

Critical Listening and Song Arrangement

Case Study: O Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer (Sovereign Grace)

This song is probably best described as a **modern hymn**. Like traditional hymns, it is made up of **verses only** (rather than the *verse-chorus-bridge* structure of many modern songs).

Each verse generally follows a musical trajectory of **building towards a climax** in the **second half of the verse** (where the melody is highest) before returning to a similar feel to how the verse started. The hymn is well written, with the **lyrics aligning well** with this structure.

The arrangement demonstrates how to **build anticipation** and **excitement** throughout the **whole song**. It avoids going too big too early by **gradually introducing instruments** and **vocal harmonies** as the song progresses and **holds back certain things for the climax** in verse 3. Again, the whole-song arrangement reflects the **lyrical journey** throughout the song.

Although there have been some post-recording touch-ups, the video does demonstrate **excellence without showmanship**, both by the instrumentalists and vocalists. This is always the **aim in corporate worship** since we are seeking to offer praise to God, not ourselves..

When examining **individual instruments**, you may be surprised at just how **simple** and **uncomplicated** the parts are. Each instrument is playing a **supportive role**, firstly to the **voice / lyrics** and secondly to the **other instruments** in the group and each leaves **space for others** to play their part. The **overall result** is one of beauty and excellence.

Things to Listen Out For

Q1. Which instruments / singers (if any) are taking the following roles at different stages of the song?

- Main melody
- Harmony
- Rhythm / Pulse
- Texture / Sustained Sound

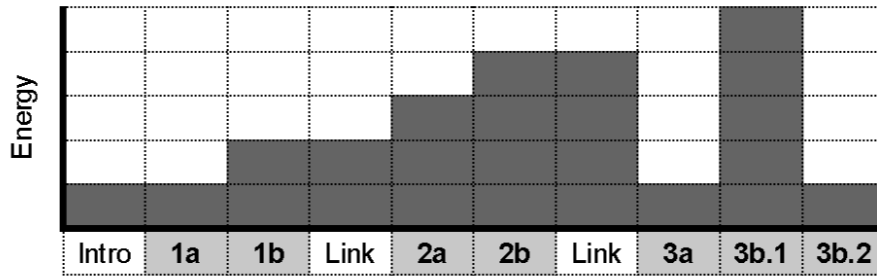
Q2. How do they build sections of the songs?

- Adding / removing instruments or voices
- Changing dynamics (loudness)
- Changing pitch / frequency range

Q3. What features make it easy for the congregation to sing from the heart and stay focused on the lyrics?

You'll now get a chance to listen to the song multiple times and discuss various aspects.

Use the next page to make some notes of the things that you notice.



Section	Lyrics	Notes
Intro	-	
1a	O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer Greatest treasure of my longing soul My God, like You there is no other True delight is found in You alone	
1b	Your grace, a well too deep to fathom Your love exceeds the heaven's reach Your truth, a fount of perfect wisdom My highest good and my unending need	
Link 1	-	
2a	O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer Strong defender of my weary heart My sword to fight the cruel deceiver And my shield against his hateful darts	
2b	My song, when enemies surround me My hope, when tides of sorrow rise My joy, when trials are abounding Your faithfulness, my refuge in the night	
Link 2	-	
3a	O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer Gracious Savior of my ruined life My guilt and cross laid on Your shoulders In my place You suffered bled and died	
3b.1	You rose, the grave and death are conquered You broke my bonds of sin and shame You rose, the grave and death are conquered You broke my bonds of sin and shame	
3b.2	O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer May all my days bring glory to Your Name	

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Leaders Notes

Section	Notes
Intro	<p>Voice: -</p> <p>Instrumentation: Solo piano playing in mid-low region (around middle C)</p> <p>Rhythm: Simple rhythm emphasising each beat - establishes pace and keeps constant throughout (no slowing down at end of phrase which provides uncertainty about when to 'come-in')</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Good intros often hint at the start of the verse - in this case, the first half of the intro aligns closely to the start of the verse - shared notes (first 3 notes are the same, notes on strong beats - 1 and 3 - are same) - shared chords</p> <p>Texture: Piano is percussive by nature - not much sustained sound (despite sustain pedal)</p>
1a	<p>Voice: Melody only (no harmony yet)</p> <p>Instrumentation: Solo piano moves to higher region</p> <p>Rhythm: Still emphasising each beat</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Plays the root note of the song (D), even in chords which don't include D - this is a feature of modern 'worship songs' - it adds some dissonance but helps to ground the key - works well alongside guitars and pads</p> <p>Texture: Voice is adding the sustain and the melody - piano going high has an emptying effect in the mids which allows the voice to come through more clearly</p>
1b	<p>Voice: Still no harmony yet - added energy comes from the fact that the melody is higher</p> <p>Instrumentation: Add sustain instruments - pads, electric guitar, cello</p> <p>Rhythm: Still comes mainly through the piano - no longer every beat to complement the more sustained, long notes</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: The root note (D) is still very prominent in pads and electric guitar - all instruments except piano are playing near the top of their pitch range (which adds energy) - piano drops to lower-mid region (otherwise overall mix would sound hollow and lack substance)</p> <p>Texture: Thicker texture as sustaining instruments layer on top of each other - pads + electric in higher regions, cello and piano in mid region</p>
Link 1	<p>Voice: -</p> <p>Instrumentation: Add bass + cymbals - prevents song from losing momentum when voice stops</p> <p>Rhythm: Piano plays same as intro - still taking role of rhythm instrument here</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: cello takes role of melody with other instruments supporting</p> <p>Texture: Piano is percussive by nature - not much sustained sound (despite sustain pedal)</p>
2a	<p>Voice: Still no harmony yet - though male voices are mixed louder</p> <p>Instrumentation: Add rhythm instruments - remove high-up pads and electric</p> <p>Rhythm: Acoustic guitar now provide the drive - drums leave a lot of space for acoustic guitar, using only kick and snare - piano takes a back-seat, hidden in the mid region playing long chords (to not interfere with rhythm instruments)</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Acoustic guitar playing with capo one means cuts through in upper-mids - the fifth note (A) is used as a pedal note (played at the top of every chord - very common in this style of music)</p> <p>Texture: Rhythm role is taken on by only acoustic and drums - every other instrument is adding sustain - nothing in the highest frequency regions at this moment</p>
2b	<p>Voice: Male harmony added above the melody - adds more energy than a female harmonising below the melody would give</p> <p>Instrumentation: high-up pads return - electric joins in mid region</p>

	<p>Rhythm: Drums takes a more prominent role filling slightly more rhythmic space - simple rhythm in electric guitar emphasises each half-beat</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Acoustic guitar playing with capo one means cuts through in upper-mids - the fifth note (A) is used as a pedal note (played at the top of every chord - very common in this style of music)</p> <p>Texture: Whole frequency range is covered here - bass drops lower to cover low region - pads in upper region - most instruments in mid region with only pads in upper region - this leaves the climax for the last verse!</p>
Link 2	<p>Voice: -</p> <p>Instrumentation: keeps all instruments with cello taking role of melody instrument - other instruments support</p> <p>Rhythm: drums and acoustic continue to drive</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: If the cello played an octave higher for the first half of the verse it would have given slightly more energy</p> <p>Texture: Listen out for two different electric guitars with distinctly different roles here</p>
3a	<p>Voice: Melody only</p> <p>Instrumentation: Piano plays similar to verse 1 - high up but with more rhythmic space, high up pads fill out the top region, cello playing in lower-mids - bass is playing near top of range to add sustain but not add too much weight</p> <p>Rhythm: Less pronounced - piano plays just enough to keep everyone together</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Chords replaced with their relative minors - reflects the starkness of the words</p> <p>Texture: Similar to verse 1</p>
3b.1	<p>Voice: Three-part harmony for the first time as female melody is added below melody</p> <p>Instrumentation: high-up pads return - electric guitar joins in mid region</p> <p>Rhythm: Emphasis every half-beat - kick drum drives first time - adding snare drum on repeated line gives it a further lift</p> <p>Notes / Harmony: Normal chords resume - all instruments playing - loudly - but still only one melody</p> <p>Texture: We've reached the climax! - loudest part of the song - whole frequency range is covered here - bass drops low again - pads in upper region, this time joined by piano in the upper range - other instruments filling out the mids</p>
3b.2	Similar to start of verse 1
Outro	There isn't one! It is worth reflecting on why this is effective here