



On The Anvil

The Worship Foundry Newsletter



MARCH 2009 – IN THIS EDITION:

Inside The Foundry – an overview of the activities that make up The Worship Foundry

In The Studio – this month we learned that we learn as we go along...

NeoPsalmist – a progress update for worship software currently in development

Shiver Me Timbers – a reminder that music piracy is not okay

Now Playing – recommended worship albums to add to your collection

Inside The Foundry

What makes The Worship Foundry what it is? After a quick explanation in the last newsletter, I thought I'd expand a bit on exactly what activities are involved in the project, either currently happening or planned. This is an extract from the document I shared with the staff team at our planning meeting held last year.

TRAINING

Equipping Events: Seminars and workshops will be run to provide training in both the practical and theological elements of worship. Certain workshops may focus on a specific instrument or musical style, but the events will be open to anyone interested. The training input will come from a variety of sources – 'in-house' speakers, visiting speakers, theologians, musicians, DVD screenings, etc.



Musician Partnerships: The Worship Foundry will encourage more experienced musicians to meet at an agreed interval with another musician for prayer, encouragement, support, accountability, and sharing. The partnership could take many forms, depending on the time available and the particular individuals involved.

SONGWRITING

Songwriter's Forum: This will be a regular meeting where song ideas in various stages of completion can be played, and insights or advice given to the songwriter(s). The forum will essentially try to provide a supportive and safe environment where songwriters can share their work, pray for each other, and be inspired to write new material.



New Song Evenings: Songs coming out of the forum which have real potential for congregational worship will be played and taught at periodic New Song Evenings. If possible, the evenings will be recorded and a CD with the rough live recordings and chords for songs will be made available.

RECORDING

Producing: The Worship Foundry will identify selected songs for recording, and guide the song writer(s) through the pre-production (musical arrangement) and recording process. This service will be based on the availability and discretion of the individuals whose time is required.

Engineering and Mixing: Selected songs will be recorded using portable home studio equipment. This can be done on location, wherever the instrument-



ation is available and the noise levels are low. The recordings will then be mixed at a later date, with the opportunity for the song writer(s) to make suggestions and changes before the final copy of the song is created.

Publishing: While The Worship Foundry is not a record label at this stage, it will seek to assist song writers in promoting and distributing their completed work via CD, the Internet, or other means. In most cases this will be optional and involve a cost that is carried by the song writer and determined by the preferred method of distribution (e.g. printing of discs and covers, etc.)

SOFTWARE

Development: work is currently underway for a software application called "NeoPsalmist" that will be used to learn songs, prepare song lists, and plan events. Useful features will include transposing song chord charts to new keys, chord diagrams displayed for both piano and guitar, sorting and searching for songs by specific criteria, and the ability to group songs into different repertoires. For more information see the article 'NeoPsalmist' below.



Distribution: After a testing period, NeoPsalmist may be released as a free resource to any church or individual who wishes to use it. The Worship Foundry would seek to promote the software and make it available on CD, flash disk, Internet download, or whatever is possible. While the software is free, most music used in churches today is copyrighted. Permission would be given to freely distribute the software in unmodified form, but permission can NOT be given to use the software to infringe copyright (e.g.



distributing copyrighted material together with the software)

Updates: With the permission of the song writer(s), the Worship Foundry will release periodic updates that add new songs to the database. Online or email update files will include the lyrics and chords for songs, and possibly pdf versions of sheet music. Updates via a CD or flash disk will allow for larger files (e.g. audio files) to be included in the updates.

COMMUNICATION

Newsletter: You're reading it! A pdf newsletter containing upcoming events, interviews, articles, etc. will be sent out via email at periodic intervals. Events will be promoted, song writers interviewed, worship topics discussed, etc.

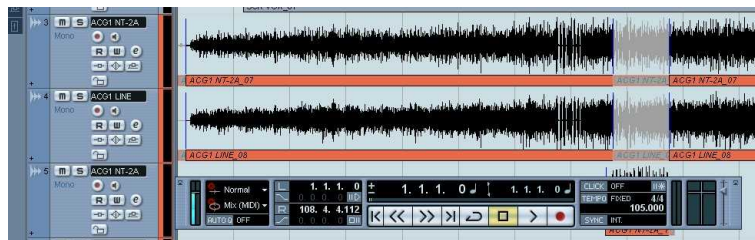
Web Page: A site has been created that allows online visitors to access information about The Worship Foundry and various resources related to the initiative. It would make sense to have downloads related to the NeoPsalmist software at this location as well, but limitations in bandwidth need to be considered, depending on the popularity and size of the software.

Some of the above activity has already begun, other activities have not yet launched. But those are the core worship activities that I am passionate about in terms of The Worship Foundry. It would be silly to think I can do all of them alone and using only the one day a week that I can give. But God will provide the time, resources, and help that are needed to fulfill his plans for initiative. It's an exciting project to be working on, and I'm encouraged by the supportive responses I've had so far. That web address again:

www.christ-church.org.za/worship-foundry

In The Studio

Last month I introduced Jono Moore's two new songs, and described the recording process we were going to follow. This turned out to be a lot more difficult than expected, as it was quite problematic to get the drums, guitar, and tempo track all synchronized.



After several brave rough attempts by Timmy Price, we got together for a fresh drum production meeting at his place in Kirstenhof and decided that we would start with drums and then add guitars and other instruments. We tightened up on some of the details that weren't clear, and Timmy spent a few more hours over the next few days tracking the drum parts.

These have been now been recorded and are awaiting collection. Once they are transferred onto my studio computer, the bass guitar parts will be added, and then Jono will be back in the studio to play the final acoustic guitar tracks over the drums and bass. This should result in a better track that holds together more tightly than one recorded using our original approach.

NeoPsalmist

At present I've almost completed the **Song Editor** window, which allows users to create and edit individual song items stored in the database. The window groups some editing fields on the left side and a preview area on the right that allows the user to see the basic outline of the song.

Here's a quick rundown of the features of the Song Editor, divided into four tab pages:

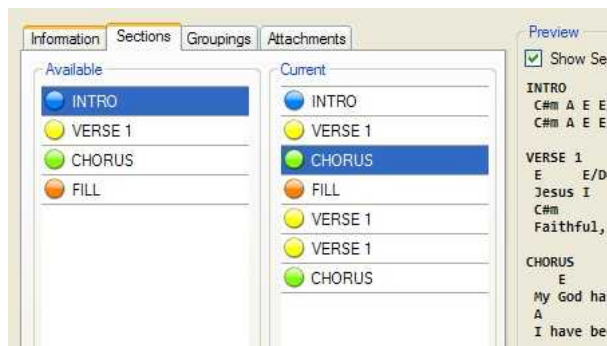
The **Information** tab page provides a place to enter basic information about the song.



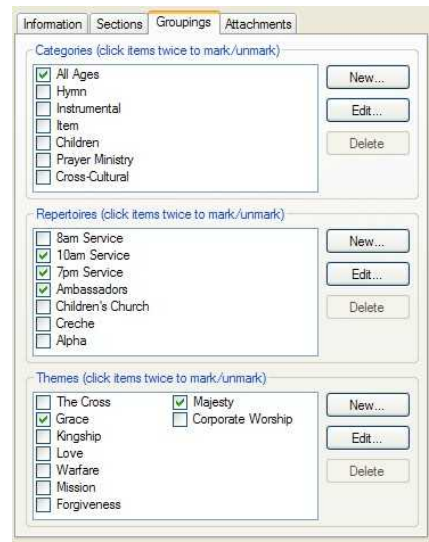
This is the information that is used to sort the songs by key signature, tempo, time signature, language, etc. There is a spot for the user to make their own notes about the song, e.g. scripture references, arrangement notes, etc.

The **Sections** tab page is where the user creates the individual sections of each song. Sections can be thought of as the building blocks NeoPsalmist uses to put together a song. Each

song is made up of one or more sections (e.g. introduction, verse, chorus, fill, etc.), which can be rearranged at a later time without having to create a whole new song for that particular arrangement.

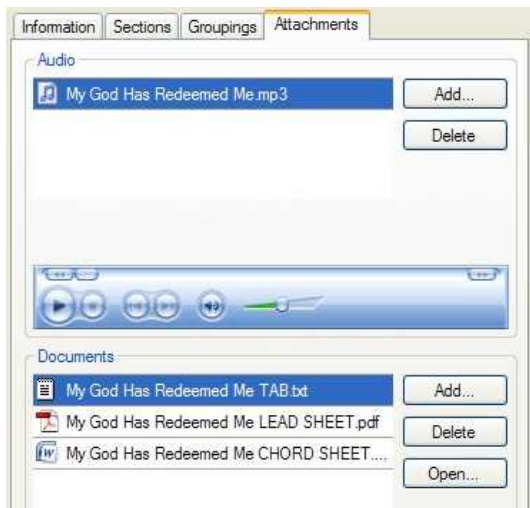


The **Groupings** tab page gives the user the option of tagging the song according to its *Category* (e.g. hymn, children's song, performed item, etc.), its *Repertoire* (the meeting, group, or context in which it is played), and its *Themes* (the general topics the song lyrics refer to). These are customizable and new groupings can be added to each. The groupings feature will allow users to filter songs when browsing them, to see, for example, only songs that are children's songs, sung at the 10am service with the theme of the cross. Useful when preparing for a meeting where there is a



specific theme or focus.

Lastly, the **Attachments** tab page allows the user to attach files to individual songs, much like one would do with an email. These attachments can be any file, but the feature is divided into Audio files, and Document files. The Audio file attachment feature would be useful when the user has a digital copy of the song and wants to associate that with the database entry. The Documents attachment feature allows for chord sheets, lead sheets, hymn sheets, guitar tab files, and scanned music pages to be associated with songs.



The attachment feature assumes that the user will respect the copyright laws covering published digital audio and documents. If I become aware of ongoing abuse of this feature to infringe copyright, I may be forced to remove it in future versions. This would be a pity, as being able to send worship musicians home-recorded acoustic versions of songs (as permitted by a CCLI license) is a great way to help them learn songs.

In the next few weeks I hope to get started on the **Event Editor**, the window that allows users to plan meetings that involve worship music.

Now Playing



Hello Love – Chris Tomlin

A friend of mine loves this album title, especially when saying it without the 'H' in a working-class British accent. It's become something of a greeting that leaves people looking strangely at us.

Chris Tomlin has brought us several wonderful congregational worship songs, such as 'Your

Grace Is Enough', 'How Great Is Our God', and 'Holy Is The Lord'.

When reading the song credits of Chris' last few albums, it is interesting to note the number of songs that are written either collaboratively, or even completely by other artists. 'God Of This City' and 'Indescribable' are two examples. It is encouraging to see Chris working with other artists in crafting and publishing songs.

The album opens with a lively track called 'Sing, Sing, Sing' which encourages the listener to do just that. I've heard it played on a live album and the studio version on this CD doesn't bring quite as much energy to the ear. The song is uncomplicated, and a great praise track that calls worshipers to get involved and declare God's authority, love, and ultimate reign.

The second track, 'Jesus Messiah' gives an excellent summary of our belief in Christ and his sacrifice. The chorus hones in on some of the ways we express the identity of Jesus:

*Jesus, Messiah, Name above all names,
Blessed Redeemer, Emmanuel
The rescue for sinners, the ransom from heaven,
Jesus, Messiah, Lord of all*

Track 3, 'You Lifted Me Out', is one of the most driving songs on the album and uses a melody line (to the word 'woah') sung in between the sections of the song. This technique works really well in a live setting where participation is the main aim.

'God Of This City' is the fourth song on the CD, and has been played extensively by churches in our context here in Cape Town. The song is a faith cry to see God move in the city in which you live. The chorus sums it up in a prophetic phrase:

*Greater things have yet to come
and greater things are still to be done in this city*

Track 6 is called 'Love' and is dedicated to describing what God's love is and does. In this world that so often offers a superficial and short-lived kind of love, Chris has written a song that boldly describes what love really is. The addition of the Watoto Children's Choir singing in their native language brings a special element to the song. This track is also the song in which the title of the album is sung.

'Praise The Father, Praise The Son' is listed seventh on the album, and changes time signature from the usual 4/4 to 6/8, giving it an slightly different feel, similar to a hymn like 'Come Thou Fount Of Ev'ry Blessing'. The melody and rhythm are easy to pick up, are fairly consistent between the verses, and the lyrics emphasis the Trinitarian aspect of God. I would place this song in the same group as some of Stuart Townend and Keith Getty's works in recent years – easily adaptable to almost any music setting, choral, orchestral, band, or other.

My favorite track on the album (I don't even want to admit what the play count for this one on my iPod is) is undoubtedly the ninth song, 'My Deliverer'. I can't say that this is the strongest song of the album lyrically, but the two part chorus harmony is one of the most beautiful I've heard in a long time, and the gentle but powerful instrument arrangement is a pleasure to listen to. This song is the kind of thing you'll want to sing when facing an ongoing difficulty or struggle in your life. It encourages us to wait for God to move and remember that he is our Rock.

Shiver Me Timbers



If you don't usually do so, I want to urge you to ensure that you buy the music which you listen to. That might sound like a strange thing to say, but many Bible-believing, Christ-loving, church-going Christians illegally copy or download worship music on a regular basis. Broad-

band Internet access and file-sharing networks make this as easy as knowing what software to install and clicking a mouse. But it's wrong, and no amount of clever argument will convince me that God approves of piracy.

Whether you agree with the practices of organizations who prosecute piracy offenders or not, piracy is wrong. Whether you think CD prices are set too high by greedy corporations or not, piracy is wrong. Whether you think people should be allowed to listen to an album before buying it or not, piracy is wrong. Whether you agree with the ethics of generating financial profit from worship music or not, piracy is wrong. Whether you think that you're too small an offender to ever be seriously prosecuted or not, piracy is wrong.

So what do you do? I suggest that you do what I did a long time ago: make a cup of coffee, get in front of your PC, spend a few moments asking God to forgive and strengthen you, and then ruthlessly delete any music file that you do not legally own. Throw out any discs you have that are copies of CDs you don't legally own. And vow that you will start investing in a music collection inasmuch as you can afford it.

ONE LAST THING...



This month has seen several delays, and has made me realize just how quickly four weeks can go by! Even though I am only able to give one day a week to this project, I haven't felt that this month was as productive as it could have been, for various reasons. But that motivates me to work a little harder in March.

I had a great conversation with a friend recently about looking at modern worship songs from the perspective of new Christians who do not have the Bible knowledge

to understand all the terminology used, or do not relate to language that is considered archaic. His challenge was for those of us who write songs to try to "express old truths in fresh words" as Matt Redman puts it. Perhaps there's an article in that for our April edition.

Tim