



Western
UNIVERSITY • CANADA

Self-As Composer

Exploring Composition & Self-Identity in Choral Music

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“If we want children to be musicians, they should be musicians from the start”

Upitis, 1991

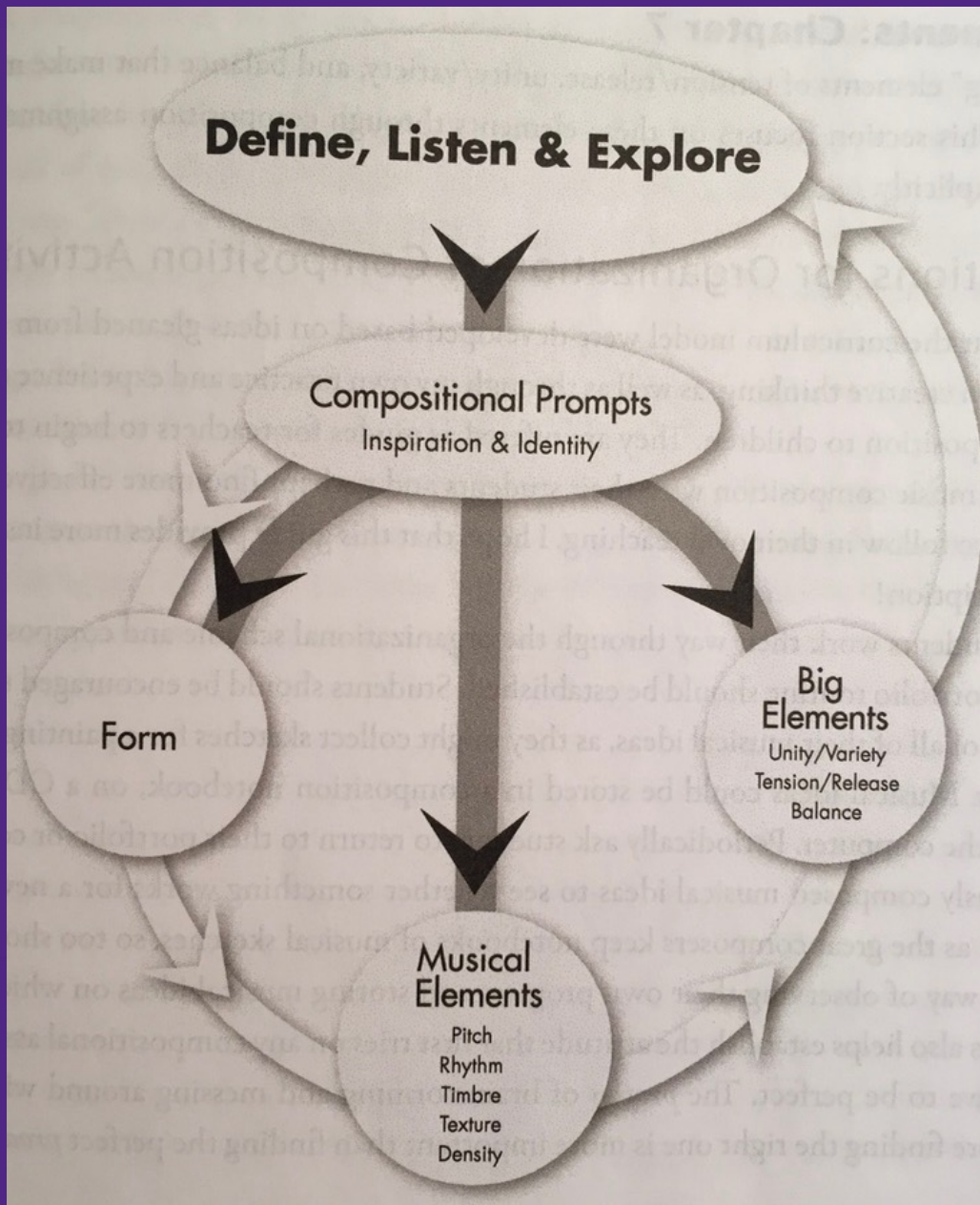
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- Participatory Music Making (Turino, 2008)

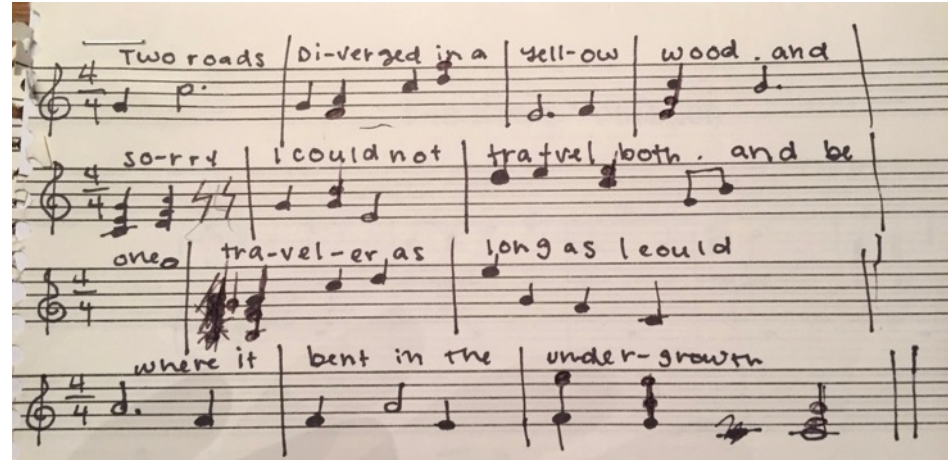




Hickey, 2012

Interwoven with Repertoire

- Challenge Warmups
- New Variations
- New Phrase Endings
- Rhythmic compositions
- Original harmonies for existing melodies
- Original compositions based on the mood, form, or melody of an existing piece



Interdisciplinary

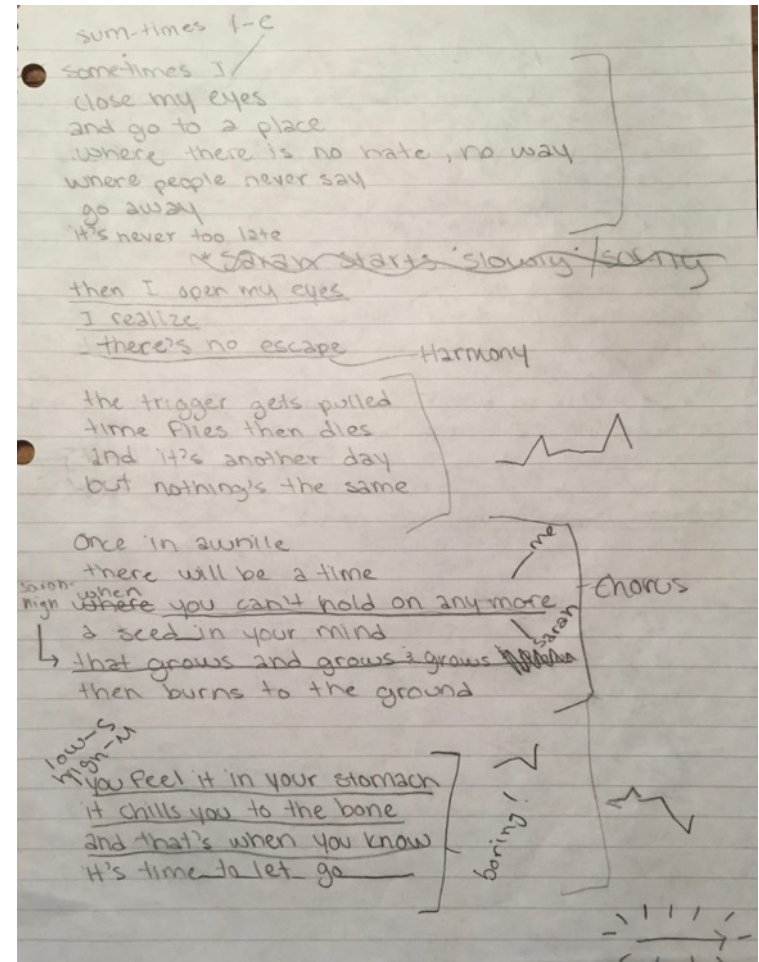
- Greatest American Spoken Word Project
- Holocaust Poetry Compositions
- Composing to Artwork



Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942

Stand Alone Compositions

- Soundscapes
- Commercial Jingles
- Silent Film Scores
- Alternative Notation



Pressures from Without

Student Agency

I like composing because I have control. The decisions are mine to make, the music does what I want it to do. There's no right answer. My opinion matters...It's not, like, school...it's just me making things.

-Evan

We just thought it was cool to learn about the Torres Strait Islands and we love the song, but we wanted to add a percussion line, so we decided to listen to different performances and then wrote our own. The coolest part was when the rest of the choir wanted us to lead the song.

-Andrea

Self-As-Creator

We had a breakthrough when we were exploring because we stopped thinking about the music from band. We stopped thinking about quarter notes and stuff and we decided to just be like whatever, the sky is the limit, you know? We actually TALKED to each other...and then, it really felt like that was when we became composers and now I think about all the music we sing and play like a composer, not just like a performer.

-Jana

I know lots of people in choir didn't think we'd choose the lullabye, but, like, I have a little brother and I sing him to sleep...and it's not like I sing Kanye when I want him to go to bed, but the lullabies I know are boring, so I thought I could compose one and then my brother could see that I could write music and that's cool...it's not just a song I learned at school...it's one I made...it's one I'm proud of.

-Jonathan

Implications for Practice

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- Students need to be taken seriously as creative music-makers / composers
- Composition curriculum should weave school practices with “real world” experiences
- Composition can – and should be – foundational in performance-based classrooms

**To whom are we
listening?**



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