

Song ➤ Inbox x



**Judy Dominick** <[jdominick@cs.cmu.edu](#)>  
to Sam, Dawn ▾

📧 Thu, Jan 10, 2013, 3:57 PM   ⭐   ↩   ⋮

Sam,

I wrote this a few years ago and it's just been hanging out in my binder since then along with a number of others. I was wondering if you and Dawn might be able to do something with the skeleton of this thing. Feel free to rearrange, change keys, add parts, and/or alter the tempo or style.

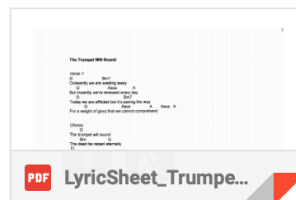
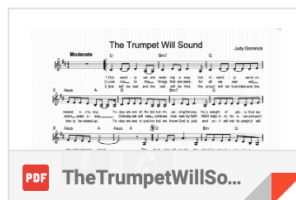
Thanks,

Judy

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[Message clipped] [View entire message](#)

**2 Attachments**



my little Celtic piece ➤



**Judy Dominick** <[redacted]>  
to Sam ▼

📧 Feb 28, 2013, 8:48 PM

Sam,

Both the full score and the lead sheet are attached. Let me know what you think. Thanks!

Judy

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[Message clipped] [View entire message](#)

## 2 Attachments





**Judy Dominick** <[redacted]>  
to Sam ▾

Tue, Jun 18, 2013, 5:02 PM



Hey Sam,

Thanks for the message (and the text just this afternoon). I was just starting to think about how to create an audio file via my keyboard after I got your email when that massive storm hit and we lost power for 2 days. And life's been a bit crazy ever since. There's this song and that other one that I sent on February 28th (the Celtic one). Let me know if you find that in your Inbox. If not, I'll resend it. And yes, I'm happy to play through both of them for you after rehearsal on Saturday. Appreciate you asking.

I've really been thinking through how to incorporate some traditional Asian sounds into worship music to provide another flavor on the diversity wheel and would like to bounce some ideas off you. Worship on Sunday mornings feels literally black and white, and I've really been praying about what Asian-Americans bring to the table that reflects what we're uniquely about so that when other Asian-Americans or Asian immigrants visit, they'll have something they can relate to better. I'm no expert at traditional Chinese music (and in fact have no experience playing any of those instruments), but I heard it growing up, so it's a part of my cultural heritage and childhood experience. I recently came across an artist that does a great job of fusing traditional Chinese instruments/sounds with hip-hop, electronica, folk, and pop. When I first heard that combination of sound a little over a week ago, POW, I felt like I finally found something that captures the Asian-American experience and ethos musically. If you get a chance, please check out producer David Liang and the [Shanghai Restoration Project](#). [Here's](#) a really interesting NPR interview from a few years back that's about 9 minutes long. Worth watching.

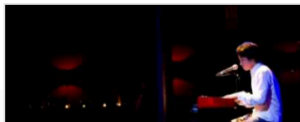
Have a great week!

Peace,  
Judy



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[Message clipped] [View entire message](#)





**Sam Crowley** <[redacted]>

to me ▾

Dec 8, 2013, 4:09 PM



Hey Judy,

I hope you are doing well juggling all of the things in your busy life! Work, a child, involvement in a city group...I know it must be a lot. Breanna told me about your conversation with her, and I just wanted to wrap back around with you. First off, I want to apologize for my poor communication with the rest of the team. I was planning on incorporating your song, but I was contemplating making a few adjustments to the verses while I was looking for an opportunity to use the song with a topic that matched with its content. You took your sabbatical before that happened, but things may have been sped up if I had thought to involve Breanna more in that process. That's on me.

With regards to writing music that specifically meshes in Asian-American influence, I would love to do that more. I think there are many reasons for why this will take more time. With other styles, we have a clear template of how to flavor the music with a certain culture's influence, but because my background is in alternative rock, gospel, contemporary and a bit of blues, I don't have a specific template with which to incorporate that style yet. Incorporating different cultures' influences into our music is what I am most passionate about, but my greatest fear is that I will create something that is a disingenuous caricature of a certain style. With some styles, hispanic music included, I don't feel I have the background to genuinely incorporate these styles personally until I have been able to study them more in depth. I want to give them their due! I want to create something that is a good representation of the particular culture's music so that everyone feels included. I realize that I will never be able to genuinely do this alone. When I move further from my personal resource pool and background, the risk of creating a phony version of another musical style increases. Just know that I have made a full commitment to continue to grow my ability to incorporate every culture's influence into our worship with the help of the people around me.

I ask that you be patient with me and give me grace as I continue to grow in my role as band director and worship leader at Renovation. I am still so young and new to this, and I know that I have miles left to go. Keep in mind how much we do value diversity in our music and how much we have worked to incorporate other genres into our worship for the purpose of making everyone feel included. It would be much easier to just play Hillsong songs. I really wish I could pour more time into this as it is my genuine passion. While I desire with all my heart to be a good steward of the role that God has given me, it is only by his grace that I can do so as I juggle working full time as a physical therapist, leading a City Group, writing music, participating in an orthopedic residency program and being a good husband to my wife. I really am being pulled in so many directions.

I appreciate your work and your comments, and I want you to keep me in the loop as you continue to work to find a way to incorporate the Asian-American genre into our music. Know that when I am writing, I am playing with melodies and chord progressions with the same goals in mind, and I have been for a while. If it is ok with you, as I create pieces with this influence, I would love to run them by you before attempting to incorporate them in worship. If you come up with anything, please let me and Breanna know! Thanks again for your help and for the points you raised.

-Sam

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## Music

Judy Dominick <[redacted]>  
To: Sam Crowley <[redacted]>  
Bcc: Breanna Crump <[redacted]>

Mon, Dec 9, 2013 at 12:56 PM

Dear Sam,

Thank you for your message. I appreciate your opening up a channel of communication. There are 2 separate issues that you have addressed and to which I'd like to respond. The first is the communication issue, but it concerns not your communication with the team but with me personally. It had been an ongoing issue for almost an entire year. At the risk of sounding lawyerly, I'll just provide you with a picture of what I was experiencing on my end. It began in January when I first emailed you and Dawn one of my original songs to look at. You told me in person on 2 consecutive Sundays after that email that you would look at it "this week," and that's the last I ever heard about it. I sent you another one at the end of February – a song that I had played a portion of for you and Dawn after one of our rehearsals at your apartment. But after I sent that email, there was no response at all – just silence. That's what prompted me to approach you after church in June and bring it up. You did apologize about forgetting, asked me to resend it, and then, of course, had me play it for you after one of our rehearsals a couple of weeks later, at which time you talked about your intention to incorporate it into Sunday worship some time soon. And that's the last I had any communication from you on the subject. While all this time was passing, I saw you periodically tweet video clips of your own new songs. Although I recognize that it was not your intention, this made me feel easily forgotten, postponed, unimportant, and irrelevant, which actually hit on some things I have experienced as an Asian-American for much of my life.

And that leads into the second issue, which is about incorporating Asian influences into our worship on Sundays. Asian-Americans spend a lot of time feeling like a minority among minorities – invisible, unimportant, easily forgotten, and easily dismissed in favor of other groups' needs and perspectives; and this is the case even at Renovation. While I appreciate the blended worship styles at Renovation, let me say for the record that I experience it as bicultural and not multi-cultural, and the impact it has had on me over time is a sense of alienation, especially when I rarely feel personally engaged or really seen by the people around me when I show up to rehearsal. There are exceptions, of course, but I'm referring to an overall experience. What flowed out of that was an awareness that if I felt that way, then there are certainly others who must feel the same, and I felt it was important to tackle that. Biculturalism can be just as difficult a thing to overcome as monoculturalism because people grow content once a certain pattern is established, and that becomes the new dominant culture. Yet there are always people on the margins that need to have a voice if our church is to be successful at reconciliation not only racially but in all areas of interpersonal alienation. And their voices cannot be funneled through dominant culture representatives. For example, you say, "my greatest fear is that I will create something that is a disingenuous caricature of a certain style" and "When I move further from my personal resource pool and background, the risk of creating a phony version of another musical style increases." May I ask you to consider that it's not something for YOU to create? With respect to Asian-influenced music, I think it's something for Asian and Asian-American musicians to create – for US to hash out and experiment with and discuss with each other, to mold and fine-tune. THAT is how you avoid tokenism: You don't invite people of other ethnicities merely to provide input for your own projects; you invite them to the table as equal contributors, creators, and leaders. When we venture into the multicultural/multiethnic context, music is not just about learning the technicalities of what type of scales or rhythms or instruments are used. Anyone with the right skill set can become a master ethnomusicologist and reduce it to technicalities, but the fact is that music of all the various people groups are an expression of their unique ethnic and cultural identity. And no matter how proficient you get at learning what makes Asian music Asian, you, Sam, will never be expressing an Asian identity. Asian-Americans have a specific narrative that is distinct from whites and Latinos and blacks and Native Americans, etc. Only we can express the emotional ethos that reflects that narrative, including our own intra-group diversity (Japanese, Chinese, East Indian, etc). Likewise, Latinos should lead and write Latino-styled music – not white people, not Asian people, not African-Americans (the obvious exception would be black people from South or Central America). Asian people should lead and write Asian-styled music – not white people, not Latinos, not blacks. The message I got from you was, "Feed me information that I, Sam, can use to create this." It felt like that was your version of "not doing it alone," but to me, that was you doing it alone.

Please know that I fully acknowledge that your role as a worship leader takes place in the larger and complex context of your own life, so I do extend latitude and grace to you. Nevertheless, what I just expressed is an honest account of how your actions, perspective, and lack of communication impacted me. And considering that this was just one more hard thing taking place in the larger context of my own complicated life, I chose to let it go rather than pursue further dialogue with you. I just didn't have the energy to go there, in particular because in my mind, the only way for you to fully receive what I was trying to communicate was for you to undergo a paradigm shift, and it felt too daunting. **It just contributed to my ongoing racial battle fatigue. I hope that makes sense.**

Blessings,

Judy

[Quoted text hidden]





**Sam Crowley**

to me ▾

Judy,

Mon, Dec 9, 2013, 3:17 PM



You are right. I definitely should have communicated better with you as well as with Breanna. I hate that you felt postponed or irrelevant by my handling of your songs, and now that I see more where you are coming from, I can see so much more the many ways that I could have performed better in this particular instance. Thank you for letting me know how you felt so that I would have to go back through the sequence of events to evaluate my actions. My focus was more on musical details and less on how you felt, and that is a reflection of a huge deficiency of mine that I have had to continually address as I have been working in this role. I think this focus on musical intricacies and details often leads to a lack of focus on more personal factors when I get out of balance. I am incredibly thankful for Breanna because one of her best strengths is her ability to keep things besides musical detail in view as she works to make us more musically excellent as well. I have already learned so much from her in that, but I definitely have very far to go.

There is no way that I could contribute any musical piece that would represent another person's cultural experience. I hope that as a songwriter, I can contribute balanced pieces based upon my own personal cultural experience as I strategically help choose songs that cover as wide a cultural ground as possible as I concurrently weigh other factors like the congregational "singability" of a piece. I have a genuine desire to continue to work to create progressive changes in the way that churches worship so that more people feel represented, and my overstepping of my boundaries and limitations in trying to musically contribute more than is possible for a person with limited cultural experience is partially contributed to by my trying to again control factors that I should never try to control. I can learn different musical styles and play them to allow more people's preferences to be addressed, and I will continue to grow as a musician to do that to the full extent of my power because I do want everyone to feel more stylistically reached in our congregation. I realize that my deeper issue is not a technical one but rather more linked to my lack of consideration of more personal factors, especially in this scenario. For that, I am truly sorry to you. I am sorry for blurring the lines in my head between musical style and cultural experience. I am sorry for the way I personally handled the incorporation of your ideas. Now that I see why you took the sabbatical and more of what you were wanting to contribute with the team, I definitely understand more of why you feel the way that you do. Thank you for being open and telling me.

-Sam



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