

Podcast Assignment: My Story with Music

Task: To produce a 3-4 minute podcast in which you will combine personally significant pieces of music—or pieces that represent personally significant interactions with music—with commentary reflecting on your relationship with music at various points in your life.

For example:

- One of the music clips might be a song you listened to a lot as a teenager, and you might explain how the song connected you to a certain peer group, or reflected something you were feeling, or drew you in and captured your interest, etc.
- Another music clip might be a piece (or similar to a piece) you performed at some point (maybe through private music lessons or school music), and you might explain how the experience of learning/performing in this context made you feel, or what it meant/represented to you.

Rationale:

- This assignment will familiarize you with the kind of audio technology employed in radio, film, TV, recording, composing, etc. It behooves music educators to be able to support students in working with this technology.
- The exploration of your personal interactions with music will, I believe, help you to better understand your own relationship with music and perhaps also the relationship others (including your students) may or might have with music.
- This is a valuable music learning activity you could do with students at a variety of ages.
- This is a form of communication which may prove useful in serving the expressive needs of you and/or your students.
- In carrying out this assignment, you will listen to and actively engage with music that is meaningful to you.

Parameters:

- 3-4 minutes in length
- must contain at *least* 3 significant pieces of music.
- do not play more than 15 seconds of any one music clip without commentary over top (you are not a disc jockey here—you are using the music to illustrate your story)
- you must email the final version of the podcast to me (benbolden@gmail.com) as an mp3 file—make sure you listen to the mp3 in its entirety before you send it, to ensure it plays correctly!

Technical considerations:

- You need a computer with a built in microphone or you need to find a microphone
- I suggest that to create the podcast you use *Audacity* <http://audacity.sourceforge.net> software which is available for free download to install on both Windows and Mac operating systems.
- Be sure to also download the ‘[LAME MP3 encoder](#)’ available from the same website under ‘optional downloads’ (allows you to export your project as an mp3).
- It is also useful to have the ‘LADSPA plugins’ [LADSPA plug-ins installer](#) - over 90 plug-ins which allow you to do things like change the pitch of a song or add reverb, etc.
- Please note this useful online tutorial: [Mixing a Narration With Background Music](http://manual.audacityteam.org/index.php?title=Tutorial_-_Mixing_a_Narration_With_Background_Music) http://manual.audacityteam.org/index.php?title=Tutorial_-_Mixing_a_Narration_With_Background_Music
- *Garage Band* (available on all Mac computers) will also work well. There are definitely other software applications that you could use, too.

Procedure:

- I suggest you begin by brainstorming a list of personally significant interactions with music at various points in your life (you could plot them on the ‘river of life’ graphic organizer).
- Next, identify specific pieces that will work to represent these interactions, and collect mp3 versions of the pieces (you can harvest mp3s from various online sources, such as youtube—see below).
- Then, write text (a paragraph or two) to accompany each musical selection.
- Finally, combine text and music using the software you have decided to use.
- Export the podcast to mp3, listen to the mp3 to make sure it plays correctly, then email it to me

The following websites may be helpful:

<http://creativeactivation.com/322-08/resources/audio.html> (useful computer audio resources/links)

www.classiccat.net (find classical mp3s available to download)

www.flvto.com (paste url into website to convert online video to mp3 and download)

www.youtube-mp3.org (paste url into website to convert online video to mp3 and download)

Assessment Rubric for Podcast

Text/Narrative: The spoken text and choice of musical excerpts successfully communicates rich and thoughtful reflection on a variety of personal interactions with music at various points in your life.

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| <p>A very high level of thoughtful reflection (e.g. thorough contemplation of the complexities and nuances of music experiences)</p> <p>...on a rich variety of personal interactions with music</p> | <p>B thoughtful reflection (e.g. some contemplation of the complexities and nuances of music experiences)</p> <p>...on a variety of personal interactions with music</p> | <p>C limited reflection (e.g. surface-level contemplation of music experiences)</p> <p>...on a limited variety of personal interactions with music</p> | <p>D very little reflection</p> <p>...on a very limited variety of personal interactions with music</p> | <p>F unacceptable level of reflection</p> |
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Technique: Care and consideration need to be employed in the technical realization of your podcast.

- Is the podcast carefully and effectively crafted?
- Are the music clips and spoken narrative at appropriate, well-matched volumes?
- Is there a minimum of unintentional ‘noise’ such as clicks, hissing, distortion, etc.?
- Is the cutting and pasting of audio events precise, careful, and thoughtful?

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| A Ready for broadcast | B Good | C Some problems | D Many problems | F Unacceptable |
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Aesthetic/Expressive Elements: Have you used technical expertise and artistic consideration to create something that is more than the sum of its parts? Does the podcast convincingly and artistically communicate your story with music? For example...

- Have you explored the expressive possibilities of manipulating and playing with the audio events (cutting and pasting, juxtaposing, repeating, layering, adding audio effects, etc.)?
- Does the piece have a sense of structure and shape? A sense of conclusion? Is there a sense of thoughtful, considered organization?
- Are there moments of tension and release? Does it have a sense of direction?
- Have you manipulated elements so that the podcast represents expressive communication through artistic decision-making: more than a series of chunks of music and narrative?

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| A extremely effective effort and exploration in this area | B effective effort and exploration in this area | C some effort and exploration in this area | D very little effort or exploration in this area | F no effort or exploration in this area |
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My Story with Music

