

# Songwriting WS

*Notes and input*

Brainstorming

# Different kinds of music

- Instrumental music (classical, Jazz, Blues, fingerstyle guitar, Irish (and other) Folk, ...)
- Spoken word/poetry performed to music
- Opera
- Pop
- Rap, Hip-hop
- Rock, Heavy Metal, Punk, ...
- "Western" (European / North American) music, "non-western" music with different tonalities
- Irish Lilt (singing that imitates instruments)

# Different kinds of music

- Barbershop
- Techno
- Dorian
- Tibetan monastery prayer sells
- Mongolian throat singing
- Gregorian chorals
- Ambient
- Raggae
- Funk
- Various traditional music
- Romantic (Kunstlied)
- Hardstage
- Mu-Metal
- Psychedelic
- Shanties
- Ska
- Baroque
- Freejazz
- House
- R'n'B
- Progame / non-progame
- Drum and Bass
- ...

# Different kinds of songs and their purposes

- Ballads (long, focus on lyrics and the story/message, maybe even just (lots of) verses without chorus, or many verses and few choruses)
- Pop songs (catchy, simple melody and structure, verse, chorus, bridge, lyrics maybe not as important as music / beats and rhythm. Well produced, to be played on the radio/streamed a lot, not too long)
- Nursery songs (simple, fun, maybe also teaching a morale), lullabies
- Highly produced songs that “need” the production vs. songs that work just with one instrument
- Songs for the biggest possible audience or specific groups / persons (friends, family etc.)

# Different kinds of songs and their purposes

- Love songs, breakup songs
- March music (-> get people together. Dictators love this trick. Create a “community”)
- Operatic, Aria
- Cinematic music
- Karaoke-able
- Dance music
- Folk
- Politically motivated songs
- National anthems

# Different kinds of songs and their purposes

- “Heart” songs (I want..., I need...)
- Focus music (background music, e.g. for studying)
- Advertisement songs
- Wake-up songs
- Answer songs (replying to another song)
- Campfire songs
- Musicals
- Funny songs
- “joining in” songs. Canons and Rounds

# Different kinds of lyrics

- Personal
- Telling a story, either fictional or real, creating a vibe
- Activistical, political songs
- Soothing vs. aggrevating
- Conversational (“Don’t Go Breaking My Heart”)
- Cumulitative (A, A&B, A&B&C, ...)
- Abstract vs. concrete
- Rhyming vs. not rhyming
- Different languages in one song
- Open ended

# Different parts of a song

- Intro
  - Short (or long) instrumental or sung melody, or spoken part
  - Gaining attention of the listener, enable to recognize the song
  - Setting the mood (+ key and rhythm) of the song
  - Can be similar to rest of song or contrasting
- Verse
  - Telling the “story” of the song, setting the mood
  - Leading to chorus in line with the or surprising
  - “Text delivery vehicle”
- Pre-Chorus
  - Linking the verse and chorus
  - Building up tension through melody and/or lyrics that lifts with the chorus
- Chorus
  - The main “message” and distinguishing part of the song (through melody and/or lyrics)
  - The part that people usually think of first/remember/want to sing
  - Catchy and memorable
  - Often more voices + instruments, more power (but can also go quieter)
  - Often higher melody too
  - Gets repeated the most

# Different parts of a song

- Interlude/Solo
  - Providing a (instrumental) break and variation to the chorus and verse
  - Giving instrumentalists (or singers) a chance to shine as well
  - May pick up the melody from the singer or do sth. Different, can repeat/reference the intro or be different
  - Gives it more space
- Bridge
  - A variant to the verses and chorus, an extra part, usually more towards the end, often between choruses
  - Creating tension, leading the story and music into a different direction
  - Possibly with mood change / key change / different chords
- Outro/Coda
  - Another short (or long) instrumental or sung melody (or repetition of intro).
  - Can also feature another turn in the story, have a surprise/change in the end
  - Signals that the song is ending
  - Fading out vs. ending with a “bang”
  - Can be variation of chorus in the end
  - Possibly different music, different lyrics
- A-Part, B-Part (tunes)
- Balance between (amount of) parts the song really needs and unnecessary repetitions

# What makes a song interesting?

- “Interesting” / unexpected notes and/or chords creating tension and surprise / that stand out
- The structure of the song, creating an arc of suspense
- Changes in tempo and key creating a dramatic effect
- Unexpected content / changes in the lyrics, a missing “solution” in the lyrics
- Variations in the repeated songparts, e.g. slightly different melodies in the verse, a changed line in a chorus
- An “interesting” topic can both be a very common topic that the listener easily identifies with or an unusual topic that grabs their attention

# What makes a song interesting?

- A novel idea
- Mixing styles
- An unusually well-working progression
- The arrangement (a-capella, etc.)
- Being groovy
- Instrumental / orchestral parts
- The story behind it
- Music jokes
- Dropping (or not dropping) the bass
- Authenticity

# What makes a song catchy?

- Hook lines
  - A melody line that “hooks” the listener, grabs their attention and keeps the song in their head, easy to remember and/or interesting and unique
- Rhythm
- Repetitions / lead motives
  - Motives in melody and/or lyrics that reappear throughout the song
- Easy melodies
- Guitar/instrumental riffs
- Chromatic scales
- Cowbell
- Chorus is higher than the verse → buildup

# What makes songs different from each other?

- Chord structure / harmonies
- Melody
- Tempo / rhythm
- “Mood” of the song
  - The clearer the “mood” of the song, the easier it is to “understand” for the listener
- Arrangement / instruments used
- Lyrics
- Genre
- Leeeeeeeenght
- Vocal “colour” / way of singing, different singers’ voices
- Experimentativeness
- Cadences
- Comedy-seriousness

# “Standard” chord progressions

Standard chord progressions

<u>I</u> (tonic)	<u>IV</u> (sub-dominant)	<u>V</u> (dominant)	<u>VI</u> (parallel minor)	II	III	VII
C	F	G	am	dm	em	Bdim
D	G	A	Bm	em	f#m	c#dim
E	A	B	C#m	f#m	g#m	D#dim
F	B <sup>b</sup>	C	dm	gm	am	Edim
G	C	D	em	am	Bm	F#dim
A	D	E	f#m	Bm	C#m	G#dim
B	E	F#	g#m	c#m	d#m	B <sup>b</sup> dim

Tasks

Write a catchy slogan and melody for an **advertisement**, e.g. for

- Cheese
- An insurance company
- A transatlantic airline
- Chocolate-covered gooseberries
- The newest bestselling thriller
- The fastest and most efficient sewing machine to date

**Go outside**, take a walk around the castle and write a short song about what you've seen and experienced (sights, smells, noises, stories, other creatures), or have a walk up the tower, look down and write about what you see from there.

## **Story writing:**

Fold a piece of paper several times, start writing a sentence and pass it on to the other person, who writes another sentence. In the end you have a story that you can turn into a song 😊

Take some **lines from books or newspapers** and turn them into songs.

You can also use the “cut up”-technique, where you take several lines/parts of a text from different places in the text and mix them together.

Just write down any **words or phrases that come to your mind** without any filter.

Then see whether you can make a story out of that.

Don't actively try to come up with a melody, but just go about your day and **hum and sing while doing whatever you're doing**, and see what you instinctively come up with!

**Listen to some of your favourite songs** and pay attention to its structure, its lyrical content, it's mood (tempo, instruments used, way of singing).

## Write some music to the **Lorem Ipsum** text

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Do a **mesh-up** of songs – try and find two songs that share a similar key and similar chords and try and put them together, either one after the other, or over each other.

Look up a **poem** and write music to it (there's also some lying here).  
Or take an **existing instrumental** (classical, jazz, etc.) and come up with some lyrics.

Pick a song you know and try to **rewrite the lyrics** by changing the story / the perspective / the characters in it etc.

Pick some Dixit cards and use them as inspiration for your lyrics.

Write a new verse for a **childrens song** you know.

Rewrite the lyrics to **Ode to Joy**.

Pick **3-4 notes** and come up with a melody containing only these notes!

Play around with an **unfamiliar instrument** and see what new melodies it makes you think of.

**Tips & tricks**

See what happens to the mood of the song if you turn all the chords from **major to minor** (or the other way round)!

Use the **loop station** to record a riff or part of your song and either play it over and over for inspiration, or add part after part to have a huge buildup.

Try thinking about **what you like about the songs** that you like.

Try "painting" with words and mention all senses (seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, feeling)

Make a wordcloud / mindmap, just collecting all kinds of words and phrases that you like (from their sound and/or meaning) and/or that fit to your topic

Sing your song out loud as much as you can to see whether it *feels* right.

Don't censor your ideas! Just try to let it flow without thoughts of any expectations

Try out different keys and ways of singing your song to find the perfect pitch and mood for the song and your abilities.

If you have the melody, try out different chords for each note/phrase, sometimes there's more than one possible chord and each can give it a different mood!

If you have a melody already, try to sing to it and see what **sounds/vowels/syllables** instinctively come out of your mouth. Also pay attention to the emphases of the melody. Then try to base the words for the lyric on those sounds!

The clearer the “**mood**” of the **song** (depending on the tempo, instruments used, your way of singing), the easier it is to “understand” for the listener.

Think about what kind of story you want to tell and what kind of parts that song might need for that (verse, bridge, (pre-)chorus, ...).

Get feedback on your ideas from the others!

It's okay to let a song / an idea rest for a few hours or days and come back to it if you get stuck!

# Noting down songs

- Full score
  - Most effort. One line for every instrument / voice, showing all the notes played/sung by it + lyrics. Mostly for classical or a-capella/choir music.
  - Musescore (download [here](#))
- Simplified version / lead sheet
  - One line with the melody/lyrics + chords for instruments above
  - Or just the bars with chords (mostly for instrumentals)
- Lyric sheet
  - Simplest version. Just the lyrics written down with the chords noted above, without the melody. Make sure you remember the melody (via audio recording or similar)!
  - Word, handwritten, [ChordPro](#)

**SINISTER THEME**  
(For scenes of impending danger)

Total time with repeats 4 min. 35 sec.  
From 1 to 2 " 1 min. 50 sec.  
From 3 to 3 " 1 min. 35 sec.  
From 3 to 4 1 min. 40 sec.

Piano  
Conductor  
PAUL VELY  
Orch. by Sol P. Levy

11

And<sup>te</sup> molto e misterioso

1

Strings

Oh Cl.

meno a poco animato

Horns

Lyrics

dim.

mf

Danny Boy chords (Londonderry Air) from www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

Frederick Weatherly

D7 G G7 C  
Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling D G D7  
From glen to glen, and down the mountain side Em  
The summer's gone, and all the flowers are dying C  
'Tis you, 'tis you must go and I must bide. G C G  
But come ye back when summer's in the meadow D G  
Or when the valley's hushed and white with snow D A7 D7  
'Tis I'll be here in sunshine or in shadow G  
Oh Danny boy, oh Danny boy, I love you so. G C G

**Ressources**

Overview over a lot of chords:

<https://www.stufentheorie.de/cheatsheet.php>

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com>

<https://www.edmprod.com/ultimate-melody-guide/>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Pop-Song>

<https://blog.sonicbids.com/4-weird-but-awesome-ways-to-come-up-with-creative-lyrics-you-havent-tried>

<https://strudel.cc/>

# Input from Songwriting Workshop 2017 (courtesy of Jens)