

# Counsel for Christadelphian Composers



1. Be sure to understand the purpose and expectations of spiritual music. **A study of Biblical music should come before any writing of music.**
2. Be sure to be well-grounded in the scriptures, particularly the theme or passage you wish to set to music. **Become an 'expert' before composing.**
3. Make sure you're familiar with the traditional Christadelphian understanding of any **doctrines** that you might be including in your music. This is particularly pertinent to themes such as the **atonement** (anything to do with Christ's sacrifice or redeeming work), the nature and working of the **Holy Spirit**, God's **love**, **forgiveness** and **grace**, etc., where subtleties may need further review.
4. Make sure that your compositions aren't influenced by an intake of spiritually inappropriate/unhelpful music. Ie, **don't try to replicate popular artists**, Christian or otherwise.
5. Always consider the people who will be singing your music, and aim to **make your pieces singable**, in terms of key, range, rhythm etc.
6. **Avoid complex syncopated rhythms** and superfluous grace notes (heavy use of the off-beat, lots of tied notes/rhythms, 'notated scoops' – think 'jazzy'). Besides heavy syncopation's association with a 'jazzy sound', complicated syncopated rhythms are typically very challenging for most accompanists and singers to decipher. Irregular rhythms also tend to muddy vocals due to the average singer being unable to find the off-beat pulse.
7. Make sure that your music **reflects a range of themes**. Just as your personal Bible studies should be well-balanced, so should the content of your songs. If you write a lot of music, chart out the themes and see if you could be providing greater breadth.
8. **Use language that is Biblically-based**. This can take the form of direct quotes, paraphrases (but make sure you get it right!), allusions to Biblical passages or principles, etc. Avoid non-Biblical language or songs that focus on the individual rather than God. We are NOT 'latter-day-Psalmsists', so remember – *God is a much better lyricist than you!*
9. **Be wary of personal pronouns**. Ie, 'I, we', etc. The subject of our music is God, not us. While it's often necessary to use pronouns in the course of a song, make sure the attention/focus is in the right place, and the song isn't all about 'you' and your experiences/problems/needs, etc.
10. Public prayers are different from private prayers. This same principle applies to music: very direct, **personal songs might not be appropriate** for congregational distribution or singing. Your **personal experiences** shouldn't form the basis of **communal praise**.
11. **Use respectful language** and avoid colloquialisms like 'cuz', 'yeah', 'alright', etc. Our subject matter and our main audience is the Almighty. **Understand and apply reverence.**
12. **Involve elders in the process**, particularly as you begin, to make sure you're starting (and staying!) on the right track!
13. **Avoid Christian clichés and trademarks**. Ie, 'amazing grace', 'You're awesome', 1-on-1 relationship with God, Jesus as a boyfriend, shallow and 'me-focused' lyrics, etc.