

Characteristics of Worship Music at HKBP Simpang Limun Medan Church

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the characteristics of worship music at the HKBP Simpang Limun Church in Medan, focusing on the evolution of the presentation of worship music which has now shifted to contemporary music. This transformation can be clearly seen in the use of modern musical instruments such as keyboards, acoustic guitars, bass guitars, drums and saxophones which have replaced the monotony of a single organ in the presentation of worship music. These changes not only create a richer variety in musical expression, but also enrich the worship experience for the congregation, reflecting the church's adaptability in responding to changing times. The purpose of this research is to determine the characteristics of worship music at the HKBP Simpang Limun Church, Medan. The research was conducted at the HKBP Simpang Limun Medan church, Jl. Brother No.30 Sudirejo II, Medan City District, Medan, North Sumatra. The approach used in this research is qualitative with a descriptive type where data is collected using observation, interviews, documentation and literature study methods. Based on the research results, it can be seen the characteristics of the music used in worship at the HKBP Simpang Limun church in terms of style, genres, textual, composition, transmission, movement.

KEYWORDS

*Characteristics
Worship Music
Church*

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INTRODUCTION

Personal experience of attending Sunday services held in various Protestant churches in the city of Medan in the last two decades provides a view of the enormous dynamics of the development of the musical genres used as part of the Sunday services in question. Starting from the use of musical accompaniment in the form of an electric organ solo to a combination of several relatively large electronic and acoustic instruments (Jimmy, 2017; Bill, 2013; Dimas, 2019). Pop music styles range from blues, reggae, rock and keroncong. Likewise, in addition to the song leader (vocal) group, there is accompaniment in the form of a combo, which consists of one drum unit (drum kit), one electric keyboard unit, one electric bass guitar unit (electric bass guitar) and one electric guitar (electric lead guitar) plus a set of sound systems with a capacity adjusted to the size of the church building. Sometimes there are also those who use the combo form as mentioned but paired with one or two saxophone units plus a violin (Kartomi, 2019).

It is also common to find musical accompaniment that uses two to three or even four electric keyboard units plus acoustic instruments such as taganing (tuned-braced drum) and a bamboo flute (transverse bamboo flute). You can imagine how noisy the accompanying music sounds when it appears in the church building accompanying the singing congregation and is led by a group of song leaders with a fairly large sound system

volume. The music genres that have been arranged and displayed show that a number of music genres seem to dominate, namely the pop music style, or the same as the pop music genre that circulates in everyday society.

Since the age of 17, the author has actively participated in religious services with a traditional model of presenting music, where at that time the organ musical instrument was still the main element. The author's journey of exploration in the context of religious services further developed when the author was in Bandung, where the author involved himself in various musical presentations. This experience broadened the author's insight into various models and characteristics of music that can be used in religious contexts.

In 2005, the author's ministry began to focus on the HKBPSL church, which became the subject of the author's research. There, the author witnessed the very dynamic development of church music, providing encouragement for the author to further explore whether the character of the music being promoted was closely related to the congregation present. This opened the door for the author to embark on a deeper journey of exploration to understand how music can be an effective communication channel, while reflecting the unique character of the church and its congregation.

In this research, the author will explore the characteristics of different worship music in three churches in the city of Medan, namely Bethel Indonesia Rumah Persembahan Church (GBIRP), Huria Kristen Batak Protestan Simpang Limun (HKBPSL) and Indonesian Protestant Christian Church Pamen Pandang Bulan (GKPIPM) . The characteristics here meant by the author are the musical elements that are characteristic of each church. Musical elements include: style, genres, textual, composition, transmission, movement. The background for the author to conduct research in the three churches is due to the different characteristics of worship music in the three churches. This may involve in-depth study of the elements that influence the experience of worship music in the church. By understanding these differences, the author can identify the unique characteristics of each church in terms of worship music.



Figure 1. HKBPSL Simpang Limun Church (Doc. Ezra Suliwaty P, 2023)

The conditions and experiences above raised various questions in the writer's mind regarding the use and presentation style of Sunday worship music in the churches in question. First, is the choice of the genre of worship music currently used in Protestant churches the policy of the church leadership? Are there strategic considerations in selecting the genre and presentation style of worship music? If there are strategic considerations in question, are they directed at one or more interests? For example, to attract congregation visits, especially relatively young and new congregation members? Or to provide an alternative service format to congregation members who are relatively young through music packaging that minimizes the relatively 'old fashion' style of hymn music and provides music arrangements that are in the pop genre or similar.

The growth and development of prayer fellowship churches like Bethel Church cannot be stopped. Technology has penetrated so much into the church that musical performances are increasingly catching up with the development of pop music, which has become a significant trend in recent years. The development of pop music was inevitable because it also entered the tribal church environment. Starting from an adequate sound system to achieve good sound quality, using modern and sophisticated instrument equipment to create a distinctive and interesting sound, presenting music that has dynamic arrangements with variations in dynamics, tempo and song structure. Up to the ensemble performance model that resembles a concert. The question now is how can pop, blues, reggae, rock and keroncong music genres enter the tribal church? The development of pop, blues, reggae, rock and keroncong music genres reflects how tribal churches adapt to cultural and technological trends to reach and interact with congregations and younger generations. While it may initially seem like a big change, the introduction of technology and elements of pop music into tribal churches is not impossible.

In the last twenty years, there have been many changes in service schedules in churches in Medan City. Usually the service is held for just one service, but now there have been four services and these also have different worship times. Morning worship, afternoon worship, afternoon worship and evening worship. The author noticed that of these four services, there were two times that used very traditional musical accompaniment (using hymns but using modern arrangements). The first and second services where the author noticed the visitors were mostly older people, but the next two services were filled with young people and the presentation of music was different from the morning service where the average number of visitors were older people. This concerns the writer, why are the music genres different? Why do they use pop music ensembles during afternoon and evening services? There are guitars, bass guitars, keyboards, saxophones, violins, some even play taganing instruments. The music presentation is well structured and complete, all the music presented has been arranged in such a way. Who does it? What's the background? Does it have an impact on the people who come to visit? Is the number or quantity of people who come to the service a target for improving or revising the music presentation? If this is true, then the author wants to see what are the characteristics of the music? Why do pop music genres appear in the three churches? What makes it different? Do these three churches also have the same approach?

This study will discuss the characteristics of worship music at Sunday services in three Protestant churches in the city of Medan. The musical characteristics that will be studied include: style, genres, textual, composition, transmission. (transmission), movement (movement). It was interesting to attend the three services at the three churches because many questions arose from the facts on the ground. Each worship music has different

characteristics, depending on the culture and traditions where the service is held.

This research is intended to examine the characteristics of worship music used by three different churches in the city of Medan. What are the characteristics of worship music? What are the various musical styles used in this music? What is the role and influence of musical elements on strategies to improve the quantity or quality of worship? Is there the influence of local culture or certain traditions in the characteristics of the worship music? What are the characteristics, are they the same or different? Why do churches use it? Does this have anything to do with meeting the congregation's tastes or is this just a strategy to improve quantity, namely the number of congregations present or improve the quality of worship? A number of these questions are the topics that the author will discuss in this research, but to organize them into a problem formulation, the author will carry out further research on each question.

METHOD

Design in research refers to the choice of methods or techniques used in the research process. In the context of this research, researchers adopted qualitative research methods. The use of qualitative methods becomes relevant when the research aims to understand in depth the subjective experiences and meanings provided by the participants. This method involves various approaches, such as direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The research design adopted in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. In the context of qualitative descriptive research, the focus is on providing a comprehensive picture of a particular social context or exploring and clarifying a particular phenomenon or social reality. This approach is applied by describing various relevant variables related to the problem being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

This research emphasizes presenting details and in-depth understanding of the context or phenomenon that is the center of attention, especially related to the characteristics of worship music at services in three Protestant churches in the city of Medan. The descriptive approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of worship music, outline the specific elements that differentiate each church, and explain the context surrounding the experience of worship music in their services (Bogdan, Taylor & DeVault 2015).

To study the characteristics of worship music in services at three Protestant churches in Medan City, researchers used a descriptive qualitative approach. Researchers also included audio-visual analysis by utilizing documentary videos as one of the data sources in this research. The aim of using documentary videos is to provide a visual description of the characteristics of worship music in each church in the research sample, as well as to complement the qualitative data that has been obtained through the interview process and document examination. Through these visual elements, research can provide an additional dimension that enriches the understanding of certain aspects of the tradition, adding depth to the analysis (Faisal, 1990).

Data collection in this research was carried out using instrument documentation techniques from various data sources which will be discussed in this research. Data is something that is obtained through a data collection method that is processed and analyzed using a certain method which will then produce something that can describe or identify something (Haris, 2010: 116).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Musical Policy and Practice in HKBPSL Worship

HKBPSL holds four worship sessions every week, each with its own unique musical presentation. The first, second, and third sessions highlighted the use of the keyboard as the main instrument in composing musical harmonies that accompany worship, as part of the traditions maintained by this church. This reflects the church's commitment to maintaining the continuity of traditional worship styles, especially in terms of music.

In contrast to other churches such as GBIRP and GKPIPM, HKBPSL only uses contemporary music in afternoon services. This decision was based on the consideration that contemporary music was more relevant and suited to the tastes of young people, so the church sought to create a deeper and more meaningful worship environment for the younger generation.

The Relevance of Contemporary Music

Contemporary music has a strong appeal and responsiveness among the younger generation, because they feel connected to spiritual messages through a musical medium that is familiar to the context of their daily lives. Therefore, the presence of contemporary music in the afternoon service not only responds to the dynamics of modern culture, but also creates a worship space that is inclusive and relevant for all members of the congregation, especially the younger generation. In the fourth session, the instruments used involved a variety of modern instruments such as keyboard 2, electric guitar, bass, drums and saxophone. No traditional instruments are used, creating a more contemporary musical experience. In addition, a sophisticated sound system format with a capacity of 7000 watts creates an immersive audio experience during worship.

HKBPSL uses an almanac that has been compiled with the songs that will be performed each week to create diversity and ensure a variety of musical presentations. Songs are selected based on the theme of the service and liturgical context, and given arrangements that suit contemporary musical styles. The musical style used includes elements of pop, rock and keroncong, with the use of improvisation in the song arrangements to create a dynamic and creative atmosphere. This approach allows churches to convey spiritual messages in a way that suits the preferences and needs of their congregation.

Congregation Response and Stage Presentation Style

The positive response from the congregation to the presentation of music reflects the church's success in providing a quality worship experience. The wide stage placement of the musical team and structured songleaders creates a dynamic and organized atmosphere, and facilitates interaction between members of the musical team and the congregation. Through unique musical policies and practices, HKBPSL has succeeded in creating an inclusive, relevant and meaningful worship experience for all members of its congregation, especially the younger generation. By combining traditional and contemporary musical elements, the church maintains its identity while responding to the changing culture and needs of its congregation.

Use of Modern Musical Instruments in the Song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna"

In the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna", there is exclusive use of modern musical instruments without including traditional musical instruments. The melodies used are thought to be produced by modern instruments such as keyboards, electric guitars, and electronic sound elements. The exclusive use of modern musical instruments creates a clean, clear and up-to-date sound, which suits the preferences of modern listeners and creates a strong connection with today's generation. Nonetheless, this approach is intended to provide a fresh twist on traditionally familiar religious songs.

Music Style in "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna"

The musical style or style in this song is closely related to the use of modern musical instruments such as keyboard, bass, acoustic guitar, saxophone and electric drums. This combination of instruments creates a rich and dynamic sound, blending modern elements with traditional character. Even though this song adopts modern musical instruments, the presence of acoustic guitar and saxophone gives it a classic and organic touch, creating a balanced blend of traditional elements and modern innovation. The rhythms in this song provide an energetic and dynamic listening experience, especially when supported by a modern drum set and electronic percussion. The choice of using a modern drum set provides freedom in rhythmic expression, creating a clear beat and giving a more complex dimension to the composition.

The use of electronic percussion adds a modern touch to the rhythm, bringing clarity and sharpness to every beat. The powerful rhythm produced by this combination not only creates intense dynamics, but also creates an accompanying vibrant atmosphere. This really supports a lively worship atmosphere, where powerful rhythms can inspire enthusiasm and solemnity in the worship community. With this dynamic and energetic rhythm, the song is able to depict a passionate musical experience, creating a solid foundation for worship and spiritually connecting singer and listener in an atmosphere of joyful worship.

"Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" Music Genre

The musical genre of this song can be identified as contemporary pop. The melody and harmony structure of this song reflects the characteristics of the contemporary pop genre with a melodic pattern that is catchy, easy to remember, and directly involves the listener. The use of common chords and relatively simple harmony progressions gives the listener a familiar and relatable impression, in keeping with the characteristics of modern pop music.

The decision to adopt the pop genre shows the HKBPSL church's efforts to approach the younger generation and understand changes in their musical tastes. By incorporating pop elements into worship, this church creates opportunities for active congregational participation, creating a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Even though it does not use traditional music, the HKBPSL church remains committed to conveying spiritual meaning in every service, combining religious messages with the style and rhythm of pop music that is popular among its congregation. This approach reflects the adaptation and relevance of the HKBPSL church to cultural and musical changes, while still prioritizing strengthening the congregation's spiritual experience.

Composition and Musical Transmission of "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna"

This song composition combines the beauty of a traditional melody with a modern touch through the use of modern musical instruments. The process of transmitting worship music at HKBPSL is a special moment, because it not only relies on existing musical heritage but also integrates new creative elements. In this endeavor, there is a dynamic blend of rich religious musical traditions and innovation that reflects the spirit of today.

The unique characteristics of the Batak language are reflected in the lyrics of worship songs at HKBPSL, becoming an important part of the church's cultural identity. The use of the Batak language not only provides a strong cultural foundation, but also provides a unique depth to the meaning and spiritual expression in each song. The text of the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" is the main focus in the musical analysis, providing an opportunity to dig deeper into the elements that make up the auditive experience. Through its musical performance, this song presents variations and nuances that enrich the significance of each word in the lyrics. The following is the text used in the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna":

Sai Ro Ma Hamuna

Sai ro ma hamuna angka na porsea

Sai ro ma hamuna tu Betlehem

Ida dakdanak, sipalua hita

Tasomba ma ibana,

tasomba ma Ibana, tasomba ma Ibadan, Rajanta

O Raja na sangap Tuhan ni saluhut

Di taon Ho na porsuk di tano on

Ala ni jolma na di hamagoan

Tasomba ma ibana, tasomba ma Ibana, tasomba ma Ibadan, Rajanta

Hamuna suruan, puji ma Jahowa

Rap dohot sude na martua i

Sangap di Tuhan Debata di Surgo

Tasomba ma ibana, tasomba ma Ibana, tasomba ma Ibadan, Rajanta

O Jesus Tuhanku sai naeng pujionku

PambaenMu di ahu pardosa on

Ai gabe jolma Ho humophop ahu

Tasomba ma ibana, tasomba ma Ibana, tasomba ma Ibadan, Rajanta

The process of distributing worship music at HKBPSL is a special moment because it not only relies on existing musical heritage, but also combines new creative elements. In this endeavor, there is a dynamic blend of rich religious musical traditions and innovation that reflects the spirit of today. Through this distribution, worship songs that inherit traditional Batak melodies and harmonies can be revived with a touch of new creativity. The use of modern musical instruments, innovative arrangements, and a focus on audio production quality are important factors in updating the worship music experience.

This combination of tradition and innovation gives a broader dimension to HKBPSL's worship music. The religious messages contained in the lyrics of traditional songs are reinforced by modern musical presentations, creating a relevant and festive atmosphere for the congregation. The distribution of worship music at HKBPSL not only acts as a bridge to the history and heritage of Batak music, but also as a medium to stimulate new creativity and maintain cultural richness through dynamic and meaningful worship.

Movements in the Worship Music "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna"

Movement has an important role in worship music at HKBPSL. Instruments and rhythm play a crucial role in shaping the unique characteristics of the worship experience. The congregation's physical movements respond to the rhythm and instruments, reflecting joy and passionate expression in the celebration of faith and worship of God. The song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" opens with the basic chord G=do. With a 2/4 time signature, this song displays a dynamic rhythm. With a 2/4 time signature, this song has fast rhythmic movements, allowing the musicians and congregation to feel the energy of the melody it carries. This combination of a strong base note and dynamic time signature creates an exciting foundation for further melodic exploration, resulting in a compelling musical experience for the listener.

The intro to the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" starts from bar 15 to bar 21. It starts with the saxophone as the melody, reinforced by a harmonious touch from the keyboard which gives it a distinctive color. The softness of the saxophone melody is combined with the warmth of the acoustic guitar chords providing an emotional touch, while the bass plays a strong and deep role to build a solid foundation. This combination of instruments creates a rich and captivating atmosphere, inviting listeners into the flow of music that flows as the song progresses.

The percussion gives a new dimension to the intro, with a catchy beat and driving rhythm, creating a truly immersive feel. As we move into the first verse, the beauty of the saxophone melody and the harmony of the keyboard further enrich the listening experience, forming a very beautiful musical whole. The combination of powerful percussion sounds with gentle melodies and beautiful harmonies creates an enchanting feeling and immerses the listener in the magic of this music.



The image shows a musical score for the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna". It consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff covers bars 1-7, and the second staff covers bars 8-14. Chords are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Staff 1 (Bars 1-7):

- Chords: G, Am/G, D/F7, G, C, G/D, D, Em, D A/C D/F# G
- Lyrics: Sai ro ma ha mu na ang ka na por se a, sai ro ma mu na tu
 O Ra ja, na sa ngap, Tu han ni sa lu hut, di taon Ho por suk di
 Ha mu ba su ru an pu ji ma Ja ho wa, rap do hot de na mar
 O Je sus Tu han hu sai naeng pu ji on ku pam ba en di au par do

Staff 2 (Bars 8-14):

- Chords: D/A, A7, D, G/B, Am, G, C/E, G, D, Em, D, A, D, G, G/D
- Lyrics: Bet le hem I da Dak da nak, Si pa lu a hi ta, ta somba ma I ba na, ta
 ta no on A la ni jol ma na di ha ma go an, ta somba ma I ba na, ta
 tu a i Sa ngap di Tu han De ba ta di su go, ta somba ma I ba na, ta
 sa on Ai ga be jol ma Ho hu mophop a u, ta somba ma I ba na, ta

Figure 2. Bars 1 – 14 Composition "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" (Doc. Ezra Susilawaty, 2023)

Bars 1 to 14, the elegance of the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" increasingly shows its musical charm. Keyboard 1 plays a melody that flows like strands of strings, touching the listener's feelings with tenderness and beauty. Simultaneously, Keyboard 2 provides additional dimension through echoing chords, creating a harmonic framework that strengthens the overall composition.

Acoustic guitar and bass enter the stage with a colorful presence. The acoustic guitar fills the space with its soft touch, while the bass adds depth and boldness to the musical foundation. The two combine harmoniously, forming layers of sound that captivate the listener's heart. Wrapped in percussive magic, this song increasingly enters the territory of modern music with such a beautiful style. Percussive beats and nuances provide flowing energy, creating a seductive feel and combining traditional beauty with a contemporary touch. At this moment, "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" creates an enchanting listening experience, combining classical harmony with modern elements with extraordinary beauty.

In the context of worship music at HKBPSL, the role of movement is very important and is a part that uniquely characterizes the worship experience. Instruments and rhythm have a central role in shaping the characteristics of the worship experience. However, emphasis is often placed on instruments capable of creating moving rhythms. Dynamic and energetic rhythms are not only a musical aspect, but also a natural impetus for physical movements that invite the congregation to be actively involved in worship activities. The selection of instruments such as keyboard, saxophone, acoustic guitar, bass and drums produces strong sound harmony. The dynamic rhythm creates an atmosphere of positivity and enthusiasm that is contagious throughout the worship space. This results in spontaneous movements, such as body vibrations, that reflect excitement and passionate expression.

Through a combination of instruments and moving rhythms, worship music at HKBPSL not only functions as vocal accompaniment, but also becomes a spiritual driver that motivates active congregational participation. The congregation's physical movements are not only a response to rhythm, but also an inseparable part of spiritual expression. The characteristics of worship music at HKBPSL, which rely on instruments and moving rhythms, form a worship experience that is dynamic, energetic, and involves the entire congregation as a whole. It becomes a medium of joyful expression and participation in commemorating faith and worship of God.

CONCLUSION

HKBP Simpang Limun Church experienced a significant transition in the presentation of worship music, moving from a monotonous tradition with a single organ to the use of contemporary music. With the existence of modern musical instruments, the presentation of worship music has become more varied and dynamic. This provides a more engaging worship experience and suits the preferences of a more diverse congregation. The characteristics of worship music at HKBP Simpang Limun involve elements such as style, genre, text, composition, transmission and movement in the presentation of the music. This church emphasizes the diversity of musical styles and genres in worship. The transition to contemporary music presents more modern genres such as pop, keroncong, rock, creating a diverse musical experience.

The presentation of the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" by HKBPSL displays a creative and dynamic approach to the musical process. The musicians are not tied to the score, but instead adopt the artistic freedom to imbue the song with their personal expression. This creates an organic collaboration that allows for spontaneous improvisation and interpretation, making their performances authentic and emotional.

Song texts for worship have deep theological meaning. Worship music compositions show high dynamics. The use of modern musical instruments such as keyboards, acoustic

guitars, bass guitars, drums, saxophones provide a dynamic and energetic dimension to the presentation of music, creating an atmosphere of enthusiastic worship. The presentation of music in this church is not only static, but also involves movement and active participation of the congregation. Dynamic music encourages physical and emotional reactions, creating a more holistic worship experience.

Changes in musical presentation can also motivate active congregational participation. More modern and dynamic music can create a more stimulating worship atmosphere and invite more congregational participation. The use of contemporary music shows the church's response to changing times. This church is open to adaptations in worship presentation to remain relevant and provide a satisfying spiritual experience for the congregation.

The presentation of the song "Sai Ro Ma Hamuna" by HKBPSL displays a creative and dynamic approach to the musical process. The musicians are not tied to the score, but instead adopt the artistic freedom to imbue the song with their personal expression. This creates an organic collaboration that allows for spontaneous improvisation and interpretation, making their performances authentic and emotional.

The song's intro with a gentle touch of saxophone creates an enchanting atmosphere, preparing the listener for a unique musical experience. Through the collaboration of modern musical instruments such as keyboard, guitar, bass, and drums, the song is given a powerful and dynamic dimension, providing a fresh touch to the tradition of worship music.

In the context of worship, music has a significant positive impact on congregational participation. Music is not only an accompaniment, but also a means to build emotional bonds, convey religious messages, and create an atmosphere that stimulates active participation. Investing in worship music not only honors arts and culture, but also enhances the church community as a whole.

The use of pop music genres in worship is a responsive step to the dynamics of the times, allowing church leaders to create worship experiences that are relevant and connected to the congregation. By striking a balance between modernity and spiritual authenticity, and with regular evaluation of its impact, church leaders can create worship that is inclusive, meaningful, and inspiring for the congregation.

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