete, you'll probably have a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. Your first song may not end up sounding like a work of genius when it is finished, but there is nothing wrong with that. Writing songs is just like playing an instrument—you get better with practice. You should write at least a little bit every single day. You won't always be inspired, and you won't always come up with a catchy tune. Some days you'll be downright frustrated. But even your favourite songwriters don't write instant classics every day. Everyone has to throw away a pile of mediocre songs before they get to a great one. Keep listening to new music for inspiration; keep writing, and good luck!