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Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh



Arts & Orality Part 2: Equipping for Ministry

Logan • Hall-Heimbecker • Rajendran • Harris • Sanha
Bauson • Goffe • Schrag • Hollingsworth • Negrão
Saurman • Neeley • Scheuermann • Rowe • Reggy
Bowman • Stahl

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Cover Photo

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.

Additional Photos

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

The Word Became Fresh

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
<i>Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge</i>	

Note from Guest Editors.....	13
<i>Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill</i>	

Relating 1:

The Art of Silence—A Posture of Relationships.....	17
<i>Erica Logan</i>	

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
<i>Sue Hall-Heimbecker</i>	

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
<i>Pramila Rajendran, interviewed by Robin Harris</i>	

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
<i>Jeremias Sanha, interviewed by Sarah Bauson</i>	

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..... 45

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..... 51

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..... 59

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..... 65

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.... 69

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..... 75

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..... 83

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..... 87

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..... 89

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..... 95

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 103

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.



ION

INTERNATIONAL ORALITY NETWORK

Co-Editors' Note

Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge

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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Cappedge".

William Cappedge

¹David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part I,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 36, no. 3 (2006): 118–34; David Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part II,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 36, no. 4 (2006): 164–84.

²For another helpful introduction to communication practices in first-century Christianity, see P.J.J. Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity*, Biblical Performance Criticism (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012).

³Carol Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁴Rhoads, “Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies--Part I,” 118.

⁵Colossians 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*.² 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).

Tapping into Community Gifts by Commissioning Artistic Works

Paul Neeley¹

Paul Neeley has lived in Africa for years working with SIL, leading music workshops with nearly forty ethnic groups. He is also involved with music and arts ministries in Asia. He is part of Artists in Christian Testimony, International Orality Network, Heart Sounds International, and is a co-founder of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists. He has published three books, over fifty articles, and edited the journal EthnoDoxology. He teaches ethnomusicology and global worship at several schools and consults for multiple mission agencies. Paul has co-founded global worship ensembles and produces CDs.

New works can substantially affect attitudes towards using indigenous art forms with Christian content, encouraging others to use them as well. This can be especially true if more than one artistic work is commissioned and created (e.g., a corpus of ten new songs or stories and dramas inspired by biblical narratives).

I use the phrase “commissioning artistic works” to refer to a facilitator who provides the impetus for an indigenous or local artist to create a particular artistic work. The facilitator, who may be either a cultural insider or outsider, asks for a song, drama, sculpture, or other work to be created and suggests potential themes to be communicated, scriptural or

otherwise. The artistic work may be geared towards use in or out of the church setting.

Decision Makers

The original facilitator may make some or all of the choices involved in commissioning a work.² Or the facilitator may realize the need for artistic works made with culturally appropriate forms, then give most of the detail work to someone else who has shown some interest and skill. This situation worked well in examples from the Yoruba in Nigeria and Sabaot in Kenya.³ A team approach can also be used where cultural insiders and outsiders share their knowledge and creative ideas.

The decisions may be made in any order according to the

situation. For example, if a biblical text—the message—is chosen first, that decision will influence which genre of music, poetry, or other art form is chosen, and the genre in turn will influence the choice of creator. Alternatively, the creator may be chosen first, and that creator may have a preferred genre in a certain artistic domain, which will then influence the choice of message to be communicated.

Commissioning an Artistic Work: Four Key Considerations

There are four basic considerations in commissioning an artistic work: the artistic genre, the creator, the message to be communicated, and how the completed work will be made public.

Choosing the artistic genre. To choose an appropriate genre for an artistic work, research local artistic resources, including the typical method used for creating a new work within each genre being considered.

Choosing the creator. When choosing someone to create a work, look for someone who has experience in creating new works and is recognized as experienced by others in the culture. The society

in which you work may have many such qualified people to choose from, or perhaps only one or two old people.

Note that in some cases the choice of certain artistic genres may automatically determine the gender of the creator. Local people will be able to make a list of potential experienced creators. Be aware that many creators specialize in a specific area within their artistic domain (e.g., two out of twelve dance forms in the society).

In some cultures, the number of Christians may be very small, and it may be difficult to find someone who is both a Christian and has experience creating artistic works. In this case, you can consider commissioning a work from a non-Christian. Questions to ask in this case include:

- Is he or she interested?
- Is he or she respected by the community? By the church?
- If his or her name is made known, will that be a help or a hindrance to acceptance of the work?
- What do local Christians think of the idea?
- How might non-Christians react?

- What will local Christians think of the recompense of money or materials to a non-Christian artist? How will this affect relationships?
- If there are local Christian artists, will they feel snubbed?

There have been situations where commissioning a scripture song from a non-Christian composer was an acceptable plan. For example, among the Akyode of Ghana, the culture's most respected and popular musician was not a Christian. However, he had a good reputation within the society, his name would actually help the song's acceptance, he was interested in the idea, and the local church saw nothing wrong in approaching him.⁴ In the Nkonya culture of Ghana, however, the most famous composer was viewed as a drunkard, and the local church decided not to approach him.

In some cultures, there is already an established role for composers who create songs for other people. In West Africa, especially in areas influenced by Islam, there may be a local form of *griot* (praise singer). There are examples from Nigeria, Benin, and Ghana where such a Muslim praise singer agreed

to work with a biblical text to compose and record a scripture song.⁵ Investigate the musical culture in your area to see if an institutionalized form of composing for patrons is already in place. Such professional composers are used to working for a cash payment. "Composers-for-hire" also appear in some Asian cultures, including parts of Nepal and the Philippines.

The composer of a commissioned song or art piece usually gets some sort of recompense, such as public recognition, a free recording, a gift, medical care, or cash. In some places, the facilitator agrees to pay a fixed price for the composing and recording of each commissioned song or artwork.⁶ In other cases, there may be a looser agreement concerning recompense.

Choosing the message. The choice of message for the artwork will be made hand in hand with the choice of genre for reasons of both emotional fit and message fit. One would probably not try to fit joyful lyrics with the musical genre of a funeral dirge.

Research is necessary to match message and art forms together.

For example, examine sample lyrics in the musical or poetic genres you are considering. Some genres may accommodate lyrics of literally epic proportions, while the lyrics of other genres may typically be one sentence long. Potential messages can be paired with the most appropriate genre(s). Genres that require short

lyrics work well with a message from a stand-alone Bible verse. A different genre may be used for a lengthy passage or an entire story. Similar research applies for other artistic domains.

Composers will find it extremely helpful if the facilitator recites the message line by line until it is memorized. In some cases, the facilitator may want to be involved with arranging the text into lyrical form, such as verse and chorus, or call and response.⁷ In other cases, the composer may do all such arranging of lyrical lines.



Some changes will probably be made in the scriptural text when adapting it for song lyrics, drama, painting, or other possible domains. The completed artistic work should be checked by a local pastor to ensure that the message has been communicated correctly and that it sounds or looks natural in the local idioms.

Local church leaders may be invited to be involved in choosing the message. For example, church leaders in Ghana were asked to choose their own favorite verses from a Gospel and then request

someone in their congregation to set these verses to music within a month. In another group, church leaders were assembled and assigned specific passages. They were asked to work with composers in their congregations to compose a song within a few days. In both cases, initial discussions had previously been held.

Choosing how to make the new artistic work public. In many parts of the world, giving a composer or artist a specific text and saying, “Please communicate this in a song or sculpture,” is not a typical method of creation. However, if the motivation of the creator is strong enough, it may work. The artistic works can be composed “on request,” or “commissioned,” if the artist understands that there is a good reason to do so.

One such motivating factor can be an upcoming event that will provide a quick public use for the work. Songs have been commissioned for dedications of houses, offices, literature publication, and for recordings and/or concerts. Commissioning scripture songs or dramas for other public gatherings is also possible (e.g., a special church service like Christmas or Easter). Find a way to get the dance, drama, sculpture, painting, or other artwork into public use fairly quickly, and this will motivate the creator.

However the details come together, commissioning artistic works can be a valuable way to help people catch a vision of the benefits of using local artistic works to impact their society for good.

¹This article is adapted from an article originally published in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, eds. James R. Krabill (managing editor), Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, Brian Schrag (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013) and is used here with permission.

²For case studies where the outsider facilitator, after considerable study, made most or all of the choices, see Paul Neeley, “A Case Study: Commissioning Scripture Songs among the Akyode of Ghana,” *Research Review* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana), supplementary issue, no. 10 (1997): 118–29; and Brian Schrag, “Commissioning Songs among the Mono of Zaire,” *Research Review* (Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana), supplementary issue, no. 10 (1997): 130–39.

³See Neeley, “Commissioning Scripture Songs.”

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*; Klaus Wedekind, “The Praise Singers,” *Bible Translator* 26, no. 2 (1975): 245–47.

⁶See the Sabaot example in Neeley, “Commissioning Scripture Songs,” *Handbook* chpt 147.

⁷See Paul Neeley, “Basic Guidelines for Adapting Written Scriptural Texts into Song Lyrics,” *Notes on Translation* 10, no. 2 (1996): 41–51.

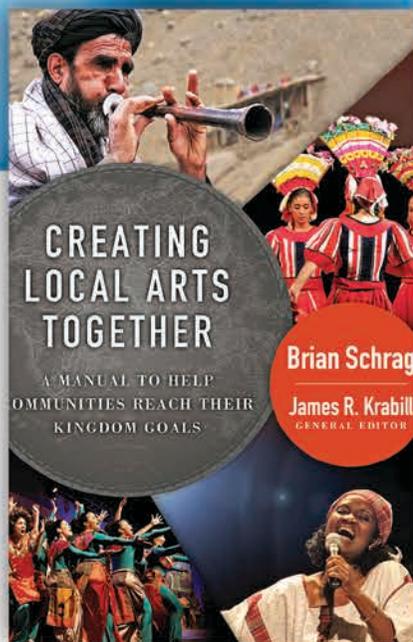




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Brian Schrag

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