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A group of women who are part of a choir react with delight as they hear a story told by pastor Elasi, in their mother tongue—Nyanga.

All photos not otherwise credited have been contributed by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!

Psalm 90:17 (ESV)

One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.

Psalm 145:4 (ESV)
Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.
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CONTENTS

Co-Editors’ Note........................................................................................................ 9
Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge

Note from Guest Editors...................................................................................... 13
Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill

Relating 1:
The Art of Silence—A Posture of Relationships................................. 17
Erica Logan
This article explores the value of the art of silence to establish relationships and release indigenous creativity, particularly through prayer, space, and trust.

Relating 2:
Mentoring Artists............................................................................................... 23
Sue Hall-Heimbecker
Interested in how mentoring and artistry work together? This practical perspective on cross-cultural mentoring, specifically between artists, emphasizes the importance of cultivating character formation through personal interaction.

Dialoguing 1:
Beyond Listening—Arts and Orality in India............................................. 35
Pramila Rajendran, interviewed by Robin Harris
This interview captures the excitement of how orality is enabling people to appreciate their own cultural artistic expressions and to be transformed by the Christian message.

Dialoguing 2:
Finding our Gifts—Encouraging Local Arts in Guinea-Bissau............ 41
Jeremias Sanha, interviewed by Sarah Bauson
Sanha provides experienced reflections from a “local artist” perspective on the power of indigenous arts, the stewardship of artistic gifts, and ideas on integrating different art forms within the church.
Dialoguing 3:
"Bringing Our Real Selves into the Worship Space"—Arts and Orality in Jamaica

Jo-Ann Richards Goffe, interviewed by Robin Harris
This account of how one Christian woman came to believe in the power of the arts, particularly for outreach amidst her Jamaican context, emphasizes the dramatic interrelationship of different artistic expressions including storytelling, proverbs, and dance.

Training 1:
Arts for a Better Future: A Practical Approach for Energizing Ministry in Oral Cultures
Brian Schrag
This engaging introduction to “Arts for a Better Future” emphasizes how relationally engaging with the arts in community-honoring ways can open up new experiences for people in their own languages and cultural art forms.

Training 2:
Designing Arts Workshops
Kenneth R. Hollingsworth and Héber Negrão
Curious about how an arts workshop might work? From experienced voices, this article outlines both the pre-training logistics as well as the practicalities of facilitating an arts workshop.

Training 3:
The Worship Wheel
Todd Saurman
The worship wheel provides yet another powerful tool for engaging the arts in order to cultivate a sense of worship throughout multiple aspects of the fabric of life.

Integrating 1:
Tapping into Community Gifts by Commissioning Artistic Works
Paul Neeley
Walking through the necessary considerations, Neeley discusses how commissioned artistic works not only communicates the Christian message but also promotes indigenous artistic expression.
Integrating 2:
Integrating Arts and Preaching

Rochelle Cathcart Scheuermann
Wondering how to bring arts into preaching? This article is laden with examples of various artistic expressions that can give a sermon more impact.

Integrating 3:
Bringing Scripture to Life with Artistic Creativity

Julisa Rowe
Whether narrative portions or monologue, Rowe provides insight into dramatizing the biblical accounts so audiences can engage the Word of God afresh.

Implementing 1:
Chanting the Scriptures

Mae Alice Reggy
Among the Wolayta Christians, interweaving Ethiopian cultural chanting and singing into their experience of the biblical text has become a powerful tool for facilitating scriptural engagement accounts.

Implementing 2:
Celebrating the Word—Oral Arts Festivals in East India

Carla Bowman
By providing a descriptive analysis of the way Christian arts festivals in India are blossoming, this account captures the excitement and effectiveness of oral, indigenous, artistic creativity.

Implementing 3:
Women Bible Storytellers in South Asia

Janet Stahl
The dramatic impact of biblical storytelling has brought transformation both to and through these South Asian women as God opens doors through His word and these women’s faithfulness.

Implementing 4:
Scripture Alive in the Tien Shan Mountains

Carla Bowman
When the scriptures are kept central and yet allowed to speak through wholistic artistic expressions, lives are transformed and indigenous multiplication happens.
The Seven Disciplines of Orality

Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network’s Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.
Orality and the Arts in the Early Church

The multi-faceted nature of communication, specifically orality, continues to surprise and delight us. One specific area inviting further exploration is that of the relationship between orality and the arts in the growth of the Early Church.

For many coming from cultures heavily influenced by print-based communication paradigms, consideration of orality and the arts among the Early Church feels counter-intuitive.1 Often in light of the Reformation and the subsequent Evangelical emphasis on the sacred text of scripture, it becomes easy to project a printed mindset back onto previous generations’ experience with God’s word. This mentality ends up reflecting, usually unintentionally, a form of communication snobbery. But for us to better understand the relationship of orality, the arts and contemporary mission praxis, we need to better understand that orality and artistic expression—specifically creative elements like oral performance—would have been central to the Early Church’s communication practice.2

For example an argument can be made that many of the New Testament writings were either transcripts collected from oral performances or they were composed orally through dictation and then written down but for the purpose of being orally performed.3 Therefore most of the Early Church (some argue as much as 95 percent) experienced the scriptures not by reading but through oral performance.4 Is oral performance exactly what Paul had in mind when he recommended that the churches of Colosse and Laodicea were to “read” each other’s letters “in the church”?5 These “readings” would have been both an oral and an artistic communication experience involving a text but also a performer, the audience, and a shared communal space. Therefore while more needs to be investigated, our own interest in the interrelationships between oral, artistic, and textual discourse seems to have clear biblical precedent.
In the Spring 2016 edition of the *Orality Journal*, volume one in a two-part series on *Orality and the Arts*, we focused our attention on exploring the power of artistic expression for capturing and transforming people’s lives. This first volume sought to demonstrate how twenty-first century Christians are allowing the arts, whether henna, dance, or visual art to “orally” speak, visualizing what are so often invisible spiritual realities. We saw that culturally adapted artistic expressions, many oral in nature, are creating liminal spaces—spiritual thresholds, through which people can encounter new understandings of salvation and restoration available through Jesus Christ.

While having established the power of the arts for transformation in volume one, the reality remains that many practitioners today need equipping for contemporary communication challenges. How does one integrate the arts, a strong commitment to the biblical text, worship of the Triune God and contextual mission praxis among oral-preferenced communicators? This Autumn 2016 edition of the *Orality Journal* provides a continuation of volume one, seeking to address this broader practical question from a variety of different perspectives.

The International Orality Network (ION) deeply appreciates the hard work of International Council for Ethnodoxologists (ICE) in their bringing together yet again a tremendous cache of resources, this time for equipping people for adopting and adapting the arts into their own ministry contexts. Like many first-century audiences, ICE recognizes many people today still prefer oral methodologies, even if they have been impacted by print. Communication practices like silent encounters with the biblical text or mono-tonal readings are limited in ways that can impact today’s audiences. Therefore for those who are only tentatively experimenting with the arts for the first time or for those who are fully convinced of their transformative impact, these articles provide catalytic ideas as well as the practical nuts and bolts for equipping those interested in incorporating artistic expression into their own oral communication practices.

From its origins, Christianity has seen orality and the arts as integral for communication. Like the Early Church, we desire that people from
every tribe, tongue, people and nation will be able to hear, receive, believe and obey the good news of Jesus Christ.

May the Holy Spirit give us creativity and courage as we seek to follow the early Christians’ example in communicating Jesus Christ in today’s world.

William Coppedge


5 Colossians 4:16
Note from Guest Editors
Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill

Katie Hoogerheide serves as associate director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts in Dallas, Texas. The overseas experiences particularly influencing her work include time spent living, working, and traveling in Europe, the Middle East, and South Africa. In addition, she draws from work and graduate studies in organ performance, ethnoarts, linguistics, and pedagogy. A member of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, she also works as associate editor for the Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith.

James R. Krabill served from 1978–1996 as a Mennonite mission worker teaching Bible and church history in oral culture settings among African-initiated churches in West Africa. Currently serving as Senior Executive for Global Ministries with the Mennonite Mission Network, Krabill has authored or edited various works, including Music in the Life of the African Church (with Roberta King and others, 2008) and Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook (2013).

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 Tim. 2:2 NIV

Resilience! All of us who invest energy into people or projects like to see our work prosper. We love to see individuals, communities, and initiatives grow in strength and in their ability to weather times of hardship. When the cause involves the Kingdom of God, our hearts burn even hotter with the desire to see the gospel message not just firmly rooted, but also thriving within cultures around the world.

How can we encourage such resilience in the communities we serve? How can we support others in pursuing peace, justice, and God himself? The International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) once again joins with the International Orality Network (ION) in seeking wisdom on these and similar questions. Earlier this year, ICE guest edited a first volume on arts and orality for the Orality Journal, where we explored just how significantly the arts impact communication.1 In this second volume, we
pursue questions of longevity and durability by sharing current practices in equipping people to invigorate their ministries with the arts.

Drawing from her research on an oral storytelling genre, Robin Harris proposes two keys for promoting resilience in arts traditions: (1) ongoing innovation and (2) provision for transmission. In other words, two of our top priorities include encouraging the creation of local arts and empowering others to carry out and pass on best practices for engaging the arts in ministry. The articles in this volume specifically highlight both of these intentions.

Whether you seek equipping for ministry for yourself or for others, we trust you will find a wealth of inspiration, ideas, and resources within these pages. Accompany Cornelius as he prepares artists for an oral arts festival in India (Bowman, “Celebrating the Word”). Get your creative juices flowing with practical ideas for integrating storytelling, songs, paintings, sculptures, drama, and other visuals into preaching (Scheuermann). Find out how participating in “Arts for a Better Future” can energize your ministry, no matter what your involvement with the arts (Schrag). Listen to Jeremias’ story and learn how he uses the arts to support the church in Guinea-Bissau (Sanha & Bauson). Join in a rich exploration of the mentoring relationship (Hall-Heimbecker).

Effective equipping for ministry involves a wide variety of facets. Logan and Hall-Heimbecker emphasize RELATING to those with whom we work, and, most importantly, to the One who gives us the strength and grace to invest in the Kingdom in the first place. We placed these articles first because establishing respectful and mutual relationships is the starting point for any work we do. In a similar vein, Rajendran & Harris, Sanha & Bauson, and Goffe & Harris highlight the importance of DIALOGUING, which includes listening to the stories, thoughts, and dreams of others. Schrag, Hollingsworth & Negrão, and Saurman present helpful tools and tips in the articles on TRAINING. Neeley, Scheuermann, and Rowe provide suggestions for INTEGRATING the arts into the fabric of community life. Reggy, Stahl, and both of Bowman’s articles share on-the-ground accounts of IMPLEMENTING the arts in orality ministries—equipping in action.
Cross-cultural work often comes fraught with tensions surrounding respect, perceived authority, control, power, and colonialism. Some months ago, a woman from a non-majority country expressed to us her frustration that the missionaries “first told us that we couldn’t use our arts, and now they tell us we should.” What a reproof! Logan provides a much-needed balance to this hegemonic posture with her thoughts on the art of silence. We are also glad to include a wide range of global voices in this volume. Our authors were born on five of the six populated continents, and they have also worked on five of the six. In addition to these direct voices, Stahl brings us a wealth of reported perspectives from an increasingly influential group of women in South Asia.

Read these contributions, study their main points, learn from new perspectives. Perhaps your next workshop could benefit from Hollingsworth & Negrão’s highly practical set of considerations for organization. Perhaps Rowe’s suggestions for creatively sharing scripture will infuse your next worship service with new life. Reggy’s account may inspire you to enrich scripture memory in your own context with the arts. Neeley’s ideas may increase your confidence in commissioning new artistic works. Saurman’s worship wheel may enhance your future discussions with others on the breadth of applications of their local arts in worship. Perhaps you never thought of the concept of “bringing our real selves” into worship (Goffe & Harris) or considered learning how to use the arts to help people recover from trauma (Rajendran & Harris).

Whatever your situation, we pray this volume will increase resilience in your ministry by sparking creativity (innovation) and by providing resources for engaging the arts with others (transmission). As in our first volume, we encourage you to maximize the influence of the people within the community you serve, whether that community represents your own culture or another. We repeat here the closing section of Bowman’s article (“Scripture Alive”), a paragraph that we believe encapsulates the collective desire of both ICE and ION:

I believe our greatest challenge is not how to train and equip, but to believe. We must recognize with complete and unwavering faith that those with whom we work in the field are more than capable of
doing anything they set their minds to. When they are inspired and fulfilled by their own God-given, culturally relevant talents, they will take that same vision to their peers, and this momentous progress toward indigenous, creative worship in the worldwide church will be unstoppable.

1View this first volume at orality.net/library/journals/volume-5-number-1/.

2Read more about Harris’ research and ideas on resilience in her book about the death and rebirth of the Siberian oral epic tradition, *olonkho* (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).
The Art of Silence—A Posture for Respectful Relationships

*Erica Logan*¹

_Erica Logan is a coach and workshop facilitator for Heart Sounds International (OM Arts International), helping ignite culturally relevant and biblically appropriate worship, especially in places where Christ-followers are restricted, persecuted, or unknown. A member of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, Erica coordinates the ethnomusicology program at Oral Roberts University and serves as an arts consultant to various organizations._

We were told there was no music in their culture. They would turn away from us and stare at the wall when we spoke. We had only one week with this small group of first-generation Christians in the remote Peruvian forest. These were the most binding limitations we had ever faced. _How could we see authentic indigenous worship music birthed under such extreme circumstances?_

We can have our manuals in hand and our teaching outlines ready, yet the comfort of a controlled environment is rarely found in the cross-cultural experience. Add unfamiliar arts and music into the mix, and we are left feeling uncertain and lacking in expertise. _Why do arts in cross-cultural ministry feel so complicated?_ Our cultural lens can create within us unrealistic expectations. In my culture, musicians are expected to know the music systems and how to manipulate them. Leaders are expected to know the answers and provide them at a moment’s notice. As a result, it becomes quite uncomfortable for me when I don’t know the next best step. Having a musical or artistic background certainly helps, and the training available to us today is foundational to healthy arts ministry. Now, here is another tool for our tool belt: one of the most important ingredients to successful indigenous creativity is the _art of silence._

The question I’m most often asked is, “What should I do when this or that happens?” Oh, how we want a “to do” list! The answer is much simpler: _be silent._ It feels counterintuitive, but the art of silence produces the most authentic outcomes. Your silence will create space for others to create. Music, dance, and art will spring forth naturally if you lean heavily into
*koinonia*, the biblical concept of co-participants communing in unity through Christ. When practicing koinonia, music and arts become catalysts for a much larger purpose: the coming together of the Bride in the Kingdom of God.

As you try out various arts and orality techniques, here is a list of silent things to do when you don’t know what to do. It is not a complete list. It does not replace the expert training and resources available to you. Rather, it is meant to supplement and can always provide an emergency plan when you are caught in a moment of uncertainty. I recommend you tape some version of this list inside your notebook as a quick reference. As you practice these protocols, you will find that the art of silence is more of a position of the heart than an action of the hand.

Three key phrases to remember are: embed PRAYER, embrace SPACE, and establish TRUST.

**Embed PRAYER**
Why talk about prayer? Prayer is something we feel we already know, a tradition we already do, a protocol at the beginning of all our meetings.

But music and arts are forms of communication meant to become living prayers. Prayer is a dynamic, ongoing conversation with God, a vital skill. Although our topic may be music and arts, we always have the opportunity to share with others how to tap into the lifeline of communication that we all so desperately need.

**A Few Tips on Prayer**
- Exchange prayer requests and have them translated in both directions. We are working with people, not projects. Do not resort to praying only for those you are teaching. Invite them to pray for you. If you can exchange requests in advance, both parties are able to pray with knowledge and seek scriptures on behalf of the other. In person, you can pray for each
other with knowledge, sincerity, and intimacy. You’ve moved from “us and them” to “we.”

- Listen for clues. Prayer provides your first insight into people’s expectations. What are they hoping for? What are you hoping for? As you engage more intentionally in prayer, you will find yourself adjusting your own priorities and plans to care for others’ needs better.

- Model creativity with God by embedding prayer throughout the tasks of your event. When giving instructions to a group, even during specific creative tasks like songwriting, provide opportunities to pray in the beginning, middle, and end. This posture models a living conversation with God rather than a command and response relationship.

- Be slow to speak and quick to pray. When groups are problem solving, you might be asked for an answer. Direct the group to pray together for an answer, even if you have a good idea. The creative transaction is between them and the Lord, and you can trust that he wants to speak to them. In my experience, the resulting idea is usually better. In the rare case when an idea is not born through scripture and prayer, you can certainly act as a catalyst to get them thinking. On the other hand, when you’re asked how to fix something and you don’t have a good idea, don’t rush in with blather. Stop and say, “I’m not sure. Let’s pray together.” Then, talk through ideas with one another.

The art of silence allows room for God to guide all of you together. Embed prayer throughout the entire experience.

**Embrace SPACE**

Beyond the traditional definition of physical distance, space is also “the opportunity to assert or experience one’s identity or needs freely.” To see local arts birthed in a community, you need to step back and embrace space. Freedom to express identity without anxiety breeds creativity. Creativity needs this kind of space. How do you facilitate silent opportunities for space, especially in the midst of programmed events?

**A Few Tips on Space**

- Recognize that your indicators of success may be different. Answer the question, “I will feel satisfied with this event if... (fill in the blank: ten songs are written, an art piece is completed, I get through my teaching outline...).” Pay attention to your immediate responses! How you answer this question will subconsciously drive your decisions. Your answers are
most likely different from those of your compatriots. What are their perceptions of time, work, and play? What is most valuable to them in your current setting? What is their most urgent desire in that moment? Doing this exercise will help you discern between your personal needs and the community’s needs.

• Realign your default priority to relationship over program. If you are new to a culture, it is overwhelming to think that you must figure out all the answers. But relationship is transcultural. It is the best default when you don’t know what to do, regardless of context. The next few tips provide practical ideas for developing relationships.

• Pick up their instrument and smile. Time and again, I have seen walls come tumbling down simply through asking, “Can you show me how to play?” Putting yourself at the feet of others gives space for them to express their identity and see that they are valued. Whether it’s dance, craft, paint, or storytelling, do this, even if you only have a few minutes.

• Visit nearby homes and record their favorite songs, hear their favorite stories, see their favorite artifacts, watch their favorite dance steps. Pay attention to the responses of different generations to each form. Then, debrief with local leaders. How do these pieces reflect the joys and hardships of the communities they serve? How might some of these beloved forms be used in new and God-honoring ways? These visits can be done during unplanned times or unexpected delays.

• Share a spontaneous meal. In Myanmar, we were working with master musicians of another faith who were being paid to compose music for lyrics written by pastors. The days were long, hot, and tedious. Spontaneously, our host said, “We need some ice cream!” We piled into cars and drove to the nearest ice cream stand for a treat. The musicians transformed from serious men at work to laughing men at play—a side of them we had not previously seen. Ice cream runs became a nightly ritual—they would never have sat with a group of Christians in any other context. Those few moments of cold cream were worth far more than getting another song done. In the end, the musicians stayed later and later every night to make sure our team got what we were looking for, and we made sure they got ice cream.

Sometimes, the art of silence includes embracing unexpected delays and allowing our plans to
shift toward experiences that create space for relationship and the freedom to be who we are, together.

Establish TRUST
Often, the cultural arts are part of a very personal identity that is not valued openly in public. We are asking people to put themselves in a vulnerable position as they try something new that may or may not be acceptable. We must respect this reality and empower their confidence by trusting their insights and decisions.

A Few Tips on Trust
• Debrief with indigenous leadership daily. Although this is perhaps one of the hardest things to schedule, this contact time is one of the most important. What are they seeing that they like? What are their concerns? How do they think these concerns might best be addressed?
• If someone is bold enough to present you with an idea, run with it. It will probably not be what you would do, but don’t discount it for the sake of your plan. If the idea doesn’t work, engage with the person in problem solving, including prayer!

Only after his or her idea has been tried might you gently present something you have in mind. Of course, you can give good wisdom along the way. Just recognize that if your idea is presented first, it will usually take precedence, since the person respects and honors your leadership.
• Be alert to the conflict your silence can create. In some cases, I frustrate co-participants because they simply want me to tell them what to do. If this starts to happen, I will share a bit more. Often, they are trying to show me respect as a teacher. Sometimes, people are afraid they are giving the wrong answers. One leader was frustrated because he felt I had knowledge he desperately wanted, and I wouldn’t give it to him! I needed to respect him by not withholding information simply due to my ideals.
• Teach with people, not at them. Provide resources as a response to their capable and intelligent minds, hearts, and spirits at work, not as a colonial idea of what is best without asking. Far too many Western-trained leaders fall prey to preaching an outline instead of engaging with people’s creativity, spiritual walk, leadership, and wisdom.

The art of silence empowers people through relationships of
trust, honor, space, patience, and a stalwart unwillingness to take control. You cannot guarantee what the result will look like. You may even be disappointed, but it’s not yours to handle. It’s their journey with God, and he is fully able to compel worship from any heart.

Conclusion
Along with your training, I invite you to pray, provide scripture for study, give space, trust others’ conclusions, and repeat. This is how we approached our limitations in Peru. Along with the techniques we knew for arts ministry, we prayed together with our Peruvian friends. A lot. When we shared scripture, we had them discuss and pray through the passages—without us, asking God to reveal to them what he had to say—before giving our own commentary.

We created space by asking them to teach us about their daily life, whether fishing, monkey hunting, grass weaving, or cooking. After three days of doing only these activities, it was hard not to get restless. We had so many ideas of how their cultural arts could embody the gospel! But we could never fully understand every dimension of their context, and there was no reason for them to trust us. So we practiced the art of silence.

Then, unexpectedly, they stopped staring at the walls. They began laughing and joking, even playing pranks on us. Excitedly, they revealed to us that God was guiding them to share their faith with their communities through their own music, weaving, and storytelling. They proceeded to dance and sing a new worship song. But wait—they said they didn’t have music. Wrong. They did have music. They just didn’t show it to foreigners.

They were a very private people, for good historical reasons. In that moment, their most urgent need was not the same as ours (to create worship songs). It was to experience freedom of identity. It was incredibly honoring to us when they were willing to share a piece of their private lives.

We consciously decided that our only goal was to honor them, perhaps resulting in no songs at all. We silenced ourselves by not overpowering them with our own plans and creativity. In the end, through embedded prayer, embraced space, and established trust, a safe opportunity was created and their creative walk with God was born.

1Photos used with permission: first photo, from Tanzania, by Erica Logan; second photo, from Peru, by Brook Hale Photography.
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Creating Local Arts Together
A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals

Brian Schrag

Creating Local Arts Together is a manual designed to guide an individual or group into a local community’s efforts at integrating its arts with the values and purposes of God’s kingdom. The practical, playful text reduces experience-based scholarly insights gained from multiple decades of incarnational ministry around the world into a flexible seven-step process.

This manual is the second book in a two-volume set on the principles and practices of ethnodoxology. The first volume, entitled Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook, presents in textbook format the central “Foundations,” “Stories,” and “Tools” designed to equip readers in exploring more fully this important new field of research and ministry.


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