

A wooden signpost with two posts stands on a green hill. The sign is made of horizontal wooden planks and has the text 'Sound Town' and 'Population 3,642' written on it. Below the sign is a dark grey road with a dashed white line down the center. The background is a solid blue sky.

# Sound Town

Population 3,642

**Edited by Rachel Berry,  
Phoebe Campbell, and Paris Taylor**

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To our readers,

As you have wandered here, whether you're passing through, are on vacation, or are a resident, we—the editors—would like you to welcome to Sound Town. As you journey through the town, you will discover a diverse love of sounds from musical ballads, gentle rains, and even silence. In Sound Town, we like to pride ourselves on accepting a variety of sounds that influence our residents in all areas of their life.

Sound Town is home to many writers. In this information booklet about the town, we would like to highlight and make known some of the sounds that have influenced these writers in their works. Throughout the town, you'll discover specific buildings housing the specific sounds these writers enjoy.

As you venture out and explore all that the town has to offer, I hope that you take the time to allow the sounds to fill your soul and influence your work, actions, and deeds.

We hope you enjoy your stay in this lovely town!

Sincerely,  
The editors

# Sound Town



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# Write Your Own Game

By Aja McFarland

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*The arcade is a source of entertainment in the town. Many youth and families enjoy coming here after school and for family game nights. The arcade features old-school favorites such as Pacman and Galaga, as well as newer games like Fruit Ninja and Mario Kart.*

\*\*\*

While sometimes it is best to write in silence with the text as your only companion, other times it may be prudent to match the music to what it is that you're writing. Conversely, using music as font of inspiration is a useful tool to get warmed up or work through writer's block. For new music this is doubly so, as there are no fingerprints of past works lingering around to smudge the creativity of new pieces—though new songs may certainly remind you of old times. To this end, I have created a small set list of songs from one of my favorite artists, a Japanese game designer and composer that goes by the alias ZUN. Most likely, these songs will be unfamiliar to you, even to those more familiar with general genre conventions of video game soundtracks. Though I prefaced this section by describing the ability of music to help us overcome writer's block, you are of course free to do with these recommendations as you see fit. Beneath each song, I included one of my own free writes to the music, which could be used as an extended prompt to generate ideas or a starter to practice various skills and techniques. Please listen with great care and enjoy.

## 永夜抄 ~ Eastern Night (Touhou 8)

A young woman sits in her room. It is dark with the moon hidden out of view of her window, and the lights of her dorm shut off. She stares vacantly at the blank document where her paper is supposed to take form and thinks back to the novella that she had to write in high school. It was hastily written, ill-planned, and certainly not very good, and yet she wants to rewrite it all the same.

## 幻視の夜 ~ Ghostly Eyes (Touhou 8)

An anxious man bumps into a couple. He gets up from where he tripped and apologizes to them but is only met with a harsh glare from the pretty thing on his arm. His apologetic demeanor changes as quickly as a thief in the night, and he crosses his arms instead of walking away. People around them walk by with the quick glances of those who want so desperately to ogle and stare but have the restraint not to watch.



## 蠢々秋月 ~ Mooned Insect (Touhou 8)

A cat skitters from side to side, chasing the headlights that flit by outside. The lace curtains have already been punctured and ripped, falling in small shreds on the old wood below. The last car goes by, and the cat sits and watches and waits, but nothing else breaks the dark night.

## 故郷の星が映る海 — The Sea Where One's Home Planet Reflects (Touhou 15)

Somewhere far away, a student blinks in and out of sleep, ebbing like the night tide. Her eyes hurt to close, but she still looks at the notes in front of her with the determination of someone putting in too much, too late. The light from the lamp is as bright as could be, and she's shorn her covers in an effort to make herself too uncomfortable to rest. Soon enough, the pen slips from her hand and clatters to the messy floor.

## 魔法少女達の百年祭 — The Centennial Festival for Magic Girls (Touhou 6)

A child grabs her sister's hands and spins her around their small playroom. For a second it looks almost like they could dance—but they trip and fall, unharmed, onto the cushions that litter the floor, landing in a giggling heap. Spry as ever, they both get up and begin again like nothing ever happened, twirling around the room in an imitation of the ribbon

dancers they've grown obsessed with watching. The sun sets in the gold-pink of the evening, lighting the tiny patterns in the curtains and making golden halos around their hair. They laugh, and they are happy.

### 少女さとり ~ 3rd eye (Touhou 11)

A group of young boys push aside the simple wood slats covering the hole in the chain link fence, then slip through with barely a clink. Not that it matters—no one would keep an eye on an abandoned mall, not even in the middle of the day. They tread the vague path through the overgrown grass, avoiding the potholes in the cracking concrete, and pick the lock on the “employees only” door with ease. It opens with a creak to reveal a nest of mice tucked into the rotting floorboards and graffiti covering the walls. They all dare each other to press forward while hiding their own fear with false bravado and all return home without ever setting a foot inside.

### 永遠の巫女 — Eternal Shrine Maiden (Touhou 1)

A young woman sits in her room and writes for what, to her, feels like the first time in forever. The keys click and clack and make line after line, but her inspiration doesn't fade. It lingers and burns within her, fueling her in a way others simply haven't. Maybe it's because she's finally able to talk about something she's always wanted to without fear of being stifled, or maybe it's because she's afraid she will soon be stifled again. She writes like tonight will be the last night she can—and maybe she's right to.

### 神々が恋した幻想郷 — The Gensokyo the Gods Loved (Touhou 10)

Atop a fence a maiden stands, illuminated by the rising sun behind her. The breeze blows gently, billowing her sleeves and carrying the light tune she plays on her bamboo flute to places unknown. Her eyes don't open to face the passersby that stare, nor does she move when her name is called, for she is just as enchanted by her own song as everyone around her. Under her, the night frost turns to bright dew, warmed by a brilliance brighter than the sun.



# Rain, Rain Don't Go Away

By Brandon Shaer

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*The community garden is a haven for plants not found in a florist. With a gazebo in the center of the garden, this makes for a great place to enjoy greenery or even take beautiful pictures. Many members of the town have also used this location for proposals.*

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## Introduction

I know that rain is not everyone's cup of tea; it ruins plans, makes it harder to drive, and sometimes gives off that weird rain smell. In general, rain seems to have a less than ideal effect on people's days. However, I think the context surrounding the rain is important. For the guy who has to walk to work that day, a torrential downpour screams, "Today is going to suck!" But the same torrential downpour is also one of life's biggest blessings for the farmer who hasn't seen rain in weeks. It's important to look at everything from both sides; otherwise, you might miss important details, but that's not entirely what this essay is about. By the end of this paper, my goal is to make you a fan of the rain. Specifically, I'm going to focus on the sound of rain and how it can affect one's mood and ability to write.

Before beginning my unorthodox sales pitch, it is important to note that "rain" is an umbrella term (how ironic is that?). There are countless types of rain sounds, ranging from the mellow drizzle to the aforementioned torrential downpour, and even then, those too are umbrella terms! What's the difference between the sound of a drizzle in a grassy park versus the same on concrete sidewalks? How different are the sounds of thunderstorms in cities compared to the Amazon rainforest? Most importantly, how do the differences in those sounds affect a person's writing? By the end of this paper, you will learn what I believe to be the three major rain sounds and how the differences in those sounds affect the writing process.

## Thunderstorm

While I enjoy listening to them during my drift into a deep slumber, thunderstorms are not the most ideal background noise for writing; they're obnoxious. The rain and wind are loud, the lightning is distracting, and sometimes the thunder feels so close it'll shoot you right out of your chair. Now, if it was just heavy rain—a topic I'll touch more on later—I could understand the appeal, but have you ever tried to write in the presence of a loud

television with a bright screen while someone blows in your ear? That's what writing during a thunderstorm is like. Furthermore, thunderstorms always seem like a bearer of bad news, making a writer more inclined to wait for a better headspace. No one wants to write while all that gloom and doom happens only a window pane away. In all, the only thing thunderstorms can offer writers is a gateway to procrastination, and as they say in the writing business, "You're already five days over the deadline."

## Cats and Dogs

Although it is similar to thunderstorms in volume and sound of rain alone, "cats and dogs" offer a much more readily available headspace for writing. If you're not sure what "cats and dogs" is, think the hardest rain you've ever seen or heard. Subtracting wind, thunder, and lightning from the equation produces a sound similar to white noise, clearing a reader's thoughts and blazing a path for creativity. Now, there's nothing potentially exciting behind that window pane dying for your attention because it's just rain. The TV is turned off, that weird guy who was blowing in your ear is gone, and the only thing you can hear is the Earth playing its favorite radio station. In my experience, the sound of heavy rain has been great for helping me to regain focus after feeling burned out. In fact, I'm listening to it right now as I write this sentence, hoping to avoid picking up my phone for the fifth time in the last hour and finish writing my paper. And the best part is that it's working!

## Drizzle

They always say to save the best for last, right? The sound of a light drizzle is like no other when creating a proper headspace for writing because it possesses the best qualities of the other two major sounds as well as new qualities that make it even better. First, like "cats and dogs," the sound of a drizzle creates the same white noise effect at a lower rate, increasing a writer's focus and diminishing potential distraction. Second, it brings the same calming effect of thunderstorms, helping writers to mellow out after a long day and inviting them to confide in their writing. Finally, the drizzle is light enough that a writer can pick up on patterns in the sounds it makes. Unlike those of a thunderstorm or heavy rain, individual raindrops can be heard hitting the surface of the Earth, and they can produce a variety of different creations. The musician can use the sounds of drizzle to

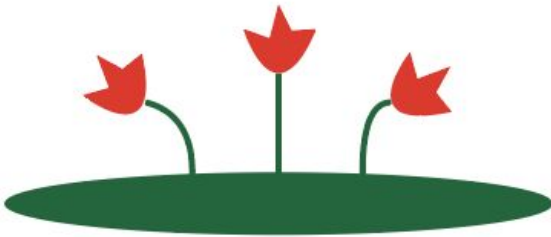


develop a new beat or melody, but the author with “writer’s block” can get lost in the sounds, developing a new story along the way. The possibilities are endless!

“Drizzle” is an umbrella term, and one of the types of rain sounds it encompasses produces what I believe to be a fantastic writing aid. While it may be cheating in terms of the context of this paper, the added visuals provided by a sunshower convert writing from a chore to a delight. I can’t help but get that warm, fuzzy feeling inside when I see the sunshine, and the added qualities of a drizzle make it that much better. On top of having increased focus, a calm demeanor, and a plug for new ideas while you write, a sunshower invites you to smile while you do it.

## Conclusion

So are you a fan of the rain yet? Was I convincing enough in my analysis of the different sounds it can make? I hope the answer to both questions is “yes.” Both the drizzle and “cats and dogs” make for great writing aids. The added focus and drive they bestow on a writer is invaluable, and the sounds they make play a key role in just about every paper I write. Sure the thunderstorm may not make for a great writing aid, but wow is it killer for helping you sleep. Skeptical of anything I’ve said? Try it on your own time. You can thank me later.



# A Cafeteria of Culture

By Clayton Tarantino

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*The international market is home to many different food options. Food from almost all over the world can be found here. Whether you keep your food choices simple or like to try something new, the international market is able to meet your dietary needs.*

\*\*\*

## Contemporary Japanese Punk: A Review Sampler

Japanese punk music, or “J-Punk,” has been developing for a long time. Starting in the 1960s, early J-Punk grew out of a psychedelic Tokyo genre known as “group sound.” With help from the rising punk scenes in major cities from the UK and the United States, Group Sound formed into J-Punk. By the 1980s, J-Punk had grown into two polarized forms: the archetypical punk sound in Tokyo and the genre-bending Osaka scene (Curtis 2018).

Contemporary J-Punk appears to take more from its Osaka ancestors. Modern J-Punk is a blend of alternative punk forms, with each band curating a different genre depending on their given taste. Some of the many genres which are now incorporated into J-Punk include pop, metal, garage, nu-metal, indie, EDM, noise, and grindcore.

Below, I review two J-Punk albums from the current decade: Fetch by Melt-Banana and Punk by Chai. Both bands vary greatly in their sound, build, and thematic focus.

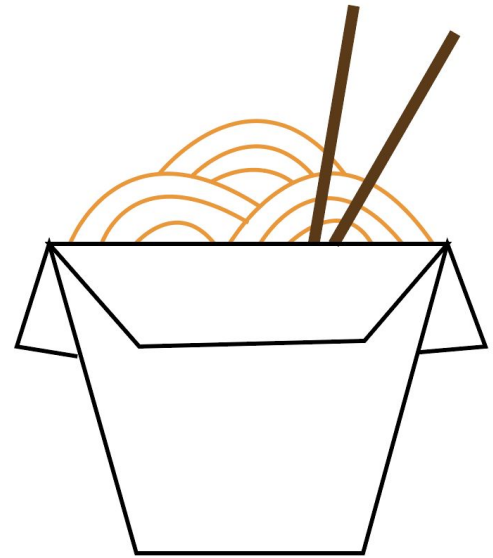
Melt-Banana, a duo of vocalist Yasuko Onuki (YAKO) and guitarist Ichirou Agata (AGATA), is built around a hard-hitting grindcore and metal influence (Melt-Banana, n.d.). Chai, made up of an all-female foursome, has a sound based predominantly in pop. Despite their great differences, both bands stand firmly as vanguards of contemporary J-Punk. They enliven the genre, which takes many forms but refuses to die.

### Fetch by Melt-Banana

In an ever-increasing cacophony of drum fills, guitar waves, and shrill vocal leads, Fetch is a dramatic J-Punk record. The drama does not come from impassioned vocals or lyrics recounting emotional themes, but from the nearly cinematic use of sound in every track. Melt-Banana seemed to see every beat as a proving ground, taking with open arms the unasked challenge of “how much sound can you fill into a second?” In the rare moments

that the vocals and guitars do go silent, such as in the enigmatic “Zero+,” the silence plays like its own set of chords. This onslaught of sound makes for a powerful J-Punk record, yet it becomes only a matter of time before the guitars start to grate against the listening experience.

Fetch exhibits its strengths when band members YAKO and AGATA offer a new twist to their formula. Here, the formula exists plainly in “Red Data, Red Stage.” In a song like this one, YAKO provides shrill vocals over AGATA’s wall of guitar sound. Suddenly, a drum loop is introduced, and the tempo seems to kick up a beat. The ending picks up further, with a climatic pitch and speed boost from YAKO, and we are flushed out in the drone of a closing heavy metal chord. As “Red Data, Red Stage” is the generic mold of what a Melt-Banana song could be, it plays off on Fetch as one of the album’s worst tracks.



With opener “Candy Gun,” Melt-Banana taps into something new. AGATA runs the track, covering multiple lines with impermeable guitar riffs. YAKA’s vocals feel almost like an addition to the drum fill, as her shrill cries staccato right along with the cymbal crashes. The song builds and builds into a kind of dubstep drop, releasing a satisfying punch of ending energy. Using a kind of call and response style, Melt-Banana delivers a high energy narrative in “Vertigo Game.” YAKO, as a rule, is hard to understand; even though she sings in English, her voice is shrill to a point of imperceptibility. In “Vertigo Game,” AGATA mutes his instrument just long enough to give YAKO the chance to shine with perceptible, enigmatic vocals: “Maybe not?” and “Maybe yes?”

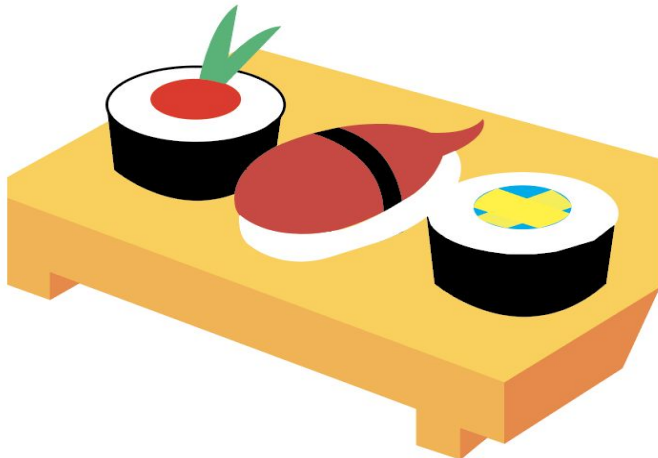
Listening to Fetch straight through can cause even the most hardcore punk fan a bit of a headache. Tracks like “My Missing Link” and “Red Data, Red Stage” come to mind. Luckily, the headache tracks tend to be the exception, rather than the rule. The majority of the album is energetically consistent and experimentally pervasive, with influences of EDM, metal, and even some softer pop tracks. The album concludes with the beautifully restrained “Zero+.” With this balanced, rhythm-driven track, Melt-Banana turns down the noise just a bit, resulting in the most satisfying song on the album. “Zero+” is a gamble that pays off, tying the album together in a taut bow.

## Punk by Chai

Punk is as fun as it is varied. At its heart, Punk is a resume, professionally presenting all that Chai is able to create. From the album's opening with "Choose Go!," we see what the all-female foursome is capable of producing. "Choose Go!" starts as a carefree femme-pop track, a kind of Japanese Cheetah Girls fight song. Midway through, the production cracks and frizzles, and the song shifts into an EDM grindcore mosh. Seconds later, segued by a heavy drum breakbeat, the track switches back to its femme-pop outer layer. "Choose Go!" acts as the perfect thesis for Punk: these girls may sound cute, but they can play punk music with the best of them.

The album contains no blemishes. In fact, even the few tracks that don't quite hit their marks only look that way in comparison to the tracks that hit the bullseye just right. Three tracks stand out in particular, and they play back to back to back in the middle of the record. If you are listening on a time crunch, check out "I'm Me," "Wintime," and "This is

Chai." Each track is varied and important to defining Chai's sounds as a whole.



"I'm Me" is a soul-affirming, feminist pop song that celebrates a love for individuality and uniqueness. It is extremely modern in its message, but its delivery is quite classic. Quiet, almost shy verses lead into a breakout, group-led chorus; the song feels like the narrative trope of a shy student singing at a school talent show to thunderous applause.

In "Wintime," the members of Chai mix the multi-layered vocalizations of a gospel choir with the unflinching movement of a patriotic anthem. The entire song feels like a bridge leading to a chorus; if there are verses, they transition quickly to the meat of the track. Despite it being a J-Punk song, it is very American in both its build and feel.

The trilogy ends with "This is Chai." A rambly, EDM-fueled, breakbeat punk track plays as the only identifiable vocals assert proudly "This is Chai." The girls relax into a sea of discordance, thumping horns, and blown-out synth leads, creating a track that has no

genre equal. The most experimental moment in Punk, "This is Chai" shows listeners just what Chai is capable of.

Of course, other tracks shine. "Fashionista" and "Feel the Beat" further Chai's genre reach and comfortable stance as a femme-J-Punk group. The album as a whole is a fantastic genre-bender, radiating experimentality and positive energy. For the more orthodox punk fans, it is a must listen to see where the genre can go. For the pop fan, it is a must listen to show how pop can bend with a little punk influence.

# Stretching out Your Soul

By Elizabeth Bolland

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*Exercise is important. At the yoga studio, you'll be able to take plenty of yoga classes, including pilates. You'll be able to stretch out your worries and drift into Savasana, balancing out everything that occupies your mind.*

\*\*\*

The sun rises, and my feet sink deeper and deeper into the small grains of wet sand. I breath in and out of consciousness, cleansing my inner soul. Hints of red and orange reflect over the glass-like water, calming the space around me. My legs cross and my hands come to heart center, preparing my chest for the upcoming yoga movements. "In through your nose and out with your mouth," the instructor repeats.

As a group, we move into more fluid and rapid movements in correlation with the instructor's music. The beat speeds up, and I flow my hands over head, grounding my toes and heels into the tough sand. "If you control your breathing, your body will stimulate a more purifying and cleansing experience," the instructor calmly mentions. My breath finds steadiness, and I begin to escape from reality. My eyelids close and I feel stillness in a space with so much energy. How is that possible?

Breathing consciously is the essence of yoga, connecting us to the subtle energy within. Our breath is what allows us to navigate through our levels of consciousness, affecting our mental, emotional, and physical state. As the music and tension speed up, your breath naturally speeds up, making it more difficult to control your consciousness. It is important to understand that connecting your breath is a method for being present.

My towel shifts as I make my first flow into downward dog. Letting go of past, current, and future thoughts, I breath into the deepest part of my lungs. My muscles calm, and I begin to focus on the moment inside the breath. Air circulates around each and every yogi participating, giving us the freshest and most desirable inhales. My mind subconsciously blocks out the chitter-chatter of the birds, allowing me to connect deeply with my inner thoughts. "Now move into warrior two," the instructor calmly suggests. How do I keep my breath steady throughout this more advanced flow?

Your breathing pattern is one of the most important things to focus on while practicing yoga. Slowing down the breath has an impact on your emotional state, due to the activation of the cerebral cortex. It sends inhibitory impulses to the respiratory center in the midbrain and eventually overflows into the hypothalamus, connecting you with your emotions. The soothing effect on your emotional state is activated through this process.

My breath relaxes as I settle into Warrior Two. I reach up and touch the sky, stretching the right side of my physique. My breath remains steady and my inner thoughts begin to wisp away into the slow movements of the wind. “Find your balance and press your right foot into your inner thigh to create tree pose,” the instructor quietly encourages. My breath quivers, but I quickly remember that with every sound, there is a vibration.



Breath is a vibration that is said to only be heard at a particular level of consciousness. Once you withdraw your senses from the outside world, your internal sound will take over, allowing you to hear the breath. It is very common to use the sounds “so” and “ham” during the practice (Rice, 2019). Some may encourage their yogis to inhale and exhale with these exact sounds, manifesting audible sound in the inner ear.

My eyes flutter open, and I revisit the external sounds surrounding my environment. The smell of fresh air and salt water fills my nostrils, bringing happiness into my practice. Tucked behind the noise of the waves crashing onto the shore, a quiet violin moves between loud and soft pitches, creating a variety of sounds. Nothing is more calming than the combination of nature and exterior sounds. “Flow into your space and link your breath to the beat,” the instructor says.

Practicing yoga is a very different hobby than listening to music, but when you combine the two, it creates something incredibly special. Recent studies have shown that music can allow a person to enter a “flow state,” which is known as an “optimal state of consciousness when we feel and perform our best (Rice 2019).” Yoga and music both share the universal language of love, which is an interesting concept to think about. Self-love is well-associated with yoga, and music is determined to bring excitement and passion to the listener through words and notes. Together, they create a powerful dynamic duo for meditation, yoga, and many other practices.

The color shining through my eyelids begins to turn light blue, exposing the sky's magnificent color palette. As the breeze quickens, my muscles relax and allow my body to flow from left to right to left. I sway to the pace of the music, letting myself go. My concentration narrows in, and I sturdy my balance, but my toes sink deeper and deeper. The sand softens and makes it difficult to ground my stance, but I manage to do so through breath and a clear mind.

Meditative music manages to influence our minds through rhythm and melody to benefit all aspects of life. Our nerves become calm and collected, leaving room for love and an open mind. It is common for our noisy thoughts to outweigh our calm and collected thoughts, but that is only if we allow them to. Introducing music into your yoga practice can benefit you in more ways than not, which is why it is common in most practices.

I glance up at the sky, hands overhead, and notice the small movements that nature brings to my practice each and every morning. It is a blessing to practice in such a space that brings clarity and self-awareness to my overwhelmed soul. My hands meet my third eye center as I bow forward in peace and relaxation. The music fades off, and the only sound present is from within my breath. "May the rest of your day and week ahead be filled with laughter and love," our instructor adds.



# Transport Yourself into Your Writing

By Emma Kalucki

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*Whether you're going or coming, the train station is the central hub for sending off friends and family, as well as welcoming them home from a trip. The train will take you almost anywhere. Vacation or a day trip, the town's train is a reliable means of transportation.*

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There are days in all of our lives when we find ourselves searching for more. Searching for something else to do outside of our mundane lives. Searching for someone else to bring us joy, love, happiness. Searching for something, anything, to bring us out of the darkness and reignite the fire in our souls that encourages us to continue on and allow ourselves to feel that passion for writing.

As writers, it becomes draining and tiring to continually imagine scenarios and worlds in which we can pour our imaginations and allow audiences to get lost in our creations. There's a feeling unlike any other after having a book published, riding on the subway and seeing strangers so engrossed in your novel, seemingly unwilling to put it down to catch their stop. It became a high that I would chase. My characters came to life on those pages, and I was unstoppable in my writing. I didn't mind going home to an empty apartment because I would be going home to write or to reread my writing from the day or previous week. It wasn't until I was finally stuck in a case of writer's block so horrible I couldn't overcome it that I understood what was wrong with me.

There was a day that I was on the subway about to get off to walk to my apartment. It was the sixth week of my writer's block, and I had tried every method I could imagine, when a song started to play in my headphones that I had never heard. My phone must have accidentally saved this song, so I went to switch it. But then I stopped. The lyrics spoke so perfectly to me that I realized what I needed to do to fix my life and find that passion again. I needed to fix the hole in my heart—and in my life—that was so stupid deep.

As I stepped off the subway, I really started to dive deep into the lyrics, relating them back to every decision I had made in my life up until that point. The books that have my name printed on the jacket cover; the countless hours filled with writing, editing, and re-reading; the launch parties and all the successes in the world—these could never amount to what this song was telling me about my entire career in those three minutes of

song. The passion that the singer had, who I later discovered was Jon Bellion, opened my eyes to the lack of passion for writing that I had developed over the past month and a half. There was something that inspired me to understand what I needed to get myself out of the stupid deep funk I had submerged into.

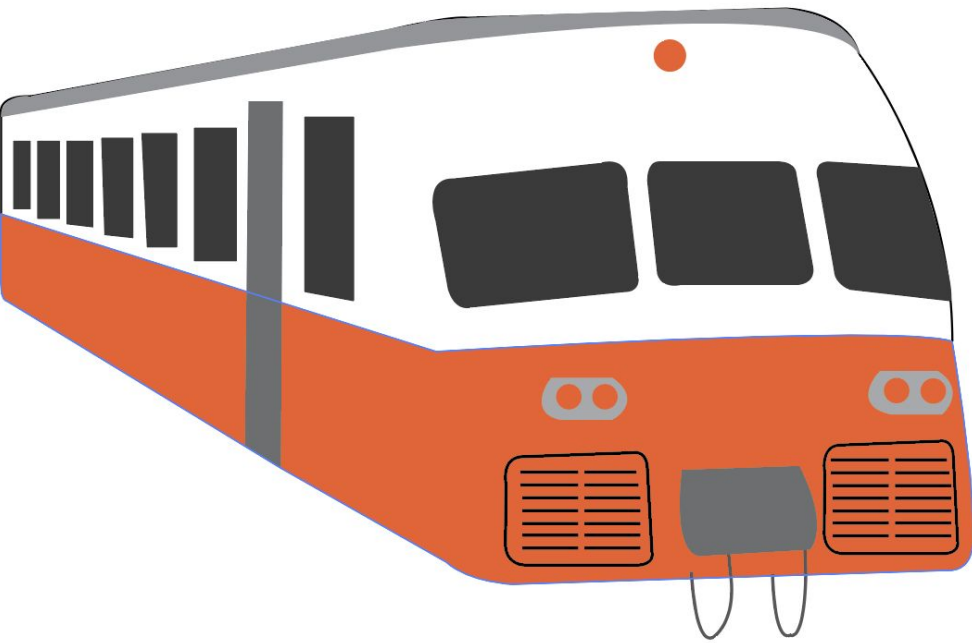
Writers have a task that is so completely unique the outside world cannot understand how their brains work or how they can imagine such new and exciting worlds. The answer is honestly quite simple—their own lives and music. The depth and inspiration in the work of other artists, songwriters, and musicians awaken the part of a writer that feels the excitement to sit and write something that might invoke the same excitement in an audience of eager readers. The problem with being a writer is that your “fans” or audience, as I prefer to call my loyal readers, are constantly expecting more writing and a new and exciting story. However, there are times when that inspiration wants to take a vacation, and it can be awhile before it bothers to come home after lounging on the beach for some time. But every once in awhile, a writer will hear a song that reignites that passion, which is what happened with me and “Stupid Deep.”

“Stupid Deep” allowed me to look at my work from a new angle and discover a way to address my writer’s block, while bringing a new type of fiction into my work. Jon Bellion and his lyrics brought me to the realization that my writing had filled a hole inside of my heart. I had never realized how much of my life I had dedicated to my work. Or how I used my characters’ love stories to fill the void that I was pushing down inside my own life. My friends and sisters had all found their passions as well as the loves of their lives, but I could only ever find one. I’m not claiming that everyone has to find a love or a person to spend their lives with to find joy, but I finally realized that that’s what was missing in mine.

Because of the lyrics that so deeply spoke to me in “Stupid Deep,” I finally understood why I was experiencing such bad writer’s block. I had been searching for love and happiness through my writing. “All the things I’ve done were just attempts at earning love, ‘cause the hole inside my heart is stupid deep” (“Jon Bellion – Stupid Deep”). I have fought for many years to fill my heart and life with my words and characters, but all along I hadn’t realized that if I wrote with what I knew in my heart and lived each day, my writing could inspire myself and others to live the life that was meant for each of us individually.

There’s inspiration and creativity in every part of the world; it all depends on what we choose to listen to and how we decide to use it. For me, it was realizing how much music

spoke to me and inspired my creative work and everyday life. “Stupid Deep” allowed me to finally understand the meaning behind my work and the future ahead.



# Masque in Four Parts

By Erin Adelman

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*The art museum is full of paintings, sculptures, and other artifacts dating back to 400 BC. Whether you are a fan of Michelangelo or Leonardo Da Vinci, you will be able to glance upon some of the most unique pieces of art from across history.*

\*\*\*

## I. Prelude

like orange notes atop  
piano keys we  
Drop. your burgundy timbre reverberates, a  
Nameless molten  
rise and  
Fall. my fingers retrace their  
steps across  
the path in quick trickle.

we leave for the countryside kindness,  
for whispered wildflower perfume that sticks in  
the wind like  
cycling thoughts. all i wish we  
Were

“not right now”  
we are autumn leaves  
swayed by today’s  
sighs, assured by yesterday’s semblance. will we  
always circle  
the conversation, distracted by our prism  
show of color?

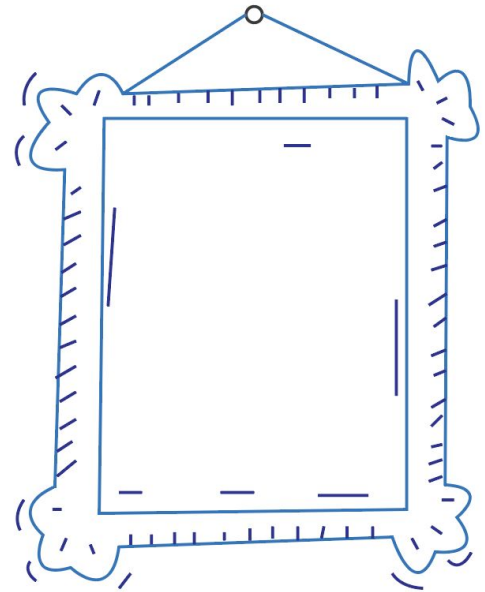
you stride  
through the sprawling field, the unseen  
underneath crushed by your  
step. bejeweled light in June is

when you return i hope you  
walk on new Crescendos.  
my attention draws  
inward to dawning  
revelations: our city is faraway  
when i see  
my thought-sculpted self  
as another. against the blue of noon  
you slow and  
stand  
what did you find?

the sun glints warning gold  
for me like lightning  
for the bird. you return and we are impressionable  
grass. you smile as though you  
Found Something.

## II. Minuet Andantino

the ballroom swings  
    a convincing twist  
and under sleeves of glassy silk. our footsteps  
flit, our hands reach for  
Steadiness, hope for an easy andantino.  
we are more Gilded  
than the walls. they glow when our backs  
are turned. we are a room of organdy smiles yet  
no one can  
hear. i twirl with  
you but i wonder which  
ghost's secrets are  
concealed  
in the sheen of the floor.  
your glance—spring breeze's



Light tone—  
skips across my  
eyes and  
the silver keys sing.  
we spin dizzy, wandering inside  
and between mind's iron fences.  
i watch starlight  
spill onto  
pomegranate-stained mahogany.

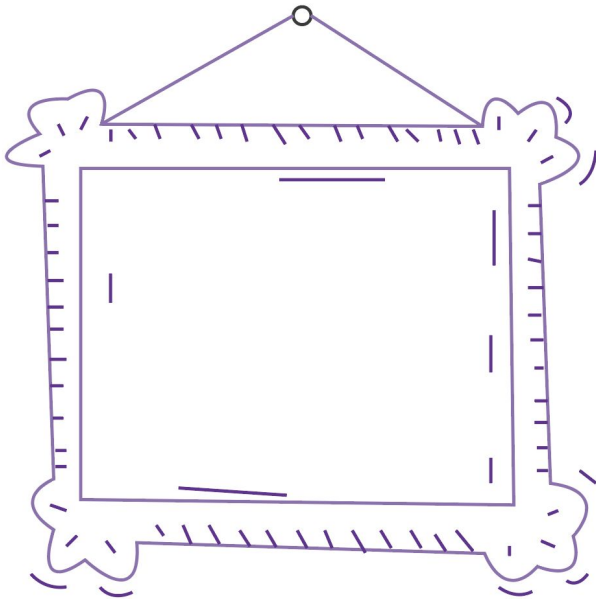
### III. Clair de Lune

can we speak      release if we can't  
See?  
what yellow dawning  
streak sleeps  
beneath our night veneer?  
we Slip in staccato  
unseen  
something spaced  
between our notes. Daylight      hangs  
like a tangent from your  
                         lip.  
no one not you  
sees the fountain stream  
beneath a beautiful disguise. easy words  
leap only to  
sink into  
my skin again.

### IV. Pass Through

i have not returned to the city we shared. not until today. we learned an allegretto in green  
spring, a creative masquerade. i yearn to wade in beginner's kindness.  
Alone with unwelcome company, the you i knew walks with me, rushing like wind  
through lace curtains. which you was the you Most you? what is my rawest me? moments  
linger orange in window corners and sing within walls. i hope this is where my memories

live once they leave me. we were fooled by illusions but was it not beautiful? Happy is a  
strange mask but Sad is a transparent face. which one do you prefer?  
a man stands at the corner of Bright and First, hands out ads for apartments.  
no thanks, i say, i am only passing through.  
cross First street and gaze anew, May memories will  
drop to December somber and there too i will only be passing through.



# Find Your Story in Sound

By Grace Nehls

\*\*\*

*The bookstore is a book worm's wildest dream. With the building being three stories tall, there isn't a book you won't be able to find. Equipped with a small cafe in the lowest level, you'll be able to shop for your favorite book and grab a cup of coffee.*

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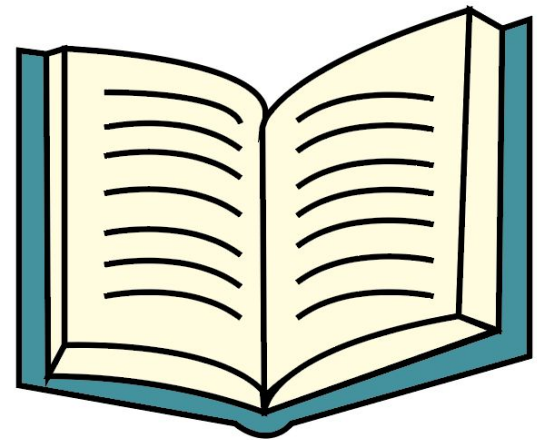
There is an abundant group of people out there who believe there is no such thing as writer's block. The notion that, for other career paths, there is only themselves to blame for the lack of creative stimulus is hilarious to this group and merely more frustrating to me. Wandering around the room with a self-pitying expression on my face, or clutching my computer—and then my head—in agony becomes a process of dissolution; I start to hate myself. And just like that, the wall is up. No one except those who have gone through it seem to understand that it's not necessarily about the words or the story at this point—it's the powerlessness.

This was me, one year out of high school. Years of consistent inspiration and natural confidence fell through. I didn't think much of it for a long time; essays, projects, and exams filled the time I once spent writing chapters for a novel or short stories for contests. But months passed when I wrote nothing, and no urge to write came up. I began to sit myself down and stare at the screen until I wrote a sentence or two. Other times I'd read a book and try to mimic the author's style in hopes of making something I'd be proud of; in a stage of despair I found an even-keeled passion for J.R.R. Tolkien and the world of Middle-Earth and obsessively read all three *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) books and *The Silmarillion* and watched the extended editions of each movie in the space of a month. I might have told myself it was the genius of the plot and the passion I'd experienced with its characters that slowly pulled me out of my stupor over the course of the next year. But now I know better. At Gandalf's fall or the irrefutable bravery Faramir exhibited when taking back Osgiliath I would find myself ugly sobbing, touched to the core by something that surpassed the scene, so deeply felt that it startled my subconscious. It was the soundtrack that finally made me feel something again for the story.

It took me a while to understand my relationship with music. It wasn't until this revelation with the LOTR soundtrack that I finally realized I had an affinity for rhythm

and sound that made me physically feel something. Lyrics suddenly felt unimportant and suffocating. I began obsessively making playlists based off of soundtracks from favorite movies I'd seen; my music taste grew, evolved. It wasn't until I encountered the albums created by Two Steps from Hell, however, that I truly felt myself returning, as if the very expression of this type of music was coaxing the words and ideas from some hidden corner of my mind.

Based in California, Two Steps from Hell is a production group that came together when Nick Phoenix and Thomas Bergersen combined their talent for movie trailer music. Epic and heart-wrenching, their sounds have made an appearance in films like *The Dark Knight*, *Harry Potter*, and *Avatar*. Their original music has additionally been used in hundreds of movie ads and thousands of TV programs. As of their most recent album, they have also released eighteen different albums. Unlike many other soundtrack artists, Two Steps from Hell specializes in original trailer music for any film or TV production, and in this way their focus and their sound is unique. Solely instrumental and lacking a specific topic, each track's generality leaves room for the listener to fill in the gaps that a topic or lyrics in other songs might not typically invoke; using your imagination becomes the ultimate experience.



Some part of my mind had put these puzzle pieces together when crying to an epic fantasy movie before the rest of my conscious had. The choice to sit down to a piece of music, close my eyes and let the sounds invoke their own images was all but foreign to me. In fact, I think it is to many people, who allow lyrics to rule their music choice and their mood. Regardless, Two Steps from Hell gave me the opportunity to start thinking again with my imagination; “Build a story,” it seemed to tell me, “Start asking questions.” So I did. Scrolling through their series of albums I paused on a particularly enticing album cover called *Archangel*—complete with half the body of a fierce-looking woman zooming on wings through the clouds, spears zipping past her lithe form, and a spatter of blood adorning the corner of her lips—and I listened.

This album is one of my favorites for several reasons. Telltale of its name, the music content suggests the journey of an archangel (or many) in a series of contrasting songs, ranging from graceful melodies to those of an epic battle. When and where have the archangels come from? Are they descending from heaven to confront an enemy? Are they trying to make peace? My mind is left in knots singling out any one possible storyline. But

the beauty of this particular album lies in its streamlined quality; it literally invokes the physical representation of an angel, from the fantastical rendering of their flying, to the more dangerous powers of their character.

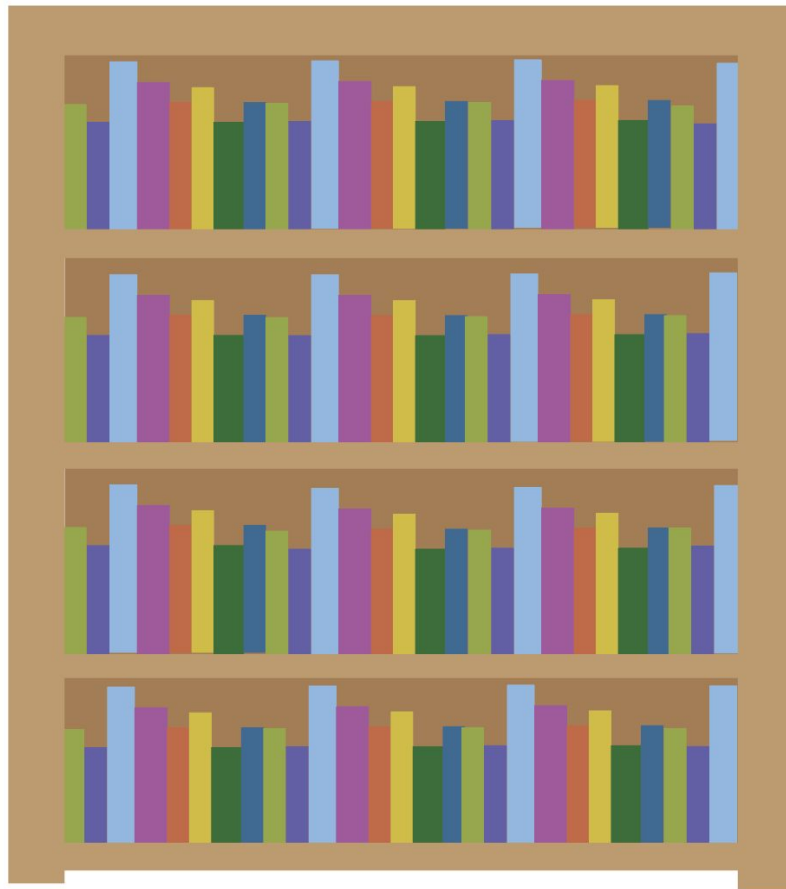
“Nero” for example, is a piece whose fluid and tranquil undertones—recreated by the descending keys of a piano—develop into an uplifting crescendo of bells and violin reminiscent of flight. There is something sublime about the sound that leaves you vulnerable to its beauty; you feel as if you’re at the edge of some precipice, the land laid out before you. It holds you there, stricken with awe and fear, until the climax crashes over every sense in tumultuous celebration. You spread your wings, you leap, and then you fall.

“What’s Happening to Me” escalates more quickly into a theme that is bolder, more threatening, and has a wider blend of orchestrated sounds. Think of the most stressful part of any movie you’ve ever watched—the protagonist trying to escape a masked killer while dragging a broken leg or the final stand-off between two armies—times four. Between the odd ticking of a clock, the haunting female vocals, and the deep thrum of drums, this track invokes a different attention to danger and beauty, and thus an entirely unique story.

Even then, “Mountains From Water” takes you on its own path. Leading with a quick, consistent pacing, both drum and violin leave you thirsting after a clue, a journey, an answer. You know what you have to do to survive and come out on top and you’re hell-bent on succeeding. Between the urgency of the drum and the intense marching of the flute, it is the ultimate sound of drive and determination, the heat of an inevitable battle.

There is no right or wrong to interpreting this kind of music. It’s the kind of sound that reminds us that human beings are universally wired to positively react to the external stimuli of sound. Since the presence of civilization, music has been an integral part of our identity and has become our purest form of expression. Technology has even provided us with the ability to interact with music daily—listening to the radio in the car on your way to work, plugging into apps like Spotify or Apple Music for the ultimate experience without interruption. Its frequency and pacing even changes with our mood.

The next time you watch a movie or a trailer, close your eyes. Forget about the physical images or the dialogue and focus instead on the sound. The swell and projection of sounds in tandem with the change of scenes, the crescendo that leaves a chill running down your spine...this is what we feel when listening or participating in the National Anthem—the internal swell of pride, patriotism, and a bone-deep sense of unity. Whether this is Two Steps from Hell or another soundtrack artist like Howard Shore or John Williams, be sure to find the rhythm and sound that shocks your soul and renders you inspired. Ask for nothing less. Perhaps it will help you find the path out of writer’s block, like it did for me. Or perhaps it will simply fill that part of you that has always been searching for something greater than yourself.



# Dance the Night Away

By Ian Salinas

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*Finding something to do on a Friday night isn't hard to do. The night club is a social spot for college students and young adults. With its amazing beats and tunes, you won't be able to sit still.*

\*\*\*

## Introduction

The sound of hip-hop has evolved throughout the years, from its humble beginnings in a New York apartment complex to now being played at sold out arenas across the world. Hip-hop's origins started in 1973 at a party hosted by an MC named DJ Kool Herc. He hosted a party and played certain percussive breaks of popular songs from that time period, like jazz and blues. The sound of hip-hop then took off within the inner cities of America. The sound of the genre has taken many forms over the years, but there is an underlying pattern that every song or beat has and the audience can hear it in the songs.

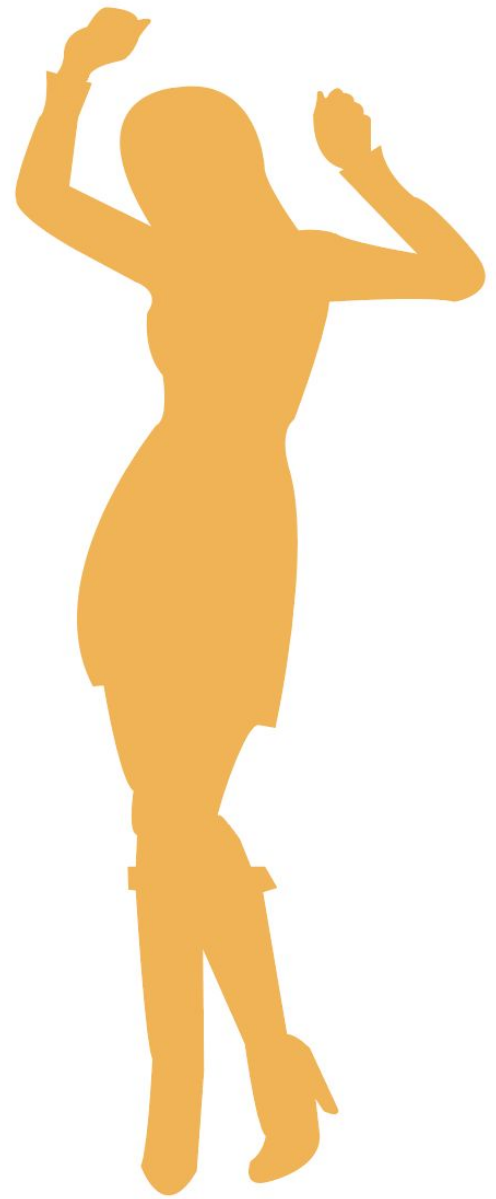
## Beginning Sound

Early depictions of hip-hop sound came from the urban streets, where people used many influences to create music. During the '70s, disco and jazz were huge parts of the American scene and especially in black culture. DJs used these records to create a style of DJing where they would "scratch" the record they would play, which would then create a new sound effect that made the record sound like it was stuttering. This would create baselines for hip-hop music as the structure of each record. Even today, every hip-hop song has a baseline that can more or less sound similar if you listen closely. In the '70s, the sound was very similar to disco music, just with added in breaks by the DJs playing the music. It was not until the late '70s when "rapping" was added to the sound. Rapping or MCing was created a sound over the beat where it would have the elements of lyrics and rhyming with rhythm. Verses can incorporate not so much singing but rhymes with added rhythm so it would not be generic. It was also around this time when people would start creating their own beats to these verses or "sampling" other songs to mix it up. However, as these new forms were being created, the same baseline and even disco and

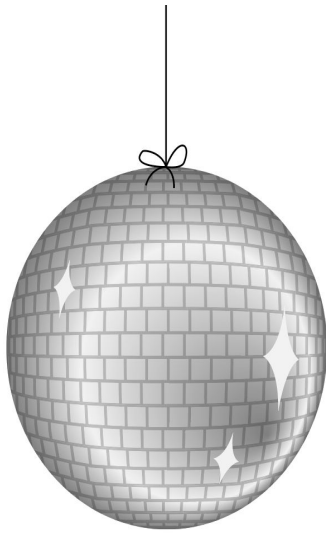
jazz influences stayed with the beats. While disco music kept declining, hip-hop started to become mainstream and a less underground genre with groups like Run-DMC and Public Enemy starting to gain popularity. Hip-hop was referred to as the better version of disco as early beats had used disco loops.

## Adapting Sound

Like everything, things adapt and change over time. Through the '80s, hip-hop became mainstream, and everyone from all types of backgrounds was listening to it. The sound itself stayed mostly the same with baselines and record scratching even put into the song recordings. The genre also tried to stay mainstream with guitar additions to songs, like in Run-DMC's "Tricky." However, producers and rappers wanted to add something else to it, instead of rapping about things the public as a whole could relate to, they wanted to show their lives and the struggles that come with that. While rap was mainly just a New York thing until the mid '80s, it spread to the west coast starting in the early '90s. This time period was a time of struggle for inner cities and the minorities in them. Racism and inequality created struggles for people of color, and they wanted to show that in their music. The sound of the beat slowed down, emphasizing the lyrics and rhyme sound they intended. This is because they wanted to spread a message. It created the subgenre called "gangsta rap" which showed the struggles of the streets and urban life. Artists like Ice Cube and Dr. Dre were the founders of this. Their sound showed people the struggles and inequalities of minorities in the United States. Songs like "Fuck the Police" by N.W.A. showed how the police target people of color. They wanted the west coast to emphasize lyrics, rather than the beat they were rapping over, but the beat was similar to the early beats and the rap sound always showed rhythm and rhymes. Rap continued to gain popularity but also critics over these songs. As more popularity was garnered, more rappers began to shine. Arguably the two greatest rappers to date, Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G., took the stage in the early '90s. Their sound was the same but also entirely different. Tupac embodied the west coast



sound, with slow, drawn out rhymes that represented the street culture and raised



awareness for those being oppressed. Biggie embodied the east coast sound, emphasizing the sound of the beat with an aggressive lyrical approach. This evolved into a feud as to who produced the greatest rappers: LA or New York. But between the two, both coasts stood up against inequality and even challenged the government through their music, which was frowned upon and even dangerous. This age of rap was referred to as the “Golden Age,” where many of the greats were in their primes and showed an updated sound of politics and rhymes that has never been surpassed.

## Current Sound

Current times of hip-hop have made the genre worldwide, not just an American scene. As of today, hip-hop has become the biggest genre in America and has spread all throughout the world. Latin countries have embraced the culture, and even all the way to Asia there are rappers and hip-hop songs being created. The sound has evolved as well because of technology. Record players are no longer a thing. With everything being digital, you can make a song in almost in any way. The baseline still occurs within the same realm as it did from the early stages, but with other influences. Hip-hop has artists from all over and the biggest ones aren't even from LA or New York. Drake, Migos, etc. are artists that come from all over. Sound now consists of better production with beats using chimes and jazz-esque noises that show the similarities from before. Production matters more in this rap age because lyrics aren't emphasized as much. However, there is still the same rhythm and flow over beats that has been there for years. Hip-hop has come a long way from its beginnings in New York to now being shown all over the world, but there is still the baseline and rhyming that show its style through time that everyone can recognize through the generations.

# The Rap God

By Izzy Schwarze

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*The town's church conducts various religious services. The town prides itself on being religiously diverse and inclusive. No matter your faith background, your beliefs are welcomed here.*

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Writing, and writing well, is an exhaustive process. The pen, mightier than the sword, rides on the forefront of social and cultural change. People use writing to communicate their unique perspective to the world. These perspectives and experiences can shake the stability of society.

An ability to harness these perspectives and put these complicated ideas into words is the root of our superpower, but finding the precise words to formulate complicated ideas fatigues even the most experienced writer. Many try to these fix complexities by listening to soothing music or relaxing sounds; however, these times are trying. With more social and political upheaval, writers must be pushed far beyond the comfort of classical music.

They must use provocative music in order to produce outspoken pieces; Kanye West is the man for the job. With over fifty Grammy nominations, Kanye West—or “Ye”—writes, performs, and lives an obscure form of music and expression. His nine albums provide ideal grenade-like one-liners. Kanye’s music is the ideal soundtrack for radical and provocative thought and writing. But being provocative does not always have intended sexual desire; it also means to cause anger or a strong reaction deliberately.

Famous writings in history have always been provocative. They intentionally provoke uncomfortable thoughts in order to implement important social change. Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of a Catholic church. His words sparked the Protestant Reformation. When Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, she tipped the world into the second-wave of feminism.

Today with such wide accessibility to music, writers can arm themselves with an ideal soundtrack while they march off to change the world. Thinking outside the box, not compromising for the norm, and simply being provocative gets the people going (Kanye

literally sings this in a song). Kanye's music does this, as does the 95 Theses and *The Feminine Mystique*.

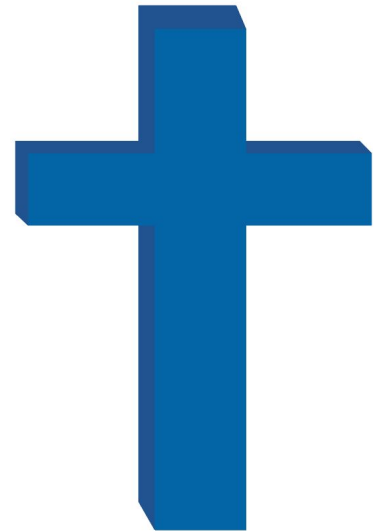
Long, wild stretches of chaos extend over Kanye's collection of music. Many find his lyrics confusing, but no one can argue the Kanye West show is irresistibly entertaining and all together provocative. For most artists, youthful exuberance reek throughout their first few albums but not for Kanye. He has been a bull in every China shop since his *College Dropout*. His outspokenness, self-appraisal, ridiculously brash persona has long attracted media attention and affection. Yet, Kanye rises in popularity.

Controversial lyrics from the 2005 hit "Gold Digger" or the album *Ye* are what consistently put Kanye at the top of the charts. Kanye knows that these immense displays of ego succeed, and ritters can take note. In his own way, his songs verge on beatific. He deliberately preaches in "Violent Crimes" about his own failures as a man and his hopes for his own daughter.

From the most popular songs like "Stronger" to hidden gems like "Jesus Walks," Kanye's music has the hit-making ability to make even the faintest of fans bop their heads along. The rhythm and rhyme of his music motivates. Think about EDM music. Even without lyrics, the electricity and pulse of the music moves people to dance along. Even if the lyrics from Kanye's music were gone, the raw music alone is enough to push writers.

While trapped behind a computer—just the writer and the screen—it is imperative to feel inspired to continue with the mission, especially if the piece comes from a place of anger or concern. Words get jumbled and ideas get lost, but tunes like "Black Skinhead," keep the fire lit in the belly of the writer. The fire burns and rages. If a writer wishes to highlight a positive, light-hearted idea, Kanye does that too.

Recently, Kanye released his newest album: *Jesus is King*. He traveled around the country premiering this album with his gospel concerts on Sunday mornings, which he calls Sunday Services. It seems he's discovered a newfound zeal as he sings about God and his religion.



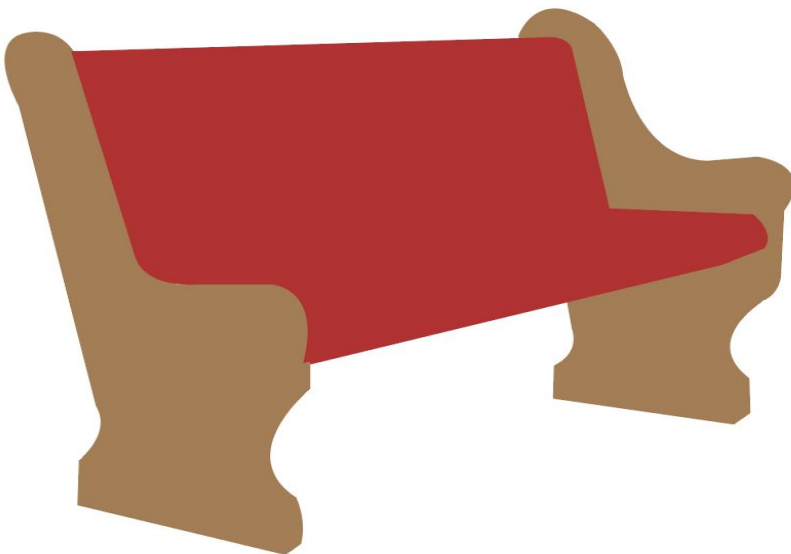
His album pushes musical boundaries. A genre—typically soiled with music about drugs and sex—sees bits of undeniable beauty in *Jesus is King*: sweeping epics sprinkled with organ introductions and ballads with lyrics about Chick-fil-A.

From this album, writers can continue to push their provocative writing, as Kanye does. This album, one of the first of its kind, addresses deeper issues that are not usually discussed in hip-hop. It has made listeners dance; it has inspired listeners; it has led to conversations about faith and hip-hop; but most importantly, it has made listeners *think*.

Today, Kanye's music makes people put their phones down, tuck their beliefs away, and listen to new ideas. Many people have reacted negatively to *Jesus is King*. They believe hip-hop artists should stick to hip-hop rather than dabbling in faith. He has provoked them with his album, but from this, people have risen and defended his ideals: there is a place for faith in hip-hop.

All good writing inspires these conversations. Whether you agree with Kanye or not, we should inspire and provoke each other with our writing. Writing for social change should push readers out of their comfort zones, excel new conversations, and be provocative.

Love him or hate him, Kanye can teach us all an important lesson: your writing should get the people goin' if you want to make a change. Listen to Kanye, go forth, and change the world.



# Shhh...

By Jenn Hood

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*The Sound Town Public Library is well-stocked with a wide array of young adult, science-fiction, romance, non-fiction, mystery, and children's books. It also has magazines, movies, audio books, and technological resources for rent. Although all ages are welcome to explore all that the library has to offer, the librarians tend to enforce a strict sound limit of only whispers at most.*

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Have you ever been in a conversation where you just keep talking to fill space? Have you ever put music on in the car when you're alone? Have you ever left the TV on at night, even if you aren't watching it, for background noise? All of these behaviors are driven by one singular truth: we, as Americans in 2019, are afraid of silence.

## Why We Are Afraid Of Silence

Most people are uncomfortable with silence. But, why? What is it about the absence of sound that makes people feel so uneasy? For starters, people are surrounded by an abundance of sound. The TV in the living room playing. A door closing. Conversations overheard at a subway stop. A phone ringing. The laundry machine spin cycle. Wind in the trees. Birds chirping. One person could hear all of these things at the same time, and more. Our lives are overpopulated with sounds—both intentional and unintentional—that we feel uneasy when sound is not present.

I think the fear of silence is also driven by the fear of being alone. Silence can make people feel like they aren't connected to those around them, and that's a scary feeling. One of the most important concepts for human emotional health is feeling a sense of love and belonging. We strive to be connected, and we need to feel love. Silence breaks that connection with others and instead connects us with ourselves.

Following that path, we don't like to be stuck with our own thoughts. Sitting in silence forces us to listen to our automatic thoughts; they are uncontrollable and usually uncomfortable. When we give ourselves the space for these uncomfortable thoughts to be heard, we are often forced to reflect. We have to think deeper about how a thought made us feel, or why a thought made us feel a certain way. Reflecting on automatic thoughts inherently requires discomfort and takes work to accomplish. People prefer to be



comfortable and are afraid to be uncomfortable, yet silence requires discomfort. So, because we are afraid of being uncomfortable, we are also afraid of silence. Also, sometimes automatic thoughts are more than just uncomfortable. Sometimes they are so distressing that we question our sense of self and our beliefs.

I also think we are afraid of silence because we are afraid of what we might learn about ourselves. Silence opens up an empty space for an internal dialogue to occur. With no conversation partner, you have to focus on your own thoughts and what

you think. In a conversation, it's so easy to ignore your own thoughts and to deflect by jumping on to what the other person said; that option is removed in an internal dialogue, and you are forced to recognize and confront your emotions and positions. Sometimes an automatic thought will challenge how you think you feel. Then, you have to re-evaluate what you thought you knew about yourself. We like to believe we know ourselves well. But when we start an internal dialogue, we often learn new information about ourselves and are forced to confront that most of us are insecure in our sense of self. We can mask our insecurity by using sound as a distractor, but when we are afraid to face our insecurity, we are afraid of silence.

## Writers Should Embrace The Silence

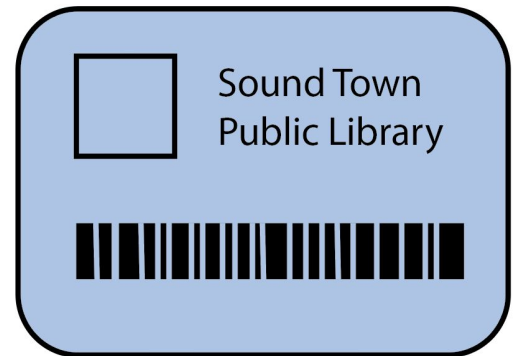
Silence is a necessary soundtrack for writers to be able to listen to and use to their advantage. Silence focuses the mind. With no auditory stimulation, which is by far the most distracting type of stimulation, the mind is free to focus on the writing and the writing alone. On a similar note, writing to a background of silence allows you to think deeper about the topic at hand. Distracting environments pull focus off of the writing; when the writer's attention is broken, the likelihood the writer will ask deep probing questions related to the piece is reduced. By eliminating audio distractions, you allow yourself to create a more complete or analytical work than you would be able to in a sound environment.

In addition, some of the most frightening aspects of silence make for the most compelling writing. In the presence of silence, I am left alone with my thoughts. I am able to reflect on my automatic, uncontrolled thoughts and discern how I truly feel about a topic as I write. I

admit that my automatic thoughts are uncomfortable. But in order to create compelling writing, I propose that we have to lean into the discomfort. I am able to know where I stand and what I think because silence forces me to become intimately familiar with what I know and how I feel. The reflective process that makes us all so uncomfortable becomes a tool to help me figure out what I really want to say.

Silence is also a gateway to creativity. Silence has the unique ability to be both a productive and an utterly boring space. I often find myself getting bored when I write in silence because silence is a void of stimulation where people are typically overstimulated. Since there are no distractions, I have to use my own thoughts to entertain myself. By using silence as a gateway to self entertainment, I find myself thinking about my writing in new and unconventional ways that I may not have thought of in an environment with sound. In this way, writing in silence allows me to consider alternate perspectives and pull new original thoughts from my existing knowledge to create a more original and holistic piece of writing.

Yes, silence makes people uncomfortable. It's unnaturally quiet, forces us to reflect on what we think, encourages us to have conversations with ourselves, and makes us confront who we are. But each of these traits that make people so afraid of silence are the same traits that make for analytical or complete writing. So, next time you write, I encourage you to shut the door, turn the TV off, and hang up the phone. Don't be afraid to write in complete silence. Lean in to the discomfort; you might be surprised at what you have to say.



# Relax, Renew, Refresh

By Jewels Savage

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*The spa is the most relaxing spot in town. Its services of facials, massages, manicures, and pedicures are all enhanced experiences with the aromas of essential oils and the sounds of lo-fi music wafting through the air. The spa also offers products for sale including handmade soaps, luxe bath bombs, essential oils, and decorative diffusers.*

\*\*\*

Writing has been, and most likely always will be, my escape.

From the time I could form words into coherent sentences to now, stories would flow out of my brain, fictional or not. I used to get lost in the silence I so desperately searched for, always trying to find some peace in an over-crowded house. The silence was welcoming, comforting, warm, and it offered open sound waves for my thoughts to flow. I used to crave this silence, often becoming unnaturally frustrated when I couldn't find it, causing myself to give up and hope that the next day would be better.

Silence no longer offers comfort.

Instead, it coaxes the darkest parts of my mind to come out, distracting me to the point where I can do nothing but sit and feel my mind ooze away. Thoughts don't connect. Unwanted emotions become apparent. The need for nicotine increases.

Music often helps more times than not when my mind becomes this way—it pulls it all back into my skull, allowing it to once more become a somewhat functioning brain. If I find myself needing to clean, the country comes on: Tim McGraw, The Dixie Chicks, Jo Dee Messina. If I find myself needing to release anger, the alternative rap comes on: Witt Lowry, Pettros, Ski Mask the Slump God. If I find myself in a rare moment of bliss, the oldies come on: The Four Seasons, Fleetwood Mac, Billy Joel. Yet, where all these tunes drive out the negatives, they also allow for distraction when I'm attempting to pour my creativeness onto paper.

It wasn't that long ago, probably less than six months, did I come across ChilledCow and their YouTube channel "lofi hip-hop music- beats to relax study to," and I was introduced to this newer music genre of Lo-Fi. I was originally taken back by the name, expecting some sort of foreign pop music with words I wouldn't be able to understand. Instead, I

found myself relaxing to a strand of calming beats playing against the instrumental soundtrack to *My Neighbor Totoro*, a Studio Ghibli film I had grown up with. The familiar music had shot a wave of nostalgia through me, calming my arm hairs to lay flat again and



my hands to stop twitching, yet the repetitive beats overlapping this music held me as if on a rope, hanging close to this nostalgia, but far enough away where my mind wouldn't be overcome by it. It offered comfort and a reassuring route, pulling me up towards a new sense of open mindedness where my thoughts felt free to roam within this area of comfort. I found my attention focusing, using this comfort spot to sort through my thoughts with the negative thoughts being thrown off me, allowing me to climb closer to my goals, whatever they might be.

Of course, ChilledCow isn't the only source of Lo-Fi, nor do all of the Lo-Fi genre inhibit nostalgic senses. Quiet Hours on Spotify offers random noises paired with simple, soothing notes, relaxing enough to ease the nerves but not relaxing enough to put you to sleep. These random noises range from the sounds of nature to the crinkling of paper to reels of tape spinning on a continuous loop.

Where these noises may often be tuned out and even annoying at times, the overlapping music offers a whole new perspective, offering a chance for my mind to slow down and appreciate these sounds in ways I can utilize them.

When I write, I write straight through, beginning to end. Distraction angers me, for I know the moment I find my mind wandering to something else, I am lost. I waste time reading and rereading what I had written, trying to get back into the same mindspace, the same tone, the same pace. I typically find myself staring at the screen for hours, my hair a mess from constantly flipping it out of my eyes. My back aches from hunching over the keyboard in long intervals, and my fingers start to cramp from typing like a madman. Sometimes, when I finish writing, I like to picture myself from another person's perspective, wondering what they might think if they happened to venture into this empty room—would they see a writer gone mad? Just another Edgar Allan Poe type? How on Earth does she continue to write so?

I would tell them it's the sounds my phone produces, sitting an arms' length away—this oddly termed strand of simple, yet complex notes. I use them to fuel this peaceful madness

as they bring comfort. They bring ease. They bring the opening of doors of inspiration when I can't seek them out myself. They bring me back down to reality, yet, at the same time, they create new realities—realities that fill my brain with endless possibilities. This collaboration of emotions and thoughts drives me to indulge in this madness, writing to my heart's content, pushing me to express my feelings, ideas, and hopes, all while blocking out any negatives that may be trying to work against me.



# A Comfy Couch and a Listening Ear

By Anonymous

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*The counseling center is well-equipped to treat all mental health needs. There are multiple counselors—with flexible hours—that take walk-ins as well as scheduled appointments. The center is always welcoming new patients and encourages anyone who is considering seeking counseling to schedule a consultation, free of cost.*

\*\*\*

In general, I try to avoid music that I listened to in my first few years of high school. Not because it's bad from a musical standpoint—the majority of it is, in my opinion, actually really good—it's just that it usually makes me feel Really Bad (like, emotionally). I even made a playlist on Spotify to consolidate all of my high school music that I listened to heavily from 2011 to 2013 and appropriately titled it "i'm depressedt !" 2011 through 2013 were some really difficult years for me for a lot of reasons, but they were also good in a lot of ways too. I don't necessarily long for those times and want to relive them (well, maybe I do), but I do mourn them in a way because, as we know, the passage of time is awful and quite frankly should be illegal.

Now, unfortunately, I can't help but associate a lot of the music I discovered at that time with feeling Really Bad. It's not all bad though, and some songs don't make me feel awful. I have a lot of positive memories associated with those songs, it's just that they're tinged with a little bit of sadness. But I guess that's what nostalgia is, right? Mixing the good and the bad of the past and longing for it but also being saddened by it.

## Background

After begging for an entire year, I finally got my own laptop for Christmas in 2010. I was truly in love with that laptop (R.I.P. 2010-2014), and as a result, I spent a lot of time online. In particular, I spent a lot of time on a website for a book series that I had read a few years prior, and I made a lot of online friends through that website. Although I didn't know it at the time, this was really the groundwork for what later shaped by music tastes and a lot of other personal aspects of myself in a positive way.

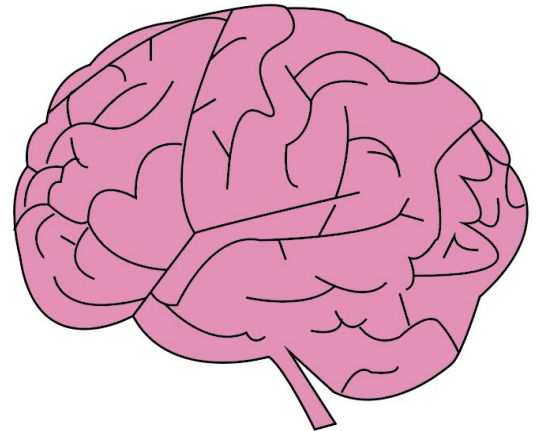
Prior to the summer before my freshman year of high school, I really didn't listen to a lot of my own music. I really only listened to what was on the radio or what my friends

showed me. My musical tastes up to 2011 really just consisted of pop, hip-hop/rap, and R&B, with probably all of it being mainstream. However, since I was talking to so many different people around the country and world through that book website, I got exposed to a lot of new music. I was introduced to genres that I had never even known about: house, trip hop, various psychedelic genres, indie rock, and indie pop among so many others. It was also summertime, and I was out of school, so I would stay up a lot later than I usually did. They don't do it anymore, but MTV used to play music videos starting at 3 a.m., and this was also a place where I was able to discover new music. I remember being pretty traumatized by Die Antwoord's "I Fink U Frecky" music video playing at 4 a.m. one day, and although that's a story for another time, it was good exposure to music that I never would have listened to otherwise.

All of this time spent online and talking to people who were outside of my little bubble in Middletown, Ohio really helped me not just branch out with my musical tastes but also develop as a person. I'll try to just focus on the musical aspects of my development, though. This isn't a motivational story about personal growth; it's just about feeling Sad and also a little bit Wistful and Nostalgic because some songs remind me of my first few years of high school. At twenty-two, I really thought my angsty teen years were over, but I guess not.

### Okay, so what am I getting at?

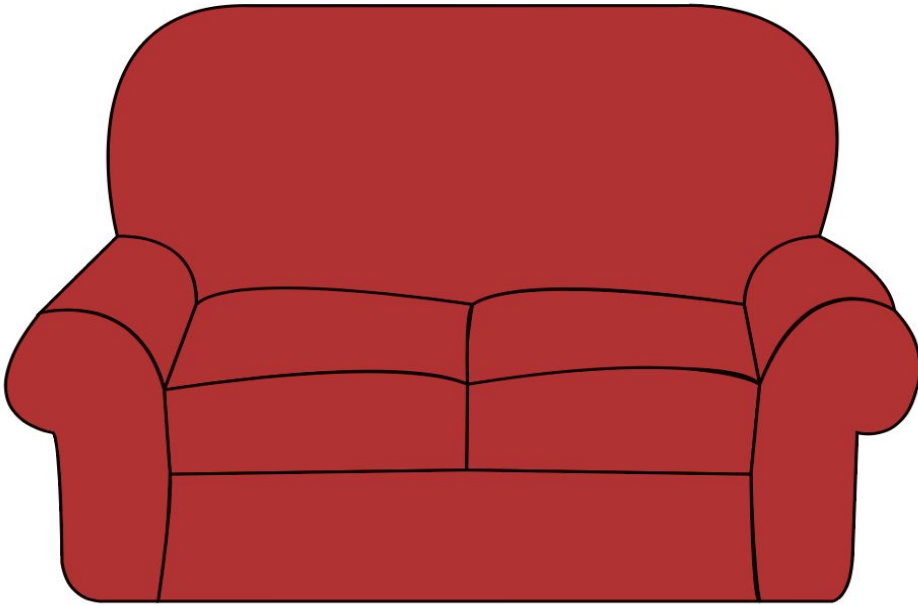
- Existence is painful
- The passage of time is evil
- Songs that you listened to in your formative years are bound to make you at least a little bit miserable (because of nostalgia), and if they don't, then what are you? Some kind of sociopath?
- I'm dramatic



"Electric Feel" by MGMT is one of the songs that I discovered when I was fifteen. I was lonely and confused and insecure, but it was that song that connected me to other people and—in a roundabout way—helped me gain a better sense of identity. Not to be fake deep (because it's not a deep song), but now whenever I listen to "Electric Feel," it makes me feel pretty emotional, but it also makes me feel like serotonin is being absolutely blasted into my brain. And I get this feeling from other songs that I listened to when I was younger too. Listening to those songs makes me miss being fifteen and miss my friends and my family members that I've lost since then. But, they also remind me of a time where I was

profoundly sad and lonely, which is something that I've since moved past. That's why it's sometimes better to just avoid listening to those songs altogether—sometimes the good does not outweigh the bad.

So for me at least, listening to “Electric Feel” perfectly encapsulates what nostalgia is—it's serotonin mixed with a little bit of sadness. It's both longing and aversion. Nostalgia's something I simultaneously want to avoid and also crave because of the negative and positive emotions it brings. But ultimately, if you're serotonin deficient, you really just have to take what you can get.



# Vinyls Galore

By Maddie Clegg

\*\*\*

*The record store has a vast collection of vinyls that encompasses as much musical history as the establishment has room for. From classic rock and and big band jazz to newer genres like J-Punk and country-rap, they really do have it all. They also offer some novelty items like band merch and figurines.*

\*\*\*

## Intro

It would be accurate to classify one of my favorite music genres under the title: sad, emotional, depressing, tender music. I am an outwardly happy person and love all genres of music from Britney Spears' "Oops!...I Did It Again" to 2Pac's "Changes." But there is just something about the soft acoustic guitar strumming along to the lyrics of a girl diagnosed with bone cancer that makes me want to comfortably sit in a dark room and listen for hours. Sufjan Stevens' release of "Casimir Pulaski Day" is a wonderful example of how thoughtfully written lyrics and beautiful acoustics harmonize to create a perfect somber mood.

## History of Sufjan Stevens

Sufjan Stevens flocks from Detroit, Michigan and first dipped his feet into the world of music while attending Hope College. He started his solo career in the beginning of 1999, with his first album release of *Sun Came* debuting in 2000. He was immediately recognized for his "superior musical command, complex instrumentation, and sparkling melodies" (Borges 2019). Stevens has released several albums varying in genre, but his music is prominently classified under indie folk, indie rock, and alternative rock. One of his largest projects, the "50 States Project," attempted to create an album for every state in the United States. However, after the completion of his second state album, Stevens commented, "The whole premise was such a joke, and I think maybe I took it too seriously. I started to feel like I was becoming a cliché of myself" (Breihan 2009). Even with the failure of this project, his music has won several awards and has appeared in numerous movies. Stevens' "Mystery of Love" won the David di Donatello for Best Original Song in 2019. His music has appeared most notably in the movies *Call Me by Your Name*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Veronica Mars*, and *Demolition*.

## Casimir Pulaski Day

Your first question upon hearing the name of this song title may quite possibly be: What is Casimir Pulaski Day? Well, it is defined as "a legal holiday in Illinois, in the United States,

on the first Monday of March. It celebrates the birthday of Casimir Pulaski, a Polish born soldier who contributed to the United States' independence" ("Casimir Pulaski Day in the United States" 1995-2019). Stevens wrote "Casimir Pulaski Day" for his album, *Illinois*. Stevens used "Casimir Pulaski Day" to remember the holiday, but he also used it as an opportunity to write about his friend who had been battling bone cancer. The song was released in 2005.

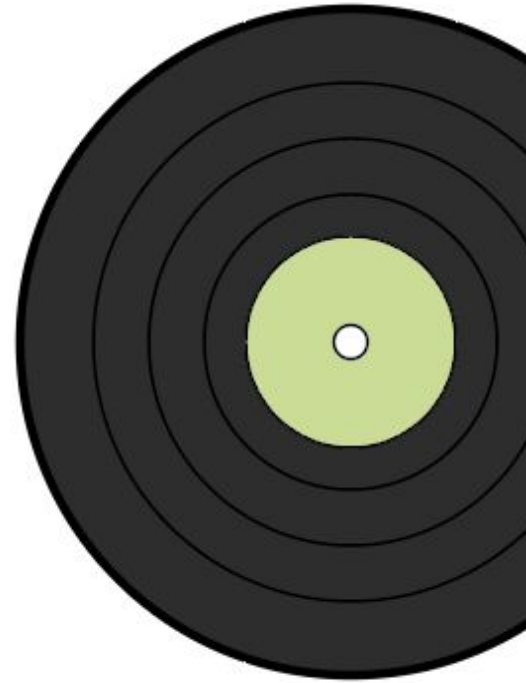
## The Song

I remember the first time I heard "Casimir Pulaski Day." I was sitting in my dorm room sophomore year of college. I just got back from class, enduring the cold December weather and the encroachment of finals season. I pulled out my phone, logged on to Spotify, and started stalking the music playlist of a boy I liked, as one does. That's where I stumbled across Stevens' "Casimir Pulaski Day."

Without knowing the name of the song or who was singing, I had an immediate reaction to it. The slow guitar strumming and soft melancholy modulation from Stevens' voice captured me. The song does not wait to build up to a climax of sadness but instead begins with, "Goldenrod and the 4H stone/The things I brought you/When I found out you had cancer of the bone/Your father cried on the telephone/And he drove his car into the navy yard/Just to prove that he was sorry" (Stevens). The immediate imagery and emotional ties of family, friends, and death creates an overwhelming bout of sadness within the first twenty seconds of the song.

The song continues to tell the tale of a young boy who loses his friend to cancer. The song sprinkles small memories, never fully developed, about Stevens' friend. Intimate moments of playful childhood romance are shared: "I remember at Michael's house/In the living room when/you kissed my neck/And I almost touched your blouse" (Sufjan Stevens). With the only other accompanying instrument being a banjo and the flutter of a background singer, Stevens sings about the slow atrophy of his childhood love. The song reaches its peak sadness, with the utterance of "In the morning when you finally go/And the nurse runs in with her head hung low/And the cardinal hits the window" (Sufjan Stevens). After hearing this stanza for the first time, I was completely obsessed with Sufjan Stevens. I was also incredibly bummed out, but in a good way.

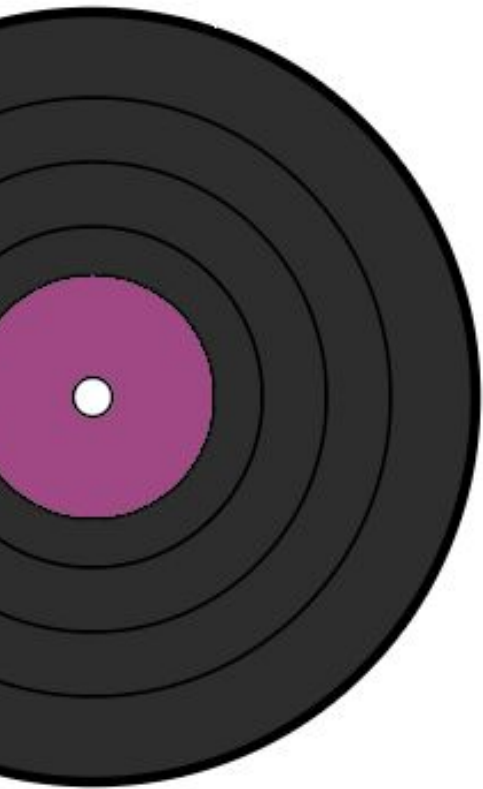
Songs of this genre have the power to make death and sadness feel beautiful and captivating. After this verse, interestingly enough, is the first and last time there is a reference made to the title of the song. Stevens sings, "In the morning in the winter shade/On the 1st of March on the holiday/I thought I saw you breathing." The first of March, referring to the day that Casimir Pulaski Day was celebrated in 2005. Although extreme Casimir Pulaski fans might be disappointed with the lack of history and



pertinence the song has to the Polish general, it's mentioning mended with a vision of Stevens' deceased friend is powerful and unique.

## Why the Sad Song Genre?

I could not recommend this song—or the artist—more to fans of the “sad, emotional, depressing, tender” music genre. It's important to remember that sad music can reach far beyond people wanting to be sad and do nothing all day (although this a totally valid reason to listen to sad music). Songs that deal with topics of pain, loss, death, grief, etc. allow us to share memories and feelings. In *Psychology Today*, Dr. Paul Thagard writes about the power of sad music and why people like it: “Sometimes sad songs do make you feel bad if they revive memories of your own tragic times, but more often they engage your interest because they describe or convey important events in the lives of others” (Thagard 2015). So basically, if you are a human who conveys emotion, sad music is the perfect way to express these emotions. Whether you listen to it softly in the background while doing homework or crank it up on a roadtrip and pretend your the star of a sad indie movie, Sufjan Stevens' “Casimir Pulaski Day” is a perfect companion.



# Coffee Shop Mixtape

By Melissa Phillips

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*The coffee shop make the best signature lattes, while also providing simple—yet delicious—house brews. They also have kombucha on tap, as well as a wide selection of teas. Whether you're picking up something on the go or staying to enjoy the ambiance, the coffee shop is a must-visit in town.*

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In *The Great Gatsby*, Jordan Baker says, “I like large parties. They’re so intimate. Small parties, there isn’t any privacy.” I feel the same way about a busy coffee shop. Sitting at a table in the middle of the hustle and bustle and listening to the natural sounds around me is the perfect atmosphere to sit down and become immersed in whatever I am writing. I don’t write in a quiet environment like a library; the silence causes me to get lost in my tangled thoughts. The sounds that swirl around me in a coffee shop keep me distracted from my own thoughts. The ambience is different at various points during the day, so walking into a coffee shop is a gamble—I never know what sounds I will experience. The busy morning hours are accompanied with the continuous screeching of steam from the espresso machines and the grounding of coffee beans amongst the chatter of people waiting on a rich, bold cup of coffee to get them through their work day. The overall compilation of noise morphs together like a soundtrack, creating the perfect mixtape to accompany my writing.

As I sit at my corner table by the window, with a rich cup of coffee nestled next to my computer, I can hear the faint sound of music in the background. Sometimes it’s upbeat pop music. Other times it’s smooth jazz. Maybe it’s classical. It doesn’t matter to me; I’m not listening to it anyway. The combination of the music pairs with the natural sounds of



the coffee shop and the chattering lips of the patrons around me, but I tune everything out into background noise and escape into my own world—well, most of the time.

As I mentioned, it’s sometimes a gamble walking into a coffee shop. When it’s not busy, the music really stands out, and I’m focused on the song that’s playing. Next thing I know, my fingers are dancing across my keys,

typing to the beat of the music. Other times, I arrive at a coffee shop, and it's not busy. In fact, I am the only one there, staring at a blank, white screen. It's mocking my writer's block, but I have the upper hand: people watching. During slower hours, I am forced to listen to the conversation and gossip the baristas are having with one another. I can hear them gossiping about their coworkers, and their cackling laughter pierces my ears. As more people begin to trickle in throughout the day, I am exposed to more conversation. At busy times, when the tables are close together and I am up close and personal with the people next to me, I am forced to listen to their conversation and gossip as well. Annoying? Yes. Inspirational? Also, yes. Their conversations do one of two things: they either buy me some time to think about what words are going to spew out onto my page, or maybe their demeanor and disposition will become an inspiration for a character in the story I am writing. Sometimes ideas just fall into my hands. I mean, what do you expect when you decide to have a business meeting with your counterpart, discussing everything you hate about each other in an effort to work better as a team? Or what about making a phone call, discussing your medical conditions with your doctor? And my personal favorite—overhearing a gossip session approximately two feet away from a stranger.

Writers are often portrayed working in a coffee shop in a sophisticated manner, daintily sipping their coffee and diving into their piece of writing as if they have no distractions. I see many people take advantage of the coffee shop to write, whether it is a high school or college student writing a paper, a businessman stopping in after work to get some things done, or even someone with a stack of books scribbling down some notes. A coffee shop is more than a haven for writers. Going to a coffee shop is a social activity, as people go in for a variety of reasons. I've seen people conduct job interviews, have business meetings, catch up with an old friend, work on homework, be on a date, do some wedding planning, and the list goes on and on.

Everyone has a different reason for entering the social scene that is a coffee shop, and personally, I love being surprised with different outcomes of the coffee shop's atmosphere. Some people might get irritated by that gossip going on at the table within earshot, but I'm an optimistic person—I take advantage of it and use it to fuel my writing. Once I grasp onto an idea, I can return to my own world, escaping into that Gatsby-esque mindset and get lost in the music, the screeching of the espresso machine, grinding of the coffee beans, and chatter of the people around me. Of course, it's all tied together with a cup of rich, bold coffee to get me through.



# A Symphony of Sound

By Paris Taylor

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*The concert hall houses beautiful performance, from full string orchestras to trumpet soloists. Many shows have free admission, while others require ticket purchases. The hall is quite large, seating over a thousand guests, and is busiest during the holiday season.*

\*\*\*

The bell-tower outside of Jainey's bedroom window chimed, signaling 3 a.m. It was almost as if her body responded to the sound and pulled itself out of the bed, putting one foot in front of the other. Her hand instinctively opened the door to her bedroom, and she walked out into the corridor of the palace. Her legs moved quietly and swiftly, eager to reach their destination. By the time her mind caught up with her, Jainey was standing in front of a silver door with a silver handle. Her eyes shot open when her hand met the coolness of the metal handle.

*How did I get here? What is this door?*

She could vaguely remember her father's rules about this door. She wasn't allowed to go near it but was never given a reason why. Before she could think to remove her hand, it turned on its own, and her legs forced her to go into the forbidden room.

The room was dimly lit with a small lamp on a stand in the corner of the room. But what stood in the middle of the room is what captured Jainey's attention. Sitting in a showcase was a chestnut colored violin and bow. She moved closer to the glass to get a better look at the violin.

*Is this why father didn't want me here? All because of a violin?*

Her hands itched to touch the violin, while her fingers longed to understand why they were missing something they've never felt. Almost robotically, Jainey slid the door of the showcase open and took out the violin and its bow. The weight of the violin felt familiar in her hands, as if she had held it before. Innately, she placed it underneath her chin, drew her bow, and began to play. With her fingers and wrist moving on their own accord, a dull, thick, syrupy sound slowly filled the room. As she played, Jainey noticed something glowing on the left wall. When she stopped playing to get a better look at it, the glow

disappeared. Placing the violin back underneath her chin, her fingers picked up where they left off.

The left wall began to glow again. She continued to play, and the light coming from the wall got brighter and started to spread out across the room. Writing on the walls slowly started to show itself, glowing in an unfamiliar language. The more she played, the more words revealed themselves.

Jainey continued to play the song her fingers were creating, picking up tempo and playing higher notes. It wasn't long before the room was almost completely filled with glowing characters. When her fingers began to slow down and her wrist began to slightly turn one last time, the room shone in white light, revealing all the writing that had appeared. Untucking the violin from her chin, she stared at the writing that trailed along the walls and onto the ceiling. Inching closer to the walls, she scanned each character. Her brain worked quickly to decipher each word, formulating them into sentences that she could understand.



“A warrior will rise when the tides of the kingdom are low. They will unlock the door and bring an era of peace and prosperity.”

*What could that mean?*

“The warrior that you seek is one amongst you. They will come to your aid when the bow meets the violin.”

*It doesn't really mean this violin does it?*

“The true heir to the kingdom will be the only one who will know the secret song to summon the warrior.”

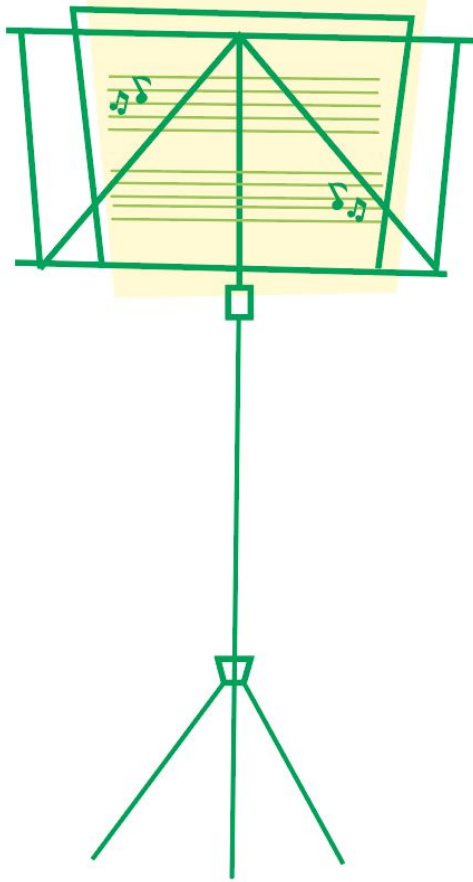
When Jainey read this sentence, a hidden door panel began to appear.

*What did I just do?*

“The final song will reveal itself when the time is right.”

*Wait, what does this mean?*

Jainey stood away from the wall and eyed the door that appeared in the room. For a minute nothing happened. Then the words on the walls shifted into musical notes, forming a melody of a song. This song was one that Jainey knew. Her mother used to play it on the piano when she was little.



When she raised the violin once more to play, it felt heavier. She attempted to glide the bow over the copper-colored strings, but her wrist would not move, nor would her fingers form the chords that were shown before her.

*Now I can't play? I've been playing all morning.*

She tried again, slow and careful to move her fingers to the correct positions. She was only able to play one note correctly. That single note reverberated throughout the room. She could feel the note's breath lingering in the air around her. It made her hands shake it with anticipation. She could feel it giving her a small kiss on her cheek. She had never heard anything like it.

The new door that had appeared creaked open. Jainey nearly dropped the violin at the sound. Taking a step back, she waited for the "warrior" to come through.

Still, there was nothing. Jainey carefully placed the violin on the floor, mustering up some courage to inch closer to the mysterious door.

She forced her legs to move, but she didn't have to try as hard. The tune of her mother's song floated from the door. It pulled her forward, closing the gap. Her hand reached up and pushed on the panel. Behind it was a mirror displaying an image of her mother playing the piano, and her adolescent self was setting next to her, memorizing her mother's hands striking each key with a soothing grace. When the song stopped, her mother turned to the smaller Jainey.

*"One day, Jainey, you will hear this song in search for someone who will aid this country in keeping harmony amongst the people and other nations."*

*"I thought father said we were in a time of stability?"*

*Her mother sighed, "That is true for now, but something is still lurking in the shadows. I know this will be hard to understand, especially since your father refuses to listen to reason, but you hold the key to saving this kingdom. Don't let your father stand in the way of that."*

The image in the mirror dissolved, showing Jainey's reflection. A small sentence crawled across the top:

"You needn't look too far for the one that will bring hope."

A different image of Jainey danced across the mirror. This time she was sitting on a throne with a crown on her head with a bow and arrow flanking her side.

# The Room Where it Happens

By Phoebe Campbell

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*The courthouse is one of the oldest establishments in the town and is located in the center of it all. With a beautiful marble exterior, spectacular columns, intricate woodwork, and original stained glass windows, the architecture alone warrants a visit.*

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*Hamilton* is a hip-hop musical about the life of Alexander Hamilton. The musical was written by Lin-Manuel Miranda after he read a biography about America's first secretary of the treasury (Murray 2019). *Hamilton* premiered Off-Broadway in January 2015, with a diverse cast and Miranda playing the leading role. Despite the fact that the concept of a hip-hop musical about the life of one of America's founding fathers sounds rather strange, the musical was nearly an instant success and moved to Broadway later in 2015. Since then, the musical has begun its circulation across America and also in London. *Hamilton* has won numerous awards and continues to garner acclaim even though it opened almost half a decade ago. Miranda has explained in many interviews that upon reading about the life of Hamilton, he came to the conclusion that his rise from being a poor, self-educated boy from the Caribbean to one of George Washington's most trusted advisors resembles the lives of many successful rappers and embodies the spirit of hip-hop (Murray 2019).

*Hamilton* is arguably one of the best lyrical works of our time and deals with a wide array of subjects—from war and politics to love and scandal. Another major topic reflected throughout the musical is writing. Hamilton was an accomplished writer following the Revolutionary War, and although everyone should listen to and enjoy this masterful work, people with a passion for writing will likely find it to be even more delightful than the typical listener for this reason. Writers might even consider listening to the music of *Hamilton* while doing their own writing. Miranda's *Hamilton* could easily provide the soundtrack to any field of writing; however, it is particularly useful for authors writing argumentative and romantic works and for those experiencing writer's block.

## Argumentative Works

Much of *Hamilton* is centered around the political climate of the United States's birth and beginning, seeing as how Hamilton was a prominent political figure of the time. The

quick, witty lines of Miranda's songs, typically focused on political issues, contain the power to inspire writers of argumentative works.

"Cabinet Battle #1," for example, is a debate between Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson in which Jefferson argues, "In Virginia, we plant seeds in the ground / We create. You just wanna move our money around / This financial plan is an outrageous demand / And it's too many

damn pages for any man to understand" ("The Official Page" n.d.). Although this line is a particularly hard-hitter, the song in its entirety could fuel any argumentative-style work. Additionally, "Your Obedient Servant" maintains argumentative prowess throughout, yet here listeners see a more covert style utilized by Hamilton and Aaron Burr. Hamilton states, "Hey, I have not been shy / I am just a guy in the public eye / Tryin' to do my best for our republic / I don't wanna fight / But I won't apologize for doing what's right" ("The Official Page" n.d.). While there are many songs from the musical that display strong argumentative characteristics, "Cabinet Battle #1" and "Your Obedient Servant" stand out among the crowd as two of the best songs for disputatious writers.



## Romantic Works

Although politics make up a generous portion of *Hamilton's* content, love is another major topic of the musical. Some of Miranda's love songs pertain to platonic love, either for friends or family; however, the romantic songs are particularly impactful. The chorus of "Helpless," for instance, maintains, "Look into your eyes, and the sky's the limit I'm helpless! / Down for the count, and I'm drownin' in 'em" ("The Official Page" n.d.). Eliza Schuyler's blind love for Hamilton, as it is displayed here, could never fail to strike up a love streak in a writer. "Burn," on the other hand, comes just after Schuyler learns of Hamilton's affair and has a much different tone than "Helpless." Eliza proclaims, "You forfeit all rights to my heart / You forfeit the place in our bed / You sleep in your office instead / With only the memories / Of when you were mine / I hope that you burn" ("The Official Page" n.d.). All great love stories have some level of turmoil and "Burn," the foil of "Helpless," provides the perfect provocation for the writer of a romantic work.

## Writer's Block

All writers experience writer's block at some point in their career for a number of reasons. Hamilton, however, may have been the exception. As Miranda describes throughout the

musical, Hamilton never lacked the motivation to write, especially it came to *The Federalist Papers*. In “Non-Stop,” Burr queries of Hamilton, “How do you write like tomorrow won’t arrive? / How do you write like you need it to survive? / How do you write ev’ry second you’re alive? / Ev’ry second you’re alive? Ev’ry second you’re alive?” (“The Official Page” n.d.). While this is indicative of Hamilton’s unique ability to write even when it didn’t seem as urgently necessary to outsiders, it also provides much needed inspiration for those who see the urgency but simply can not find the words. A song that serves a similar purpose is “My Shot,” in which Hamilton states, “I’m a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal / Tryin’ to reach my goal. My power of speech: unimpeachable” (“The Official Page” n.d.). Although this song is less directly applicable to writer’s block, it does have the potential to incite confidence in those who are doubting their writing abilities. The entire musical, in fact, is centered around Hamilton’s obsession with his own perceived legacy, which carries the promise of encouraging one to write.

## Conclusion

Although Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical, *Hamilton*, could easily provide the soundtrack to any field of writing, it is particularly useful for authors writing argumentative and romantic works, in addition to those experiencing writer’s block. “Cabinet Battle #1” and “Your Obedient Servent” are perfect for argumentative writing, “Helpless” and “Burn” are applicable for romantic writing, and “My Shot” and “Non-Stop” are effective cures for writer’s block. With almost 50 songs, however, the musical contains numerous tunes that are great for other genres of writing. Due to its universalism, *Hamilton* transcends not only musical genre, but literary genre as well.



# The Chaos Chronicle

By Rachel Berry

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*The Chaos Chronicle is the town's local newspaper. Going to press Monday night and delivering every Tuesday morning, the Chaos Chronicle is a staple of the town's culture and communication. The paper covers breaking stories, sports, entertainment, politics, and more.*

\*\*\*

4:45 p.m.

The door beeps as the red light turns to green, and I swing the door open, turning on the lights and making my way to the corner to put my things down.

I pull my computer out of my backpack and begin typing, my fingers flying across the keyboard as I compose one email after another. The sound of my fingers hitting the keys fills the empty room.

After just a few minutes, I see someone fumbling in their pockets for their ID before the familiar beep of the door. In comes another editor.

Her backpack thumps against the floor, as she, too, sits down and begins to work.

We sit in silence, the only sound being the muffled conversations of those walking by outside the newsroom.

Soon, more people trickle in, ready to begin the long night ahead.

The Miami Student, Miami University's school newspaper, publishes once a week on Tuesdays. This means that every Monday night, the editors all gather in our small room on the third floor of Armstrong Student Center to edit articles and put together the next day's paper.

6:12 p.m.

The room becomes crowded, as we all squeeze into 3018 Armstrong, made up of two glass panels for walls and overlooking the seal down below.

There's maybe thirty of us, gradually taking over more and more of the upstairs of Armstrong. The copy editors sit at a round table right outside the newsroom, working on

homework and chatting together before they're needed to check for grammar errors on the page.

If someone is stressed trying to write a late-night article, they'll oftentimes go sit around the corner, the quiet being so much more conducive to writing.

As we work, the room becomes loud—very loud. People shout across the room, asking questions about certain articles.

“Is Caroline’s good for me to look at?” the managing editor asks.

Loud sighs can be heard over articles that aren’t finished yet. Although we try to enforce deadlines, Mondays inevitably become crunch time to finish last-minute interviews and get pressing questions answered before we go to print.

Sometimes we have to push them until the next week when something we thought would be okay turns out not to be salvageable in time for print.



7:35 p.m.

People stumble into the newsroom looking lost, ready to get their photo taken for headshots we’re running this week. The photo editor ushers them out into the hallway, and the click of the camera can be heard as he poses them.

7:56 p.m.

Food crunches as one editor bites into a hamburger from Pulley Diner downstairs. Another eats chips they brought in earlier. Another slurps a milkshake in the corner, also from Pulley. We must keep that place in business

on production nights.

8:42 p.m.

There’s a lot of shouting, but this Monday night in particular draws more than usual. Shouting over each other to be heard on song suggestions. Shouting across the room to the photography editor to ask if we have pictures for a certain story. Shouting between news editors on how mad we are at a certain writer. Shouting excited conversations between friends or asking someone to confirm an opinion that two other editors disagree on. So much shouting.

This is how we work. This is the atmosphere we write and edit in.

10:21 p.m.

Computers beep as they wake up, as we use more and more of the desktop computers, all of us looking over different pages.

The keyboard clicks become more furious, the sighs louder and more pronounced.

Sticky notes can be heard peeling off the white board where we keep track of what pages have been looked at.

A sharpie screeches as it moves across the paper, adding more names to the wall of shame for those who missed glaring errors.

10:49 p.m.

The culture section, always the first to finish, shuffles their papers as they pack up for the night.

Our sports editor sits in the corner, throwing a football up and down. It smacks his hand, the sound of the foam hitting his skin repeatedly as he waits for his pages to be ready to be looked at. As the night progresses, he'll play catch with various members of the staff, trying to teach an uncoordinated group of journalists about sports.



The music choice varies, ranging from pop to alternative to rap. People shout out suggestions of their favorite songs to be added to the queue. Sometimes, they physically get up and change an unattended Spotify playlist when they don't like the song.

12:19 p.m.

As the clock ticks farther past midnight, more and more people head out as their sections are finished. Soon, only news, sports, and opinion are left.

1:13 a.m.

The design editor's phone rings with a call from the printer, asking if we have any pages to send. While we would be annoyed, he sounds calm and collected. Even if we're behind schedule, he assures her that everything will be fine, and we'll give her more pages soon.

1:34 a.m.

The zippers on the design editor's backpack swish together as he finally starts cleaning up

for the night. We play a closing song, sometimes "Closing Time" by Semisonic, sometimes something else with the same sentiment.

The chairs bump into the tables, plastic hitting plastic as we clean up our humble abode for the night, picking up trash on the way out.

The door slams behind us, clicking into place as we all shuffle outside for the long walk home, talking about the homework we have to finish and the long night that still lays ahead of us.

# En Pointe

By Sophie Thompson

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*The dance studio offers classes to dancers of all ages, from preschoolers to seniors in the community. It also provides a wide variety of classes including ballet, hip-hip, jazz, tap, pom, ballroom, and acrobats. Every spring, the dance studio puts on a recital at the music hall to showcase the dancers' hardwork and encourage community involvement.*

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At the sound of the first harp string thrumming delicately through the air, Celine could feel the music in her bones.

She stood alone on the floor, empty space around her, the candles flickering within their golden candelabras on the tables from afar. Her body was folded neatly in her opening position, bent at the waist, arms folded down towards the ground, head bowed. Her eyes were closed, rimmed in gold around her lash-line, waiting for the right moment to open. One leg stood straight, the other stretched out behind her at a slight angle, toe pointed, the tips of her glossy satin shoe catching the dim light of the room.

The violin began to weave a mellow harmony from thin but tenacious strings, and she obediently rose from her stance, standing on her toes, balancing her weight. Her arms fluttered above her head, and she turned, gliding into an arabesque. The music swayed around her. A smile graced her lips, and she shifted back to relevé to face her audience.

Celine bowed once to her left while on her toes, one arm making a broad sweeping gesture, acknowledging the sea of faces before her. She did the same to her right. Then the real dance began.

She turned and spun across the floor, her skirt fanning out around her. Her feet moved on their own accord, their movements instinctive by now, the music leading her onwards through the dance. She paid no mind to the people who saw her, to the sheer number of them, let alone the caliber of status they brought with them. Tonight, she was the principal dancer, and she would give them a show.

Light as air, quick as a fox, she flitted about the room, arms aloft, performing a series of jumps and pirouettes. Her body sang with every movement she made, every breath she took. This was what she was meant to do.

Celine danced and danced and danced, twirling every which way, then gracefully stretching towards the ceiling, beyond which the midnight sky darkened to signal the coming of night. Her steps were swift, precise; she completed elegant, slow circles en pointe and jumped into assemblés so high she felt like she was flying.

The music swarmed around her, building into the main part of the dance. Her movements echoed the chords. A countdown began in her mind as she lifted a leg into a high arabesque once more and waited, holding her stance in a display of strength and grandeur.

A light touch at her waist was her only warning before she allowed herself to be lifted high into the air, shifting to meet the face of her partner, Gustave, who at last joined the dance. They allowed one another a brief smile before she was whisked about and set down on the floor, rapidly switching into a series of moves that vaguely resembled a waltz. They walked the length of the floor, his body perfectly in sync with hers, engaging in quick-fire maneuvers that had the crowd around them gasping in awe.



Gustave took her hand and twirled her, so her outfit could be showcased at every angle. Celine's bodice was a pale pink, lined in white trim with tiny pearls stitched into the paneled front. Her skirt flared out in alternating layers of tulle and chiffon, soft and dainty to match the sprightly, whimsical tone of the music. She rose on her toes and extended herself into a croisé, letting him then take the opportunity to dance around her and display his outfit in turn. Gustave gave into a full tour en l'air, exhibiting the brocade doublet in white with gold buttons and matching fine white pants that fit snugly to the leg to allow full range of movement.

They came together at the sound of the drums, falling smoothly into each other's arms, joined together in the final, rousing sequence that would bring the audience to its knees. Their steps quickened, their arms a flurry of refined, graceful gestures, turning and turning until at last the ending chords sounded, and they struck their final pose, Gustave's arm wrapped

around Celine's waist, holding her steady as she balanced on the top of her right toe, her left leg extended fully behind her.

For a moment, silence reigned.

Then the thunderous applause rang out from somewhere deep within the shadows of the massive ballroom, and her heart swelled with pride and happiness. Face flushed, Celine sank into a curtsy, beaming at Gustave, who, grinning, grabbed her hand to lead her off the dance floor and into the crowd, eager to introduce her to the many noble faces at court.

She hesitated for only a moment, darting a glance out the closest window, eyes searching for something—or perhaps someone—far in the distance. She bit her lip, then let herself be tugged into the adoring masses, lost in a tangle of jeweled throats and polished boots.

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Marshall could hear the music from the palace.

One of the famed dances composed by the legendary musician in residence at court, no doubt.

He glanced up at the hall renowned for its balls, its food and drink, its lush interior, and the myriad of people inside it. He wanted no part of it now. Didn't see a need to pay it any sort of attention.

*Except...*

Except. He could barely form the thought in his mind. *She* was up there. Somewhere in that crowded ballroom, she was up there, likely lost in the music and dancing her heart out, dressed like a queen.

Marshall wished he could see her, for all the good it would do him. Wished to see her dance under the diamond chandeliers like a fallen star on the wayside, a dream, a vision come to life. He had never felt so alone before.

He turned his gaze away, back to the horse he led by the halter. The creature blinked slowly at him, fog curling from its nostrils as it breathed in the cold night air. He shook his head. It was time he did what he was supposed to do—what he should've been grateful to be doing.



A warm blanket, a bucket of grain and an apple, and the task of bedding down the other horses awaited him.

“Come on, boy,” he said softly, and tugged gently on the lead rope, walking the gelding back to the stables.

Back to where he himself belonged.

The horse followed obediently, his soft nicker the only other sound accompanying his hooves plodding across the street.

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