5-27-2019

Analysis and Utilization of Hip-Hop Techniques in Classical Music

William Francis Montgomery
williammontgomerycomposer@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations

Part of the Composition Commons, Musicology Commons, Music Practice Commons, and the Music Theory Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/4946

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradtd@lsu.edu.
ANALYSIS AND UTILIZATION OF HIP-HOP TECHNIQUES IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Music

by
William Francis Montgomery
B.A. Idaho State University, 2014
M.M. University of Nevada, Reno, 2016
August 2019
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, and foremost, thank you to Dr. Dinos Constantinides for bringing me to Baton Rouge, and Louisiana State University. You took a chance on a student that didn’t really know what he was going to do with his life, but wanted to get a terminal degree in music composition. You and your wife greeted us so warmly, introduced us to Chimes, and helped us get acquainted with Baton Rouge.

This document would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my primary professor, Dr. Mara Gibson. Without her nearly constant encouragement and undying belief in me and my topic of interest, I would not have been able to accomplish this Herculean task without her believing in my, my subject of choice, and my passion to encourage “classical” composers to experience and experiment with new music genres. You came to LSU and instantly accepted me, and my meager help as you started to build up not only a very promising career at LSU but the Constantinides New Music Ensemble.

I would also like to thank Dr.’s Robert Peck and Stephen Beck for their sage advice and criticism that not only challenged me intellectually but also challenged me to not accept anything less than my very best. They are amazing professors from whom I learned vast amounts about contemporary classical music, the music of Mahler and Strauss, and spectral music. Their words and edits are invaluable and brought this document to further levels than I had anticipated.

A thank you must also be extended to all my friends and family for all of their help, ears to listen to my constant thoughts of doubt, perpetual support. I would like to especially thank Alexandra “Xanthe” Kraft for her near constant reassurance that I would finish, be successful in
the adventure, and faith in my abilities. You were always encouraging me when it all seemed like too much for me to accomplish, when my ideas for a subject were ever changing, and when the process seemed to be a dark cloud hanging over me.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you to all the wonderful musicians from whom I have learned more than a textbook could ever teach me about every instrument. Working with instrumentalist is a process that I will encourage all my students to follow and do so that they can get a deeper understanding of each instrument, and the mental gymnastics that each performer must undergo in order to perform not only the canon of classical music but brand new music never heard before. Thank you to the performers of my recital, the soloists and the chamber ensemble: Mark Lesser, Sherman Modeste, Jolisa Singletary, Gabriela Estevez, Alba Layana, Hannah Panamarenka, Daniel Torres, Felipe Viana, Abby Buchanan, Luciano Correa, Wagner Duarte, Claudia Aizaga, Victoria Garza, Cari Sands, Marcus Westbrook, Shane Courville, Centria Brown, Kevin McCabe, Darko Varga, and Nelson Williams. You all gave my piece its first breath of life.

My sincerest thanks are given to The Estate of Langston Hughes, Harold Ober Associates Incorporated, and Alexander Smithline for allowing me to use the beautiful texts of Langston Hughes. My deepest appreciation is also given to Reuben Jackson and Jasmine Reed for their support and allowance to use their poignant words. I would also like to thank the members of the chamber ensemble who put so much time into the preparation of this piece, for their dedication to music beyond racial boundaries, and for their masterful artistry.

A special thank you to Ava Lavell Haymon for not only allowing me to work with her words in previous compositions but for also for taking me under your wing, for your support of
my music, and for the encouragement with your eloquent words. Without you and your words, both written and spoken, my music would not have taken the step forward that it needed.

I would also like to thank my mother, Tracy Montgomery, for reading, editing, and looking over many of my papers as I went through my degrees. Your insights, advice, and editorials are invaluable and I would not have gotten this far without you. You took on the hardest job of playing both parents and dealing with my heart condition. You have always listened to me and been there when I needed you from the simplest things to the most tragic moments in my life. You walked with me in the deepest of depressions and rejoiced with me in the highest of celebrations.

And, lastly, a very deep, loving, thank you to my amazing wife. You were there for everything. You moved across the country to the largest city you have ever been to for an extended period, and to a climate that was very alien to what we are used to in Idaho. Your eyes constantly show your love for me and your words are always the sincerest. You are my rock in all the most tumultuous seas, and the light in the darkest of times. You believed in me and my talents when I didn’t. You would always remind me to take a breath and just take the first step forward, thus making the next 100 so much easier to accomplish. I cannot thank you enough for allowing me to spend hours in front of a computer screen, staying up late, pulling all-nighters, and doing well below my fair share of the house work. You took care of the kids and our house while supporting me and pursuing your own education and career. You are the most amazing woman I know and I am honored to be able to call you my wife. Thank you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................ ii

ABSTRACT .................................................................................... vii

PART ONE. ANALYSIS OF HIP-HOP TECHNIQUES .......................... 1

LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................. 2

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 12

CHAPTER II. HISTORY ................................................................. 21

THE TROUBLE WITH RAP MUSIC ............................................... 27

CHAPTER III. RAP POETRY/LYRICS ............................................. 35

SATURATION ................................................................39

MUSICALITY OF POEMS .................................................................. 42

CHAPTER IV. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS ........................... 52

YOUNG AND UNCENSORED ......................................................... 57

CHAPTER V. RECENT CROSSOVERS IN TO THE CLASSICAL WORLD 66

CRITICISM OF THE PULITZER ................................................... 71

CHAPTER VI. WORLD WIDE INFLUENCE .................................... 76

THE MIDDLE EAST ........................................................................ 77

ASIA .............................................................................................. 82

SOUTH AMERICA .......................................................................... 85

EUROPE ........................................................................................ 87

AFRICA ........................................................................................ 88

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION .......................................................... 93

PART TWO. HIP-HOP TECHNIQUES IN CLASSICAL MUSIC ............... 97

THE FREEDOM TRAIN ................................................................. 98

APPENDIX A. THE HOLODOMOR: THE SOVIET FAMINE 1932-1933 AND CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS ................................................................. 184

APPENDIX B. PERMISSIONS ........................................................... 209
ABSTRACT

As of January 4th, 2018, R&B/Hip-Hop (including rap) had overtaken rock and roll as the most popular genre among music fans. Nielsen Music reported that rap had surpassed rock in terms of total consumption with rappers such as Drake and Kendrick Lamar leading the charge. This would lead to the second-highest growth of any genre of music, spiking at 25% over the previous year.¹ This came as a very big surprise to many, especially when we take into consideration the rocky at best relationship that rap has had with public perception.

There are many misconceptions and biases about hip-hop/rap music and I hope that this document will shed some light on the artistic abilities and craftsmanship that is placed with care into many of these songs. I will show musical and poetic aspects by analyzing songs by N.W.A., Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, The Cunninglynguists, and Childish Gambino. I will evaluate and analyze songs by these rappers paying attention to their rhythmic devices, musical motives, and the connection between text and rhythm of the words. I will also show the growing world-wide appreciation of the genre by discussing artists from around the world. These selected rap artists will demonstrate not just the world-wide appeal of the rap music genre but will also show the power of their messages. I have selected these performers due to the lyrical abilities of the singers, the rhythmic motives that they use, and the overwhelming number of songs that are political or social in meaning.

My hope is that by highlighting the craftsmanship, techniques, and poeticism of these artists that more classically trained composers could be inspired to create works that fuse these

genres together. I will also show this with my accompanying dissertation piece, *The Freedom Train*. 
PART ONE

ANALYSIS OF HIP-HOP TECHNIQUES
LITERATURE REVIEW

Initially, rap and hip-hop struggled to find a foothold in either research areas, or, especially, in the scholarly pursuit of hip-hop music in academia. The vast majority of the research done in hip-hop/rap music is on the reflection that the art form has on African-American society and the history of the people. One needs to only look through the titles of the bibliography posted on The Ohio State University Libraries Guide to Hip Hop Culture Resources to see a majority of works consisting of anthologies, reference guides, biographies of hip-hop/rap artists, and discussions of appropriation of hip-hop ideas by Caucasian or Chicano youth.2

Author and one of the world’s leading academics on race, gender and politics, Tricia Rose, remembers finding almost no previous research on hip-hop when she began hers in 1990. Ms. Rose acknowledges that this lack of research has changed since 1990, but blames the lack of interest in academia to the one key factor; it is a study of music and culture that comes from the people of African descent. “Every black art form has had to overcome the widely-held notion that it just wasn’t worthy of consideration”.3 She goes on to compare the lack of initial research in rap to the lack of interest in jazz during its rise of popularity. Now, classes and degrees are being offered in hip-hop from universities ranging from the Historically Black College or Universities such as Bowie State University, in Bowie, Maryland, to leaders in

research such as Harvard University. This increase of interest in rap music and hip-hop in academia is a great move forward for a genre that started in the slums of The Bronx.

While these books are immensely important to the understanding of the culture of hip-hop/rap music, there is no effort to bridge the divide between the classical world and the hip-hop world. There are countless books on the African Aesthetic in hip-hop by authors such as Halifu Osumare, on the poetry of hip-hop by Alexs Pate, Adam Bradley, and Brian Coleman, and discussions on the business of hip-hop by Dan Charnas, but the possible exploration of the connective tissue between hip-hop/rap and classical music is about as vast as a jail cell. It is here that I wish to strike a claim. It is in this niche that I think much more exploration can be done.

As a composer, I am fascinated with the many new musical techniques and emotional possibilities of hip-hop music. I believe that there are countless amounts of information and germs for creativity in the music genre of hip-hop. It is a truly American form, a hybrid of the multicultural area of The South Bronx thus embodying the great American idea of being a melting pot of people, and hip-hop/rap music speaks to people of any race, creed, religion, and sex. It is a tool for political and social change, and is often a propellant for action. I also believe that by utilizing and understanding hip-hop/rap music, composers can write music that is inspired and borrows techniques from this genre of music that will reach the age group that is abandoning our concert halls.

And this is not the first time that composers have tried to fuse together hip-hop and classical music. In an article from 2013, the Berklee College of Music in Boston interviewed professors, students, and alum that were inspired by the medium of hip-hop and have then
synthesized it into their own aesthetic. Professor Stephen Webber says, “it just never occurred to that genres shouldn’t mix freely”. The article then continues,

Webber sees the fusion of hip-hop and classical as natural. Like hip-hop, classical has a long history of its own version of sampling, borrowing melodies and harmonies from the folk music of the day. The similarity extends further to the “bombastic” nature of both. Webber recalls the sheer decibels of a full orchestra. “There has always been this element of classical music that take you by the collar and rustles you up and tries to have you go, ‘Wow. What was that’ Hip-hop has the same desire”. One student example of this purposeful mixing is Reginald Espiritu. In his work, Symphonic Passion, Espiritu arranges the acoustic instruments of an orchestra in such a way to have the instruments create the synthesized sound of hip-hop. His inspiration is lure older and younger people to be part of the same audience. “The older generation is there because, technically, it’s an orchestra. The younger crowd is there for the contemporary sound. Both stand to gain through the experience.⁴

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, classical music performances and attendances have decreased by 8.8% within the last 5 years. While rap music is seeing an ever-increasing audience, mostly in the youth, the only audience that classical music has seen an increase in is the older generations of Americans.⁵ There seems to be an enlarging gap between the concert stage and the youth of America, and orchestras have taken notice.

Nearly every orchestra in the United States has dedicated at least one concert a year to include some material from popular culture. But the material that is drawn from is usually the movies or rock bands from before the 70s. A recent article in the Washington Post takes a conservative estimate to the number of times that “Star Wars” was performed in orchestras around the world was 13 times.⁶ While this seems to be a step forward to bringing in more

---

⁶ Midgette, A. (January 2019) “As a classical music critic, I used to think the ‘Star Wars’ score was beneath me. I was wrong.” The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/as-a-classical-music-
youthful audiences to the concert hall, we don’t see any correlation to the actual numbers of people coming in.

Numerous suggestions have been made to find the lucky key to bringing more diverse and younger audiences into the concert hall, including various new music styles, more performances of film scores (Star Wars, Harry Potter, etc.), inclusion of Broadway hits, and even bringing rock bands onto the stage; yet there seems to be very little correlation to these types of concerts with the number of audience members. I believe that if we want to bring in more diverse and youthful audiences then we need to see what the audience is listening to. The same Truth Be Told article goes on to say that even for a local orchestra, such as Macon Symphony Orchestra, it can cost $50,000 per night to put on a concert (Macon Symphony Orchestra would close in October of 2017 due to lack of funding), so we can only imagine the staggering costs for the National Symphony Orchestra or the Los Angeles Philharmonic to stage a concert. For orchestras such as the Macon Symphony, or the Idaho State Civic Symphony, or many others, the costs are heavy and the audiences are dwindling.

Money, culture, sponsors, location, and engagement are all contributors to the reason why classical music seems to be less popular today than it was even a decade ago. The average cost of a ticket to a classical music concert can be up to $200 for a general ticket, while the average cost for a millennial (the age that classical music executive boards want to tap into) to attend a pop concert can range between $30 to $50. On Wanderu.com, we can see a regional critic-i-used-to-think-the-star-wars-score-was-beneath-me-i-was-wrong/2019/01/17/80fe0744-18f0-11e9-88fe-f9f77a3cbcb6c_story.html?fbclid=IwAR1kYgMjHsWBWOAYrplqQzZpj72TYRjRprPWhVvye7Bfct4Lbk_2QR01wNQ&noredirect=on&utm_term=.bc40817c869e Accessed January 20, 2019.

Stone.
break down listings of the costs of attending concerts with varying ranges of extremes.

According to Staffo Dobrev of Wanderu, the costliest tickets you can buy in the nation is a ticket to a concert in Los Angeles for an average of $127.57. While the cheapest is in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for an average of $73.09 (New Orleans was placed the cheapest as well with an average cost of $77.16). Dobrev says that it could be the same concert in Houston as it is in San Antonio, but you would pay at least $25 less by driving to San Antonio.⁸

One of the biggest issues that classical music has faced is that it has not adjusted to the changing culture in music and concerts. Yet, chamber ensembles seem to embrace newer genres or music and collaborations with more popular artists. Ensembles such as Room Full of Teeth, Bang on a Can, and Iranian Female Composers Association are bringing performances to life of contemporary composers that are minorities or under represented. If we can bridge this gap between the chamber ensemble inclusivity and the seemingly segregated realm of the orchestra, we might be able to create an atmosphere that more diverse populations might want to participate in and become regular attendees.

And it is this self-imposed blindness that is really affecting the popularity and futures of the classical music world. I grew up listening to concerts of classical music, watched Leonard Bernstein lectures and his videos with the New York Philharmonic, and would later go on to perform in numerous concerts myself. And while there always seems to be an engagement for the very young, there is a large gap between the schools bussing 300 6th graders to a concert hall and seeking out the youthful Americans that might pay for their own tickets (18 – 30 year

---

olds). We (orchestras and composers) have not engaged with this section of the population and we need to make changes to do so.

A possible change that could be made is the focus of much of this paper. Similar to jazz, hip-hop/rap music is an American grown genre from a subjugated and under-represented section of the American population. Long and arduous was the journey for and the acceptance of jazz to be included in the university musical education. Research in rap music is still rather young, yet there are plentiful amounts of discussion boards that are concerned mostly in the machismo of the language or the violence that the language seems to represent. One only needs to simply sift through the latest JSTOR collections to see that machismo, or hyper-masculinity is a pervasive topic associated with the genre. For instance, DeReef Jamison’s article from the *Journal of African American Studies* is dedicated to the relationship between rap music, cultural mis-orientation, hyper-masculinity, and African self-consciousness.

But the aesthetics and techniques of hip-hop/rap is a new field that is still being sifted through. Some of the research is dedicated towards the amount of words or virtuosity of the selection of words. For instance, Matt Daniels of *ThePudding.com* publishes a project that started in 2014 and is updated as often as January 21, 2019, that focuses on the vocabulary of some of the biggest hip-hop/rap artists in the world. Daniels focuses on several different key aspects, but the first aspect is his number of unique words used within an artist’s first 35,000 lyrics. While some of the data has a slight skew to it due to the time the artist has been

---

9 Others include the discussion of homosexuality in gangsta rap, alternative embodiments of black masculinity in rap music, and how religious masculinity (also called Abrahamic masculinity by Nonald Neal) affects rap music and visa versa.

10 For Daniels, unique words were decided by a methodology called token analysis. Daniels writes, “each word is counted once, so *pimps*, *pimp*, *pimping*, and *pimpin* are four unique words. To avoid issues with apostrophes (e.g.,
actively performing and writing, there is a wonderful spectrum with some artists such as Aesop Rock and Bus Driver on one with over 7,800 and 7,300 individual unique words respectively, and other artists such as Lil Uzi Vert and Lil Baby with less than 2,800 individual words used. But the bell curve seems to peak at around 4,300 words. Daniels does make one loophole for the newer generation of hip-hop/rap artists. He quotes from a *New York Times* article by Joe Carmanica arguing that the genre of hip-hop/rap has evolved. “It has moved away from the complex lyricism toward elements traditionally associated with pop music: repetitive song structure and singing”.  

People might use this as a measuring tool to support or admonish against one style of hip-hop/rap over the other, but the style of hip-hop/rap doesn’t seem to be an issue in the cumulative words. What is noticeable is that there seems to be a trend of fewer unique words used among newer artists.

Daniels then expands this to compare the number of unique words used in 500 random samples of 35,000 lyrics from country, rock, and hip-hop. In this graph, we see that the majority of country artists included in the study lingered around 2,900 unique words, rock lingers around closer to 3,400 unique words, but hip-hop is nearly 2,000 more unique words than the other two.

Ultimately for Daniels, the meaning of all this data is something simple. “Jay-Z contrasts his lyricism with that of Common and Talib Kweli (both of whom rank higher than him, when it comes to the diversity of their vocabulary):

*(Jay-Z says)* I dumbed down for my audience to double my dollars

---

They criticized me for it, yet they all yell “holla”
If skills sold, truth be told, I’d probably be
Lyrically Talib Kweli
Truthfully I wanna rhyme like Common Sense
But I did 5 mil – I ain’t been rhyming like Common since.”

Another fascinating site is Martin Connor’s “Rap Analysis”. Through this website, people can read analysis of hip-hop/rap songs, beats analysis, and even take rap lessons on flow, delivery, and many other crucial aspects of becoming a hip-hop/rap artist. Connor even has a section based on music theory that rappers should know and understand. It discusses terminology of musical time signatures, beat, tempo, bars, and syncopation. While this section is extremely fascinating coming from the classical world to the hip-hop world, but it is interesting to think of the process in the reverse.

But it is his discussions and “analysis” of hip-hop/rap songs that would be the most helpful towards the study of the genre. While this is a great start, it is very minimal. For instance, in his first video Connor’s discusses the difference between musical time and chronological time. This video is then less than 10 minutes long. Connor’s then has two videos set up that discusses how to make a better and smoother flow. Unfortunately, he diminishes his importance and the possible connection between the classical canonic education and the hip-hop/rap world by including this sentence, “So, how do you get a better sense of rhythm? Basically, just do this: rap along to everything you hear while rapping beats. Memorize and rap to this increasingly difficult series of songs to become a better rapper. . . “ He then goes on to list songs from various artists such as N.W.A., Eminem, Notorious B.I.G., Busta Rhymes, and Kendrick Lamar. While many of these names do fall on the higher end of Daniel’s research, and

---

thus helps correlate and support the research that both are doing, he misses numerous opportunities to include artists that may not be as mainstream popular as those listed above, nor does he list any female artists, or artists from other parts of the world that may perform in English.\(^\text{13}\)

While the previously mentioned authors are helping push the practice of researching hip-hop/rap in a more mathematical or even in the slightest classical style, my focus is not on these aspects of the music at all, but rather the socially minded and progressive materials that can exist, the poeticism of the lyrics, and the world-wide craving for the genre. I will also be looking at the musical aspects of rap music such as motives, rhythmic devices, and how lyrics are adhered to a given melody or rhythmic pattern.

The accompanying composition will include all the above techniques, implementation of modern poetry, application of spoken text to a specific rhythmic pattern, and motives. With permission from the Langston Hughes Foundation, I will set poetry from the great Harlem Renaissance poet and juxtapose them to transcribed interviews from family members that have lost a loved one to police shootings. The composition will not point a finger of fault to one side or the other, but will focus on creating an understanding of the people that perished as more than just a criminal background, or skin color, as I hope to do in my monograph. The orchestration will also exemplify the effort to create hip-hop effects and techniques but utilizing classical instruments. The instrumentation includes flute, oboe, Bb clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, horn, trumpet, drum set, piano, 2 singers (one male and one female), and strings (4 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, and 1 string bass). The piece lasts between 25 and 30 minutes in length.

With this piece, I hope to successfully demonstrate what has been learned, and illustrate a combination of classical and modern techniques in order to achieve a bridge between a classical experience and popular ideas.

I would like to warn any readers that throughout the document there is the use of objectionable words. These words are from the hip-hop/rap artists and do not express the opinions or feelings of the author. I have included the words and lyrics exactly as they appear or are composed by the artist for the sheer purpose of showcasing the true intent of the artist and to highlight the feelings without worrying about censorship. Hip-hop/rap music has a long history with censorship and it diminishes the importance of what is being said or the feelings being portrayed by the artist.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The music history of America is often focused on the creation of the musical, the blues, jazz, and rock and roll. The classical world would often look to jazz and folk for inspiration. Non-American composers would even cite folk songs to create an image of America, most famously, Anton Dvorak in his 9th symphony using *Going Home*. For American composers, Horatio Parker was one of the first to rely heavily on the folk song tradition of America. He would go on to pass this tradition along to Charles Ives who was the most prominent America composers to quote folk music in his pieces. Following Ives, Aaron Copland would look towards *Simple Gifts* and would include materials from Mexico to obtain a sound that resembled the culture he was implying. George Gershwin would make a name for himself by being inspired by the traditions of jazz and their idiomatic writing for his *Rhapsody in Blue* and many other pieces. In his opera *Porgy and Bess*, Gershwin would look towards the slang speech stylings of the African American community of the south in other to add an air of authenticity and simultaneously achieve an exoticism that was familiar and, yet, foreign to American audiences. Contemporary composers, such as Leonard Bernstein, Steve Reich, and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, use of folk materials or materials that sounded familiarly foreign for some of the their most famous works, *West Side Story*, *It’s Gonna Rain*, and *Hrim* respectively.

The issue that all these previous attempts have experienced is that the composer is using material in order to give his/her music an air of authenticity or exoticism that couldn’t be achieve in any other form. This tradition isn’t an American phenomenon but just a continuation of a musical practice that has deep roots in the Western Classical Music world originating in
Europe. While there is nothing wrong with this type of borrowing or nationalistic writing, there is a missed opportunity that many current composers could capitalize on and audiences would genuinely enjoy experiencing. While it is true that America has a wonderfully rich history of folk songs and home grown musical genres that have shaped the world there is one that has evaded usage in the concert hall. And this musical genre is quintessentially American in its birth, history, struggle, and rise to global popularity. This genre is rap music.

Some people might suggest that jazz, or its modern offshoots, might be the most logical progression due to jazz already accomplishing and falling into many of the characteristics just discussed. But it is because of this predetermined inclusion that I would suggest excludes it. Jazz does accomplish numerous quantities of the check list that was just previously spoken of (folk tradition, home grown tradition, and a genre that has been enjoyed by a large, global audience). The classical world has become used to the harmonic language and the experimental nature of jazz, and it often has dedicated concerts of classical/jazz hybrids. Yet, these concert ideas are much more prolific than some might think. From the early days of inclusion on the concert stage with Bernstein’s performance in 1964 as part of the “Young People’s Concerts” series, to the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s April 5th concert in 2019, along with the continuous efforts of Jazz at Lincoln Center, jazz and its musical tropes have been helping audiences become exposed to these virtuosic musicians and ensembles.

Other people might scoff at the idea of using rap music in a concert hall setting or at the thought of being inspired by such a genre because of the many negative connotations that are

---

14 In 2017, the London Symphony Orchestra helped promote and stage a concert series entitled “Jazz Meets Classical” that focused on collaborating members of the LSO and professional jazz musicians while bringing these concerts to children that might be otherwise unable to attend such concerts.
associated with rap music. While there is a well-documented history of violence associated with
the rise and falls of many rap world stars, the story of rap music is a story that can only be told
from America. The creation of rap music could only happen because of the great and complex
country that America is.

First, before discussing the rich and multi-faceted history of rap music, a clarification of
the difference between rap music and hip-hop is necessary. American writer and former
professor of African American Studies at the University of Minnesota, Alexis Pate makes a
wonderful distinction by stating that hip-hop “is the world, the culture that envelopes rap
(including rap/poetry and the music)”.$^{15}$

For Alexis Pate, hip-hop is built around nine different elements: “breaking, emceeing,
graffiti art, dee-jaying, beatboxing, street fashion, street language, street knowledge, and street
entrepreneurialism”.$^{16}$ And hip-hop culture must be understood as “one that is politically
oppositional to an imagined dominant majority (read white), overtly racialized (read African-
American), heteronormative, youth centered, competitive, egalitarian, and global”.$^{17}$ A
discussion of this anti-establishment style will be addressed more formally when I discuss the
poetry and lyrics of rap music, but I believe this definition of hip-hop culture is critical to the
discussion of rap music based on the applicability of all these different aspects to the concert
world.

Since its emergence, the Western classical music world and stage has been dominated
by white males. Partly due to the patriarchal structure of society, but even as societies changed

---

$^{16}$ Ibid. p. 2
$^{17}$ Ibid. p. 2
and their beliefs adjusted to the world around them, and even after the progress of some great female composers such as Clara Schuman, many works that were being published and performed were by white males. Their works have become the canon that many new musicians study when they begin their formal educations and these students will rarely see a name that from a location south of Mexico, let alone female. In my personal experience, much of my piano training was focused on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Scarlatti. It was only occasionally that I encountered works by composers from Russia, or pieces composed by Bartok, or Villa-Lobos. Once I reached my university education I was encouraged to listen and play composers outside of my comfort zone, yet when the time came to pick a piece, we would often return to Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven. On my senior recital, I performed Scarlatti, Bach, Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, and Shostakovich. Fortunately, my piano professor understood my interest in composition and allowed me to perform a piece I composed for prepared piano and percussion. However, many of my colleagues did not have such an opportunity. Although I was able to include my own piece in the program of my recital, the entire recital was still dominated by European male composers.

Recently there has been a large push back, in a positive way, against the traditional concert programming limited to works of (often dead) Caucasian men. While there are ensembles, directors, and performers that consciously make the choice to try an include women, minorities, and new composers, the practice is few and far between. In the past few years, there has been a great ground swelling of support for composers in the classical world for women, minorities, and young composers. In fact, multiple databases including, but not
limited to, Rob Deemer’s “Composer Diversity Project”, and the “And We Were Heard Project” have been designed to help programmers, conductors, and music directors break this cycle.

In November 2017, Eric William Lin published a report on the performance trends of the past 175 years of the New York Philharmonic. Here was can see a disturbing trend from one of the nation’s premier orchestras. Initially, the first big trend encountered was the introduction of Mahler as the music director in 1909 where the Philharmonic increased their performances threefold and nearly tripled their number of premiered pieces from 31 to 85. But the trend of exclusion had started before Mahler’s arrival. The 1859-60 season was the first time that premiere performances dropped under 50% and was the first time that repeat performances of previously performed pieces took the majority. In the 1967-68 season, the average number of living composers dropped below 20% of the selected composers and it has since remained below 20%. By 1990, the share of pieces performed by living composers dropped even further to around 10%. Lin goes on to even say, “living composers are still getting some performances these days, but they almost never hear their pieces again”. This research doesn’t even begin to distinguish between gender or race when speaking about living composers.

These groups, databases, and ensembles dedicated to the performance of composers that don’t fit the normative idea of European, white, males are doing a great service for the concert hall. Unfortunately, there doesn’t seem to be a large reciprocal action being taken by the world-famous orchestras, directors, and even the universities and conservatories that train the musicians. Some ensembles and programming committees seem to think that by having a

---

concert dedicated to film music or performing the score of a film while it is being shown on a giant screen above the orchestra is sufficient to counts towards diversifying their programs. This cannot be farther from the truth and is doing more harm to the wonderful work that these databases and ensembles are doing. To actively exclude a gender, race, or “new” composer and their work from the concert hall just distances the ensemble and audience from experiencing and learning about new music. Film music is a wonderful world of creation and experimentation. From the inclusion of electronic sounds, and extended techniques in music\(^\text{19}\) to the rich tapestries of harmonic language of Bernard Herrmann and the minimalist soundtracks of Hans Zimmer, the world of film music is a forest of wonderful music. But, the entire creation of the music is centered on the inclusion of the film. While numerous soundtracks and selections from the soundtracks can be adored, and loved, they are all created with the express interest of conjuring up the images from the film. For instance, when someone mentions “Jaws”, the theme of the music and the film instantly pops into the mind. Or “Harry Potter”, “Psycho”, or “North by Northwest”. This is not a negative thing, and is very admirable by many young composers. But the inclusion of film music with their accompanying films (usually with the action on the screen silenced to highlight the music) seems to minimize the importance of the rest of the year of concerts that the orchestra or ensemble might have planned.

In addition, to include music from the film world, even if we ignore the purpose of film music (to create and highlight the action on the screen), we are further distancing ourselves

\(^{19}\) Such as numerous Bartok pizz., harmonics, and physically hitting the body of the string instruments in the soundtrack for the “Minority Report” by John Williams and the electronic sounds of Hans Zimmer’s “Batman” movies.
from the possibility to include music by composers that are living that could be just as intriguing, engaging, and “entertaining”. Long has the fear of “modern” classical music been perpetuated by the very ensembles that were so brave and vanguard in the creation of the newest genres of music. The harmonies of the mid 1900s are no longer as extremely dissonant and distant as they were once thought to be, and while some of the material can be questionable to some audience members and programming committees, many audience goers and some programming committees have come to enjoy these spectacles. For instance, when the director of the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, Kasper Holten, was leaving he reportedly said that, “sex and violence have a role in modern opera”.20 While I am not proposing for the concert hall to be filled with violence, nudity, sex, or other controversial material, we need to be willing to accept that our concert hall stages were placed to push the audience into questioning what is going on around them, or what they may not have ever experienced.

My accompanying composition also focuses on this aspect of the concert hall and hopes to accomplish this. It is created to push the audience to question the social progress that we like to pride ourselves on in America. Have we really come so far that the words of Langston Hughes during the Harlem Renaissance can’t find some reverberating string? Or is our perception of the people that are often vilified by the news and politicians correct? We may believe that there are many sides to a story but can we see this when the protagonist of the news story is also a criminal?

Another issue is the audience of the concert hall. The stereotypical audience of a concert hall is men and women in suits and nice dresses all of whom seem to be over 70. I recently attended the wonderful performance of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra and aside from some of the performers on stage, my wife and I were some of the youngest people attending. This was also something that the new executive director and I spoke about after the concert at the reception. The rational was once explained to me, by a member of the board of the Idaho State Civic Symphony, as such: the ensembles, directors, and boards select the music that they know their patrons will pay for. Included in this algorithm are the patrons that donate large sums of money whom might get a seat at the decision table when it comes to programming for the next year. While I cannot speak for every ensemble in the country, it does seem that the programs are geared towards audience members that have come to expect consistent performances of the canon classical music figures. While this isn’t necessarily bad, nor is it wrong, it does leave a large number of people out of the possibility of experiencing what orchestras have to offer. If we can find a way to bridge this classical background and the techniques or approaches to music that the most popular genre of music has to offer, we might be able to bring a new crowd into the concert hall.

I believe that the best way to attract new audiences and build a new future of classical music is to infuse the classical world with techniques, tropes, and styles from the most popular genre of music: hip-hop. While there is a fine line to tow that will portray flexibility of classical music to incorporate and support this genre of music, we must pay attention that we do not minimize the importance of hip-hop in the African–American culture. There are many ways to do this: honest and sincere approaches to learning as much from the genre as possible, honest
incorporations of literature that will portray the lifestyles of African-Americans, and a true understanding of the history of hip-hop.
Chapter II
History

Rap in general dates all the way back to the motherland, where tribes would use call-and response chants. In the 1930s and 1940s, you had Cab Calloway pioneering his style of jazz rhyming. The 60s you had the love style of rapping, with Isaac Hayes, Barry White, and the poetry style of rapping with the Last Poets, the Watts poets and the militant style of rapping with brothers like Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan. In the 60s you also had “The Name Game”, a funny rap by Shirley Ellis, and the radio djs would rhyme and rap before a song came on.

-- Afrika Bambaataa

In the early 70s, disco was king, and many cities had clubs that were devoted to disco and its opulence. Disco was often seen as a way to distract people from a changing world around you. The music seemed to have trance inducing qualities. This might may have been achieved by having metronome markings all centered around 100 beats per minute (bpm).

University of Illinois research study that correlated some disco songs with this tempo and may have something to do with the interesting connection between the bpm needed to resuscitate someone from a heart attack (100 bpm according to the American Heart Association). This connection implies that the metronome marking of around 100 might strike the listener a little stronger than other markings because we naturally have heartbeats in this range.

Either way, disco functioned as a distraction from many of the issues that America was going through. One of the most important was the Civil Rights movement. While the movement had begun in the 50s and included many successes into 1968, portions of the populace continued the protests and demonstrations into the 70s with demands of action and not just

---


bills passed. If there is one city that is a microcosm of this era of American history, it is the South Bronx of New York City.

Prior to the 1950s, the population of the South Bronx was mostly Caucasians from a variety of countries. After World War II, America and New York City in particular, were inundated with immigrants from around the world. As many Caucasians fled to the suburbs, the void was filled by Puerto Ricans and Blacks. By 1960, the population of the South Bronx was over two-thirds black or Puerto Rican. During the 60s and 70s, much of the South Bronx would be devastated by a number of issues including the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, landlord abandonment, economic changes, and demographic changes. Many of these would have lasting effects into the 80s.

Significant poverty was the primary issue plaguing the region. During this time, the South Bronx would experience some of the worst urban decay with the loss of over 300,000 residents and the destruction, but not the clean-up, of entire city blocks’ worth of buildings. This was due to the South Bronx experiencing almost total economic collapse and bankruptcy. This led to the large creation of section 8 housing, which saved the city leaders from having to use the cash-strapped city coffers due to construction and rent being controlled by the Federal Government, but the Federal rate was not based on the property’s actual value.

and thus was set so low by the city that it left little incentive for landlords to maintain or improve their buildings which then exacerbated the problems.\textsuperscript{25}

It was here, in the depths of poverty and destruction that, like jazz, hip-hop and its sub-sector, rap, was created and flourished. In these abandoned buildings, citizens would create and throw block parties that included African-Americans and Latin Americans of the surrounding areas. These block parties would have a disc-jockey, or DJ, and their primary responsibility was to keep the music flowing for the audience to enjoy. The DJ wasn’t a creation of the rap world as this was also seen in the flashy disco clubs of Manhattan and other cities, but their jobs quickly changed once the master of ceremonies, or MC, took the stage. During the 70s, records held long sections of music without lyrics that were created in order for the DJ to have time to switch between records. This had one purpose and that was to keep the dancers moving. Again, as previously mentioned, these records were all set to around the same tempos (about 100 bpm) and a skilled DJ would phase between the records effortlessly. These lengthy musical breaks, called percussive breaks or the break, became so popular that DJs began isolating those sections out more often than the actual songs that they accompanied. At 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, an unassuming apartment building, unit 102, would become the Mecca of rap music with a block party featuring the father of this technique, DJ Kool Herc. He is credited with creating a process called “merry-go-rounding”.

Merry-go-rounding was the process of using two turn tables that would each have a copy of the same record on them. Kool Herc would then switch back and forth between the

Accessed December 2018
turn tables giving the illusion of one continuous break. These breaks would consist of just the drums or drums and bass. Kool Herc would cycle back and forth between the two copies of breaks which inspired another form of hip-hop, break dancing.

The break dancers were a group of boys that would dance specifically over the break. These young men would grow up to hold a very special place in the history of hip-hop and rap music due to their innovative and very physical style of dancing. While the crowds would gather round and cheer on the break dancing boy (or b-boy) the MC would step up to the microphone.

William Cobb, author of *To the Break of Dawn*, defines a clear and distinct line between an MC and a rapper. For Cobb, “rappers are created in accord with the reigning flavor of the nanosecond.” They live for the product placements, rides, gear, and their existence is deliberately created as a fulfillment of the inevitable consumerism and capitalism that would follow an artistic genre that is quickly becoming a world-wide interest. Cobbs unfortunately doesn’t take into consideration the natural evolution of any music genre. Canadian broadcaster and rapper, Shad, falls into the camp that a rapper is the natural evolutionary cycle from the MC. For Shad, the MCs started as something with a menial importance.

The grandfather of rap music, Kool Herc, had a partner at the microphone named Coke la Rock. When Shad asked la Rock about his early days as an MC, la Rock says,

> The first time I got on the mic, I used to just holler out my friend’s names, like shout outs. You had Easy Al, Skip from the joint, Paradise, Reggie Red. See, I used to do like this, like, my man Reggie be out, I’d be like, ‘Yo, Reggie, go-go-go move your car. You’re double parked in the ra-ra,’ you know? After that, it didn’t stop. It got better every time. We had everybody in our party, I mean, we had

---

killers, we had the robbers, we had the dancers, we had the regular party people.\textsuperscript{27}

Coke La Rock’s original job wasn’t to be on the microphone. He was initially there to sell marijuana. For Cobb, the MC was judged by their ability to move crowds. The MC had the task with only the barest of materials: two turntables and a microphone. Cobb continues, “The MC writes his own material. The MC would still be writing his own material even if he didn’t have a record deal”.\textsuperscript{28}

Cobb makes the assertion that rappers only exist thanks to the commercial music industry writing all the lyrics of a song. He says with contempt, that, “a rapper without a record deal is like a commercial without a timeslot”.\textsuperscript{29} Yet, there is substantial evidence that some of the most popular rap poets write all their own material; Kendrick Lamar, Childish Gambino, Kenye, Cunninglynguists, Meek Mill, Dr. Dre., Jay Z are just a few of the notorious rap poets that write their own music/lyrics.\textsuperscript{30} Cobb quickly tries to gain some ground on this argument by stating there is a grey area of specialization where some rappers are simultaneously MCs. For Cobb, this is done by their ability to “exist within the commercial arena while maintaining their integrity as artists”.\textsuperscript{31} This feels like a bit of a cop-out and a way to not anger the almost fanatic supporters of some rappers.

The development of a rapper is tied into the natural evolution of the genre, which can be seen in another portion of Matt Daniels’ research. In another graph that Daniels’ created, he takes all the artists that qualify for the research (having over 35,000 words cumulatively) and

\textsuperscript{27} Shad. Hip-hop Revolution”. Netflix.
\textsuperscript{29} Cobb, W. p. 9
\textsuperscript{31} Cobb, W. p 9
delineates between the decades that they have come out. Here we see that many of the hip-hop/rap artists from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s tend to exist above the 4,000 unique words with all the artists above 5,675 unique words coming exclusively from the 1990s and 2000s. Nearly all the artists that can be heard on the radio currently or are fresh to the scene exist at or below 4,550 unique words.\textsuperscript{32} While, Daniels’ doesn’t expressly say a conclusion from the data, we are free and justifiably able to draw the conclusion that more recent artists are focused on production of entertainment than quality of message.

As rap music has moved out of the basements of the housing projects, the elements of rap music would naturally evolve by the appreciation of the crowds. The inevitable branching off with different versions would come with different requirements by the crowds that are following them. While there is a large following for groups such as Snoop Dogg, Tupac, Dr. Dre., Notorious B.I.G., and N.W.A., the basic requirements for gangster rap is somewhat unified. And anyone that is interested or inspired to break into this genre knows the subject matter that they would usually need to discuss. While this may seem to verge onto Cobb’s camp, we can understand that agreeing to a genre’s subject material is not the same as working and aiming to land a record deal.

Whether the focus is on a label signing or to create a certain atmosphere at a concert, the MC is a pivotal part of the development and eventual prospering of rap music as a genre. While the beginnings of an MC was based around drugs, Coke La Rock reminds us the importance of the MC:

\begin{quote}
I’d bag up a quarter pound, and sell 160 nickels in two hours, while I’m playing the music and talking.” But, “as long as the music’s not stopping, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Daniels, M.
rocks are dropping, the champagne is flowing, the freaks will be going. Hotel, motel. You don’t tell, we don’t tell. One time route nine. You see what I’m saying? This was back then. Nobody was talking on the mic. There’s not a man that can’t be thrown, a horse that can’t be rode, a bull that can’t be stopped, and there’s not a disco that Kool Herc and Coke La Rock can’t rock.\textsuperscript{33}

The Trouble with Rap Music

The popular support of rap music has not happened un-noticed by many. Pate states,

\begin{quote}
Too often, rap music is so entwined with illegal drugs and life of a gangster, that it is deemed inappropriate and unacceptable to include anywhere other than the public stadium setting. Yet, to concentrate on this small fraction of the rap music genre does a disservice to the entire genre of music. It would be as if people judged all food by the Big Mac. This prejudicial treatment towards the genre can be resolved if we looked for quality material rather than what is entangled around it.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

While there is a large number of artists that seem to thoroughly enjoy the presence of marijuana and other drugs, as well as drinking in large quantities, to concentrate on these details as the only way to create or verify quality is a disservice to the vast majority of well-orchestrated and thought-provoking pieces. It would be akin to concentrating on the cocaine use of 1970s jazz to qualify the entire genre. Let’s look at the groundbreaking album by the CunninLynguists, \textit{A Piece of Strange}.

\textit{A Piece of Strange} was released in 2006 and received widespread acclaim from critics. It depicts a tale of the pathway to and from sin and features the added lyrical skills of Tonedeff, Immortal Technique, and Cee-Lo Green.\textsuperscript{35} Upon working on the album, the members of the CunninLynguists would call it a turning point for the group. Ryan Wisler, a.k.a. Kno, produced

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{33}{“Hip-Hop Revolution”}.
\footnotetext{34}{Pate, p. 5.}
\footnotetext{35}{Natti; Willis Polk II; Ryan Wisler. \textit{A Piece of Strange}. L.A. Underground. 2006}
\end{footnotes}
the entire album and remarked numerous times as to the importance of the album in the evolution of the ensemble.

What makes the album so remarkable isn’t the fact that it discusses the topics of heaven, faith, sin, and hell, but it is also a poignant discussion of the nature of America in the first decade of 2000. From discussions about the American fascination of gangsters, to the quality of life in the inner city, to love. While the lyrics and the storyline create a world that is magical, the music of the entire album elevates everything to a level that is hard to match by other productions.

The songs have minimal instrumentation, with only a bass, keyboard, and drum set as the consistent voices. But as the album progresses from track to track, we find a cohesion from the amalgamation of guitars, pianos, organs, choir, and tape tracks that lend to it a sense of artistic value beyond just the storyline. The guitars and keyboards add a voice of instrumentation that separates the album apart from other albums. The instruments are not used as just cliché materials but are approached with deep consideration to their distinct voices and timbres. In the opening track, Where Will You Be?, the guitar adds an almost relaxed Latin flavor to the closed voicings of the choir and the steady patterns of the drums and bongos. While in Caved In, the piano adds a feeling of great sadness and disillusionment to the tortured words of the singers. Ryan Wisler masterfully cuts audio clips from a vast array of sources such as fellow rap artists Kanye West, Outkast, A Tribe Called Quest, Wu-Tang Clan; movies, The Way
of the Gun; Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson; and other ensembles such as The Crazy World of Arthur Brown. Many times, these samples remind me of *It’s Gonna Rain* by Steve Reich.

The hip-hop universe is rich and filled with many wonderful examples of music that fills the hearts and minds of the audience. Some may like the entertainment qualities of music by Migos, or prefer the more complex materials of the Cunninglynguists or Kendrick Lamar, the genre of hip-hop is filled with a plethora of wonderful artists that are expressing their existences in a similar fashion. This dichotomy of entertainment versus songs with meaning has come to the forefront many times in new articles as well as songs by people who create the music. For example, in J. Cole’s song, *1985 (Intro to “The Fall Off”)*, we hear that there is some sort of conflict between J. Cole and new hip-hop/rap artists SmokePurp and Lil Pump. This is not new in the rap industry nor in the classical music world. The history of both genres is replete with examples of conflicting personalities.

J. Cole’s song, *1985*, exists as a valuable lesson on age, growth, and race while still maintaining a “diss” track without ever naming the recipient. Unlike other tracks that call out and make fun of opponents by other artists, J. Cole accomplishes an artistic feat by making *1985* a song of brotherly advice. The title of the song, *1985*, refers to the year that J. Cole was born. Within the first few lines he says, “1985, I arrive/33 years/damn, I am grateful I survived/We wasn’t supposed to get past 25.” This phrase, coupled with the title, is an establishment of J. Cole’s brotherly advice that he is going to set forth. While there are some rap artists that “retire” at or by 30, some don’t make it very long within the rap scene. And some

36 Albums sampled by the Cunninglynguists.  
www.rateyourmusic.com/list/Pooba/songs_that_are_sampled_by_cunninglynguists_for_their_amazing_album_a_piece_of_strange/ Accessed December 2018
reach their peak importance by their mid-20s only to be killed (Notorious B.I.G. was 24 and Tupac Shakur was 25 at the time of their deaths).

J. Cole addresses the newer generation of rappers directly in his next statement, “All these niggas popping now is young/Everybody say the music that they make is dumb/I remember I was 18/Money, pussy, parties, I was on the same thing.” He is establishing an almost credential with his audience to which he adds, “You gotta give a boy a chance to grow some.” This statement is a side statement to the many people that are often criticizing the creative output of performers like Lil’ Yachty, Lil’ Uzi, 6ix9ine, and many more. As a brotherly figure might tell other people to remember where they were in their lives when they were that age.

In another verse, J. Cole speaks to the recipient (Lil Pump) of this song and says, “I see your watch is icy and your whip foreign/I got some good advice never quit touring/Cuz that’s the way we eat here in this rap game.” Cole suggests that the younger artists, while it is understandable to be drawn to the flashy jewelry and the fast cars, should concentrate on the importance of owning real estate property and composing lyrics with substance that can last the test of time. “One day, them kids that’s listening goin’ grow up and get too old for that shit that made you blow up”, he continues. With over a decade in the business of rapping and still breaking records with new releases, J. Cole knows a thing or two about maintaining success.

But this song is more than just a linguistic shaming, but Cole also uses it to address a racial component that is often missed in nearly every new debate about the importance of hip-hop. While Cole celebrates success “I love to see a black man get paid”, he is also disapproving of the means to which they are achieving this success. “By your songs, I’m unimpressed (hey).”
He believes that the new generation of rappers can lift the relevance of their lyrics and the importance of the words that they are choosing. “You havin’ fun and I respect that, but have you ever thought about your impact? These white kids love that you don’t give a fuck! ‘Cause that’s exactly what’s expected when your skin black.” This point really touches a nerve with me.

While R&B/Hip-hop has become the most popular genre in the country, the level of popularity inevitably brings more eyes to the culture than ever before. But how is that managed? What role do artists and their labels play? And what role do supporters play? Cole continues, “They wanna see you dab/They wanna see you pop a pill/They wanna see you tatted from your face to your heels/And somewhere deep down, fuck it, I gotta keep it real/They wanna be black and think your song is how it feels.” Cole achieves a simultaneous reflection from the listener and the creator. He forces both sides of the process to reflect on the complex relationships of stereotypes, conformity, and race. This was a similar point that was brought up in 1998 in the book, *Hip Hop America* by Nelson George. He wrote about the battles royal (boxing) in the South throughout the 1930s.

For the black men who pummeled each other in the quest for a bit of spare change, it was a chance to prove their toughness to friends, rivals, and themselves. For white audiences, the heated bout allowed them to see the blacks as comical figures whose most aggressive urges were neutered for their amusement. He went on to compare this boxing fights to hip-hop’s “most tragically comic” moments, when “young African Americans...verbally, emotionally, and yes, physically bash each other for the pleasure of predominantly white spectators worldwide”. Yet, over 20 years after the publishing of *Hip Hop America*, this issue remains.

Ebro Darden, a music personality from Hot97/Apple Music, celebrated this lyric as “maybe the most important line in hip-hop since we had [KRS-One] trying to save our lives”. Darden goes on to address what he views as “the perpetuation of ignorant black imagery for corporate profit” and the racial element that Cole described. One example for Darden is the rise of Bhad Bhabie. She initially gained fame as the outrageous and disrespectful daughter on an episode of Dr. Phil spouting off heavily accented phrases such as, “catch me ou’side, ‘ow ‘bout ‘dat?” “The Bhad Bhabie thing to me is about white kids wanting [to] mimic the worst aspects of Black culture for fun,” Darden tweeted. While this conversation isn’t an easy one and there are many opinions and historical perspectives to weight, it’s a conversation worth having and amplifying through songs like Cole’s.

1985 is much more than just a “diss track”. Cole manages to address issues--generational divide, financial edification, and racial tension, with self-awareness. Cole serves up lessons for a younger generation without losing his grit. He drops morsels of education while holding young peers accountable, or at least making them think about their impact. This song is much more potent than a “diss track”. It is a moment of reflection and a sobering moment of clarity.

J. Cole’s music listeners heard the prose of families dissolving, fathers being shot, having little to no food, and the only real education that is received is from the street. These stories are not a new trope for literature, but they always seemed to be very distant to a reader. The stories of someone who has survived the situations similar to this while being accompanied by

music that highlights the words through numerous stylings and nuance seem to be more powerful and poignant. We can take these lessons and be inspired to create materials that could inspire and motivate others.

For example, while merry-go-rounding lead to an almost endless amount of time for MCs to rap and create new ideas this isn’t really possible for acoustic instrumentalists. But, this means that composers must become creative and take a different approach to not just the idea of merry-go-rounding, but to orchestration. Similarly, the minimalist music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass can seem extremely taxing to those that are unfamiliar with the genre, but through their creative orchestrations they are able to create sound worlds that change minutely over large expanses of time. In the movement of the accompanying composition, *Just Another RIP Hashtag*, the words are better highlighted by keeping the instrumentation to a minimum. The drum set lays down a rhythm pattern that is predictable but changes in very few select spots. The piano is also selected due to the fact that it is much easier for a keyboardist to perform for much longer stretches of time rather than a woodwind or brass performer. While the music for this movement isn’t nearly as expanse as *Music for 18 Instruments*, by Steve Reich, or even smaller works from *Glassworks* by Philip Glass, the idea was to make the music just background to the lyrics.

The words of the poem, *Just Another RIP Hashtag*, speak of the troubles that many African-Americans face daily. It speaks of the police brutality that occurs too often, but it also speaks of the many nameless people who pass away due to these brutalities that don’t get national new coverage. It also challenges the reader to view the writer beyond the broad association of being included in the African-American community. It asks for the reader, and
subsequently the audience, to judge the writer, and anyone else that isn’t associated with crime, to not be judged by those that do commit crimes.

To truly keep these poignant words at the forefront and not somehow dilute them by an immersive acoustic world, I chose to orchestrate with only a minimal drum set, piano, and string bass. When compared to the other movements, there is very little going on in the harmony, and the music is simple and repetitive. I tried to mimic merry-go-rounding but by doing so in my own style and still portray the poem in an honest and sincere fashion.

Beyond an honest and sincere portrayal of music, techniques of hip-hop music can create a world that is unachievable without these techniques. For instance, the movement of my piece that is concerned with Trayvon Martin could be impactful without the quotations of Mahler’s 10th symphony in the beginning, but, to me, this melodic material gives the portrayal of not just a extremely emotional outpouring, but as a lullaby. This lullaby material is used as a way to remind the audience that Trayvon Martin was only 17 when he was shot for stealing a bag of Skittles. Merry-go-rounding is just one technique that composers can look to for inspiration. Other techniques include minimal melodic material while focusing on vocal inflection in the singer’s part (similar to Sprechstimme) and sampling (which is reminiscent of parody, or the act of creating a new piece over top the music of another composer). While these latter techniques are not new to classical music, they are and should be approached differently when it comes to incorporating them into classical music.

39 Schoenberg was the first to truly implement a Sprechstimme style of vocal writing in his Pierot Lunaire. Sampling is something a little different from the classical usage of quoting. While composers have quoted other composers for hundreds of years, usually in theme and variations, others have used quotations as a way of portraying a mood, which is closer to hip-hops purpose. Schnittke and Crumb would often quote classical materials from the canon of classical music to portray a mood. For instance, in Black Angels, Crumb quotes Dies Irae in multiple movements that creates a sense of humor or horror. He also quotes Schubert’s Death of the Maiden in an attempt to create a
CHAPTER III
RAP POETRY/LYRICS

Poetry takes all life as its province. Its primary concern is not with beauty, not with philosophical truth, not with persuasion, but with experience.

--Laurence Perrine

Alexs Pate’s book, In the Heart of the Beat, is a wonderful exploration of the poetry of rap music. Pate is an American novelist, playwright, author, writing professor, and president of Innocent Technologies, LLC., and creator of Innocent Classrooms which “rebuilds the relationship between educators and their students, especially students of color”. At one point, Pate was an associate professor of African-American and African studies at the university of Minnesota, where he taught English, fiction writing and literature – including a class on the poetry of rap. In the Heart of the Beat creates a true understanding of terms that many hip-hop/rap artists discuss including flow and saturation, but more importantly, it focuses on the use of hip-hop/rap as an outlet for the African-American community and how it relates to the inherit social norms of the community.

This section will continue the great, yet brief, work that he does. The primary issue that arises from In the Heart of the Beat, is the almost constant assertion that the only good poetry comes from rap poets/music that were created in the mid to late 90s. While this may be a sense of the ethereal. But hip-hop samples sounds and music as a way of creating more music from materials that have existed before. But these quotations usually occur only a few times, and most of the time only once. But in hip-hop, sampled materials will appear and reappear numerous times throughout the song. Sometimes, they appear as linking materials, and other times they appear as important quotations as in Kendrick Lamar’s D.N.A. which is discussed in Chapter III. Another type of sampling that resembles parody in the classical world, is where the hip-hop/rap artist uses the music from a previous genre or generation of music to teleologically connect himself with the sampled artist and give himself credibility with the audience familiar with the sampled audience.

40 Drew, B. 2007. 100 Most Popular African American Authors: Biographical Sketches and Bibliographies. Westport, CT: Unlimited Publishing. p. 251
42 Drew, B. p. 251
“golden era” for rap music, it does have a negative effect on anyone that might enjoy the music that has been created since. There are a few examples between 2000 and 2004, but nothing that might have been included between then and the year of publishing, 2010. Those six years are filled with great music from groups such as Cunninlynguists (*A Piece of Strange* – 2006), The Roots (*Game Theory* – 2006), Jay-Z (*American Gangster* – 2007), Nas (*Untitled* – 2008), Atmosphere (*When Life Gives You Lemons* – 2008), DOOM (*Born Like This* – 2009), Mos Def (*The Ecstatic* – 2009), and many, many more. But it is from 2004 that I would like to continue the discussion on the quality of poetry created by rap artists and include music from within the last year.

Pate plans out a set of parameters that, according to him, creates a system for reading rap poetry. These elements, like those of traditional poetry, can act as a guide to enhance our abilities to interpret, appreciate, and understand the quality, lack thereof, and effectiveness of rap poetry. Some of these elements (such as texture, language, and image) help us appreciate the quality while others, such as meaning, saturation, and structure, help us decipher significance of a poem. These aren’t new categories. His elements are:

1. Saturation
2. Language
3. Imagery
4. Texture
5. Meaning
6. Structure, form, and rhythm
7. Flow

Another important book that will help elucidate the various aspects of poetry will be Laurence Perrine’s *Sound and Sense*. Perrine was an English professor at Southern Methodist University.

---

43 Pate p. 39
University until he retired in 1980. Perrine received his B.A. and M.A. from the Oberlin College and his Ph.D. from Yale. Of his many books published, *Sound and Sense*, about poetry, and *Story and Structure*, about fiction, have become standard literature textbooks nationwide. Many aspects of these two books were later pulled for inclusion in a secondary-level literature textbook that Perrine co-authored entitled *Adventures in Appreciation* which was published in 1968. A paragraph about judging a poem by evaluating its perfection and significance was even used in the film “Dead Poets Society (1989)”.

In *Sound and Sense*, Laurence Perrine says that novels, short stories, plays, and poems are written to “bring us a sense and a perception of life, to widen and sharpen our contacts with existence”. But he warns readers to not take false approaches when analyzing or appreciating literature. These approaches are most often applied to poetry, according to Perrine, and are: always looking for a lesson or a bit of moral instruction; and expecting to find poetry always beautiful. Here, he gives the example of *Winter* by William Shakespeare. He shows that the poem has no moral and neither is the poem “beautiful”. While it is an appealing poem in its own way, “there is little that is really beautiful in red raw noses, coughing in chapel, nipped blood, foul roads, and greasy kitchen maids.”

Perrine understands that not everyone is a gifted reader of poetry, nor does everyone fully understand what is going on in poetry and gives a few simple suggestions to aid in the understanding of any poem. He suggests that we, the readers, ask ourselves a few questions

---

46 Ibid p. 6
47 Ibid p. 7
while we are reading or after we have finished reading a poem. The first, and most important to Perrine, is:

“Who is the speaker and what is the occasion?”

And the second most important question is:

“What is the central purpose of the poem?”

According to Perrine, these two questions will be the most reliable way to start on a reader’s journey towards understanding and appreciating a piece of poetry. Once we, the readers, have answered these central questions then we can continue our journey and consider other questions, such as, “by what means is the purpose achieved?”

These questions, while different in the word usage and statements, lead us to discover the multifaceted elements for understanding poetry. Perrine looks at nine elements in poetry with an additional tenth that is of great interest in our discussion of poetry and music (whether it is in rap or in Western Classical music). These elements are:

1. Denotation and Connotation
2. Imagery
3. Figurative Language (metaphor, personification, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony)
4. Allusion
5. Meaning and idea
6. Tone
7. Rhythm and meter
8. Sound and meaning
9. Pattern

The additional element is an exemplary chapter on Musical Devices which we can discuss at the end.

---

48 Perrine p. 20
49 Ibid p. 21
50 Ibid p. 23
There are numerous cross examples from Pate and Perrine. For Pate, language of poetry encompasses the elements such as figurative language (Perrine), but also includes language that is individual to rap poetry/music; i.e. profanity and use of the “N” word. Pate also looks at structure form, and rhythm, which is equivalent to Perrine’s rhythm and meter. Perrine discusses pattern while Pate calls it flow. Pate discusses imagery as well but doesn’t seem to break it down as much as Perrine with denotation, connotations, imagery, and allusion. While there are different words their terms can be understood in similar ways. A discussion of the specific terms that Pate uses starts below.

Saturation

One of the prime arguments in all of poetry is what makes a good poem. This is an age-old question that is often asked by English and Literature teachers the moment the class begins to discuss poetry. For many, a good poem somehow connects to the reader/listener. In addition, it might illuminate an aspect about the person or help present a possible solution to a problem that the reader/audience might be facing at different or simultaneous times. But these are not always the reason poetry might be deemed “good” or “great”, nor is it a universal feeling on a single poem. Laurence Perrine and Alexs Pate both attempt to provide a framework from which to begin.

For Perrine, a good poem successfully passes a test with the question, “how fully has it accomplished its purpose?”  

---

51 Perrine p. 239
“how important is its purpose?\textsuperscript{52}” A great poem should automatically answer the first question and hold its own individual merits to the second question.

Perrine says that great poetry engages the whole person – senses, imagination, emotion, intellect; it does not touch us merely on one or two sides of our nature. Great poetry seeks not to merely entertain us but to bring us – along with pure pleasure – fresh insights, or renewed insights, and important insights, into the nature of human experience. Great poetry, we might say, gives us a broader and deeper understanding of life, of fellow humans, and of ourselves, always with the qualification that the kind of insight literature gives is not necessarily the kind that can be summed up in a simple “lesson” or “moral”. It is a knowledge that is felt or a new knowledge of the complexities of human nature and of the tragedies and sufferings, the excitements and joys, that characterize human experience.\textsuperscript{53}

While Perrine concentrates on the universality of poetry, Pate takes this idea but gears it towards the applicability of rap poetry to the hip-hop culture.\textsuperscript{54} For Pate’s purpose, this hip hop culture can be read as politically oppositional to an imagined majority (read white), overtly racialized (African American), overtly gendered, competitive, egalitarian, largely urban, and global (multicultural).\textsuperscript{55} When these readings of hip-hop culture are read and applied to the seven elements of poetry, Pate creates a thick world of interest. For example, saturation implies a term of measurement and Pate does not dismiss that definition of the word out. He

\textsuperscript{52} Perrine p. 239
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid p. 240
\textsuperscript{54} Pate p. 46
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid p. 46
uses this type of measurement to discover the amount to which a rap/poem embraces ideas of hip-hop culture and how they’re relation to one another.\textsuperscript{56}

But there is a caveat in the types of saturation in rap poetry. The difference between types of rap poetry is boiled down to those that are about the selling of a culture or cultural ideas while others are about the promotion of these ideas. For example:

This is game time  
My team is all hype  
Offense is fast, defense is tight  
The other team is nice but has no hype  
I throw my skates on and we go all night  
Score the game point  
I’m the number one ace  
Drop my game face  
Meet up at our favorite place  
I get that quarter pounder  
With cheese burger for real  
The double fills up all  
After showing my skills  
The beef the cheese the pickles the bun  
After that I think it’s time for another one  
McDonald’s. I’m lovin’ it.\textsuperscript{57}

This is an example of rap poetry being used to sell products and, in many ways, lessens the impact and importance of rap poetry. Pate then compares this example with an excerpt from Ice Cube’s \textit{Alive Upon Arrival}:

\texttt{Woke up in the back of a tray  
On my way, to MLK  
That’s the county hospital jack  
Where niggaz die over a little scratch  
Still sittin in the trauma center  
In my back is where the bullet entered  
Yo nurse I’m getting kind of warm}

\textsuperscript{56} Pate p. 46  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid p. 46
Bitch still made me fill out the fuckin form\textsuperscript{58}

We can see a drastic and dramatic difference between these two examples. While the first example shows the qualities of a McDonald’s quarter pounder or a cheese burger, it is inauthentic and “irresponsible” to the culture from which it is being borrowed. While Ice Cube’s poem is darkly and directly opposite of the cheeseburger jingle. It takes the reader/audience into the inner-city grit. Gang fights, gunshots, ambulances, emergency wards, the wait, these are all traditional visages of the inner city. The account is immediately recognized by the most inner-city residents, and, yet, those that can will empathize with the story telling.

While there are many wonderful pieces of this genre, there is a definite difference between quality pieces. Alexs Pate, William Cobb, Laurence Perrine, and countless critics dip into this discussion. While these authors acknowledge that there are plenty of poems that are entertaining and worthy of experiencing, there is a distinction between good and great poetry. Finding this distinction is a crucial act for any composer who wishes to set text to a song. But how does a composer pick a poem or piece of literature to set? One aspect that a composer can look at is the musicality of the poem.

Musicality of Poems

When Pate discusses his seven elements, he has separated the poetry of rap from the music that it is so closely and often held. The largest issue with this type of segregation is that it doesn’t fully take into consideration the musicality of the poetry itself. Perrine discusses this with his chapter devoted to the musical devices nestled within any poetry. He says, “There are two broad ways by which the poet achieves musical quality: by the choice and arrangement of

\textsuperscript{58} Pate p 47
sounds and by the arrangement of accents".\(^{59}\) Unfortunately, this undermines the important role that the music has when setting a poem, even for hip-hop.

For instance, we can separate the poetry of Kendrick Lamar’s *DNA* from the music, but doing so lessens the impact of the words that are spoken. The initial beginning of this song is an introduction to the abilities of Kendrick and sets the tone of the song. He puts these words against a bass line that is looped and repeated for half the song, except in a few instances when he abandons all music to emphasize a word or phrase. At the half way mark in the song, he suddenly changes the tone of the music and, incidentally, the rhythm scheme of the poetry.

What begins as a steady stream of 16\(^{th}\) notes under the lyrics:

I got loyalty, got royalty inside my DNA  
Cocaine quarter piece, got war and peace inside my DNA  
I got power, poison, pain and joy inside my DNA  
I got hustle though, ambition, flow, inside my DNA  
I was born like this, since one like this  
Immaculate conception  
I transform like this, perform like this  
Was Yeshua’s new weapon  
I don’t contemplate, I meditate, then off your fucking head  
This that put-the-kids-to-bed  
This that I got, I got, I got, I got\(^{60}\)

These lyrics emerge to show the steps that Lamar has taken to release himself from the bonds of his childhood neighborhood in Compton. The drums and harmony are reminiscent of the late 80s and early 90s hip-hop that Lamar grew up listening to and absorbing. It has a manner to it that seems to evoke memories of riding around Compton in a low rider, blasting a bass line that would tell the neighborhood that you had arrived. But just when the song seems

\(^{59}\) Perrine p. 155  
to be settling into a predictable and memorable system, Lamar changes it and brings the music into a different style. One that brings the listener out of the late 80s and early 90s, and into the 21st century.

Then, halfway through the song, the rhythm and harmonic language suddenly stops and the listener is presented with a new side of the song. There is an introduction that utilizes the repeated “I got” statement against a sampled clip from a person speaking about the ills and harm that rap has had on the youth of the African-American community. Suddenly, a throbbing and distorted bass line emerges and pumps itself in the listener’s face. From this point on, Lamar grandstands and the only thing that he has that can support him is the pushing and pulsating drum sequence. All harmonic material has evaporated and over top of all the lyrics (almost to the point of overtaking the lyrics) is a sample of Rick James saying, “Give me the ganja”. This is evidenced in the lyrics as well. Lamar says:

Tell me somthin’
You mothafuckas can’t tell me nothin’
I’d rather die than to listen to you
My DNA not for imitation
Your DNA an abomination
This how it is when you’re in the Matrix
Dodgin’ bullets, reapin’ what you sow
And stackin’ up the footage, livin’ on the go
And sleepin’ in a villa
Sippin’ from a Grammy and walkin’ in the buildin’
Diamond in the ceilin’, marble on the floors
Beach inside the window peekin’ out the window
Baby in the pool, godfather goals
Only Lord know, I’ve been goin’ hammer
Dodgin’ paparazzi, freakin’ through the cameras
Eat at Four Daughters, Brock wearin’ sandals
Yoga on a Monday, stretchin’ to Nirvana
Watchin’ all the snakes, curvin’ all the fakes
Phone never on, I don’t conversate
I don’t compromise, I just penetrate
Sex, money, murder – these are the breaks
These are the times, level number 9
Look up in the sky, 10 is on the way
Sentence on the way, killings on the way
Motherfucker, I got winners on the way
You ain’t shit without a body on your belt
You ain’t shit without a ticket on your plate
You ain’t sick enough to pull it on yourself
You ain’t rich enough to hit the lot and skate
Tell me when destruction gonna be my fate
Gonna be your fate, gonna be our faith
Peace to the world, let it rotate
Sex, money murder – our DNA.61

These words come in quick fire succession in a triplet feel. They are a beratement of everything that Lamar has had to deal with and his ultimate success. Yet, these words aren’t displayed as a triumph, but as an angry and forceful statement, as if to say, “Show me how I am not as street wise as I used to be simply because I live in a mansion?” The music behind this tirade of personal triumph is minimal and, as said earlier, a bridge from the late 80s to the more electronically driven 21st century.

One of the examples that Pate uses to illustrate this point is Block Party by Jean Grae. In this poem, Grae urges men and women to not just challenge themselves, but to grow. She begins by describing the horrible conditions in which many African-Americans lived.

[Verse One]
Listen
I don’t wanna preach or come off bitter, this is a commentary auditory Editorial, about the state of things, state of mind and state of being
What the fuck is goin on? How the fuck we gonna make it out?
It’s hectic, from asbestor filled classrooms
to the stench of death that’s still in New York
The air is thick with it, but it reaches further
Like the world murder rate
Circulate, cultivate your mind and soul, your heart and your body

61 Lamar
So stagnant; niggaz, get off your block and travel
Stop actin like your flesh is metal and your hood’s a magnet
We need to globalize, further spread on this earth
to appreciate the full value of individual worth
To realize how ridiculous the thought of ownership is
and protectin your turf—that’s bullshit man
That’s how we got colonized
Missionaries create foreign schools and change the native way & thinkin
So in ten years, we can have a foreign columbine
in some small village in the Amazon, c’mon man

While these lyrics are symbolic of the plight that the African-American community faces, it is also ambiguous enough to be applicable to any community where the citizens are marginalized. Yet in the setting of the poetry, Grae decides to not put the poem down with a consistent beat. She settles on a free form setting; as if this is just a speech given over a background track. Perhaps, this is a purposeful setting. Grae is placing her words apart from the music on purpose in order to highlight the distinct story telling abilities of the words while creating an almost constant background narrative with the music similar to how a narrator might speak over the action portrayed in a movie.

But instances like Jean Grae’s are rare. The hip-hop world has always had a deep connection between the rhythm of the poetry and the beat of the music. From Sugarhill Gang’s smash hit that started the hip-hop craze, *Rapper’s Delight*, to the constant lyrical bombardment of Eminem’s *Rap God*, to the linguistic gymnastics of J. Cole’s *1985*, the words have always been tightly intertwined with the rhythm of the music. I believe it is this marriage of word and music that has helped propel rap music into the forefront of music.

---

62 Pate p. 106
At one time, classical music was this vanguard. It held the attention of their audiences with vigor, and skill. Composers wrote operas, song cycles, and arias that grabbed the imagination and bewildered the conventions. *Coloratura* sopranos were the stars of their day. People cheered and countless gifts were given. But things changed. Slowly, the lives of the working class became increasingly busy and the cost of attendance was often too much for many to give. While we still marvel and a near perfect performance of Mozart’s *Queen of the Night Aria*, many have lost interest in these spectacles. But not because of the skill or technique that it takes to perform pieces such as Mozart’s but with the way in which the words are set.

Often, when we examine the great solo arias composed by the great music composers, we see long melisma’s and multiple notes per syllable. These can be somewhat lengthy at times; take Handel’s masterpiece *For Unto Us A Child Is Born* for example. But this wasn’t just an issue in the classical world. Popular music has had its fair share of singers that enjoyed extending syllables out. Famous singers like Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey, Stevie Wonder, and Beyoncé have all enjoyed the grandiose opportunities that a long melisma can add to a song. Unfortunately, for both the classical and popular music worlds, this trend fell from vogue.

During the early decade of the 2000s, many singers, song writers, and music composers were moving away from the extended use of melismas due to the audiences changing acceptance of simpler, more straight forward, melodic styles. Brown also makes the charge that the melisma was associated with a cultural point of view that was centered around money and ostentation. We can make an argument that these were important aspects of the classical

---

world as well. Opera was often associated with copious quantities of money, opulence, and ostentation. It is not a coincidence that the rise of pervasive melisma use in opera is during the late 19th century when the leading European countries were at the height of their colonialism phases, and the height of melisma use in popular music was during the great wealth building decades of the 1980s and 90s in America.

It is worth noting that the decline of the melisma in the pop world creates a void that is replete with singers that fill their songs with much more words than previously. The quality of these words is always up for debate, but song writing became a much more straight forward and significantly less embellished. This led to the popularization of singers such as Taylor Swift and Lady Gaga. Similarly, rap/hip-hop music saw a beginning that was focused on the creation of songs centered around the excess of the 80s. But just as the popular music had to downsize for the recession, rap/hip-hop music was forced to become more introverted and we see a rise in singers that are focused on the reclamation of society and social justice.

This straight forward, less embellished style of vocal writing, I believe, is perfect for the modern poetry that many current composers set. With the lack of embellishment, concentration can be placed on the importance of the words rather than the melodic line. While some may make the argument that opera and hip-hop have different aesthetic approaches and what they focus on might be different, one must agree that the common thread between these two arts is the fact that they want to tell stories. While the storylines might be different, the point of the lyrics are to tell a story to the audience in order for them to learn from a story that isn’t presented in the regular normative of the media.
Composers must not think that the only way to present these materials is through strict hip-hop mimicry or through the creation of a brand-new opera. Many wonderful opportunities exist in the world of chamber ensembles and duets. And these subsets of ensembles seem to be more receptive to the inclusion of songs that are less embellished and more story line focused. Recently, the opportunity came to work with a previous Poet Laureate of Louisiana, Ava Haymon. Poems had been previously selected from her wide oeuvre and composers volunteered to work with singers in order to present these materials to an audience, which included the poet. Ava read the poems to the composers and special note was taken to the vocal inflections and the speed at which she read the poetry. I had the opportunity to work with another doctoral student and we set all three of the selected poems. While the focus of the works are different in numerous ways, the one linking thread I found was the use of children. And it was this link that I felt I needed to express in the music settings.

*3 Songs in the Name of Children* was the ultimate result of this collaboration between poet, composer, and singer, and it was well received. The music set the mood but also served as a second witness to the words. One poem, *Changing Weather Patterns*, discusses the vast influences of *el Niño* and *la Nina* on a world that is already riddled with issues due to the greed of humanity. Throughout the poem there are multiple references to not just weather catastrophes but also the catastrophes that humans create with each other. When I set this poetry to music, I wanted to really focus on the many weather influences as well while keeping the idea of children in mind.

In this piece, there are numerous text painting examples; fast dissonant whirling scales that depict the hurricanes created, the thunderous chords to depict mudslides, etc., but I also
wanted to make sure that I was always thinking about the children which is discussed in the poem and exists as the thread between all three poems. At the end of the poem, Ms. Haymon discusses the pleading of the poorest people to the humanized spirits of *el Nino* and *la Nina*.

But they are only answered with the voice of the evil and crackling voice of the ozone:

*La Nina, we pray, and El Nino, her brother*  
*We long for sweetness and scale*  
*Our tables sag under the piles of unsorted papers*  
*Spare us, Ninos. We don’t know winter from summer*  
*Above the trade winds, ozone crackles*  
*Their answer: We have come for the children.*

These words are ripe with anxiety, energy, and fear. I tried to depict this in a straightforward and honest depiction of the worlds and words. In both settings I created, the lyrics are set ahead of the musical accompaniment of the piano. The piano slowly trails away as the words move towards the response of the ozone. Here, at the ozone’s response, I have taken two different approaches to the words but both end in a similar fashion. In the original creation of the piece, the musical accompaniment of the piano slowly disappears until it just becomes long notes that are separated by minor seconds or major 7ths. This emptiness creates a world of unease and the dissonant notes create an acoustic world of energy as they fight to either resolve to one shared note or push to keep the energy of the dissonance moving forward.

In the second setting for soprano, the ozone responds in loud, thunderous, and resounding chords climbing higher towards the end of the keyboard. These chords are still filled with dissonance and energy but the dynamic difference and the thickness of the musical setting

---

create two different worlds that the lyrics exist within. These lyrics both come to an ending that is similar with a sense of dread, and imply a future of darkness.\textsuperscript{65}

There are so many levels on which text can exist that it can do a dis-service to the lyrics by setting them to a highly-embellished melody. There are many wonderful modern examples of lyrics set to these embellished melodies and they are beautiful to listen to, but the excessive melodic acrobatics seems to draw away from the impact of the words that are set to the melodies. A straight-forward setting of text can release the importance of these words on the audience because the audience can concentrate on the words rather than the melodic material that is presented simultaneously.

\textsuperscript{65} Samples of these sections can be found in the Appendix.
CHAPTER IV  
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

Music has been and continues to be the most significant creative art expression of African Americans. Blacks sing song and play music (in their churches and at their juke parties) as a way of coping with life’s contradictions and of celebrating its triumphs . . . Singing is the medium through which we talk to each other and make known our perspectives on life and the world . . . Today a new form of musical discourse has emerged in the black community called “rap” music. It is a musical talk, extremely popular among young people who are searching for meaning in a world that has no place for them.

--James H. Cone, The Spirituals and the Blues, 199166

If you see something is going wrong within politics and the world today, then some Hip Hop artist is gonna come along and get straight with it. If they think that there’s a lot of racism going on then there’s another Hip Hop artist who’s gonna come out and speak their mind.

--Afrika Bambaataa67

On May 5th, 2018, Donald Glover, a.k.a. Childish Gambino, released This Is America.

What begins so innocently quickly turns into a mélange of dark images, social criticism, and the promotion of gun reform. Childish Gambino’s lyrics are full of double meaning and it is only enhanced by the wonderful compositional techniques of Ludwig Göransson. The beginning of the piece is a choir of voices singing, “Yeah” in unison at 120 beats per minute. Ludwig and Childish reinforce beats one and three. On initial hearing, a listener hears maracas and a deep guttural reinforcement of beats one and three. While this might be an introduction that recalls the spiritual nature of African-American music traditions in America, I believe that this is recalling something from the darkest history of America. A guitar plucks away a melody and harmony that implies a simple way of living or life style. The lyrics then begin with

We just wanna party  
Party just for you

---

We just want the money
Money just for you
I know you wanna party
Party just for me
Girl, you got me dancin’
Dance and shake the frame
We just wanna part (yeah)
Party just for you (yeah)
We just want the money (yeah)
Money just for you (yeah)
I know you wanna party (yeah)
Party just for me (yeah)
Girl, you got me dancin’ (yeah, girl, you got me dancin’)
Dance and shake the frame (you)

At this moment, the lighthearted mood of the music switches with a low rumbling bass that is in direct opposition and dissonant from everything that has been set up previously. The bass waffles around a minor second with no intention to move away to a more stable idea. Ludwig also adds metal or mechanical sounds that are urging on all the beats but with only a heavy emphasis on beat 3. And it is here that we see the actual lyrics and meaning of the song:

This is America
Don’t catch you slippin’ up (ayy)
Look at how I’m livin’ now
Police be trippin’ now (woo)
Yeah, this is America (woo, ayy)
Guns in my area (word, my area)
I got the strap (ayy, ayy)
I gotta carry ‘em
Yeah, yeah, I’m go into this (ugh)
Yeah, yeah, this is guerilla (woo)
Yeah, yeah, I’m go get the bag
Yeah, yeah, or I’m go get the pad
Yeah, yeah, I’m so cold like yeah (yeah)
I’m so dope like yeah (woo)
We gon’ blow like yeah (straight up, uh)

---

Packed in this small section is a minefield of lyrical games that are dizzying and stirring all at the same time. The main character in this poem is describing the dark and unwelcoming scenery around him and, yet, he is prepared to die for a way to make a living the only way he knows how. The police are constantly on the scene for this character and they are not viewed as a welcome or helpful presence.

But also, packed in this one section is a thread to the beginning. There is a call and response that is being articulated between the character and another group. In popular culture and with current trends of social media, one might be geared to think that the responses are from the character’s group of friends or other members of his gang. But I am inclined to think that the responses are being used as a tool to hearken back to the call and response nature of the African-Americans while they worked in the fields as slaves. This idea is bolstered by the musical effects that Childish and Ludwig use. For instance, the tempo of the piece is the usual setting for a march, but it isn’t a tempo that would suggest dancing. To compound the problem, Childish and Ludwig emphasize beats one and three which is counter to the current popular music trend of emphasizing two and four. These punctuations are then heightened with the use of a sound effect that seems to suggest the sound of shovels hitting the ground.

The sound effect of the shovels, the emphasis of one and three, and the call and response nature of the lyrics leads to only one conclusion, Childish and Ludwig and evoking the imagery of slaves in the deep south. While the main character of the poem is placed in a setting that is decidedly current, the aesthetic that is achieved is paradoxical and historical.

When the chorus returns, the bass has disappeared, the choir is in a simple harmony, and the guitar has found its voice again. This will be the pattern for the entire piece, until the
end. The verse sections will be filled with mechanical, growling, and grinding noises, while the chorus seems to be a choir filled with excitement and inspiration.

This paradox, of joyful, spiritual chorus and menacing/growling verse, continues for the rest of the song until the last verse. Here Childish writes:

You just a black man in this world
You just a barcode, ayy
You just a black man in this world
Drivin’ expensive foreigons, ayy
You just a big dawg, yeah
I kenneled him in the backyard
No proper life to a dog
For a big dog

The song then fades out. If the previous section was slightly difficult to withdraw meaning, this new verse, acting as a coda, is even murkier. But we can begin gathering meaning by the first initial response that we get. The audience is no longer being told about the life of a man in a first-person perspective, but we are seeing another voice direct hurtful statements to the main character. This new person dehumanizes the main character and reminds him of how other people have been treated in the past. “You just a big dawg/I kenneled him in the backyard” is explicitly reminding the main character of the times of slavery when strong African men were forced to wear metal collars and chains in an attempt to restrain them from doing anything destructive much like a dog owner would chain his Rottweiler in his yard because the dog could do damage to someone that crossing his path. The last two lines are even more damaging: “No proper life to a dog/For a big dog”, meaning that this man is now chained up like a big dog and will never be able to live the life that he could live all due to some characteristic that he has no control over.
At this point musically, the majority of the music has faded away or is taken out. Ludwig masterfully orchestrates a great disparity between a low, rumbling bass drum beat, and a high-pitched synthesizer voice. While the thumping bass drum like sound is consistent and pounding a rhythm underneath the fading voice and synthesizer, it is not constant with random beats missing. This creates a sense of disorientation and destroys all sense of meter. If we could equate this section to a classical music device we might be able to draw line to the recitative. Here the beats/harmony are dependent on the movement of the lyrics. These lyrics can be performed at the will of the singer(s) while they move the storyline forward. The effect of the closing section of This is America is similar to that of the recitative because it moves the storyline forward, and, even though the lyrics are sung in a very strict rhythmic style that is consistent with the meter, it is there as a commentary rather than a continuation of the scene previously established.

This is America is the newest incarnation of protest music in rap music that is often overlooked or easily dismissed due to the reactions to pop rap which is only concerned with the production of a good bar scene or drugs. While one of the many reasons the block parties were created was to be a relief and a dance part for those living in the projects of The Bronx, it also served as a way for the musicians and the like-minded to express their frustrations with what was going on around them. Henry Louis Gates Jr., director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University, speaks on the importance of the written language as a tool for the African-American community.

No, blacks could not achieve any true presence by speaking, since their ‘African’-informed English seemed to have only underscored their status as sui generis, as distinct in spoken language use as in their ‘black color’. If blacks
were to signify as full members of the Western human community, they would have to do so in their writings.\textsuperscript{69}

While, Gates is initially speaking of the usage of the written word in the Civil Rights era, we can still deem this applicable to the development of rap music. With no other avenues available to them to express their frustrations with the world around them in The South Bronx, MCs (which would later outshine the DJ) looked to poetry for a release. Through masterful word play, rap poets would push for social changes that are universal in need and that are still applicable over 40 years after the Civil Rights movements has ended.

**Young and Uncensored**

The development of rap music gave young black voices direct audiences of like-minded people. This audience was largely unfettered by a censoring device and this would last for a rather lengthy amount of time. Rap poets were speaking about the issues at hand and saying what they wanted, how they wanted, and there were rarely any repercussions. It was as if a generation of people were given the right to free speech and they were going to go wild with this new freedom.

Rap poets like KRS-One (*My Philosophy, Beef, and Love’s Gonna Getcha*), Big Daddy Kane (*Word to the Mother (Land)*), Tupac Shakur (*White Man’z World, Dear Mama*), Ice Cube (*Death Certificate, Alive on Arrival*) would harness this newly found freedom and mold a blisteringly honest perspective that would force the world to listen. The honesty, clarity, passion, and instinctive ambition to compose poetry that worked on multiple levels was something more than a need to write lyrics to a new beat. Their poetry was more than just a completion of an

\textsuperscript{69} Gates, H. *Figures in Black*. Oxford University Press, 1987. p. 6
understood contract between the music and the audience expectations. From the beginning, rap offered creative writers a different vehicle to express their feelings and it would take off like a rocket ship.

Like many other forms of artistry, there are great versions and bad versions of the genre. Rap poets like Rakim, Afrika Bambaata, Mos Def, and Jean Grae would create worlds of richness, density, and sophistication that is often ignored by the more popular performers. Much of what is presented to the public is patronizing to those that are determined to put significant thought and emotion into the music. The clear majority of this popular music is concerned with debauchery, bragging, and a seemingly unending ability to subjugate one person, gender, or group of people which stands in stark contrast to the deeply powerful sentiments and emotions of Jean Grae and the like. While the music of rap poets such as ‘Lil John, Soulja Boy, Amigos, and Kodak Black has value in its own right, they are a group of musicians that are interested on very surface material.

Every song created in rap music exists in at least two realities: that of the speaker and the listener. It is a crucial relationship that all music shares and is something that we, as composers, can manipulate in every piece we compose. We can bring the audience to a level of discomfort that is usually designed for film and without the added drama of imagery. Music can bring an audience to tears about death of Romeo and Juliet. And music can bring a sense of calm and relaxation with just the simplest of tunes. But music can also serve a purpose.

Similarly, *This is America* is able to discuss multiple problems and issues that face America currently while simultaneously reaching back to discuss the issues of America’s past. The purpose of doing this is not to achieve some kind of dualism or harmony between the two,
or to create an exoticism, but to push the audience to really feel or sympathize with the message that music can hold. Not all music needs to have a message, but, I believe, some of the greatest pieces of the Western classical music world have held a message or were somehow able to convince the listener that there is an importance just below the surface. While some of these messages might be individual to the listener, a truly important piece of Western classical music is universal in its appeal and understanding. When an orchestra plays the *Joke Symphony* by Hayden, or the *Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky, the audience understands the importance of these pieces and can feel the humor or brutality.

This universal appeal doesn’t have to be limited to the orchestra either. Solo piano works such as *The Raindrop Prelude* by Chopin, or *Pathetique Sonata* by Beethoven evoke a wondrous series of emotions from the audience that might not be universal. Yet, the individuality of the experiences creates a universal appeal to the pieces. While music has always had a way to pull at our heart strings, depict brutality, and tap into our primal brain, it is also the key conduit to which we can muster the troops or gather a large group of people together.

This ability to create a progressive stance is one of the most fascinating aspects about music. Whether it is *The Stalingrad Symphony* by Shostakovich, *The Moldau* by Smetana, or *Fanfare for a Common Man* by Copland, music is more powerful than words to incite action, or stir patriotism. Leaders of every country known the power of a good stirring piece for their campaigns as well as the importance of their nations national anthem.

This can also be displayed in the opposite direction. The anti-Vietnam War protestors clearly understood the importance of music and one of the founding principles of the greatest public concert in America, Woodstock, was based on the idea of music bringing like-minded
people together in order to protest the actions of a government. It is in this slot that I believe rap music can have an influence on concert hall attendance.

The concert hall has a wonderful history of being able to stir people from all types of backgrounds and experiences. But it is only recently that the concert hall has been able push for change and challenge the powers at large. Great American awards and institutions are realizing this power and works such as Angel Bones (a story of two angels forced into spiritual and sexual slavery) by Du Yun, and Become Ocean (a 40+ minute monolith depicting the undulating waves of the ocean) by John Luther Adams are winning Pulitzer Prizes. These pieces force the audience to challenge their preconceived notions of what is happening in their world and encourages action on the behalf of the subjects.

But this is only a recent development (by recent, I mean in the last decade), while rap music has been challenging the audience to take actions for numerous causes for over forty years. Sometimes the urgings come in passionate and forceful songs such as U.N.I.T.Y. by Queen Latifah, and sometimes it comes in anger filled rants such as Fuck the Police by N.W.A., but they all encourage action or bring attention to an affliction for the greater good of the African-American people, and, ultimately, the country. But no matter the type of delivery or context of the music, it was with a message at its heart.

Unfortunately, it seems that much of the music that goes into the Western classical world from current composers doesn’t have a message at its heart. Luke Muehlhauser writes a beginner’s guide to modern classical music blog. In this blog, he lays out steps for people to discover genres of new classical music that they might enjoy. He first gives a list of compositions from composers ranging from John Adams and David Lang to Frederic Rzewski and Nico Muhly.
He then makes the argument that some modern classical music isn’t as atonal, noisy, or abstract as some variations of rock music. While he doesn’t list groups such as Nine Inch Nails or dark Swedish death metal bands like Entombed or At the Gates, Muehlhauser does list numerous compositions that might blur the lines between classical and rock music (Todd Reynolds, Glenn Branca, Efterklang, and Corey Dargel). The end of the blog post lists several contemporary pieces that would challenge even the most adventurous classical music lover. Here, Muehlhauser says, “At this point you might be wondering what the hell is this garbage and how could anyone listen to it?!” Here he gives the response that is rather surprising.

Maybe, non-composers shouldn’t be able to appreciate such music, just like non-mathematicians can’t appreciate the Langlands program (The Langlands program is a project that has far-reaching and influential conjectures about connections between number theory and geometry). Here is [Milton] Babbitt writing in 1958:

Why should the layman be other than bored and puzzled by what he is unable to understand, music or anything else? It is only the translation of this boredom and puzzlement into resentment and denunciation that seems to be indefensible. After all, the public does have its own music, its ubiquitous music: music to eat by, to read by, to dance by, and to be impressed by. Why refuse to recognize the possibility that contemporary music has reached a stage long since attained by other forms of activity? The time has passed when the normally well-educated man without special preparation could understand the most advanced work in, for example, mathematics, philosophy, and physic. Advanced music, to the composer, scarcely can be expected to appear more intelligible than these arts and sciences to the person whose musical education usually has been even less extensive than his background in other fields. . .

This is a long way of saying that perhaps the message isn’t necessarily at the forefront but it is disguised as a message for composers and is often leaving the audience behind.

---

While it can evoke an emotional response from the audience, it doesn’t necessarily encourage the audience to actively participate in the future of the storyline of the individuals being depicted or the country of origin from the piece. Now, it must be said, that I am not promoting for music that is simply to push the composers or librettists own perspectives or agendas, nor am I saying that music that doesn’t provoke action isn’t worthy. I am simply saying that in the tumultuous world that we live in currently, there is a need for release and we can help with this release by encouraging composers to study those that are encouraging action. Hip-hop inspired music can be a way to release this tension and frustration in a way that not only links classical music to the past, but encourages interaction and intersections between the classical world and the world that is often relegated away from many audience members. While not every student or composer will agree, nor will everyone be interested in writing in this manner, but if a composer can accomplish this within the Western classical music world, then they can reach an audience that might be unaware of the issue or the magnitude of it.

While I was studying at the University of Nevada, Reno, I finished a piece for solo trumpet and low synth pad. It was my first experience writing for an acoustic instrument and incorporating the electronic elements. The trumpet writing is simple and rather relaxed. It has a rhythmic motive that repeats with a melodic middle section. The form of the piece is a simple rounded binary. If the trumpet part was performed separate from the synthesizer one might expect it to be a horn call from the Alps. But once the electronic element was added the piece took on a sinister and morose sense. The trumpet voluntaries were repeated by the upper synth patch as if in echo. The rhythmic motive was mimicking the sounds of trains passing while the melodic material of the second section was derived from a Ukrainian lullaby.
I titled the piece *The Holodomor*\(^2\) after the great famine that struck the Ukraine in 1932 to 1933. During this forced starvation by Communist Russia on the Ukrainian people, between 3 and 7 million people died. While the piece couldn’t urge people to take action against the event, as I have mentioned, I was told after each performance by audience members that they were going to go look up more details of the events that happened. This personal education can yield results if something in the future should happen that is similar to the historical event.

After the performance of *The Holodomor* for the College of Liberal Arts Graduate School (C.L.A.G.S.), one judge spoke to me saying that it was refreshing that the piece was about an event that few people knew about. He would go on to tell me that his family was from one of the hardest hit regions of the Ukraine and the ultimately had to flee to America to survive. He wasn’t sure many people outside of Ukrainian studies or history majors would know about the event but was excited that there seemed to be an interest in audience members to find out more about what had happened. It is moments like this that can lead to open and honest discussions about the policies and practices of our leaders that can make a change.

Of my current compositional projects, one is in response to the events going on around me. Titled *The Freedom Train*, this piece combines the poetry of Langston Hughes and transcribed interviews from family members that have lost someone to police shootings. I have selected four individuals that I feel really encapsulate the struggle that many African Americans face on a daily basis and will use the words of their family to not blame the police or to cause a bigger rift between police and the African-American community, but will attempt to show the humanity in each individual. For instance, while Alton Sterling might have been acting illegally

\(^2\) The score for this piece can be found in the Appendix II.
while he was selling C.D.’s at the gas station, and he had a history of trouble with the police, I seek to highlight the side of him that is often rarely spoken about. The fact that he was a father of seven children, not very well educated, and just trying to provide for his family, while living in a part of Baton Rouge that isn’t the easiest to escape is often never exposed or discussed by the news outlets. He was also a brother, son, and member of his community. There are many questions and unresolved issues that are still circulating with this incident and, while I don’t want to speak to the legal issues, point fingers of blame, or ramifications of the court system, I do want to highlight the problems and situations that many of these people are in.

This was the purpose of rap music when it crawled out of the wreckage of The South Bronx in the ‘70s. They speak of the police brutality and political corruption not as to necessarily anger the people but to cause people to make or demand a change in response to what was going on. For instance, in N.W.A.’s most famous song, *Fuck the Police*, the group openly discuss the idea that the group could be walking around their neighborhood with no intention of doing anything except enjoying time together but the police will stop them, pat them all down, and possible take them into the police station for questioning. The band says:

```
Fuckin’ with me ‘cause I’m a teenager
With a little bit of gold and a pager
Searchin’ my car, lookin’ for product
Thinkin’ every nigga is sellin’ narcotics
You’d rather see me in the pen
Then me and Lorenzo rollin’ in the Benzo.73
```

---

This little snippet of the song demonstrates the situation that many African-Americans face daily, and while it was originally written in 1988, it is still very applicable to the lives of many today.

One thing we can extract from this snippet is shear viciousness and ferocity of the poetry. There is contempt and hatred in the lyrics. Childish Gambino perfectly articulates the sentiment of too many slave owners. Slaves were property and viewed as animals. While the practice of owning slaves has been abolished in America since 1865 with the ratification of the 13th amendment, it merely changed faces as Jim Crow laws, segregation of businesses, and housing laws. There are even more subtle divisions within the music industry.

---

74 General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives
Chapter V
Recent Crossovers to The Classical World

Initially, there was a lot of push back on the intersection of hip-hop and the classical music worlds. Many were hesitant to see hip-hop as more than just a violent, vulgar, and pointless art form that gang members and disenfranchised youth would listen to. But recently there has been a push to explore a collaborative existence between the two. Hip-hop has even been able to receive accolades from previously classically dominated awards, such as the Pulitzer Prize, and numerous orchestras have started to invite hip-hop stars to perform with them. Another intersection is the increase in hip-hop styled lyrics for Broadway musicals. Yet, even with these crossovers from the “street” to the “stage” or “concert hall”, the music still possesses numerous qualities of hip-hop, including the highly-stylized lyrics, merry-go-rounding, and drumbeats.

One example of the hybridizing nature of rap and “classical” music is the smash Broadway hit, *Hamilton*. While this piece is concerned with a founding member of the nation, it uses tropes of rap music to tell its story. The beginning, with its simple orchestration, as if it were the introduction to the epic album, uses a bass line that is low and repeatable. The poetic writings that are utilized by Lin-Manuel Miranda takes the usual script or lyrical structure of a song and gives it a makeover with rap stylings. The instrumentation of the piece is even giving nods to the rap scene. Mixed in with the usual musical instrumentation of strings, some brass and winds, piano, and drum set is the use of a turntable. Miranda masterfully utilizes the turntable to emphasize certain passages and statements. He also uses funk inspired bass lines and drum beats that edge towards the funk history of rap music. Yet, he juxtaposes this with
nearly perfect counterpoint from the 18th century and harmonic language that has one foot in standard harmonic progressions and one foot in the explorative language of the 20th century.

An example of this combination of hip-hop stylings and the more classically oriented world is the song, *Alexander Hamilton*. This is the first song of the Broadway hit and sets the entire setting for the rest of the show. But it is also the introduction for the audience the aural world that the composer uses. In the first measure, we have the heavily accented *tutti* hits of the orchestra followed by a “classical” era inspired string quartet, but there is also something different that is heard. It is the scratching sounds that would be heard from a DJ scratching the records. The music quickly dies away as the story of Alexander Hamilton’s early life is told in a lyrical styling that is just as home on the musical theater stage as it would be on a hip-hop album. All the instruments used until around the two (2) minute marking are all classic acoustic instruments from the Classical Music world; piano and strings. Then, at the two (2) minute marking the audience is struck with the use of the drum set. While a drum set in the musical theater world isn’t a new thing, how it is being used is new.

Here, Lin-Manuel, choses to use the hi-hat of the drum set with accented attacks from the orchestra to highlight the section of the lyrics that discusses Alexander picking himself up from his bootstraps and choosing to not live destitute and starving. This empty orchestration makes the importance of the words even more potent. The words do not need to fight with the simple melodic material from the piano, and are allowed to really be ingested by the audience.
This section void of instruments quickly grows until the lyrics speak of New York. Here, we also hear the introduction of electronic guitars and bass guitar.\textsuperscript{75}

Through the entire musical, Miranda is careful to make sure that his hip-hop inspired text is not so dense that it becomes oppressive to the ears. There are plenty of catchy choruses and melodies that are memorable as well as harmonic language that is functional yet not boring and simple.

This brilliant combination of genres as well as mixing of instruments would lead Hamilton to win numerous awards including Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Orchestrations at the Tony Awards\textsuperscript{76} as well as the Pulitzer Prize in Drama.\textsuperscript{77} Yet, this is just the precursor for the most shocking awarding to a hip-hop creation. The next most shocking award given to the hip-hop world would also include the Pulitzer and come two (2) years later.

In 2017, Kendrick Lamar released his newest album, “D.A.M.N.” This album would rocket to the top of the billboard charts and captivated the nation with a litany of smash hits including \textit{DUCKWORTH, LOVE, HUMBLE, PRIDE, LOYALTY, ELEMENT}, and \textit{DNA}.\textsuperscript{78} Not only did \textit{HUMBLE} become Lamar’s third number one hit on the Billboard Top 100, but every single song on the album was listed somewhere along the 100. Also impressive is that this made Kendrick Lamar only the fifth act to chart as many as 14 concurrent titles on the Hot 100 list since The

\textsuperscript{75} Again, the guitar and bass guitar are not new elements to the musical theater orchestra, but the use of these instruments is new when compared to the other musicals that have proceeded before.


\textsuperscript{78} Titles are listed as they appear in caps as they do on the album.
Beatles first did it in 1964 at the height of Beatlmania. Others that accomplished this were fellow hip-hop stars Drake and The Weeknd, as well as Justin Bieber.  

This album is the perfect storm of hip-hop with catchy singles that were heard on nearly every radio station as well as samples from Fox News broadcasters to Rick James to fellow hip-hop star Juvenile to O.C. Smith, to Organic Future Hip-hop, to Bruno Mars, as well as James Brown and his legendary brass hits in *Get Up Off Of That Thing*, and the drum patterns of The Fatback Band. Lamar masterfully combines all these samples with his lyrics that speak across racial, social, and financial barriers.

Then in 2018, the classical world was rocked by the announcement that the Pulitzer Prize for music was going to be awarded to Kendrick Lamar. While Lamar was relatively quiet about the award, many saw the win as a great move for the black community. Cornell William Brooks Tweeted out:

> Congratulations to @kendricklamar as the first rapper to win a Pulitzer Prize. @PulitzerPrizes only confer a literary legitimacy that FOLLOWS the street credibility and artistic authority ALREADY conferred by the Black Community. @EBONYMag @Essence @Variety @Blavity @TeenVogue

Top Dawg Entertainment, Lamar’s record label, even Tweeted out a victory cry by quoting one of Lamar’s songs, *The Heart, Pt. 3 (Will You Let It Die)*:

> “I came. I saw. I conguqered. No Shame, I blame all of this on Compton” the recording studio’s official Twitter account Captioned the announcement” #DAMN. #TIDE

---


While fans, important figures of the black community, and even the composers that lost to Lamar cheered him on, some were outraged. One tweet said:

There’s one. Great talent. Great. Let’s get “blown” with the homies. Great motivation for kids. Let’s give him a Pulitzer. And this is not the first time that the Pulitzer Prize in music has caused an outrage.

The history of the Pulitzer has been filled with allegations of sexism, elitism, and racism. The musical composition category was first awarded in 1943 and, historically, the musical composition prize has been dominated by the classical world. American composers such as Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, Walter Piston, Virgil Thomson, Norman Dello Joio, Elliot Carter, George Crumb, Karel Husa, Steve Reich, and many more titans of the American classical music scene. For decades, this genre was awarded solely to men, garnering criticism by the public demanding representation of minorities, and female composers. It wasn’t until 1996 that an African-American won the Pulitzer Prize for music. George Walker rocked the trend of Caucasian composers by winning the Pulitzer for his piece Lilacs, composed for voice and orchestra. While there seems to be an appreciation for the musical language that was used by George Walker, the subsequent recipients were the traditional white men, that had successful academic positions. Prior to this, in 1983, 40 years after the first music composition award was given out, the first female received the accolade. Ellen Zwilich would win for her piece Three

---


Movement for Orchestra (Symphony No. 1). The next woman to win the Pulitzer would be in 1991 and it was awarded to Shulamit Ran for Symphony. In the four decades that it had existed, the Pulitzer had awarded 98% of their rewards to Caucasian men who worked primarily in the academic field. In the 34 years since Ellen was given the award, women made up only 6 of the winners. And while America becomes more interracial and the lines between obvious races becomes blurred, the number of minorities represented in the field is significantly smaller.

Criticism of the Pulitzer

Many of the latest award winners have taken a very cynical view of the prize. In 1974, Donald Martino said, “If you write music long enough, sooner or later, someone is going to take pity on you and give you the damn thing. It is not always the award for the best piece of the year; it has gone to whoever hasn’t gotten it before”. John Corigliano who was awarded the prize in 2001, complained the Pulitzer award had become a very different award then its original intention. He said that the award was now awarded “by composers for composers” and the process was “mired in a pool of rotating jurors”. Kyle Gann, a composer and music critic, complained about the disparity of representation in an essay titled, “The Uptown Prejudice Against Downtown Music”. In the essay, Gann notes that the judges for the Pulitzer and many other top awards for composition include “seven names over and over as judges”. Most notably Gunther Schuller, Joseph Schwantner, Jacob Druckman, George Perle, John Harbison, Marl Davidovsky, and Bernard Rands. Gann argues that “Downtown” composers (which he labeled himself under) did not win awards because the composer-judges were all “white men, all of the

coming pretty much from the same narrow Eurocentric aesthetic...These seven men have
determined who wins the top prizes in American music for the last two decades. They have
made sure that ‘Downtown’ composers never win”. Gunther Schuller would argue that it wasn’t
the Eurocentric view that cornered the market for the awards, but rather a too tight spectrum
that could be reviewed.

Perhaps, the Pulitzer Prize could see the changing landscape of American music taste
and did try to make changes to what would qualify as potential nominees. As the attendance
numbers steadily declined in concert hall performances, the Pulitzer committee would go on to
expand their judging parameters in 2004 with varying degrees of acceptance. John Harbison,
one of the judges outraged by Kyle Gann, called these definition expansions as a “horrible
development”, adding “if you want to impose a comparable standard on fiction you would be
soliciting entries from the authors of airport novels”. Donald Martino would also say that the
prize had “already begun to go in the direction of permitting less serious stuff” before the 2004
definition changes. The 2000 winner, Lewis Spratlan, also objected to the expansion by saying,
“The Pulitzer is one of the very few prizes that award artistic distinction in front-edge, risk-
taking music. To dilute this objective by inviting the likes of musicals and movie scores, no
matter how excellent, is to undermine the distinctiveness and capability for artistic
advancement.”

In classrooms all over America, students are being instructed to compose for film, dance
collaborations, and use electronic technology to advance their ideas. In 2014, Mason Bates
collaborated with the San Francisco Symphony on numerous pieces that included electronic
parts, that received rave reviews.\footnote{Kosman, J. 2016. Mason Bates, Works for Orchestra Review. \textit{San Francisco Chronical}. \url{https://www.sfchronicle.com/music/article/Mason-Bates-Works-for-Orchestra-review-6873420.php} Accessed February 2019.} It only makes sense that if the classical world in America is moving in a direction that the awards should follow suite and expand their definitions of was high level composition is.

Unfortunately, a larger problem that has plagued the American musical world as well as the American society is our ability to turn a blind eye to racism. This can be seen in the Pulitzer Prize. The lack of representation of minorities isn’t necessarily a problem with the Pulitzer exclusively but falls mostly on the history of racism of the classical world. While great jazz composers have won the prize (George Walker, Winton Marsalis, and Duke Ellington) there have been hundreds, if not more, African-American composers that were just as deserving as their Caucasian counterparts. Are William Grant Still or Florence Price any less significant composers to Samuel Barber, John Corigliano, or Walter Piston? Do many of their pieces not still qualify under even the very constricting parameters of the Pulitzer pre-2004?

Unfortunately, many of the answers fall towards Gann’s observations of the “Uptown” versus “Downtown”. This battle of “Uptown” versus “Downtown” would finally reach an apex in 2017 with Kendrick Lamar winning the Pulitzer.

The Pulitzer called the album, “a virtuosic song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African-American life”.\footnote{The Pulitzer Prize}
“D.A.M.N.” is centered solely on the horrible conditions in which much of the African-American community are treated. Many of the topics center on the inability to survive in a world that is constantly pushing for them to be subservient, sees them as criminals with no proof, and the systemic racism (in the numerous police departments, the justice system, and American culture) that is often in plain sight to those that experience it on a regular basis. While “D.A.M.N.” isn’t the first album, nor the most notorious, to discuss these issues (N.W.A.’s “Straight Out of Compton” is undoubtedly the most famous and precedent setting) it has become another feather in rap genre’s hat. The album would go on to reach number 1 in American and Canada, and number 2 in numerous other countries including Sweden, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. Yet it was still separated from much of the classical world solely because it was a rap album. The album had three singles, Humble, Loyalty, and Love. But it also has numerous other songs that are equal in importance including “D.N.A.”. This song has some obvious correlations to N.W.A.’s “Straight Out of Compton” album, but most importantly it depicts the life of African-Americans in an honest and unscripted story telling.

Lin-Manuel Miranda and Kendrick Lamar have achieved major success in their respective areas by successfully mixing their chosen mediums with influences that were at one time considered unmixable. Their success should be a boost to those that are looking for new avenues of experimentation within their own music. In my accompanying composition, The Freedom Train, there are many instances of hip-hop influencing aspects of the piece from rhythms chosen to accompany the ensemble, to how the melody is presented, to harmonic language, to even samples from other sources to create a certain emotion. But the purpose of
the piece isn’t to just experiment with hip-hop tropes but to also pose the question to the audience of,

How far have we come as a country since the Jim Crow days? Are lives really much better? Or have we turned an eye away from the people that deal with the injustices of the world and only get information on the crimes once they have become criminals?
CHAPTER VI
WORLD WIDE INFLUENCE

What started as an underground, sub-culture desire to express the vast emotions felt while living in one of the poorest areas in the United States, rap music has exploded into a world-wide phenomenon. Its greatest appeal has been to those that feel marginalized or are feeling the prejudice in their life due to circumstances that are beyond their control (location of birth, skin color, religious affiliation, etc.). Like many art forms created by a marginalized section of humanity, it can quickly be picked up and supported internationally due to many universal elements. These elements are rampant in rap music; lyrics that are poignant yet ambiguous enough that they can be applied to people of varying life situations, emotions seemingly displayed on the sleeve of the performer while maintaining a depth that others can self-impose their own experiences, and a formula of song writing that is fixed enough that an audience can expect what the next verse or section might be yet flexible enough that it can be adjusted to the different needs of the writer.

Rap music can be heard on every inhabited continent. World-wide rap music can be just as superficial as their American counterparts or just as deep and thought provoking as any new form of protest song. One of the biggest rap artists to currently be thriving with this latter form of rap music is Yassin Alsalmán, also known as The Narcicyst or Narcy. Alsalmán was born in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates and lived the early part of his life in Basra, Iraq. He would late move to Canada to go to school and begin a career as an activist hip-hop artist. He
previously branched out of the rap music by teaching a course at Concordia University in Montreal on hip-hop music.87

**The Middle East**

Alsalman is a popular activist rapper in the Middle East where he preaches peace between all the countries but most notably between Israel and Palestinians. Alsalman is also very active in the search for support and understanding of the people of the Middle East that live in America, especially since Donald Trump became president. One of Alsalman’s most famous songs, *Free (One Day)*, discusses the lack of respect that people from the Middle East receive even though they do many of the day to day jobs that most Americans take for granted.

Driving a cab, paying a tax, laying their countries flat
Open a laundromat, what’s wrong with that?
Everything’s relative, self in development
And he’s steady been digging the plan
Give him an inch, and he’s taking the land
Everyone scared to be sticking the Man
It must be that taste of Freedom, what do you think it takes to beat him?
He’s the cheater, there’s no trust in that
I don’t even think my country loves me back88

Here we can see the connection to the disillusioned youth of The South Bronx. In the lyrics of this song we can see the frustration, the hopelessness, and yet there is a reassuring quality to the music. Many of those that immigrate to America are automatically marginalized, subject to threats, or treated as a stain on the American landscape. But they do services to the nation that many take advantage of everyday. Alsalman reminds the listener that there is nothing wrong with a blue-collar job of working at newsstands, cleaning houses, or opening a laundromat.

---

These are essential elements to society that wouldn’t exist without those that are opening and/or working these jobs.

Alsalman then quickly switches the tone of the lyrics to an anthem of encouragement to those that might feel like they are in a similar position in life by discussing the problems with the powers to be and how one might be able to push back against the oppressor. Similarly, to the rap poets of the late 1980s, the message isn’t necessarily a violent over through of the system but a change that must happen so that all people may feel represented. Surprisingly, this song came out two years before Donald Trump was elected president and tried to impose his ban on immigration from seven majority Islamic countries.

The ending of the first half of the song is the hopeful conclusion to a situation that is not the best. While Alsalman discusses what must happen to a governmental body that oppresses him or people like him, he poses the most heart wrenching question that many immigrants feel; what should you do if you love your country but your country doesn’t return the love? While Alsalman may not say those words verbatim, he does imply a yearning for reciprocal love and devotion. When I first encountered this song, I immediately wondered what it would be like to live in a place that needed you, that you loved because it is so remarkably different (read safer) than your homeland, yet would gladly turn its back on you because of some twisted ideal? This is the feeling of the song. Free (One Day) is a discussion of how it would feel if you have moved or settled in a country that isn’t your “home” but is rather dismissive of your very existence. The title refers to the desire to be free from all the violence and hatred. It may seem like a long way off, but, eventually, it will happen. This feeling is epitomized in the ending lyrics of the song:
We Are the People, We Are The [sic.] Past and We Are the Sequel
We Are the Never, We’re the Forever, We Live in Hell or We’re
Living in heaven
Honestly can’t even tell you the difference. We are the Cause, We
Are the Effect
We are the Blessed, I also believe that we could be the Best. ⁸⁹

The most poignant part, in my opinion as a composer, is the very ending section of the
song. At around the three-minute mark, the electronic drums, joyous chorus, and pulsating
guitars drop out and an acoustic piano begins an almost easy listening or Las Vegas diner solo.

Over the top, Canadian hip-hop and spoken word artist, Ian Kamau, reads the following poem:

One day, I will leave this all to you
Wind and soil and blood of Earth
In the space where the two rivers clasp each other’s hands
The mist will kiss your copper skin
Keep safe distance from the water though
Don’t run from your mother’s loving gaze
A young man drowned here once
He was as beautiful as you.
His aren’t the only tears that gather here.
They spill where dreams evaporate
Let your deeds be your reflection
Remember our affection; a new.
I’ll sing to you in our mother tongue.to my last breath.
I hope the melody reminds you of me.
One day, your children will look at you with squinting eyes and smile
You’ll recognize your father’s laugh among them ⁹⁰

The words reach out of the reader’s voice and Kamau seems to speak specifically to the people
of the Middle East. While Kamau doesn’t specifically inject a notice that this section is
dedicated to the people of the Middle East, I believe that the inclusion of the poem in this song
is an ode to those people. The third line of the poem reads, “In the space where the two rivers

⁸⁹ Alsalman.
⁹⁰ Ibid.
clasp each other’s hands”, seems to be reflective of where the Tigress and the Euphrates meet in the current country of Iraq. This area of land has always been a vital point to civilization and many anthropologists believe that it was the cradle for the creation of our modern system of farming during ancient Mesopotamia (which includes the current countries of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey). Unfortunately, this area of the world has been in an almost constant state of warfare.

While, I am assuming that this poem is for the people of the Middle East, the poem is ambiguous and open enough that rivers line could mean the convergence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, or the Black and White Nile, or any other joining of river systems. The poem also doesn’t point out one type of people and encourages the reader(s) to sift through the lines and words to fine their own meaning and understanding. To help with the emotional impact of the words of this poem, Alsalman sets it against music that was not included in the first large chunk of the song.

While Alsalman’s lyrics are a multi-leveled experience of an immigrant, the music he chooses to use is a kaleidoscope of instrumental, electronic drums, and singing that seems to be reminiscent of the island songs of the south Pacific. This looping and constant insertion of materials seems to bring an air of joyful celebration to the song which juxtaposes against the lyrics at times. For instance, when Alsalman sings about the many trials, or prejudices that are faced by a new people to a country, the joyful island singing stops and the guitars become a constant, almost mechanical, backing. Once Alsalman brings the chorus back, then he inserts the island singing. This poem is emotionally enhanced by the inclusion of non-standard hip-hop instruments (read as heavy drums, and electronic effects).
The closing section of the song includes an ensemble of strings and piano. The strings rock back and forth as if they are the ebbing river flow, while the piano slowly disappears into the silence. And placed high above them all is a lone violin playing a sustained note. Often, the utilization of these specific acoustic instruments in the hip-hop world can seem cliche, but Alsalman’s use of the instruments creates a sound world that is full of emotion and tugs at the heart strings of anyone that empathize with those that are fleeing a horrible situation for a better world, but are met with a different collection of hardships. While the ending of the song is set apart by new instrumentation and a sudden change of emotion, there is another wonderful moment where all music except the drums drop out.

During the last verse of the song, Alsalman speaks about the many qualities of the people that are immigrating. In one line, Alsalman says, “We are the shooter, we are the victim”, and it is on the statement of “we are the victims” that the constant sound of the guitars and chorus drop out, very briefly. And this moment of silence reaches through the music and grabs the listener by the collar as if to say, “we are victims of a situation that we have no control over. We will not be ignored, and we will make you take notice.”

As a composer, I find Alsalman’s ability to enhance important words by either silence or new instrumentation fascinating and invigorating. While this isn’t a new phenomenon in the classical music world, it seems to be more poignant with the ambiguity of informal speech. It seems that of the words that Alsalman uses, none are special or dependent on a vast knowledge of history, or the region. While translations may change the meaning of the song, slightly, the emotional impact and the ambiguous insight opens the genre to a world of inclusivity. While Yassin Alsalman uses materials from around the world to subtly hint at the
universality of the immigrant experience, Chinese rapper VaVa uses traditional instruments and creates a world of music that bridges the old and the new.

Asia

Mao Yanqi, also known as MC VaVa, is from Chengdu, China, and grew up in a single parent family.\(^{91}\) In an interview with Esquire magazine, VaVa answered questions about her background, her family, inclusion of traditional instruments, and government censorship. The reason that VaVa got into rap was because she felt that it was a very free form for her to take advantage of. This seems to be a universal feeling in the rap scene. Many people start rapping because of the freedom of expression, of form, and the freedom to be oneself. VaVa says, “You can say what you like, it doesn’t have to be limited to love or relationships, like most pop songs are. There are other emotions to tap into, more directions you can take with your music.”\(^{92}\)

This liberty is at the heart of rap and hip-hop music. While it is a popular music genre, it is open to the world and open to experimentation.

Part of being able to say what you want in a song is the ability for the artist to express frustration about situations, similar to how Alsalman did in Free, and the ability to highlight social issues. At the beginning of her career, VaVa spoke more about social issues and social justice, but has since turned more towards a popular feeling. She says, “I now want to write music that speaks to everyone. Now I’m more attentive to what I write.”\(^{93}\) But VaVa does give a

---

\(^{91}\) Wings, S. VAVA. www.aminoapps.com Accessed January 2019


\(^{93}\) Kanthor.
deserved nod to hip-hop from America. “Hip-hop comes from the US, and let’s be honest here, we’re really just copying their style, but, in a sense, we are connected. We’re (Chinese rappers) are still finding our way, still creating and finding our own Chinese style of hip-hop.” And her solution to this conundrum of finding a Chinese style is to include traditional Chinese instruments in her music rather than sampling them.

VaVa continues, “We need to put more Chinese elements into our music. Already some rappers abroad are inserting Chinese elements into their music, like Migos with the inclusion of mahjong in Stirfry”.

This inclusion of traditional instruments set VaVa’s music apart from most hip-hop artists and bridges the gap between traditionalist China and the youth of the country. And in her smash hit, My New Swag, VaVa includes the usual electronic elements of hip-hop, but also the wonderful traditional instruments of China.

The song begins with the woody sound of the “Chinese clave” or ban lei. Then gongs add an air of authentic traditional instruments. These instruments meld into a tempo-less and free metric introduction. A guzheng, or Chinese zither, then adds a melodic element that is accompanied by low acoustic drums and the ban lei. The material builds and a tempo is established. All of this happens in the first 25 seconds of the song. But instead of just using the sounds to add an air of tradition and then immediately returning to the electronic sound of hip-hop, VaVa keeps the traditional instruments going during the entire piece. She marries the traditional and new into a wonderful mélange that is completely new. Then, around the one-and-a-half-minute mark of the song, VaVa uses a sample from a traditional opera sung by Nina

---

94 Kanthor.
Wang, as a bridge out of the chorus and into the added material by collaborator Ty. This sample of opera also helps bridge the distance between the concert hall and the rap stage.

Routinely, VaVa speaks about her mother (who is only 40) telling her that she likes the music but doesn’t understand it, nor does she understand the youthful movement that listens to this music. This is a pretty universal feeling, especially in America. Whenever we see a push for the censorship or banning of a certain artist or group, it is usually lead by many people that are from an older generation. While rap is the music of the youth, many of topics covered and the music stylings usually leave people from older generations behind. But this is a constant revolving state for any popular music. When the Beatles came to America, they were thronged by the youth, while an older generation was trying to get their performances blocked. When Elvis appeared on stage, older people were pushing to make sure the camera wasn’t lower than his waist-line while the younger generation were screaming for more of his dancing. But this gap doesn’t have to be vast. While I am not delusional into thinking that we can join the two sides of canyon, we can at least attach bridges to help make the distance not as far. The inclusion of traditional instruments is one step that, as a composer, I am fascinated by the idea that we could still push our creative forces forward by including more popular stylings and techniques while still adhering to the traditional background that we have.

Even though VaVa is one of the most popular rap artists in China, she still has to adhere to the censorship of the government. When questioned about this process, VaVa says,

[there] is [an] old Chinese saying: wise men suit their actions to the times they are living in. To make rap and hip-hop [flourish] in China, we have to toe the Chinese party line. This is important because we’re living in a different environment here. There are some rappers in China whose lyrics [could create] problems. Before rap wasn’t as popular as it is now, and not as many people were paying attention to us. But now there’s a lot of attention on rap, and we
have a lot of young fans who idolize us and put us on a pedestal. Before I wasn’t restrained in my lyrics, but now I’m aware that I have young fans and I know they will be influenced by what I say, so I now think that changing my lyrics a bit is the responsible thing to do.

This awareness helps drive her popularity with not only the youngest of listeners but also the older listeners who might be fans but are worried about the context of the lyrics. While her latest albums “21” and “The Other Side” are branded by the warning rating of “E” for language, the instances of cursing are few and far between especially in comparison to the music of her American comrades.  

**South America**

Around the world, hip-hop and rap music have been embraced by groups such as Facção Central from São Paulo, Brazil, Sarkodie from Tema, Ghana, and Suprême NTM from St. Denis, France; all of whom grew up in some of the poorest areas of their respective cities. Each group or artist picked up hip-hop as a way to express what they go through or have gone through.

Facção Central talks about the abuse of many young people, the crime that fills the streets of the *favela*, as well as the political corruption that is plaguing much of Brazil. Led by their main composer and performer Eduardo (also known as Carlos Eduardo Taddeo) the group of four create music that they hope will change the street environment of São Paulo and push to change the political scene. The group began in 1989 and are more often labeled under the styling of gangster rap. This can be exemplified in their song *Hoje Deus Anda De Blindado*. In this song, you can hear the influence of American gangster music that was thriving at the same time in Los Angeles.

---

95 I must admit that I do not speak Mandarin, and there must be some lenience to idea of VaVa swearing in her native tongue, but the instances of swearing that I have heard in both albums is delegated to the use of English.
Through many of their songs, the tropes of gangster music are widely used. One of these tropes are a basic repeating rhythm on the drum set with very little functioning harmony. The lyrics are then read with a monotone inflection of the voice. Sporadically, there are insertions of gun shots. The focus with this type of music isn’t the music, but the words, and the story telling. But this type of rap music has faced numerous negative reactions from the public, both in America and in Brazil.

In June 2000, a judge in Brazil ordered the seizure of a video made by Facção Central for their song, *Isto é um Guerra* (This is a War). According to *Folha de S. Paulo*, an online newspaper from Brazil, the seizure of the video was prompted because the song “incites racism, as the criminals depicted in the clip are black, and biased against residents of São Paulo’s eastern zone, who are also identified as criminals on tape.”\(^{96}\) This is a complaint that is often held against hip-hop artists. While I wish to not comment on the lyrics as they present or glorify violence, there is a history of many artists being shut down or penalized by the powers to be for what is said in their poetry. Unfortunately, in this song, Facção Central believe that the meaning of the song is lost on many due to the violence that is often spoke of. Eduardo says that, “there was an error of interpretation [by the] justice. The intention of the song is to show that the criminal can affect the society if it does not hide behind an armored car.” They wished to “show the criminal . . . to the society, and to show that it can help.”\(^{97}\) And if we look at the lyrics, once

---


\(^{97}\) Ibid.
translated, we can see what Eduardo means. In the first quarter of the first verse, Dum Dum (a member of the group) says,

It is a war where only those who shoot
Who fits the mansion, who traffics
Unfortunately, the book does not solve
Brazil only respects me with a revolver
The judge kneels, the executive cries,
To not feel the gauge of the pistol.
If I want food, someone has to bleed.\textsuperscript{98}

These lyrics are just a small portion of the story created from the crime ridden neighborhoods of São Paulo. While one could read these lyrics as the promotion of crime (as many did during the late 80s in the US with the rise of groups such as N.W.A. and Dr. Dre) this is just a surface reading. A deeper reading of the lyrics shows that there are few options left for the people that live in the worst parts of many cities. Whether it is Compton or South Central, Los Angeles, The South Bronx of New York City, or the \textit{favelas} of São Paulo, those that live in the worst conditions will find a way to express what they are going through.

\textbf{Europe}

While Facção Central uses gangster rap to highlight the plight of the inner city, Suprême NTM uses their platform to fight racism and class inequality within France. Facção Central uses gangster rap as a means to their story telling and Suprême NTM uses hardcore rap (a style of rap music that is often characterized by anger, aggression, and confrontation)\textsuperscript{99} that is infused with funk, soul, and reggae influences. The group has lasted nearly three decades and have


\textsuperscript{99} Allmusic \url{https://www.allmusic.com/style/hardcore-rap-ma000011937} Accessed December 2019
garnered the admiration of great American groups such as the Wu-Tang Clan with whom they shared the stage with at the festival at the Parc des Princes in 2013.\textsuperscript{100}

The aggression of Suprême NTM’s music is not felt in the lyrics of their hit song, \textit{Seine-Saint-Denis Style}, but is reverberated through the body of the listener through the beats and the aggressive vocal timbres of the singers. Through the entire song, the vocalists employ a very rough and gravely timbre to their voice and constantly play with the sounds of the words while metaphorically grabbing the listener by the collar and singing inches away from their face. This aggressive vocal style is not a single occurrence but their stamp of authenticity in all their songs. Similarly to VaVa’s inclusion of traditional instruments in her music, Suprême NTM employs the vocal fry.

While the vocal fry technique is motive of operation by Suprême NTM, Sarkodie, from Ghana, has a vocal technique as smooth as chocolate, but delivers his lyrics in his native tongue of Twi but does use English to highlight certain important phrases and statements. This is probably due to the universality of the English language. Sarkodie also employs a large amount of electronic sounds and instruments rather than a mix of electronic and acoustic the previous performers have adhered to. While the previous examples have used their platforms to gain attention to important social issues or cultural problems, Sarkodie is focused on the improvement of his country of Ghana.

\textbf{Africa}

Sarkodie, also known as Michael Owusu Addo, was born in Tema, Ghana, and raised by a single mother. Many of his family members are musical and Sarkodie began his musical career

at a young age; 4. He began his career with the off-hand rap show named *Kasahare Level*. Eventually, he worked hard and quickly became known as the best rapper in Tema. He has become very successful in Africa and was the first rapper from Ghana to win the BET Award for Best International Act: Africa category in 2012.

Most fascinatingly, in a compositional stand point, is the fact that Sarkodie mixes hip-hop with *Azonto* (a dance form that originated from the traditional dance in Ghana called *Kpanlogo*).\(^{101}\) Sarkodie finds a way to fuse hip-hop techniques (throbbing bass, sampled bass lines, synthesized sounds, and rhythmic lyrics)\(^{102}\) with traditional Kpanlogo rhythms from Ghana. The Kpanlogo rhythm is based on the clave rhythm. Usually, there is one person performing the clave rhythm on a cow bell, or metal tube while the drummers perform a series of 16\(^{th}\) note rhythms underneath. Underneath these rhythms is a drummer that performs drum strikes on each beat to keep a constant tempo.

![Basic Underlying Kpanlogo rhythm](image)

This combination of rhythms is invigorating to myself as a composer because it is an infusion of the old and new. Sarkodie pays homage to his home country and, like VaVa, brings it

---


forth into the modern age. This desire by Sarkodie to link the past and the future is not only evident in his rhythms but also in his urgency to help Ghana modernize its infrastructure.

Sarkodie uses much of his wealth from his music career to help improve the lives of the people of Ghana. Much of his philanthropy goes towards a road safety campaign, youth empowerment campaigns, and he is a big supporter of breastfeeding.\textsuperscript{103} While the previous performers spoken of concern their music towards change (this is not a comment that they don’t engage in activism outside of their music), Sarkodie focuses on using his wealth to change Ghana. His philanthropy has even helped some of the newest rappers from Ghana to come from the streets and gain popularity.

Around the world, rap music has become a key musical movement that engages the youth of the poorest and most segregated neighborhoods. But the performers coming from these areas are not content with sitting idly by making music that glorifies the commercialism that has divided much of the American market. Narcy (Yassin Alsalman), VaVa, Facção Central, Suprême NTM, and Sarkodie are dedicated to leading the charge to change the preconceived idea of hip-hop music. Whether the artist is pushing for change in their lyrics or are actively changing the world around them through the inclusion of traditional elements and philanthropy, the point of their activism is to bring forth a new world that is more inclusive, fair, and free from many of the blights that are felt both around the globe and in many parts of America. I believe that we, as composers, can push for a similar change while still maintaining an individual style.

The accompanying composition to this document is my attempt to bring to light the same change and activism that the previous rappers had done for their respective cultures. In so doing, I don’t want to just portray something that I have never experienced at such a deep level. I wasn’t born and raised in a rung of society that was actively looked down upon, that was forced to go to schools that are woefully under-funded and the teachers were so poorly paid and supported. Nor did I ever worry about my own life when I have been pulled over for minor traffic incidents such as speeding. While I have never had to deal with what so many African-Americans have had to deal with in their lives, I can still empathize with their plight. I can still see them as fellow citizens that need to be respected, elevated, and admired for their many works. I can also feel empathy towards them as a human being. I felt like this was an important aspect of our daily American lives that needed to be discussed.

As I have said earlier, the purpose of the composition is not to caste blame on the many forces that are set against the African-American, but to try and shine new light on the people that were involved and ultimately lost their lives. I also want to portray the realities of those that live in this system currently and juxtapose them against the world as seen by Langston Hughes almost 100 years earlier. I infuse my own work with poetry or lyrics that urge the audience to either take a moment to reflect what is going on around them, or to view something from a different perspective. In the second movement of my piece, The Freedom Train, I use a transcribed interview from the mother of Eric Garner as the lyrical material. While Garner had a long history with the NYPD (arrested more than 30 times between 1980 and his subsequent death in 2014), he was also noted to be a “peacemaker” in his neighborhood and
was often labeled as a “generous” and “congenial person”. It is this aspect of the man that I wish to highlight. Every one of the individuals highlighted in the movements not filled with the poetry of Langston Hughes was selected to show the flip side of the “criminal” persona that is often presented by the news medias.

After the initial breaking of the story of Eric Garner, many news sources and pundits immediately turned towards the criminal history of the individuals that were just lost. This political tool changes the discussion of responsibility and fails to show that people are multifaceted. The hope of the individual movements of my piece are to illustrate these multiple facets and remind the listener that the victims are still fathers, sons, uncles, community members, and held important positions within their own neighborhoods.

---

Author Eileen Southern says of the black music tradition:

Again and again black musical styles have passed over into American music; there to be diluted and altered in ways that appeal to a wider public . . . The black composer’s response has simply been to invent new music . . . the old is never totally discarded, however, but absorbed into the new.105

While this isn’t necessarily a trait that only hip-hop/rap music can claim, it is something that composers must hold in their minds while they try to fuse together the genres of hip-hop/rap and classical music. Hip-hop/rap music has figured a formula out that makes it susceptible to international manipulation while still holding to not just the tropes of the genre but appeal to the people of the country and their traditions. This is the strength of hip-hop/rap music that is not often found in other genres of music. This versatility will encourage many new hip-hop/rap artists to explore the genre and, hopefully, those composers from outside the genre can find relatable to their own pieces.

William Cobb postulates that there is a worst-case scenario for hip-hop/rap, that it may “drop into the vast well of commercial mediocrity but it will still inform the musical innovations that are surely to come”.106 There may be an increase in the amount of popular hip-hop/rap artists that focus on the wealth, debauchery, and purchasing power of the music, but there are many artists that are under the radar that contain the power of their world and the ability to


106 Cobb. p. 168
influence the future. Cobb continues, “Hip hop’s struggle to maintain a fragment of its essence is the struggle we all confront in the first days of the twenty-first century”.107

Classical music is facing a similar dissolvent. We classical music composers have a choice to write music that is either for those in the know or for the populace. This may seem like a daunting up-hill struggle, but there are different paths to fuse these two choices. And simultaneously fusing classical music and hip-hop/rap in a genuine and respectful way to both genres can not only alleviate the worry, but bring a renewed interest in a genre of music. We may be trying to bridge the ever-growing gap between audience attendance and the classical music world by bringing artists to join orchestras on the stage108 but this seems to be a move of half genuine (at best) interest in the audience that this would reach. The audience members are smart enough to know when they aren’t being spoken to in an honest manner and all these attempts to incorporate hip-hop stars or the film soundtracks of current popular films seem to belittle the true art that is created by living composers. While many may not agree with this point of view or may see these as honest attempts to encourage younger audience attendance, there is a long history of gentrification from within the classical music world and these attempts all seem to be only halfhearted.

But we must not forget that one of the best and most important roles that any musical genre can make is the pressure for change. Cobb says, “what will still remain amazing is the spotlight hip hop shone on otherwise invisible lives”.109 It is the year 2019, and we can still see

107 Cobb, p. 168.
109 Cobb, p. 169.
the disparity between what one community believes or thinks about another community.

Through hip-hop/rap we can see the struggles, the losses, the joys, the frustrations, the glory, the vanity, the brilliance, and complex ugliness of life in the late twentieth century. These are all aspects that can be brought to a new venue as composers coalesce these musical genres.

Hip-hop/rap is the fruit of a collective outpouring created by survivors, people who had willed themselves in from the margins of America. It has defied the odds and is quickly gaining all the illustrious awards, admiration, and popularity that it rightly deserves. It has crossed the hard chasm from obscure local music genre to a world-wide powerhouse and political tool. But, if one listens closely to the words, subject matter, and musical prowess, one can still hear the rattling of chains and the subversion of those who had first insisted upon creating beauty in a hostile land. The future of hip-hop/rap music is bright and assured, whereas the light for classical music might be starting to flicker and dull.

Instead of doing concerts that focus on performing the same musical pieces for the hundredth time, or instead of performing a film and soundtrack at the same time, we should look towards not only learning from the most popular genre of music in the nation, but creating an amalgamation of these styles to create not only powerfully beautiful music, but to highlight the lives of a group of people. We, the orchestras, ensembles, and music directors, should encourage living composers by giving them not only more exposure and performances, but encourage them to feel free to experiment with new materials and influences. We, the audience, should not be fearful of new creations in the concert hall. We can get rid of the stereotype of a concert hall so often depicted as being filled with white haired rich patrons that are only there to hear the music that their money has paid for while not understanding or
appreciating the music. We can bring in a younger audience that can meld with the older generations as we meld the music of a younger generation with the music genre of an older generation. And, finally, we composers should feel free and inspired to incorporate any type of influential material, tropes, and techniques into our own music. One possible genre that should be explored more fully, is the important influence of hip-hop/rap.
PART TWO

HIP-HOP TECHNIQUES IN CLASSICAL MUSIC
The Freedom Train

by William F. Montgomery
Copyright © William F. Montgomery 2019
Published by Black Bayou Publishing
www.williammontgomerycomposer.com

Text copyrights
The Freedom Train, Southern Mammy Sings, The Black Man Speaks, I Dream a World
Copyright © The Estate of Langston Hughes 2018
Trayvon Martin
Copyright © Reuben Jackson 2015
Eric Garner
Copyright © William F. Montgomery 2019
Just Another RIP Hashtag
Copyright © Jasmine Reed 2018
The Freedom Train is the culmination of my dissertation project and is an expression of my own emotional responses to the world that many of my friends live in. At a young age, I was taught to accept all people based on characteristics that they cannot control (i.e. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.). Many of my school classmates in Idaho were Caucasian and we only had one or two people that were African-American. But I was lucky enough to be encouraged to travel and experience the world. During these trips, I was confronted with images of severe poverty, racist speech, and many other forms of deplorable behavior. While I never felt any concern for my own freedom, it wasn’t hard to see how it did affect those that were not Caucasian. I can remember clearly watching the LA riots from my house, and being stunned by the actions of some, yet intrigued by their behavior. I never grew up in the areas that were the hardest hit, but you don’t need to live in the same situations or climate to have empathy towards people.

As my education progressed, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet new people and to hear stories about their lives; some were horrible, depressing, and tense, but many were happy. Then around 2014, news channels started covering videos of people being shot by the police while they were unarmed, following directions, or committing minor crimes. Then the divisive reactions were played constantly by the 24-hour news channels. We all quickly learned the names of victims such as Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, Eric Garner, and, more recently, Stephon Clark, but we don’t hear about the thousands of other cases of shootings across the nation that go uncovered by the news channels. In 2016, I accepted a chance to move to Baton Rouge to study at Louisiana State University and was incredibly excited. Then on July 5th, Alton Sterling was shot while being arrested for selling CDs and reportedly using a gun to threaten a man. Soon after this, the riots started.

The reasons for many of these incidents are extremely complex, and to try and tackle these issues within a music composition could be foolish. But I wanted to focus on an idea I had spoken to my dear friend Trevor Bailey about. If we look at where we are now as a society, and how we treat each other, and then compare it to the events that happened during first half of the 20th century, how far have we really come? This was the creative impetus of the piece.

I decided to use text from the great Langston Hughes because they cover emotions from a perfectly succinct African-American perspective, and then juxtapose these poems with poetry from living poets and how they are perceiving the world around them. My dissertation paper research was also focused on a similar subject; the creation, evolution, and future utilization of hip-hop music in a classical world. This piece delivers on many things talked about in the paper including sampling, repetitive materials and rhythms, melodies that are more story driven than melodic, and a focus on the creation of an acoustic world that delivers material that is relatable across all boundaries while still staying true to itself. Not only do I pose literature separated by over 100 years and age/life experiences, I also juxtapose music styles with the text; i.e. if the poetry is from a living poet/event, the music tries to related it to the past by using samplings of classical themes, and adhering to more “classical” harmonic language. And if the poetry is from Langston Hughes, I hold it against material that could just as well hold itself against the lyrical acrobatics of Jay-Z, The Cunninglynguists, Narcy, and others.

The goal of the piece is to never blame one side or the other. The point is to pose a question, “have we come along far enough that Langston Hughes’ words cannot stand for the
majority of African-American narratives? If not, what can we do to change that?” All these people were citizens of this country, held important positions within their community, and were fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, or daughters. These aspects of being members of families and their communities are what I wanted to highlight. Perhaps, doing this, we can more easily find the answers to the questions that were previously posed.

**Duration**
ca. 30 minutes

**Movements**

I – The Freedom Train
   text by Langston Hughes
II – Trayvon Martin
   text by Reuben Jackson
III – Southern Mammy Sings
   text by Langston Hughes
IV – Eric Garner
   text inspired by a CNN interview of Garner’s mother
V – The Black Man Sings
   text by Langston Hughes
VI – Just Another RIP Hashtag
   text by Jasmine Reed
VII – I Dream a World
   text by Langston Hughes

**Instrumentation**

1 Flute in C/Alto Flute
1 Oboe
1 Bb Clarinet
1 Bassoon
1 Horn in F
1 Trumpet in Bb with Harmon mute and Straight mute
1 Drum Set (see performance notes for drums and cymbal requirements)
1 Piano (optional toy piano for Trayvon Martin)
1 Female Voice (vocalist should use a microphone)
1 Male Voice (vocalist should use a microphone)
4 Violin I/II
2 Viola
2 Cello
1 Double Bass (amplified)

**Performance Notes**
Winds

\[ \text{Indicates that the performer should blow through the instrument creating a hollow sound.} \]

\( \text{Ct}(4) \)

\[ \text{indicates an improvised solo over the written chords.} \]

Drum Set

\[ \text{Drummer should use nylon tips for the “crossing guard sounds”, and brushes for the softer movements.} \]

\[ \text{Apply a splash cymbal or large wallet to the top of the snare drum to create a crisp sound.} \]

Voice

\[ \text{Vocalists should freely speak the section of lyrics within the time frame.} \]

Strings

\[ \text{Bartok pizz. To create a loud “snap” against the neck of the instrument.} \]

\[ \text{All string divisi should be by stand not player.} \]

\[ \text{Slowly glissando down during the given period.} \]

All Performers

\[ \text{Crescendo from nothing (niente)} \]
Decrescendo to nothing (niente)

Vocalists and bass should be amplified with at least one monitor facing the ensemble.

Text
I – The Freedom Train

I read in the papers about the Freedom Train
I heard on the radio about the Freedom Train
I seen folks talkin’ about the Freedom Train
Lord, I been a-waitin’ for the Freedom Train

The Birmingham station’s marked COLORED and WHITE.
The white folks go let, the colored go right – They even got a segregated lane.
Is that the way to get aboard the Freedom Train?
I got to know about this Freedom Train!

Down South in Dixie only train I see’s
Got a Jim Crow car set aside for me.
I hope there ain’t no Jim Crow on the Freedom Train,
No back door entrance to the Freedom Train,
No signs FOR COLORED on the Freedom Train,
No WHITE FOLKS ONLY on the Freedom Train.

If my children ask me, Daddy please explain Why there’s Jim Crow stations for the Freedom Train?
What shall I tell my children? . . . You tell me – ‘Cause freedom ain’t freedom when a man ain’t free.
But maybe they explains it on the Freedom Train.

I’m gonna check up on this Freedom Train.

If my children ask me, Daddy please explain Why there’s Jim Crow stations for the Freedom Train?
What shall I tell my children? . . . You tell me – ‘Cause freedom ain’t freedom when a man ain’t free.
But maybe they explains it on the Freedom Train.

Who’s the engineer on the Freedom Train?
Can a coal black man drive the Freedom Train?
Or am I still a porter on the Freedom Train?
Is there ballot boxes on the Freedom Train?
When it stops in Mississippi will it be made plain
Everybody’s got a right to board the Freedom Train?

Somebody tell me about this Freedom Train!

When my grandmother in Atlanta, 83 and black,
Gets in line to see the Freedom,
Will some white man yell, Get back!
A Negro’s got no business on the Freedom Track!

Mister, I thought it were the Freedom Train!

Her grandson’s name was Jimmy. He died in Anzio.
He died for real. It wasn’t no show.
The freedom that they carryin’ on this Freedom Train,
Is it for real – or just a show again?
Jimmy wants to know about the Freedom Train

Will his Freedom Train come zoomin' down the track
Gleamin' in the sunlight for white and black?
Not stoppin' at no stations marked COLORED nor WHITE.
Just stoppin' in the fields in the broad daylight,
Stoppin' in the country in the wide-open air
Where there never was no Jim Crow signs nowhere.
No Welcomin' Committees, nor politicians of note,
No Mayors and such for which colored can't vote,

And nary a sign of a color line –
For the Freedom Train will be yours and mine!

Then maybe from their graves in Anzio
The G.I.'s who fought will say, We wanted it so!
Black men and white will say, Ain't it fine?
At home they got a trains that's yours and mine!

Then I'll shout, Glory for the Freedom Train!
I'll holler, Blow your whistle, Freedom Train!
Thank God-A-Mighty! Here's the Freedom Train!
Get on board our Freedom Train!

II – Trayvon Martin text by Reuben Jackson

Instead of sleeping I walk with him from the store
No Skittles, thank you.
We do not talk much
Sneakers crossing the courtyard,
Humid Southern night.
We shake hands and hug
Ancient, stoic tenderness
I not to the moon
I’m so old school
I hang til the latch clicks like,
An unloaded gun.

III – Southern Mammy Sings text by Langston Hughes

Miss Gardner’s in her garden.
Miss Yardman’s in her yard.
Miss Michaelmas is at de mass
And I am gettin’ tired!
    Lawd!
I am gettin’ tired

Sometimes I think that white folks
Ain’t work a little bit.
No, m’am!
Ain’t worth a little bit.

The nations they is fightin’
And the nations they done fit

Last week they lynched a colored boy.
They hung him to a tree.
That colored boy ain’t said a thing
But we all should be free
Yes, m’am!
We all should be free.

Not meanin’ to be sassy
And not meanin’ to be smart –

But sometimes I think that white folks
Just ain’t got no heart
No, m’am!
Just ain’t got no heart.

IV – Eric Garner text inspired by a CNN interview

The cause of death
Is compression of the neck
Choke-hold
Compression of the chest prone positioning
During physical restraint by the police
I can’t breathe

The day that I found out that Eric had passed.
I can’t breathe

I remember trying to knock the wind-shield out
I remember trying to open the door and running on the highway
They have taken my son’s voice away
But his mother has a voice.
I am going to use it as long as I have a voice!
I can breathe!

V – The Black Man Speaks text by Langston Hughes

I swear to the Lord
I still can’t see
Why Democracy means
Everybody but me.

I swear to my soul
I can’t understand
Why Freedom don’t apply
To the black man.

I swear, by gum,
I really don’t know
Why in the name of Liberty
You treat me so.

From Los Angeles to London
You spread your color bar
Jim Crow Army,
And Navy, too –
Is Jim Crow Freedom the best
I can expect from you?

I simply raise these questions
Cause I want you to state
What kind of a world
We’re fighting to create.

If we’re fighting to create
A free world tomorrow
Why not end right now
Old Jim Crow’s sorrow?

VI – Just Another RIP Hashtag text by Jasmine Reed

I am the shadow of Trayvon Martin
Lyring on the ground just as he did
I’m black just as he was
I wasn’t planning to die that day either
I wasn’t threatening nobody either that day.
The gun shots echoed just as loud
Yet his name echoes through the streets
years later still
Mine followed me to the grave
They don’t care about me, it seems
If I cried, “What about me” Who would ever see?
Because my hashtag has even been
drown’d so deep
in the depths of RIP’s
that I can barely breath anymore
When we think black brutality
Why do the names of
Trayvon
Mike
Tamir
Sandra
Rush to our heads just as fast as blood once
rushed to theirs?
Does my black life, too, matter?
I can’t blame you

That there have been so many deaths due to
Oppression and police brutality
That they all sound the same
No matter how long we scream
Black Lives Matter!
We will never be seen as living
But the potentially dead.
We cry for justice in a system that’ no longer built
To accept us
A president that tries to forget us
A black voice will always be too loud in a world who
Never
Intended to listen
Who am I?
Besides a hashtag and a t-shirt with my face
on it?
A black lives matter sign and a melanin fist?
A statistic?
I am black excellence!
Regardless of how much sin you may see in my kin.

VII – I Dream a World text by Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man
No other man will score,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom’s way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day,
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pear,
Attends the needs of all mankind –
Of such I dream, my world.
The Freedom Train

I

The Freedom Train

Grandioso (d = 90)

Flute/Alto Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Alto Sax

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in Bb

Drum Set

Piano

Male Voice

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

all octaves in bass are optional.
Preference should be given to lowest range

* mf+ should be performed slightly louder than mf, but not yet at a full forte
Suddenly Slower, Yet Freely ($\frac{d}{d} = 75$)

wait for at least 4 seconds

bought the Freedom Train, I heard on the radio about the Freedom Train, I send folks talkin'
The Freedom Train

finger the note but only breath into the instrument without sounding the pitch

---

About the Freedom Train! Lord, I have been waitin' for the Freedom Train!
Energetic and Pushing Forward

Fl.

B-Cl.

A. Sx.

Hn.

B-Tpt.

D. S.

Pno.

B

Vln. I

half of the violin players should play
col legno while the other half should
play in a normal manner

Vln. II

half of the violin players should play
col legno while the other half should
play in a normal manner

Vla.

half of the cello players should play
col legno while the other half should
play in a normal manner

Vc.

pizz.

D.B.

mp

The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

Fl. 

Ob. 

B-Cl. 

A. Sax. 

Bsn. 

Hn. 

B-Tpt. 

D. S. 

Pno. 

B 

Vln. I 

Vln. II 

Vla. 

Vc. 

D.B. 

The Freedom Train


\[ \sum \]
The Freedom Train

- It steps in Miss-iss-ip-pi will it be made plain?
- Ev'-ry bo-dy's got a right to board the Free-dom Train.
- Some-bo-dy tell me
The Freedom Train

Fl.

Ob.

B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Bsn.

Hn.

B. Tpt.

D. S.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
The Freedom Train

D. S.

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

70

D. S.

Pno.

with eagerness

B

Train?

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
The Freedom Train

Fl.

B-Cl.

A. Sx.

D. S.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Free-dom Train?
What shall I tell my chil-dren?
You tell me ‘Cause Free-dom’s got enuf free-dom when a man ain’t
The Freedom Train

When my B
free
But may be they explains it on the Freedom Train.
The Freedom Train

The Freedom Train

\[ \text{Slightly Slower} \ (\text{q} = 120) \]

1. The Freedom Train!
2. Mister, I thought it were the Freedom Train!
3. Her grand-um's name was Jimmy.

\[ \text{Pno.} \]

\[ \text{Bsn.} \]

\[ \text{Vln. I} \]

\[ \text{Vln. II} \]

\[ \text{Vla.} \]

\[ \text{Vc.} \]

\[ \text{D.B.} \]

\[ \text{D. S.} \]

\[ \text{Obo.} \]

\[ \text{B. Cl.} \]

\[ \text{A. Sx.} \]

\[ \text{Fl.} \]
He died in A-n-z-i-o
He died for real
It was n't no show
The Free-dom that they car-ry-er on this Free-dom Train
is it for real or just

keep triplet
gliss down
the string

The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

Fl.

Ob.

B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Bsn.

D. S.

B

fl

Jinny wants to know about the Freedom Train
Will his Freedom Train come zoom-in' down the track
Gleam

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

p

p

p

p

123
The Freedom Train

in' in the sun-light

for white and black

Not stop-pin' at no sta-tions marked co-lored and white

Just stop-pin' in the fields in the broad day-light

and black

co-lored
The Freedom Train

Stop-p'n' in the coun-try in the wide o-pen air
Where there ne-ver was no Jim Crow signs
No-where No Wel-com-in' Com-mit-tee
no po-li-ti-cians of note
The Freedom Train

and such for which colored can't note and mary a sign of a color line for the Freedom Train will be yours and mine.
Then may be from their graves in Ani-o
The G. I's who fought will say. We wan-ted it so
black men and white will
Energetic and Pushing Forward

The Freedom Train

Glo-ry for the Free-dom Train! I'll holl-er! Blow your whis-tle! Free-dom Train! Thank God-A-Migh-ty! Here's the Free-dom
The Freedom Train

joyfully exclaimed

Train!

Train!

Train!
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

II
Trayvon Martin

Text by Reuben Jackson
The Freedom Train

Mezzo
from the store
No Skat-ties thank you.
We do not talk much
Smen-kers crossing the court yard.

Vln. I
sol ponticello
normal

Vln. II
sol ponticello
normal

Vla.
sol ponticello
normal

Vc.

D.B.

14

freely spoken
Bu-nid South-ern night.
We shake hands and hug
An-sient, an-te-ren-der-ness.
I said to the moon

132
Mezzo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

The Freedom Train

Mezzo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

opt. toy piano

Mezzo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
Funeral March \( \frac{7}{8} = 60 \)

A. Fl.

B. Cl.

A. Sx.

Bsn.

Hn.

B

Miss Gard-ner's in her gar-den

Miss Yard-man's in her yard

135
A. Fl.

B-Cl.

A. Sx.

Bsn.

Hn.

D. S.

B

D.B.

The Freedom Train

fgh-tin' and the nations they don't fit

Some-times I think that white folks:

Ain't worth a li-tle bit

No m'am! Ain't worth a li-tle
breathy sound but still with pitch
Slow trill

Last week they lynched a black boy. They hung him to a tree. That col-oured boy ain't said a

The Freedom Train
A. Fl.
B-Cl.
A. Sx.
Bsn.
D. S.
B
D.B.

 thing
But we should all be free
Yes, we should all be free
Not meanin’ to say
and not meanin’ to say
The Freedom Train

A. Fl.

B-Cl.

A. Sax.

Bsn.

Hn.

D. S.

B.

D.B.

265

in' to be smart but some times I think that white folk
The Freedom Train

Yes ma'am we all should be free

as soft as possible
The Freedom Train

IV

Eric Garner

Text Transcribed from CNN Interview
The Freedom Train

1 can't breath
1 can't breath
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

Fl. mp

Ob. mp

B-Cl. mp

A. Sx. mp

Bn.

Hn.

B-Tpt. f

D. S.

C7(#9) D9

Pno. mf.

Mezzo

out that I'm had posad.

I can't breath

Vln. I f

Vln. II f

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

They have taken my sons. I'm way

They have taken my sons, my voice is way

But his mother has a voice. I am going to use it as long as I have a

They have taken my sons.
The Freedom Train
V
The Black Man Speaks

Text by Langston Hughes

Leisurely but Strong (\( \text{\textit{q} = 80} \) )
The Freedom Train
D. S.

Pno.

B

D.B.

The Freedom Train

freedom don't apply to the black man.
I swear, by gum, I really don't know.

why in the

name of liberty you treat me so.
The black man speaks.

The black man

speaks.

The black man

speaks.
The Freedom Train

Down South you make me ride in a Jim Crow car

From Los Angeles to London you spread your colors far
Jan crow ar-ny, and nav-y, too, Is Jan Crow Free-dom the best I can ex-pect from
If we're fighting to create a free world tomorrow, why not end right now. Old Jim Cross sorrow?

I want you to state what kind of world we're fighting to create. If we're fighting to create a free world...

to-morrow, why not end right now. Old Jim Cross sorrow? The black man speaks.
The Freedom Train

The black man speaks
VI

Just Another RIP Hashtag

Text by Jasmine Reed

The Freedom Train

Reverently and Anxious

D.S.

Pno.

Mezzo

D.B.

p

Reverently and Anxious

D.S.

Pno.

Mezzo

D.B.

p

Freely speak the words in the boxes within the measures of music as if the music is just a background soundtrack

I am the shadow of Trayvon Martin
Mezzo

Mezzo

D. S.

D.B.

Pno.

Pno.

Mezzo

Ly-ing on the ground just as he did
I'm black just as he was
I wasn't planning to die that day either

D.B.

D.B.

Pno.

Pno.

Mezzo

I wasn't threatening nobody either that day.
The gun shots ech-oeled just as loud Yet his name ech-oeled through the streets years later still

D.B.

D.B.

Pno.

Pno.

Mezzo

Mise followed me to the grave
They don't care a bout me, it seems.
If I cried, "What about me? Who would ever see? Because my hash-tag has even been drowned so deep in the depth's of R.I.P. That I can't bare-ly breath any more.

When we think black bru-ta-lty Why do the names of Trayvon Mike Tanir San-dra Rush to our heads just as has as blood once rushed to theirs?

Does my black life, too, mat-ta? I can't blame you
That there have been so many deaths due to oppression and police brutality that they all sound the same.

This section must be performed at this moment in time.

No matter how long we scream Black lives matter. We will never be seen as living But the potentially dead.

We cry for justice to a system that's no longer built to accept us A presid-ent that tries to for-get us A black voice will aways be too loud in a world who never in-sen-ed to lis-ten.
The Freedom Train

VII
I Dream a World

Text by Langston Hughes

Fl.

Ob.

B-Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

D. S.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train
The Freedom Train

earth
And every man is free.
Where
The Freedom Train

wretchedness will hang its head and joy, like a pearl,

At
The Freedom Train

I dream my world!
The Freedom Train

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

A. Sax.

Bsn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

D. S.

Pno.

Mezzo

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

\begin{align*}
\text{Fl.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{Ob.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{B♭ Cl.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{A. Sax.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{Bsn.} & \quad \text{pp} \\
\text{Hn.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{B♭ Tpt.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{D. S.} & \quad \text{scrape} \\
\text{Pno.} & \quad \text{pp} \\
\text{Mezzo} & \quad \text{1 dream} \\
\text{B} & \quad \text{1 dream} \\
\text{Vln. I} & \quad \text{1 dream} \\
\text{Vln. II} & \quad \text{1 dream} \\
\text{Vla.} & \quad \text{pp} \\
\text{Vc.} & \quad \text{pp} \ (\text{or as soft as possible}) \\
\text{D.B.} & \quad \text{pp} \\
\end{align*}
APPENDIX A
THE HOLODOMOR: THE SOVIET FAMINE 1932-1933
CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS
Changing Weather Patterns

From sea-floor mud, El Niño brings up the secrets of childhood.

El Niño crawls in the...
Changing Weather Patterns

S

\[ mf \]

\[ manager \] \[ time runs out \] \[ El Niño \]

Pno.

\[ mp \]

\[ rocks \] \[ himself \] \[ dry \] \[ on the edge of a continent \]

S

\[ p \]

\[ Prairies of wheat go unpolinated, \] \[ there is rumor El Niño is \]

Pno.

\[ mp \] \[ p \]
Changing Weather Patterns

\begin{align*}
\text{kill-ing the honey-bees} \\
\text{The water turns cold, La Ni-na follows her twin} \\
\text{Window-panes darken, the weather channel shows rain}
\end{align*}
Changing Weather Patterns

Robust and Rousing

Angels proclaim in vain above unseasonal cloud cover

casually

La Niña lines up her hurricanes in alphabetic order

rit.

Flood waters announce her coming
Freely without Time
spoken angrily
with attention
to rhythm

The rich bribe air-lines while the poor push children into branches of trees

changing

a tempo (Allegro \( \frac{d}{=} 120 \))

sung

The Ni-nos hear their names on the news in every language

-changing

Changing Weather Patterns

The Ni-nos bankrupt distant cities with mudslides
Changing Weather Patterns

Freely without Time

angrily spoken

S

Com-ets snuff out in dir-ty skies

Pno.

Cе - leb-ri-ties se-duce us a way from the guides in

Slowly \( \dot{\jmath} = 50 \)

Mechanically \( \dot{\jmath} = 50 \)

dolce

monotone and

robotic

S

our dreams—

Lovers of cha- os

Sung

Com-pu-ters rull back their ze-ro eyes

Pno.

Allegro = 120

f

The trum-pet cries

Los Ni- nos in a loud voice

Fa-ces

ff

\( p \)

Slowly and

articulate
98

trail off to a whisper

Grave and Sad $\overline{\text{q}} = 80$

sung

on bill-boards draw closer

La Ni-na we pray

98

Grave and Sad $\overline{\text{q}} = 80$

p

spoken

p

104

sung

dolce

spoken

104

and El Ni-no, her brother we long for sweetness and scra-

Pno.

104

sung

f

spoken

Pno.

110

sprechstimme

Grand and

Pleading $\overline{\text{q}} = 85$

110

sung

f

Spare us,
Changing Weather Patterns

We don't know winter from summer.
Above the trade winds ozone

crackles their answer
We have come for

193
Changing Weather Patterns

your children!
Changing Weather Patterns

Text: Ava Leavell Haymon

Mysterioius and Intense $\dot{\text{d}} = 80$

Tenor

Piano

heavy emphasis on the "s" at the end of "slips"
Changing Weather Patterns

7 pp

T

ri - ses dri - ping from the o - cean

8

Pno.

9 pp

T

From sea-floor mud, El Ni - no brings up the se - crets of child - hood

9

Pno.

El Ni - no crawls in the ma - nger time runs ou -
Changing Weather Patterns

El Niño rocks himself dry on the edge of a continent.

Prairies of wheat go un-pollinated.

There is rumor El Niño is killing the honeybees.
Changing Weather Patterns

Pno.

T

spoken cold and lacking in gentleness

31

The water turns cold, La Niña follows her

34

twin Windowpanes darken, the weather channel shows us rain

37

Angels proclaim in vain above unseasonal cloud cover

198
Changing Weather Patterns

La Niña lines up her hurricanes in alphabetical order.

Floodwaters announce her coming.

The rich bribe airlines while the poor push children into agitato

Changing Weather Patterns
Changing Weather Patterns

bran-ches of trees

hear their names on the news in ev-ery lan-guage

bank-rupt dis-tant cit-ies with mud-slides Com-ets snuff out in dir-ty skies

200
pp

Pno.

61

ties se-duce us a-way from the guides in our dreams

Lo-

65

vers of cha-gos

com-pu ters roll

Pno.

69

back their zero eyes

The trump et cries Los Ni- nos

Pno.

Changing Weather Patterns
Changing Weather Patterns

T  
\[ \text{in a loud voice} \quad \text{Faces on billboards draw} \]

Pno.  

T  
\[ \text{closer} \quad \text{La Ni} \]

Pno.  

T  
\[ \text{na we pray, and El Ni no, her brother we long} \quad \text{like a guitar (but on the keyboard)} \]

Pno.  
\[ \text{pizz. (from the inside of the piano)} \]
Changing Weather Patterns

for sweetness and scale our tables sag

under piles of unsorted papers Spare us, Ninos We don't know winter

winter from summer Above the trade winds

... ozone crackles their answer We have come for your children
The Holodomor: The Soviet Famine 1932 – 1933
for Trumpet in C and Tape

by William F. Montgomery
Copyright © William F. Montgomery 2015
Published by Black Bayou Publishing
www.williammontgomerycomposer.com
About the Piece

I was inspired to write this piece after listening to a performance of Dr. Virko Baley’s chamber piece, The Holodomor. I wanted to create a piece that would capture the solitude, loneliness, sadness, and oppression of the disaster with just one instrument and electronics. The Holodomor was one of the worst man made famines ever recorded. Some estimate that over 7 million people lost their lives due to the over production and over use of the land in the Ukraine (then, formerly part of the USSR), and southern USSR to the Kazakh border to the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas. Some provinces of the Ukraine lost more than a quarter of their population due to starvation and the increase of malaria cases. What was once home to the richest and most fertile ground in the entire Soviet territory, was turned into a waste of famine and disease.

This piece was performed for the College of Liberal Arts Graduate Symposium at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 2015 and on Dr. Shane Courville’s DMA recital at Louisiana State University in 2017.

Duration
ca. 7 minutes

Instrumentation
Trumpet in C
    Must have two mutes
    Harmon and Silent
APPENDIX B
PERMISSIONS
Hi Jasmine. My name is William Montgomery and I am currently enrolled at LSU as a PhD candidate in Music Composition. My dissertation is centered around depicting the lives of Americans that were lost due to police brutality between 2015 and 2018. I would love to set your poem RIP Hashtag in my piece. But I wanted to see if that would be ok with you. Please let me know here or via my email at wmontg7@lsu.edu. You can also check my website at williammontgomerycomposer.com. Thank you for your beautiful and striking words. - Bill

Jasmine  Sep 2018
I'm fine with it as long as I get credit where it's due :-)

William  Feb 10
Hi Jasmine. I am finally getting around to setting your poem. What is your last name so that I can list your full name as the author? Thank you so much for your words and for allowing me to use this text.

Jasmine  Feb 19
My full name is Jasmine Reed. Thanks for being intrigued by my writing
Permission from Reuben Jackson

Reuben Jackson <reubjcks@aol.com>

Mon 1/28, 6:28 PM
I'm Reuben Jackson. Your query was forwarded by my publisher. I cannot tell you how honored I am. The Trayvon poem is one I wish I had no occasion to write. I am the copyright holder. (2015) Feel free to include it in your thesis. Please keep me posted on your work.

With deep gratitude,

Reuben Jackson.
Archivist, Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives
University of the District of Columbia
To: William F. Montgomery  
550 Lee Drive #175  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  

September 26, 2018

Dear Harold Ober Associates Incorporated:

This will confirm our understanding with regard to my rights to set to music, publish and record a musical setting of the following literary work:

“Freedom Train” by Langston Hughes
“Love” by Langston Hughes
“As I Grow Older” by Langston Hughes
“Death in Harlem” by Langston Hughes
“August 19th” by Langston Hughes
“Southern Mammy Sings” by Langston Hughes
“The Black Man Speaks” by Langston Hughes
“I Dream A World” by Langston Hughes
“Night Funeral In Harlem” by Langston Hughes

1. You grant me the non-exclusive right to set to music and to have published, performed and recorded my musical setting of the above literary work and to secure copyright in said musical work. Said rights may be exercised by me or my heirs throughout the world for the term of copyright and all renewals. I agree to furnish you with the names of publishers and/or producers with whom I enter into agreements concerning my musical settings.

2. The Estate of Langston Hughes is entitled to one half of any royalties and other standard applicable fees that copyright law authorizes composers and lyricists to receive from the publication, performance, recording, or use of the musical setting which composer intends to create using the poems of Langston Hughes referenced in this Letter of Agreement. Composer shall be entitled to the other 50% of such fees. This 50-50 split is limited solely to the performance or publication of the musical setting which uses the poems referenced in this Letter of Agreement. I further agree to stipulate that, in making any contract with a publisher for publication of my musical compositions using the poems of Langston Hughes, that the publisher is to pay the Langston Hughes Estate’s share of the sums under the publication contract to Harold Ober Associates Incorporated (Tax ID 13-1837815) as agent for The Langston Hughes Estate. Performance royalties should be paid to ASCAP where The Langston Hughes Estate is Member 5197800. ASCAP shall be the sole administrator of performance royalties for both the Langston Hughes Estate and composer for the works referenced in this Agreement. Each party shall receive 50% of such performance royalties.

3. You hereby warrant that you are the authorized agent of the proprietor of the rights herein granted and that you have full power to enter into this agreement.

4. I agree that on each and every individual copy of said musical composition which I publish or cause to be published, there shall be imprinted the following copyright line: Copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes, by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

5. Your signature below will constitute this a valid and binding agreement between us. This agreement will be binding upon our respective heirs and assigns.

AGREED AND ACCEPTED:
Harold Ober Associates Incorporated

Sincerely,
Bibliography

ma0000011937.

Alsalman, Yassin. 2018. *Free (One Day)*. “World War Free Now!”

Bambaataa, A. BrainyQuote. https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/afrika_bambaataa

https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/arts/music/when-cries-of-rape-are-heard-in-opera-

Billboard Top 100. (2018) Kendrick Lamar Charts All 14 tracks from ‘DAMN.’ on Billboard Hot

November 2018.


tnm.com/biographie/.


  www.rateyourmusic.com/list/Pooba/songs_that_are_sampled_by_cunninglynguists_for_their_amazing_album_a_piece_of_strange/.


Midgette, Anne. 2019. *As a classical music critic, I used to think the 'Star Wars' score was beneath me*. January. Accessed January 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/as-a-classical-music-critic-i-used-to-think-the-star-wars-score-was-beneath-me-i-was-wrong/2019/01/17/80fe0744-18f0-11e9-88fe-f9f77a3cb6c_story.html?fbclid=IwAR1kYgMjHsWBW0AYrpNlq22pj72TYRljRpPWhVyhe7Bfct4L


Pate, Alexs. 2010. *In the Heart of the Beat*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press.


VITA

William F. Montgomery (b. 1983) is an internationally performed composer based in Louisiana. William received his Master’s degree from the University of Nevada-Reno, where he studied with James Winn and Jean-Paul Perrotte, and plans to receive his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University where William studied with Mara Gibson and Dinos Constantinides. William was a semi-finalist in The American Prize Composition Competition Student – Orchestra Division and has won numerous composition competitions. He participated in the EAMA/Nadia Boulanger Institute in Paris in 2017 and recently co-authored a paper presented at the ICMC/NYCEMF in New York City. In 2018, William had a premiere of his piano piece, Dreamscapes, in Krakow, Poland, and in 2019, William will have a premiere of his piece for solo guitar, $Ma$, in Tokyo in August, and will present a paper that he co-authored with Dr. Edgar Berdahl, and Dr. Chase Mitchusson at the International Computer Music Conference/New York City Electro-Acoustic Music Festival in June.