

# LYRIC DRIVEN SONGWRITING

**An AnySquared Workshop**

GET TO KNOW YOU

WHAT MAKES A SONG?

# WHAT MAKES A SONG?

a song is a poem set to music, meant to be sung

a song is a musical form of communication

a song is a story

POETRY & LITERARY  
DEVICES

# SONGWRITING THROUGH POETRY

- Form and Structure
  - recognizable form that allows a reader/listener to move with the writer as the writer intends
- Rhyme
  - a comforting sound/expectation that helps bring things together
- Rhythm
  - cadence, syllable counts that create a memorable rhythm

“Hope” is the thing  
with feathers  
– Emily Dickinson

“HOPE” IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS -  
THAT PERCHES IN THE SOUL -  
AND SINGS THE TUNE WITHOUT THE WORDS -  
AND NEVER STOPS - AT ALL -

AND SWEETEST - IN THE GALE - IS HEARD -  
AND SORE MUST BE THE STORM -  
THAT COULD ABASH THE LITTLE BIRD  
THAT KEPT SO MANY WARM -

I’VE HEARD IT IN THE CHILDEST LAND -  
AND ON THE STRANGEST SEA -  
YET - NEVER - IN EXTREMITY  
IT ASKED A CRUMB OF ME

# Dear Hope, Sara Bareilles

[VERSE 1]

READ A BOOK ON HEMINGWAY  
CLOSED MY EYES TO SEE  
THE MAN HIMSELF APPEARED TO SAY  
TO WRITE IS JUST TO BLEED

[PRE-CHORUS 1]

SO I WILL WRITE IT DOWN, ALL THE JAGGED EDGES  
THE UGLINESS I'VE SEEN  
UNTIL I CHANGE THE TRUTH, REARRANGE THE LETTERS  
FOR BEAUTY UNDERNEATH

[CHORUS]

DEAR HOPE  
IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, DON'T GO  
I DON'T FEEL YOU NOW, BUT I  
KNOW YOU'RE THERE

DEAR HOPE

I COULD REALLY USE YOU NOW  
THROW ME A ROPE  
THROW ME A ROPE  
DEAR HOPE

[VERSE 2]

I CAN'T SEEM TO SHAKE IT YET  
FEELING THAT THINGS MAY NEVER CHANGE  
IT ALWAYS BREAKS MY HEART  
WHEN BROKEN PARTS ACHE TO HEAL AGAIN

[PRE-CHORUS 2]

SO I WILL WRITE IT DOWN AND MAKE JAGGED EDGES  
INTO SOMETHING I CAN HOLD  
DON'T WANNA LOSE MY WAY  
LIKE DEAR HEMINGWAY  
SO I WON'T LET GO

# COMMONLY USED LITERARY DEVICES

- Rhyme
- Imagery
- Metaphor
- Simile
- Repetition
- Idiom
- Oxymoron
- Juxtaposition
- Parallelism
- Alliteration
- Symbolism
- Pun
- Personification
- Synecdoche
- Litotes
- Hyperbole
- Anaphora
- Assonance
- Onomatopoeia
- Allusion
- Metonymy

# BUILDING BLOCKS: FORM AND STRUCTURE OF A SONG

- Different genres will follow different structures
- similar to poetry, some structures are easy to recognize
- Each part of a song serves a purpose
- Pop/Rock: A B A' B' C B''
- Folk: A A' A''
- Folk: A B A C
- Pairing structure with purpose makes for a powerful song!

Intro

Verse

Prechorus

Chorus

Post/Hook

Motif

Bridge

Instrumental

Outro

WHAT IS THE  
MESSAGE BEING  
DELIVERED?

# PURPOSE...PURPOSE... PURPOSE!!!

- Convey an emotion
- Communicate with someone/group
- Process an event/emotion
- Learn something
- Protest
- Gossip
- Hype
- Set a mood
- Make a statement about something/someone
- Commercial use/messaging

# USING STRUCTURE TO COMMUNICATE

## VERSE

- Detail oriented
- literary devices commonly used
- Supporting evidence
- can become what you need to fill the gaps

## CHORUS

- Thesis Statement
- most hooky part of the song
- the main idea

## BRIDGE

- Breakthrough moment where another big idea comes in
- sonically different
- epiphany

# USING LITERARY DEVICES TO COMMUNICATE

## RELATABILITY/CONNECTION

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Imagery
- Personification
- Idiom

## IMPORTANCE

- Repetition
- Oxymoron
- Juxtaposition
- Alliteration
- Hyperbole

## COMPARISON

- Parallelism
- Symbolism
- Allusion
- Assonance

STORYTELLING  
THROUGH  
SONGWRITING

# TWO GENERAL BUCKETS OF STORYTELLING

## Like a Movie!

- verses set scenes, introduce characters
- visual lyrics - listener should be able to have a point of reference they can see and connect to
- Plot of story is easy to follow
- direct details to story

## Like a Book!

- Story is in there, but listener needs to dig deeper
- multiple interpretations are very common
- the story itself isn't as important as the emotion that guides the story
- not as many hard details on setting, but easily connected to a feeling

# EVERYTHING IS A STORY

- Choosing how you want to tell your story is the secret sauce to accomplishing your purpose/end result in mind
- I want to...
  - connect with listeners
  - inspire action
  - educate them about something
  - send a message to someone/a group
  - criticize something
  - tell a story we all know with a twist/my way
  - present a conflict
  - process my emotions

YOUR TURN!

# GETTING A SONG STARTED: FIND YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

- Brain Dump
- Spot cool words/phrases
- spot concepts/ideas for later
- voice notes with melodic ideas
- conversation - things that come up together
- Be okay with crappy ideas!!

# MY TIPS AND TRICKS

- It's okay to be crappy
- make some decisions, see them through, and change your mind
- give yourself some rules, stick to them, and maybe break them
- be as clear as you can on what your purpose is
- Use prompts, borrowed lines, existing chord progressions
- remove as many barriers to entry

OPTIONAL LISTENING...

DEPORTEE (PLANE WRECK AT LOS  
GATOS)

— THE BYRDS/WOODIE GUTHRIE

MEXICAN CHEF

—XENIA RUBINO

AMERICAN IDIOT

—GREEN DAY

MANISTEE

— MIKE FOX

ATTENTION

— BREAKFAST BUFFET

TO WHOM IT MAY

CONCERN

— THE CIVIL WARS

ROOM FOR YOU

— BER

THE HOUSE THAT BUILT ME

— MIRANDA LAMBERT

INVISIBLE STRING

— TAYLOR SWIFT