

W o r s h i p M u s i c M i n i s t r y

T R A I N I N G C O U R S E

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Running a Sound Check

General points

- ◇ Just like a rehearsal can be very efficient or very inefficient based upon the way it is lead, so also a sound check can be very efficient or very inefficient.
- ◇ The worship leader needs to be able to run a sound check in order to use the time efficiently.
- ◇ Sometimes you may have a sound person that you really trust who can guide the group through portions of the sound check, but often the sound person will not be able to efficiently lead the group.
- ◇ The following points assume that the worship leader is guiding the whole sound check.
- ◇ Many of the same principles from running a rehearsal will apply in a sound check. Basically, be a strong, clear leader.

- ◇ Arrive early if possible.
- ◇ If the system is being set up right before the service, keep tabs on it's progress so you know when you can begin sound checking things.
- ◇ Not everything has to be completely set up in order to start sound checking.
 - ◇ As soon as the mains are set up, ask the sound man to put a CD through them to make sure they are working properly.
 - ◇ As soon as the floor monitors are set up, ask the sound person to put one signal source through them so you can make sure they work properly.
 - ◇ As soon as the headphone system is set up (if you're using one), test it to make sure it's working.
 - ◇ If various mics or instruments are set up ahead of the rest, you can test them.
 - ◇ Advantage:
 - ◇ If there is a problem they can begin solving it right then instead of waiting until the very end.
 - ◇ They can adjust the EQ or other settings to make sure they sound good while other things are still being set up.
- ◇ Once everything is set up, you can gather all your musicians to their places and gain their attention.
- ◇ If you have a very competent sound person that you trust, you could have them adjust the monitors for you using headphones.
 - ◇ Instead, the following examples assume that the musicians on stage are asking the sound person what they need to hear.
 - ◇ In general, I think it works better to have the musicians set their own mix, because the sound that they hear on stage is often different than what a sound person would hear in earphones, because they are not hearing all the ambient sound from things like main speakers, acoustic drum sound, and amps.
 - ◇ Also, it gives musicians a chance to develop their own ability to hear and create a good monitor mix.
 - ◇ This is a very valuable skill to have when they are in places that do not have an experienced sound person.
- ◇ It is helpful to have just one person on stage addressing the sound person.
 - ◇ The worship leader should generally be this voice expressing sound needs.

- ◇ I will often just make decisions about what I think needs to change without even asking the musicians; especially if it is an 'in-ear' system and I can hear in my headphones exactly what they are hearing.
- ◇ But after the initial changes are made, I will always ask if it sounds OK to them.
- ◇ If there are inexperienced people on stage who may not know what a good monitor mix sounds like, I will often walk over in front of their monitors with them and make suggestions about what might need to change.
 - ◇ This is especially helpful for vocalists
 - ◇ It teaches them how to create a good mix for themselves.
- ◇ In many of the following steps, you will be playing music to test the sound.
 - ◇ Pick a short section of music that can be easily repeated as needed, and easily stopped and started.
 - ◇ Only play the music as long as is needed to set the level or to figure out what you need. Then stop and communicate that to the sound person and move on to the next need.
 - ◇ If possible, use hand signals (as detailed in the 'Using a Sound System' teaching) to communicate your needs. This allows you to not have to start and stop the music between communications and lets you go much faster.
- ◇ During each step, make sure the only people making noise are those who are sound checking. No 'noodling' :)

Using a floor monitor system

- ◇ Testing the leaders vocal mic and the lead rhythm instruments:
 - ◇ Have the lead vocalist sing and the backing rhythm instrument(s) play one at a time so the sound person can set their input gain.
 - ◇ Balance the lead vocalist's mic (probably yours) and the lead rhythm instruments (probably keys, acoustic guitar, &/or accordion :)
- ◇ Set this 'leader' mix the same for all the monitor mixes. In the following steps, adjust the other voices or instruments against this basic starting mix.
- ◇ Testing the vocalist's mics:
 - ◇ Have each vocalist sing a sample one at a time while the sound person sets their input gain. I will generally sing and play something simple for them to sing with.
 - ◇ Then have each person say 'hello' one after the other in order to tell if the levels in the monitors are balanced.
 - ◇ If some people are too loud or soft, ask for those adjustments to be made.
 - ◇ During this stage of sound checking, the worship leader can be the only one addressing the sound person.
 - ◇ Then you can sing a song with just keys or guitar and vocals.
 - ◇ Just sing about one verse or chorus and then stop.
 - ◇ Ask the singers if there are any major changes that need to be made.
 - ◇ Ask the sound person to make those changes.
 - ◇ Tell the singers that you're going to sing the song again and this time they can make any needed changes by using hand signals to the sound person.
 - ◇ Duplicate these relative backing vocal levels in the other monitor mixes, at about half the volume.
 - ◇ In this way, the other monitor mixes will have a balance vocal sound, but they will be much less prominent in comparison to their instruments.
 - ◇ It is possible that the other mixes may not want ANY backing vocals in their mix. They may be able to hear the vocals enough just from the ambient sound coming from the mains and the vocal monitors.
- ◇ Testing the drums & bass guitar: