

**“It’s festival time again”: Sounding tensions with/in an a/r/tographical inquiry
into participation in competition music festivals**

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Dedication

To Scott and my parents with thanks

Abstract

Reflecting on my musical past, my annual participation in competition music festivals in solo and ensemble categories at the local and provincial levels shaped my music education as well as my development as a music educator. I inquire into how re/visiting moments of tension in my lived experiences as a participant in competition music festivals can facilitate my current praxis as artist, researcher and teacher. My inquiry is informed by understandings of *a/r/tography* as an arts-based educational research methodology. I inquire into these sites of music-making drawing on a theoretical framework of a soundscape, a concept originally proposed by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, to generate rhizomatic pathways with/in my research. Through this framework I consider how musical form informs the processes and structures of my thesis. Emphasizing *a/r/tography* as process-oriented inquiry, understandings emerge through music-making, arts-based journaling and autoethnographic renderings. Rhizomatic soundscapes evoke new understandings and questions contributing to literature on student perspectives participating in competition music festivals and teaching and learning in one-to-one music instruction.

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Prologue

“The audience is hushed and expectant as it waits in the darkness. The stage lights blaze down on the nervous performers. The accompanist, poised to play, watches as the conductor raises her hands to begin...and out floats the sweet clear voices of the young choristers. It’s festival time again” (McConnell, 1991).



“It’s festival time again” were words that I heard every year while growing up. Performing and competing in the local music festival was an annual part of my music education. Each year, my repertoire (songs to be learned and memorized) was chosen with the help of my music teacher and carefully prepared through months of practice, lessons, and rehearsals before the final performance at the festival.

Several months before the festival started, the program was released. Each year, trembling in anticipation, I remember opening the program to read the schedule of events. Students registered to compete in “classes” where they were grouped with others who were performing musical pieces in a similar style at a similar level. Other information contained in the program included the order of performance within the classes as well as biographical information about the adjudicators (the judges of the festival).

For myself, performing first or last in a class was undesirable. The agony of having to perform first on stage or alternatively wait until all the other performers had their turns to play sometimes felt unbearable. While I competed in music festivals in many different disciplines, solo performances in piano and violin stand out most vividly as part of my past experiences in music education.

Listening (re)verberations

Listening through muted whispers, swirling dissonances, pulsing rhythms and lyrical harmonies, I reflect on my past experiences in music education while inquiring into arts-based research methodologies. Embarking on a thesis project, I hear sonorities from my past reverberating with/in the spaces of my lived experience. Lingering in the residue of sounds, I reflect on my participation in competition music festivals as “meaningful biographical experience” (Denzin, 2014). I am drawn to re/visit and inquire in/to these moments in my musical past articulating a/r/tography as an arts-based research methodology to inform my work.

Preparing for and participating in competition music festivals was an important part of my music education growing up in a small town on the Canadian prairies. Echoes resonate through my fingers on/to piano keys as I re/member music students performing on stage while being evaluated by an adjudicator who provided feedback on their performances (Abbott, 1969).

My qualitative inquiry draws on the methodological approach of a/r/tography to inquire in/to my past lived experiences as a music student participating in competition music festivals. A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology which emerged from the work of researchers at the University of British Columbia (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008). An a/r/tographer is someone who lives in the arts and works to create, teach and research their art-making as part of their lived experiences. In a/r/tography, the letters of the

word “art” are divided by slashes. This highlights the researcher’s roles as artist, researcher and teacher as a central part of the research process.

In a/r/tography, the emphasis is not on the final results of the project but rather on the process of inquiry. This continuous process of reflection plays a critical role in rendering a/r/tographical inquiry as a form of living inquiry. Through conceptualizing a/r/tography as process-oriented living inquiry, I re/visit these sites of tension in my music education drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape to inform my research (Schafer, 1994).

Inquiring into these sites of music-making drawing on the notion of a soundscape generates rhizomatic pathways with/in the processes of my inquiry. The term soundscape was originally created by Canadian composer, educator and theorist, R. Murray Schafer and has been influential in the fields of acoustic ecology (Schafer, 1994), soundscape composition (Drever, 2002; Truax, 2000; 2012) and recently in arts-based research (Toth, 2007).

Listening through fleeting spaces as openings for my contrapuntal overtones, I immerse myself in a variety of materials from my past participation in competition music festivals. These include recordings and videos of myself performing and preparing for music festivals as a student. I also re-read adjudication forms, programs and other written materials such as newspaper articles and lesson records from my classes with music teachers.

Cultivating moments of listening and playing, I examine the musical scores which I used to prepare for competition music festivals, containing markings and notes, recorded memories, on the process of my preparation. Including these materials as harmonic utterances enables me to work reflectively and reflexively (Irwin & Springgay, 2008) with/in my process-oriented inquiry.

In representing my artistic processes, I craft stories, poetry and music from my experiences in response to my memories emanating through vibrant glissandi, fissures in melodic lines and fading ambiences. I consider intersecting connections and understandings with/in my experiences through the notion of a soundscape, selecting musical occurrences to form a “performance collage” (Jenoure, 2002).

Sounds e/merging, evoking tensions

As I inquire in/to the significance of sounding memories and lived experiences of my music education, questions emerge in response to my reflections. How have my past experiences as a music student shaped my current practices as an artist/researcher/teacher? More specifically, I wonder how my experiences as a participant in competition music festivals as part of my music education have shaped my current practices as an artist/researcher/teacher?

How can understandings of a/r/tography facilitate inquiry in/to memories of my lived experiences as a music student? How do my memories of music festivals perform tensions in my personal narrative as an artist/researcher/teacher? Through Schafer’s (1994) terminology surrounding the notion of a soundscape, rhizomatic pathways begin to emerge with/in my personal narrative as I consider my roles as artist/researcher/teacher. How can I represent moments of lived curriculum through theoretical notions of a soundscape?

From my stance of questioning, several foundational questions e/merge which I inquire in/to through this thesis project:

- How do my past experiences as a music student participating in competition music festivals shape my current practices as an artist/researcher/teacher?
- How can my current musical praxis and identity as an artist/researcher/teacher facilitate my inquiry into my experiences as a participant in competition music festivals?

- How can theoretical notions of a soundscape facilitate a/r/tographical inquiry in music education?

(H)earing Pathways

“Sound gets to places where sight cannot. Sound plunges below the surface” (Schafer, 1993, p. 163).

Listening to Schafer (1993) while inquiring in/to my past experiences as a music student participating in competition music festivals, I embark on a literature review in Chapter 1 rendering several areas of academic literature which inform my work. I re/turn in/to cadences of the history of competition music festivals in Canada, circle the emergence of arts-based research involving music and consider how the notion of a soundscape has inspired several fields of study including acoustic ecology and soundscape composition.

In Chapter 2, I re/sound a/r/tography as autoethnographic and living inquiry. I consider identities of artist/researcher/teacher and the importance of including music-making as a central part of the research process. This leads to a discussion of my project drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape as a way of bringing musical ways of knowing in/to my inquiry. I outline an acoustically inspired map guiding my process-oriented inquiry through sounded moments in my past.

I perform with/in an arts-based journal in Chapter 3 a combination of visual, textual and musical art that I have created reflecting on my past lived experiences participating in competition music festivals. This chapter sings through working materials, fragments of sounded memories combining to form a métissage (Irwin & deCosson, 2004). The notated musical excerpts are accompanied by audio tracks included on CD as part of this thesis project.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape to generate rhizomatic pathways, Chapter 4 contains reflections on these musical moments. I seek to dwell in-between spaces

allowing for multiple renderings and further questioning as I consider living inquiry through music-making. I create a “performance collage” inspired by Jenoure (2002), engaging with working materials from my arts-based journal through notions of the soundscape.

Chapter 5 reflects on new understandings which emerge through my musical journey engaging with re/verberations of my research questions in the form of a concert performance. I consider the notion of rhizomatic soundscapes as a framework for further inquiries into music-making and learning in the Epilogue, while also addressing directions for future research and further questioning.

Excerpts of poetry, visual art and musical notation are included throughout this thesis. I have created these pieces throughout the process of this inquiry. Emerging as I compose musical soundscapes, I engage with these working materials embodying and celebrating ways of knowing through the arts and the centrality of music-making in my process-oriented inquiry.

Chapter 1: Musical Maps Unravelling

As I review academic literature relating to my work, I am reminded of the process of learning a new piece of music. I listen to Gouzouasis (2006) who explains that “One may consider that living inquiry is embodied by performing arts. That is because music performance is a lifelong cyclical process of practice, research, reflection and performance” (p. 30).

Before learning a new song on the piano, I engage with a large variety of different music. I am listening for a piece of music that inspires my imagination as well as challenges me technically to improve my playing. Once I choose a song, I begin to practice. This is a process of working/re/working and engaging with all aspects of the music including pitches, articulations, rhythm and dynamics. Sometimes the music I have chosen is written on a score for me to follow. Other times, I learn through playing by ear. Researching the context and history of musical styles shapes how I interpret the music I play. My music is constantly changing in a process that emerges through a cycle of feedback and reflection. No two performances are exactly the same. Gouzouasis’ (2006) words resonate: “practice, research, reflection and performance” (p. 30).

connections or

intersections?

flurried movement on a page

springing to life

living

breathing

sighing

sounding

Competition music festivals

The concept of a competition music festival, also referred to as a music festival, originated in England in the 1880s. In 1905, Earl Grey, governor general of Canada proposed organizing small local music festivals across Canada culminating in a Dominion-wide music festival with representatives from each province (Abbott, 1969).

The idea was to give students a chance to perform in a local event and receive feedback on their performances with winners competing against each other at a national level. It was hoped that the festivals would increase appreciation of the arts in Canada as well as provide entertainment for local communities. The first music festival was held in Edmonton, Alberta in 1908. Saskatchewan hosted its first music festival in 1909 and Manitoba followed in 1919. By 1952, music festivals were held in all Canadian provinces including Newfoundland and Labrador. The process of instituting music festivals involved creating a community association to organize and host the festival as well as developing a festival syllabus. The festival syllabus outlined the levels of different musical works that could be played and contained registration information for participants (Abbott, 1969).

Abbott's (1969) dissertation outlines some of the early events in the history of music festivals in Canada. The purpose of his dissertation is to examine the growth of the music festival movement in Canada as well as reflect on the involvement of the music festival movement in the music education of Canadian students. He concludes that the success of music festivals in Canada has relied on the interest of local community members, music educators and students (p. 203). Music festivals continue to be held at the local, provincial and national levels in Canada through numerous community organizations.

Current research trends

Since Abbott (1969), many other scholars have chosen to research various aspects of competition music festivals. While no others studies have taken such a comprehensive look at music festivals in Canada, many have chosen to focus on a specific aspect of the music festival experience. I reflect on previous studies which have focused on competition music festivals from a sociological perspective (McCormick, 2009) as well as from a historical perspective in Canada (Abbott, 1969). The perspectives of teachers, parents and administrators (Fleming, 1975; Rogers, 1984; Sweeney, 1998), the evaluation criteria of festival adjudicators (Bergee & McWhirter, 2005; Wapnick, Mazza & Darrow, 2000), and survey data documenting the perceptions of students (Gouzouasis & Henderson, 2012; Stamer, 2004) have also been considered in relation to competition music festivals. Relevant to my inquiry are studies which have considered music festivals from the perspective of students participating in competition music festivals (Gouzouasis & Henderson, 2012; Stamer, 2004) and piano competitions specifically (McCormick, 2009).

Providing a sociological perspective on piano competitions, McCormick (2009) analyzes the *Van Cliburn International Piano Competition* held in Texas every four years. She suggests that music competitions in general, “have been a visible and controversial part of the classical music world for over a century, yet sociologists have strangely neglected to study their social significance” (p. 5). Her article draws on discourse analysis to suggest that piano competitions have numerous discourses which can be studied in different ways including the analogy of piano competitions as sport games and the goal of the musical hero to win the competition.

Participation in competition music festivals has also been studied from the perspectives of students in choirs and concert bands. Stamer (2004) surveyed 268 students using a researcher

developed “Choir Competition Survey” (p. 6). The purpose of his study is to examine student perceptions of participation in choral music festivals. His findings suggest that there are differences across age and gender categories in student perceptions of the competition experience. Younger high school students placed more importance on the contests while older students did not find them as motivating. Additionally male students are more motivated than female students by participation in the choral competition experience.

Gouzouasis and Henderson (2012) surveyed 526 band students from Surrey, British Columbia to interrogate student perceptions of participation in district band festivals. Their findings suggest that generally students felt participation in band festivals was a positive experience and a beneficial part of their music education. In their conclusion, Gouzouasis and Henderson (2012) contend that additional studies involving “ethnographic (Ellis, 2004) and autoethnographic research (Bartleet & Ellis, 2009; Gouzouasis, 2008) in this area could be very enlightening and provide broad, nuanced contributions to the literature” (p. 495).

Currently, the majority of studies involving student perceptions of music festivals are from the perspective of students participating in ensemble performances such as band and choirs. Student participation in performance and competition music festivals as part of music education has been understudied in research from an arts-based, autoethnographic perspective. My inquiry provides a unique narrative from the perspective of a music student’s participation in solo performances at competition music festivals.

Arts-based research in music

As a teacher education student and now graduate student, I began to read studies about current practices in music education research. I learned that music education is often characterized as “conservative” compared to other disciplines in the arts (Gouzouasis, 2006;

Lines, 2013). Lines (2013) describes music education research “as a field that has well-established ideas about what constitutes effective learning in and through music” (p. 24). Gouzouasis (2006) furthers this idea by describing how these established traditions in music education might help explain the lack of musicians and music education researchers involved in arts-based methodologies compared to other disciplines.

Despite these challenges, new research involving arts-based methodologies in music education has been emerging. I review three ways that music has informed arts-based methodologies unravelling a spectrum of possibilities. First, several scholars (Bresler, 2005; Gouzouasis, 2006; 2008; 2013) have discussed how musical form can influence and inform the research process. Second, a/r/tographers have considered music-making while inquiring in/to lives as artists, researchers and teachers. In a/r/tography, these studies are process-oriented and the results often generate more questions than answers. Third, the methodology of autoethnography has drawn on musical understandings while storying music and teaching lives.

Musical form informing research

Within the context of arts-based research involving music, scholars have considered how musical form can inform the process of inquiry (Bresler, 2005; 2009; Gouzouasis, 2006; 2008; 2013; Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002). When considering different ways that music can inform arts-based research, Leavy (2009) suggests that, “researchers can use music to contemplate the importance of form in life and research...” (p. 107). Form in music refers to the way a musical work is organized. Leavy (2015) reminds me that this notion of form relates not only to the organization of the whole and the parts but also to elements such as variation, repetition and silence and the way that these elements interact within musical forms (p. 130). Musical form has been used by Bresler (2005) to draw attention to the social relationships and forms used to

organize interactions within research in the social sciences. For example, repetition may occur within life writing to draw attention to certain aspects of the stories (Leavy, 2015, p. 130).

Gouzouasis (2006; 2008; 2013) draws on a variety of forms commonly used in western classical music including the toccata, fugue, and sonata form in his a/r/tographical inquiries. Reflections on these musical forms are included in Gouzouasis' research processes and written works. For example, Gouzouasis & Lee (2002) structure their writings in the form of the fugue featuring a conversation between teacher and graduate student which examines and interrogates research traditions leading to a discussion of the notion of truth. Before publication, the editors asked Gouzouasis and Lee to remove several sections from the article. The editors of the journal didn't recognize the musical form of the fugue and its contribution to the article. Gouzouasis (2008) reflects back on this publication noting how others have noted the absence of these sections and how this change affected the overall structure of the article (p. 221).

In contrast, Bresler (2005) considers how specific aspects of musical form including dynamics, timbre, polyphony, harmony and melody can inform the research process. She suggests that by reflecting on these specific aspects of musical form, musical ways of knowing can provide insights into qualitative research.

Drawing on the notion of texture, Bresler (2005) describes harmony as a specific aspect of musical form. In musical pieces, there are expectations about the harmonic progressions which create the musical work based on the style, context and form in which the music was created. Bresler argues that the same expectations apply to the study of a classroom where there are also expectations and conventions embedded within the setting much like harmonic progressions in music.

Bresler (2005) continues by also comparing the “tolerance for dissonance” within a musical work. This tolerance for dissonance differs depending on musical style, form and harmonic progressions. Making a similar comparison, she suggests that there are also variations in the tolerance for dissonance in different classrooms as in music.

This review of musical form and its uses in qualitative research methodologies is particularly important to my research as I consider the form of a soundscape as a theoretical framework for my inquiry. I am inspired by the work of Bresler (2005) and Gouzouasis (2008) as I consider the importance of musical form with/in my own research processes. However, rather than draw on musical forms common in the canon of classical music, I draw on Schafer’s (1994) notion and terminology of the soundscape. Through reflections on the soundscape as a musical form evoking the environment and lived experiences, I am reminded of one of my research questions: *How can theoretical notions of a soundscape facilitate a/r/tographical inquiry in music education?*

A/r/tographical research and music education

A/r/tographical inquiry in music and music education has been featured in the work of several scholars at the University of British Columbia (Bakan, 2013; Bakan, 2014; Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002; Gouzouasis, 2006; 2008; 2013). A/r/tography as a methodology will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, however, this section will review some of the current trends and issues in a/r/tographical praxis including music-making.

In his article, Bakan (2013) discusses the creation of a song with lyrics entitled, *This is the Beauty*. Written for a graduate seminar on arts-based methodologies, the song has autoethnographic meaning for Bakan which he expands upon as part of his paper. He explains how he considered his audience (colleagues in a graduate seminar on research methodologies)

when creating and composing his song. With this acknowledgement, he highlights the relationship between the audience and performer as part of arts-based research involving music.

As the subject of the article, Bakan (2013) focuses on the transition of his identity as an artist towards an emerging identity as a researcher and PhD candidate. Through his discussion, “a complex and multi-dimensional bricolage has formed/informed an emerging theory of song as artographical inquiry” (Bakan, 2013, p. 16). Embedded within the article are the lyrics of the song as well as a video recording of Bakan performing the song for his research seminar class. Bakan (2013) considers this to be “a documentation of the birth of the song”. He contends that the song “is not a perfected artistic rendering but rather a field note that informs my research process. The song and video represents a transitory moment in my a/r/tographical queries into song and research as pedagogy” (p. 4).

Gouzouasis (2006; 2008; 2013) incorporates original musical compositions as well as other musical works in his articles inquiring into the role of music in a/r/tographical research. In his first article on a/r/tography, Gouzouasis (2006) discusses new possibilities in music education research drawing on a/r/tography. He cites some of the challenges and reasons that a/r/tography and other arts-based research methodologies haven't been adopted by more music education researchers. These include the specialized nature of music training programs and the conservative nature of music education research. Additionally, Gouzouasis explains some of the connections that can be made with music through the six renderings of a/r/tography.

Using a metaphor of tonality to engage with a/r/tography as a form of “living inquiry”, Gouzouasis (2013) characterizes a/r/tography as “a hybrid research form that in this essay employs narrative, autoethnography, lyrics, poetry, music and pedagogical inquiry – as a music research method” (p. 1). Through the inclusion of music, he renders new understandings in the

processes of a/r/tography. Musical excerpts are embedded into the article and can be accessed by readers as part of the performance of reading the article.

Gouzouasis' work as an artist/researcher/teacher has also bridged a gap between a/r/tography and the research methodology of autoethnography. While some of his work combines a/r/tographical research with autoethnographic reflections (Gouzouasis, 2013), more recent work also addresses new possibilities for autoethnographic research between students and teachers in music education (Gouzouasis et. al., 2014; Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014).

Gouzouasis and Ryu (2014) examine the teacher-student relationship between a 4 year old piano student and a piano teacher in private one-on-one music lessons. The authors contend that “by considering autoethnography as creative, didactic non-fiction, our essay sings out with a call for transformation in how we engage with children in teaching and learning piano – on how we engage in a “listening pedagogy” to transform piano teaching and learning into a much more expressive, meaningful, playful and positive learning experience” (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014, p. 1).

The article tells the story of “young Buddha”, a piano student who asks many questions during his lessons and struggles to play a song all the way through without pausing to curiously inquire with his teacher about aspects of the music. At the year-end recital, the young boy performs his favourite song, *Alouette*, for the first time all the way through and his teacher is very proud of his achievement. After the recital, the boy presents the teacher with a handmade bracelet which is made of beads of the teacher's favourite colours. The teacher realizes that the student asked her months ago about her favourite colours and that the student has retained this knowledge applying it to create the bracelet.

Gouzouasis and Ryu (2014) use this story, to highlight the importance of conversation as well as the relationship that forms between music teachers and young music students. The authors discuss the importance of a “listening pedagogy” and how teachers must consider the perspectives of students as part of curriculum. Gouzouasis and Ryu conclude that autoethnography can be used as a means of inquiring into pedagogical interactions between music teachers and their students.

Music autoethnographies

Autoethnographic research in music has also become more prominent in recent years in a variety of contexts (Bartleet, 2009; Bartleet & Ellis, 2009; Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2014; manovski, 2014). Bartleet and Ellis (2009) edited *Music autoethnographies: Making Autoethnography Sing/Making Music Personal* which seeks to inspire readers “to listen closely and hear the music in the stories that are shared” (p. 12). This volume contains sixteen autoethnographic works that engage with music in different areas including composition and improvisation, teaching and learning, and identities as researchers. In the first chapter on teaching and learning, Yuyan (2009) describes her journey as a music student in rural China. Her inquiry provides insights into emergent pathways that led to her career as a percussionist with renowned orchestras and more recently as graduate student in music education. Through her inquiry, she describes how her early experiences as a music student, both triumphs and failures, have shaped her current identity as a performer and musician.

Drawing from a conservatory setting, Schindler (2009) investigates her experiences as a performer/teacher of vocal pedagogy. Through her narrative, autoethnographic inquiry she traces a journey through her experiences as a student, performer and teacher. She concludes that “as a teacher of one-to-one voice, the opportunity to examine my own story truthfully has

produced some key pedagogical insights as well as some profound observations about myself” such as how her experiences as a performer have shaped her relationships with current students (p. 192).

In contrast, Dunbar-Hall’s (2009) autoethnographic study on teaching and learning through autoethnographic inquiry and music focuses on learning Balinese gamelan from teachers in Bali. By inquiring into how learning Balinese music and learning about Balinese music relates to processes of learning, thinking and doing, Dunbar-Hall especially comments on connections to his role as a university professor. He concludes that his autoethnographic reflection became an integral part of his life that he was able to continually apply in his university teaching. For example, he concludes that he analyzes his actions in his teaching as a result of his experiences with autoethnographic research methods.

Reflecting on lived experiences of teaching and learning music, manovski (2014) combines arts-based research approaches with autoethnography in his dissertation which represents his journey as a voice student through his experiences learning to sing. On a quest to find “his voice”, manovski conducts an autoethnographic inquiry using recordings of himself taking voice lessons at various points in his life for his doctoral dissertation in music education. Much of his work focuses on lessons with his current voice teacher as well as a discussion of vocal pedagogy. He describes his work as, “Essentially, I am an artist, thinking about my artistic process through my artistic thinking, crafting what I hope will be perceived as artful narratives, interlaced with visual art, music and more” (manovski, 2014, p. xvi). Throughout his creative writing and analysis, manovski’s dissertation discusses themes of marginalization, music education and sexuality and includes art-making in music, the visual arts as well as poetry.

Shoemaker (2014) has written an autoethnography about her relationship with the music of jazz icon Miles Davis. She connects the music of Davis to her lived experiences in her hometown in Texas where she was introduced to Davis' music by her uncle who struggled with mental illness and died tragically at a young age in a single vehicle car accident. Drawing on memories of her relationship with her uncle and her reflections on a performer interpreting the work of Miles Davis, Shoemaker cites Stacy L. Holman Jones who reminds her that "music works on us; it materially moves us into new places of possibility over years of listening, singing, playing and dancing along" (p. 321). Shoemaker concludes by including reflections on the relationship between performance and music in an autoethnographic context.

In another example of autoethnographic research, two professors Sefton and Beyley (2012) discuss their identities as performing musicians within the context of a Faculty of Education at a Canadian university. They reflect on how faculties of education in Canada value written words over musical training (p. 322). Their autoethnographic project had two goals, "to reclaim our identity as musicians through performance and to make a space for our performance work in the academy" (p. 324). Sefton and Beyley videotaped their joint rehearsals and reflected on the processes of preparing for performances as the focus and subject of their autoethnographic study. Considering how musicians are familiar with the notion of "practicing as a process of discovery", they note that this notion was regarded as largely unfamiliar to colleagues in the faculty (p. 328). They conclude that the music-making relationship that they established through the autoethnographic study resulted in the formation of complex identities as researchers, performers and professors as well as opened up possibilities for other relationships within the faculty.

Autoethnographies connect music-making and musical lives to the larger social, political and cultural context with/in which they are lived. While some of the studies (Dunbar-Hall, 2009; Schindler, 2009; Yuyan, 2009) are autoethnographic reflections from musicians also trained and employed as music teachers, others reflect on musical lives more generally including teaching and learning in other forms (Shoemaker, 2014; manovksi, 2014). Autoethnographies involving music continue to rely mainly on written text to describe music-making activities. manovski's (2014) study stands out as an example that includes a variety of arts-based forms in an autoethnographic study including text, music and visual arts.

Soundscapes in research

The notion of a soundscape also informs my inquiry. Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer originally discussed the idea of the acoustic environment as a soundscape. Schafer (1994) describes a soundscape as, "The sonic environment. Technically, any portion of the sonic environment regarded as a field for study. The term may refer to actual environments, or to abstract constructions such as music composition" (p. 274-275). Schafer's work in this area has focused on the environmental impact of the soundscapes in which we live and for this reason he has been called the "father of acoustic ecology" (King, Gillmor & Mackenzie, 2011, para. 9).

Schafer (1994) elaborates on the notion of a soundscape by defining parts of a soundscape including terminology such as keynote sounds, signals and soundmarks. The keynote sounds refer to the background or "tonality" of a soundscape. Schafer describes keynote sounds as "those which are heard by a particular society continuously or frequently enough to form a background against which other sounds are perceived" (p. 272). Signals are defined by Schafer as "foreground sounds and they are listened to consciously" (p. 10). Schafer also introduces the term soundmark which "is derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is

unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community” (p. 10).

Theoretically I inquire into my experiences as a participant in competition music festivals drawing on the terminology of the soundscape as a framework for my inquiry in Chapter 4. Since Schafer’s initial use of the term soundscape, several fields of study including acoustic ecology, soundscape composition and arts-based research have used the concept of the soundscape in varying ways. I review these fields of research to position my own narrative drawing on understandings of the soundscape.

Acoustic ecology

In addition to the terminology outlined above, Schafer’s work with soundscapes included the founding of the “World Soundscape Project” through Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada, which documented the unique soundscapes of communities across Canada and around the world during the 1960s and 1970s. The purpose of the project was to study the relationship between “people and their acoustic environment” (King, Gillmor & Mackenzie, 2011) especially focusing on the impact of noise pollution in urban centres.

Soundscape composition

As a result of R. Murray Schafer’s work involving the soundscape, a new field of soundscape composition emerged (Drever, 2002; Truax, 2012). Soundscape composition retains the soundscape’s connection with the environment, although this environment can be real or artificially constructed in the composition. Generally soundscape composition has been associated with the field of acousmatic music (electronic music) and features several key components described by Truax (2000), one of the leading scholars in the field of soundscape composition. The primary aim of soundscape composition is to “enhance our understanding of

the world” and also preserve the recognition of sound clips from the environment for the listener (Drever, 2002, p.22). In addition, both composer and listener have active and distinct roles to play in engaging with soundscape compositions. The composer uses knowledge of musical composition and the environment to influence the shape of the composition while the listener is expected to use their prior knowledge to engage with the soundscape composition. While the work of soundscape composers represents one possible application of R. Murray Schafer’s notion of a soundscape, this project is also informed by the work of Toth (2007) as he creates soundscapes as part of an arts-based thesis project drawing on a/r/tography and music.

Soundscapes in arts-based research

The notion of a soundscape drawing on the metaphor of sculpting soundscapes was proposed by Toth (2007) as an integral part of his a/r/tographical and autoethnographically inspired thesis. His project combines music, life writing and poetry “to create a multi-faceted tapestry that exposes my life roles, my feelings, my values and the greyer in-between areas of knowing, teaching and learning” (p. ii). The metaphor of sculpting soundscapes used throughout the thesis illustrates Toth’s artistic processes when working with soundscapes to accompany his autobiographically inspired poetic renderings. Toth’s final project includes an audio recording of his soundscapes which is meant to accompany the reading of his work.

In addition to the creation of soundscapes to accompany his narratives, Toth (2007) also draws on understandings of jazz improvisation as a method of inquiring into his identity as an artist, teacher and musician. Looking into the question of “who is the real me?” Toth analyzed his poetry, narratives and soundscapes considering emerging themes in his work (p. 5). His thesis project represents seven themes including: “personal context and context formation, heroes, regrets, issues with the prevailing culture, new beginnings, artistic/transcendent/arational

spaces and reflections and intimate looks into the form and function of education landscape” as part of his findings (p. ii-iii). Reflecting on Toth’s use of soundscapes to accompany his autobiographically inspired poems, I consider how soundscapes can provide openings for telling my own autobiographically inspired stories.

Soundscapes as theoretical framework

All accurate descriptions of sound will be biographical, based on personal experience. Anything otherwise would be romantic or illusionary. Therefore, all I can do in these pages is to track a few of the many sounds that have been close to me in the parts of Canada I have known. (Schafer, 1993, p. 84)

Reflecting on the notion of music as the study of sound in music education has led me to consider how the soundscape, a concept proposed by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer (1988; 1994) and used by Toth (2007) in an a/r/tographical inquiry, can serve as a theoretical framework for re/visiting sites of my participation in competition music festivals.

I draw on Toth’s (2007) work in my own a/r/tographical inquiry along with the language of soundscapes proposed by Schafer (1994) as a framework for inquiring in/to my participation in competition music festivals. Toth (2007) defines soundscapes in his project as “various musical compositions that support the autoethnographic narratives and poetic renderings that I, and others, have written (p. 4). Like Toth, I create originally composed soundscapes inspired by my lived experiences e/merging throughout the process of my inquiry. I also reflect on the terminology of a soundscape as a way of structuring my arts-based inquiries.

Chapter 2: Re/sounding Methodology

Drawing on the methodological approach of a/r/tography, I consider how the processes of my inquiry unfold, identities of artist/researcher/teacher informing my work. I re/sound frequencies of a/r/tography that have shaped the form, process and product of this thesis. Recapitulating a sounded journey, I trace a map articulating amplifications, vibrations and sonorities highlighting processes in my inquiry towards pathways of questioning, interconnections and possibilities.

A/r/tography: questioning and living inquiry

A/r/tographical research is not subject to standardized criteria, rather it remains dynamic, fluid and in constant motion. (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xix)

A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology which emerged from the work of researchers at the University of British Columbia (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008). While considering a/r/tography as a means of inquiry, the emphasis is not on the final results of the project but rather on the process of inquiry. According to Irwin and Springgay (2008), “A/r/tography is a living practice, a life creating experience examining our personal, political and/or professional lives” (p. xxix). This continuous process of reflection plays a critical role in enacting a/r/tographical inquiry as a living form of inquiry.

An a/r/tographer is someone who lives in the arts and works to create, teach and research their art making as part of their lived experiences. As noted in the Prologue, in a/r/tography, the letters of the word “art” are divided by slashes. This highlights the researcher’s roles as artist, teacher and researcher as a central part of the research process. Additionally, the word a/r/tography can be viewed as “art” and “-ography”. According to Irwin et al. (2006) this

“purposely illustrates a doubling of identities and concepts rather than a separation/bifurcation of ideas” (p. 70).

The concept of the rhizome also informs understandings of a/r/tography and has been discussed in a number of a/r/tographical works (Irwin, 2003; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis & Grauer, 2006; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Gu & Bickel, 2006). For example, in Irwin et al. (2006), a/r/tographers collaborated with immigrant families on a project called *The City of Richgate Project*. The project involved a community of arts-based researchers working with immigrant families in Richgate, British Columbia to tell stories drawing on art-making as a mode of inquiry. The project drew on conceptions of a rhizome throughout the process of research as well as influenced the structure of the published article. In this particular project, collaboration between a/r/tographers also became an important part of praxis. By using the rhizome as a framework for inquiry, a/r/tographers are able to inquire into the processes of their work and reflect on connections that emerge as part of living inquiry.

My work is informed by a rendering of a/r/tography as a living inquiry. In the study of music and a/r/tography, Gouzouasis (2006) has compared the process of living inquiry to the process of musical performance which involves a “lifelong, cyclical process of practice, research, reflection and performance (p. 30-31). This connection with music and music-making makes a/r/tography particularly relevant in my project.

Understandings of a/r/tography also consist of autoethnographic renderings (Irwin and de Cosson, 2004). In my inquiry, I am inspired by Bakan (2013) and manovski (2014) who both characterize their arts-based research processes as autoethnographic. Bakan’s article engages with his composition of song and lyrics in the context of his life story growing up with a researcher-mother and dealing with her death while in the process of becoming a researcher

himself. manovski's work describes his process of writing down stories from his life and analyzing them for emergent themes in his PhD dissertation. As part of this process, he re-worked chosen stories into a narrative which would connect with larger issues that emerged from lived experiences in the arts providing autoethnographic connections in his work.

Bartleet & Ellis (2009) define autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre that connects the personal to the cultural, social and political" (p. 7). There is an emphasis on process in autoethnography which mirrors an emphasis on process as well as product in a/r/tographical inquiry. Scholars have been writing in diverse and creative areas in the field of autoethnography including discussing autoethnography as methodology (Denzin, 2014; Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; 2000; 2006), in performance studies (Pelias, 2004; 2011; 2014; Spry, 2010; 2011), and in music (Bartleet, 2009; Bartleet & Ellis, 2009) which together inform my project.

Drawing on autoethnography, Ellis (2004) reminds me:

Autoethnographers "look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (p. 37-38)

While autoethnography draws on autobiographical experiences, it differs from other autobiographical genres of writing in that it connects individual experiences with culture, "seeking a resonance" (Pelias, 2004, p. 11). As I reflect on how to connect my stories with culture, I am reminded of Pelias (2004) who suggests, "Culture is not static; it is an ongoing process of social construction, ever changing, always in negotiation" (p. 110). Denzin (2014) also echoes this sentiment as he urges scholars to "connect autobiographies and lived experiences, the epiphanies of lives, to the groups and social relationships that surround and shape persons" (p. 6).

Although music autoethnography is a relatively new area of research, Bartleet & Ellis (2009) observe that “autoethnography frees musicians from writing dry descriptions or reports of musical experiences. Rather, this approach encourages them to convey the meanings of vibrant musical experiences evocatively” (p. 9). These possibilities and opportunities to write evocatively as I inquire into my lived experiences as a participant in competition music festivals are welcomed as I further consider how renderings of a/r/tography inform my inquiry.

Epiphanies, “epiphonies” and Schafer’s soundscapes

Another feature in some forms of autoethnography is the notion of an epiphany (Denzin, 2014; Ellis, 2004). Gouzouasis and Ryu (2014) remind me that “as a form of enlightened realisation, an epiphany is often spurred by an object or event that enables the individual to make an inference or develop a new, deeper understanding of a phenomenon” (p. 7). Similarly Denzin (2014) simply conceives of an epiphany as “meaningful biographical experience” (p. 28). He suggests that “this event, the epiphany, how it is experienced, how it is defined, and how it is woven through the multiple strands of a person’s life, constitutes the focus of critical interpretive inquiry” (Denzin, 2014, p. 28).

I consider the notion of an epiphany as a significant part of my inquiry. When reflecting on my experiences as a participant in competition music festivals, moments of “biographically meaningful experiences” emerge through sounds from my participation. Evoking polyphonies of lived experiences, I inquire into how these events, epiphanies, have shaped my development as an artist/research/teacher.

I listen with Denzin (2014) as biographical experience and memories are re-imagined in the context of autoethnography to reveal new understandings and meanings. Essences of

experiences create stories that are not necessarily factually accurate, but evoke understandings in the life of the artist/researcher/teacher.

The biographical project begins with personal history, with the sting of childhood memory, with an event that lingers and remains in the person's life story (Ulmer, 1989, p. 209). This is the space where biography intersects with history, politics and culture. Autoethnography re-tells and re-performs these life experiences as they intersect in these sites. The life story becomes an invention, a re-presentation, an historical object often ripped or torn out of its context and recontextualized in the spaces and understandings of the story.

In writing an autoethnographic life story, I create the conditions for rediscovering the meanings of a past sequence of events (Ulmer, 1989, p. 211). In so doing, I create new ways of performing and experiencing the past. To represent the past this way does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was". It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 257), to see and rediscover the past not as a succession of events, but as a series of scenes, inventions, emotions, images and stories (Ulmer, 1989, p. 112). (Denzin, 2014, p. 28)

Gouzouasis (2013) also draws on the notion of an epiphany in his autoethnographic work. He applies the term "epiphony" to conceive of an epiphany which is sounded and contains a musical origin (p. 14). Gouzouasis and Ryu (2014) contend that "the suffix, "phony" means "sound" and for musicians important discoveries about the self and others (eg. music students, peers, colleagues) are often based upon acoustic experiences" (p. 7). Considering sound as epiphony requires the creation of sounds as well as careful listening in order to relate the epiphony to the experiences of the self and others. My inquiry draws on a similar metaphor, except that I use the terminology of a soundscape as a way of interrogating sounded moments, epiphanies, in my past experiences as a participant in competition music festivals.

Re/locating sounded moments in my musical past

My inquiry draws on both a/r/tographical and autoethnographic approaches as I consider my lived experiences as a piano student, re/visiting sites of my performances in competition music festivals. I am reminded of Britzman (2003) who states: "The sources of theory, then, are

in practice; in the lives of teachers, in the values, beliefs, and deep conviction enacted in practice, in the social context that encloses such practice, and in the social relationships that enliven the teaching and learning encounter” (p. 64-65).

Prior to immersing myself in a variety of materials, evocative objects (Turkle, 2007), from my participation in competition music festivals, I obtained ethical approval for secondary use of data from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. The materials that I engaged with as part of my research process included recordings and videos of myself performing and preparing for festivals as a music student. I also located musical scores containing writing from myself and my music teacher. These are messy texts with sounded memories leaping from the page each time my fingers touch the piano keys. While performing old songs and improvising new melodies on piano and violin I also re-read adjudication forms, programs from festivals and other written materials such as newspaper articles and lessons records. Adjudication forms are the written records of my performances in competition music festivals which include commentary on the performance by judges of the competition.

As a central part of my work, I include music-making as part of my research praxis by re/learning and re/visiting the repertoire that I performed in competition music festivals as a student. Music-making is included during the process of my inquiry as well as in representations of my inquiry that take shape in this project. Including these materials with/in my inquiry enables me to work reflectively and reflexively (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Lymburner, 2004) with/in this process-oriented inquiry.

Towards a praxis as artist/research/teacher

Throughout my inquiry, I engage in a process of art-making and reflection through journal writing, note taking and crafting stories of my experiences. I am mindful of a/r/tography

as a continuous process and emphasize this process as part of interrogating my own identity as an a/r/tographer.

Irwin and Springgay (2008) state that in a/r/tography, rigour “comes from its continuous reflective and reflexive stance to engagement, analysis and learning” (p. xxix). Lynburner (2004) reminds me, “Arts-based journaling methods provide the opportunity to reflect in action and on action aesthetically, intellectually and introspectively” (p. 87). Chapter 3 contains excerpts from my arts-based journal that I created while working with/in this thesis project. The journal includes text, poetry, visual art and music combined to form a “metissage” (Irwin & deCosson, 2004). I craft these stories of my experiences in response to my memories and engagement with evocative objects and music through a process of note-taking, arts-based journaling and creative writing.

Chapter 4 considers emergent understandings with/in my arts-based journal through original compositions, soundscapes, to accompany my narratives. The theoretical framework of a soundscape allows for multiple openings to emerge in this inquiry. Drawing on the autoethnographic nature of a/r/tographical inquiry, I hope to “seek a resonance” (Pelias, 2004) as I connect my work with the “cultural, social and political” (Bartleet & Ellis, 2009).

“Performance collage” and musical inquiry

From time to time, a/r/tographers may choose to share their inquiries with others and it is here that products are refined and shared. These living inquiry moments are not end results, but rather understandings of experiences along the way. Thus, a/r/tography needs to be pursued continuously over time while searching for ways to disseminate aspects of the work at particular moments in time. (Springgay and Irwin, 2008, p. xxix)

While this inquiry must necessarily take a textual (thesis) form to fulfill requirements for a Master’s degree in Education, I also draw on mediums that reflect the musical nature of my work. With Jenoure (2002), I also feel the need to “begin the process of integrating my

performing with other aspects of my life” (p. 76). Jenoure (2000) develops musical portraiture and performance collage as methods for representing findings from her study involving African American artists working in higher education.

In musical portraiture, Jenoure (2002) uses sounded materials from her interviews with participants to create sonic portraits as part of her findings. She compares the process of creating these portraits to riffs in jazz improvisation. After completing her musical portraits and publishing a book related to her research, Jenoure embarks on a journey to “breathe even more life” into her research by creating *Sweeping the Temple*, a performance collage of one portrait from her research (p. 78).

Leavy (2009) defines performance collage as “the process of musically coding and writing up data culminating in a musical performance” (p. 109). Jenoure (2002) writes that she was inspired to represent her work using performance collage to make her research “more tangible to an audience” as well as more accessible (p. 78). This idea of a musical performance as part of my inquiry resonates as I reflect on understandings of a/r/tography as a continuous process of inquiry. I am reminded by Wilson (2004) that “if we have a holistic view of research and art production, the process of creating, the research and the final product are all integral to the final outcome” (p. 47). Inspired by Jenoure (2002) and drawing on understandings of performance collage and the ongoing nature of a/r/tographical inquiry, I view my arts-based journaling as a form of performance collage, combining text, music and art as an act of performance.

Sounding stories

*Hearts beating across
Time and place, soundscapes emerge
Sounding of stories*

As part of a research class at the University of Ottawa, I was reminded to consider the limitations of my work. I reflect on Denzin (2014) who writes, “A story is always an interpretive account, but, of course, all interpretations are biased” (p. 57). I consider that a limitation of telling my own stories is that my memory is “personal, idiosyncratic and often distorted” (Pelias, 2014, p. 140). At the same time, writing personal narratives also offers ways of knowing which I engage with throughout my a/r/tographical inquiry. Pelias (2004) remarks that “memory is not what emerges from an individual mind but what emerges from social life. So together we share the burden of what is to be told” (p. 58).

It is with this knowledge that I recognize while telling my personal narratives could be considered a limitation of this inquiry, there are also generative possibilities in sharing these personal narratives. I hope that my stories of lived experiences will also be considered a strength of this inquiry through sharing and inquiring in/to my unique narratives, soundscapes in music education.

Chapter 3: Sounding Stories from my past

As I step onto the stage, my heart is pounding. The lights are much brighter than I remember them during the rehearsal. I don't dare look out into the audience. People are shifting in their seats, but

I don't even notice, I am completely focused on moving my legs towards the bench.

It's festival time again

re/visiting

re/sounding

re/locating

Today I am performing a Bach Partita. Why did I choose to start with Bach? He is the hardest to memorize and there are so many people watching me!

Unravelling sounds, moments on a musical journey

Artist

Teacher

Researcher

Ok, I am playing now. My fingers are moving, my brain is moving faster.

I look down at my hands. I gaze in wonder at their movement. I urge myself to focus on the slurs, feeling into the rise and fall of the music.

Stories from my past

Evoking soundscapes

And suddenly

It's festival time again

Introducing my arts-based journal

The poem above reflects my re/turn to sounded moments from my participation in competition music festivals. My arts-based journal represents moments of working material, fragments of poetry, music and narrative engaged with/in processes of listening and performing music from the soundscapes of my past. I chose to create this journal to capture the nature of the improvisatory and sounded moments of my inquiry. Fragments of poetry, music, narrative and visual art that I have created are not illustrative of each other but work together each positioned to perform moments from my experiences as part of this arts-based inquiry.

A large part of my inquiry included improvising as well as relearning/revisiting songs from past festival performances at the piano and violin. While I revisited festival songs in a variety of orders and formats, the entries in this journal are arranged in chronological order to allow the audience to experience my stories with me. The characters in my arts-based journal including adjudicators and other performers are composite characters loosely based on my experiences and details of my narrative have been changed to protect the identities of others that played a role in my stories.

This chapter may feel fragmented as sounds emerge and fade throughout the journal, composing/re/composing experiences of my music education participating in music festivals. Many of the stories are set at the local music festival in western Canada where I performed primarily on piano as a solo instrument. There are also stories from my participation at the provincial level of the festival where each local festival recommended representatives to participate. Throughout the narrative there are also references to my experiences performing solo violin as well as a member of ensembles including piano duets, trios, French horn ensembles, concert band and jazz bands.

This chapter can be read in order, however, I also encourage readers (the audience) to also skip around in the chapter, reading different sections at different times. Sections can also be conceived as different sounds from moments of my participation in music festivals. Reflecting on this journal as rhizomatic, my hope is that by reading the sections in different orders, new understandings and connections can be made as a result of my experiences participating in competition music festivals as part of my music education.



There's a polar bear on the piano!

I meet Fred the polar bear the first time I play piano in the local music festival. When I arrive with my mom at an old church which had been rented for the event, I notice a white, fluffy stuffed toy sitting on the piano. After handing in my music book to a lady at the front of the room, we find seats in a church pew. My mom shows me the written program and whispers to me that there are two kids playing piano before it is my turn to play the piano. She reminds me that I am playing my song, March in F Major which I have just played for my mom before leaving our house to come to the festival. I look back at the stuffed polar bear sitting on the piano at the front of the church. He looks very soft and has a smile stitched into his white face. Just then, an older man stands up and starts talking next to the polar bear.

“Hello everyone, my name is Mr. James and I am going to be the adjudicator for the festival this afternoon. I am so excited to see you all!”

I wondered what the word adjudicator meant.

He continued, “As the adjudicator, it’s my job to listen to you play the piano and tell you about all the wonderful things you are doing while you play! I am also going to write about some things that you can do to help you play piano even better.”

Mr. James picks up the polar bear off the piano. He pats the polar bear’s head and says, “This is my friend, Fred! I brought Fred with me because I live far up north in Canada where there are many polar bears. This way you can know a little about me and where I am from. Fred and I travelled very far to be with you today. I know that sometimes it can be scary to play piano in front of other people, that’s why Fred is going to sit at the piano so that you won’t be alone. Let’s get started and have some fun!”

The first student walks up to the front of the piano. She smiles shyly and sits down on the piano bench. Her legs dangle off the edge as she isn’t tall enough to touch the ground while sitting on the bench. She plays her piano song called *To Fly Like an Eagle* and takes a bow before running back to her parents who are sitting in the second row of the church.

There is a break while Mr. James writes on a sheet of paper and then a boy is called up to the piano to play. He sits down on the bench and looks at the piano keys. He tries touching a few and then looks back at the audience towards his mom.

Mr. James jumps up from his seat to stand beside the boy.

He whispers, “Do you know where to put your fingers?”

The boy shakes his head, looking nervous.

Mr. James shows the boy how to place his fingers, smiles and whispers quietly, “I can’t wait to hear your song. I will be right here if you need any more help. Give your song a try!”

The boy starts tentatively at first but plays the rest of his song without difficulty. He takes a bow and he walks towards his parents who are each holding a camera and beaming.

After Mr. James finishes writing, it is my turn. My name is called and I walk up towards the piano. I sit down and look up at Fred the polar bear. Fred is much larger when I am sitting so close to him! I place my hands on the piano and play my song. Since I had been practicing it for almost a year, I don’t have to think much about playing it. After I finish, I am so excited to leave the stage that I forget to take a bow! Halfway down the church aisle, I remember and take a quick half bow while the audience claps.

My mom smiles at me when I return to my seat and she tells me that I played my song very nicely. She asks me what the polar bear is like. I tell her it is much bigger up close!

There are 12 kids who played songs in the class. Once everyone has finished, Mr. James stands up to speak again. He smiles, pats the polar and sits down at the piano.

“Can I have all the performers come up to the front and stand around me by the piano? I am going to show you some of the wonderful things you did today and also some things to work on as you get older and keep learning the piano. I was so impressed with how well you all played your piano pieces. You played them without the music too which is not easy to do! He pauses and continues, “As you keep learning to play the piano, make sure you play with lots of dynamics. Does anyone know what the word dynamics means?”

A little boy answers, “Louds and softs in music.”

“That’s right!” says Mr. James. “There are signs for louds and softs written into the songs that we are playing. Can anyone tell me the names of any of these signs?”

Recapitulating (festival)

Walking, sitting, standing, bowing

Moving fingers

Marches, Sonatinas, Minuets, Toccatas

Walking, sitting, standing, bowing

Bowing and smiling

Clapping and waiting

Curled fingers

Ta dot ti ta

Titi ta ta ta

Walking, sitting, standing, bowing

Forte, piano, crescendo

Pedals pushing up and down

Wet shoes squeaking

Hands on lap

Walking, sitting, standing, bowing

Fingers slowing

Staccatos ending

Walking, sitting, standing, bowing

Waterfalls of Mentos

Three years later, I am 11 years old and playing piano in the festival again. I didn't play last year since my family went on vacation during festival time. My mom and I arrive at the new community centre which has just opened. There is a grand piano placed in a room normally reserved for dance classes.

Students pour into the room and the festival class begins with the festival secretary introducing the adjudicator. The adjudicator is an older woman this year from another province. She smiles when the secretary who sits beside her introduces her but she doesn't speak. The secretary calls the name of the first performer, a boy playing *Sonatina in G* who rushes down the short aisle and begins playing. I am playing last in the class and have to wait for all the other students to play before my turn.

After he finishes playing his song, everyone claps. The adjudicator begins writing. It takes her a long time to write and the other performers in the audience begin shuffling nervously. I am not wearing shoes since my boots were very wet from the melting snow. I wiggle my toes in my black socks and feel the hardwood floor beneath my seat.

The secretary stands up and calls the name of the second performer. Another boy walks to the front and begins to play his song, *Song of Twilight*. After he finishes, he takes a bow and returns to his seat. The adjudicator begins writing again taking a long time to write her comments. A baby, a sibling of one of the other performers, starts crying and anxious shifting among the audience begins again.

Another student is called to play and the process repeats. While we are waiting, I glance at the program sitting on my mom's lap. There are still 10 performers before my turn! I start feeling very nervous.

My mom senses this and reaches into her purse. She pulls out a package of candies, Mentos. They are fruit flavoured and there are three different kinds in a roll of candy: lemon, orange, and strawberry. At the top of the roll is an orange flavoured mento, my favourite kind! I quietly chew the mento in my mouth while I wait for the next performer.

9 more performers until my turn. I smile at one of my friends sitting across the room.

Her turn is in three performers.

8 performers

7 performers

Waiting

Waiting

My mom offers me another mento. It is strawberry this time and I take it quietly and eat it while I wait for my turn.

6 performers

5 performers

4 performers

I whisper to my mom that I would like one more mento before my turn. She points to the performer on the stage and motions that I will have to wait until the adjudicator is writing.

3 performers

2 performers

It's my turn next! Butterflies swirl in my stomach and I wait for my name to be called.

“Jessica Duerksen is playing the song Waterfall.”

I walk in my socks up to the front. I sit down and test out the pedal. My teacher spent lots of lesson time coaching me to test the pedal before playing. She said this was because all pedals feel different and you need to get the feel before you start playing.

I start playing my song and it is going well. As I get to the middle section, I make a mistake and miss a low A but keep playing. I continue to the next section and keep going. Before I know it, I am playing the ending of the song. I lift my foot off the pedal and take a bow.

As I reach my seat, my mom is holding the pack of Mentos. She tells me I played well and asks me if I would like one. I take one and wait for the adjudicator to finish writing.

Since I was the last performer, the adjudicator stands up and starts talking after my turn, “You all played very nicely. I have written down a few things for you to work on. I am going to call you up one by one and talk to you and the audience about some things to work on.”

She calls up each student individually and then it is my turn.

I walk to the front and the adjudicator tells me, “You did a beautiful job playing the dynamics in the song. I know you missed that low A today, can you make sure you use the correct fingering there? I think that will help you not miss it next time. Also at the end, there are

finger numbers written in your book. I noticed that you didn't use those fingers. Can you fix that with your teacher at your piano lessons?"

I nod as she hands me my paper, my book and a ribbon.

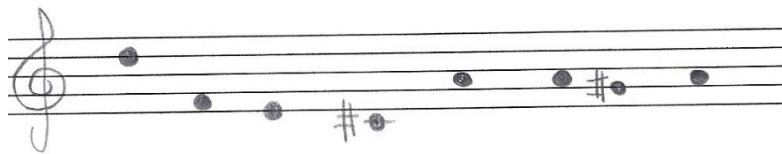
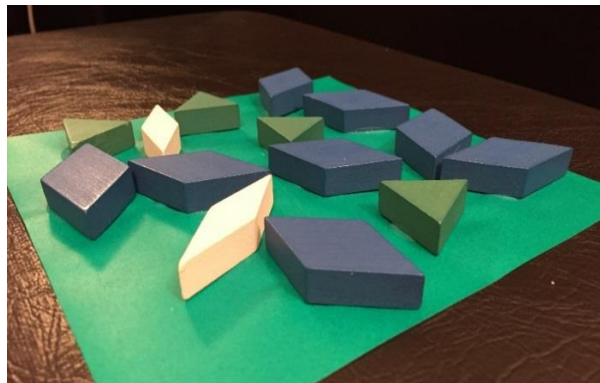
I walk back to sit with my mom.

The adjudicator clears her throat and says, "Now it's time to announce the winners."

I look up, surprised. Winners? There have never been winners before in the festival.

Usually everyone gets a ribbon for participating but no one was the winner!

The adjudicator continues speaking, "Now that you have reached Level 4 piano, I choose a winner and a second place performer in each music festival class. The winner of this class is Franklin Oreal and the second place performer is Jessica Duerksen."



Track 2

Fleeting improvisations

Autumn

Listening to songs played on piano

My teacher's hands fall across the keys

Punctuated by laughter and smiles

Hands moving quickly now

Sparkling tones soaring

Sitting back at the piano bench

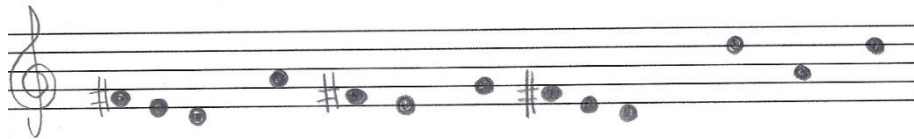
The smell of coffee

Open books scattered across the floor

My mind is whirling

*"I liked the third one and the fourth one
you played"*

Pencils writing, decisions made.



Track 3

Winter

Many songs chosen

Lists are handed in

In the countdown to festival

Practicing begins

Learning notes

How to count

Dynamics

Accents

Tone

Memory is hardest

“Keep practicing”

“Sounds great!”

“Bring out the R.H.”

“Sparkly fingers!”

Spring

Snow is melting

Countdown is on

Practice challenge is completed

Final lessons, finishing touches

Where has the time gone?

Waltz in B minor

The next year I play a song called *Waltz in B Minor* at the music festival. I notice in the festival program that there is one other student playing the same *Waltz in B Minor* and she is performing right before me in the festival class. I return to the same piano and same room as the year before. At least I am familiar with the piano from last year! After sitting down, my mom pulls out a package of Mentos to show me. I smile and remember last year eating Mentos while waiting for my turn to play *Waterfall*.

One of my friends, Kara, comes and sits down right beside me.

I ask her, “Are you playing in this class too?”

Kara responds, “No. I am playing in the class after you, but there is no break in between so I get to watch you play too!”

The secretary stands up, introduces the adjudicator and calls the first performer to play his song. He sits down at the piano and begins to play. In between performers, my mom passes me the package of Mentos. Kara and I each take one. There isn't as much waiting between the performers this year since the adjudicator seems to write very quickly.

Before long, there is only one performer left to play before my turn. She is from a neighbouring small town and I have performed in festival classes with her before. She sits down at the piano and begins playing the same song that I am going to play, *Waltz in B Minor*.

I notice right away that her version of *Waltz in B Minor* sounds very different than my version. Her performance is much quicker and she doesn't take any pauses throughout the piece. She plays well and after the final notes sound, she takes a bow and sits down.

The adjudicator writes comments and I can hear the scratching of the pencil against the page.

“The next performer is Jessica Duerksen and she will also be playing *Waltz in B Minor*”

I stand up and walk towards the piano. I feel very nervous, my *Waltz in B Minor* doesn't sound at all like what the last girl played. What if I was playing it wrong and the adjudicator doesn't like my playing?

I begin to play, my interpretation is slower emphasizing melodic lines in the right hand. I take my time and perform the “rubato” sections just as my teacher has taught me. Rubato, I remember, was used in musical songs from the romantic era to give songs a feeling of ebb and flow by using slight tempo changes.

I am flushed and nervous the entire time I am playing. I don't even feel relief when the song is over. As I am sitting down, I suddenly become aware of a lot of whispering amongst the audience. Does the audience always whisper so much between performances? I had never noticed before. Maybe they were whispering about how my version of the song was so different from the other girl's version?

I sit back down in my seat.

I wonder why the person who made the program decided to put myself and the other girl playing the same song right beside each other in the festival class? There were many other people playing in the class. Couldn't they have separated us so our two performances wouldn't have been compared so directly?

While I was thinking about these things, the final performers played their songs and the adjudicator finished writing.

The adjudicator stands up and begins speaking, “Today you gave some great examples of music from the Romantic era. You may have noticed from our performances today that there are

many different ways to interpret music from the Romantic era. For example, Jessica and Louisa both played the same song, *Waltz in B Minor*, but they had very different ways of interpreting it.”

I breathed a sigh of relief, the adjudicator hadn't thought my way of performing was wrong, just different from the other performer. Even though I wasn't wrong, I still didn't like the feeling of playing the same song as another performer.



Dissonance reverberates

The same year that I played *Waltz in B Minor* on the piano, I also played solo violin in the festival. The violin festival was only hosted every other year at the local music festival since it wasn't as popular an instrument and there were not enough students to pay for having an adjudicator every year. In the violin festival, each performer had to have a piano accompanist perform with them. This added an element of difficulty as the piano accompanist usually had an introduction and the violinist had to remember when the violin part started.

I walk onto the stage with my accompanist. Holding my violin, I stand close to the piano accompanist and get ready to play.

Suddenly I hear someone yelling, “STOP! STOP! You are standing in the wrong place!”

I look up and see the adjudicator rushing towards me. She runs from the top of the auditorium, down the stairs and onto the stage.

“You aren’t standing in the correct spot on the stage!” She abruptly pulls my arm and leads me to another place on the stage. “There you go, now wait until I get back to my chair and then you can start playing.”

I glance over at my piano accompanist. She smiles reassuringly at me, but I feel quite stressed and I do not want to play my song.

I squint to see that the adjudicator has found her place and I begin to play.

Starting on an up bow, I perform *Concerto in C* with my accompanist. The whole time I am playing, I am thinking about how the adjudicator surprised me by running down onto the stage. Part way through the song, I realize that I can’t make eye contact with my accompanist like I normally do, because I am standing in a new place! I finish the song, barely aware of what I am playing.

My accompanist and I take a bow.

The students who perform after me make sure to stand exactly where the adjudicator positioned me.

Following the performances, the adjudication begins.

The adjudicator shows me again, “This is the correct place to stand on the stage. You have to be able to stand correctly in order to perform the violin. I hope that you remember this for the next time you perform.”



Rehearsing

Stage lights beam down

The piano feels large and unfamiliar

I sit in the nearly empty auditorium surrounded by a few friends

And my teacher

“Jess, it’s your turn next!”

“What are you going to play for us?”

“I think I will try out my Nocturne”

“Wonderful choice! Don’t forget to slow down at the end!

Give us time to settle into the beauty!”

I walk up to the piano and sit down

The lights are even brighter and the gleam of the piano reveals a perfect reflection of my hands

I begin

Notes swirl around me

Drawing inwards

Breath

Movement of sounds

Energy channeled through finger tips

Must remember to slow down at the end

Slowing, lingering, holding

Release

Everyone claps as I practice a bow.

“Great performance Jess! The ending is just right now! I had a couple of thoughts about your middle section. On this piano the left hand sounded a bit too loud. Do you think you could play it a bit more quietly?”

“Would you like me to try it for you now?”

“Give it a try! I will let you know if it’s still too loud”



A trip to highlights night

“And the winner of this class is Jessica Duerksen”

Winning a class in the music festival means that I am invited to play at “Highlights Night”. Highlights night features all the winners of all the classes for a particular grade and instrument. The winners compete against each other for medals, trophies and scholarships which are decided and announced by the adjudicator at the end of the evening. The highlights evenings is recorded by the local radio station and the performances are broadcast on air several weeks later. The names and photos of the winners are also published in the local newspaper.

In Grade 6 piano, I won several classes and am invited to perform at highlights night. The highlights night is taking place in a local church which seated over 500 people. The auditorium isn't full, but there is a substantial audience of friends and family members to support the competitors.

The president of the festival greeted us, “Welcome everyone to the highlights evening for Grade 4-6 Piano! We are celebrating excellence this evening as each student here has practiced hard and performed wonderfully this past week. As you can see, the order of performers and the classes that they have won are printed on the program. You should have received this program when you entered the auditorium. We will follow this order with a very short break between each student for the adjudicator to make notes. I will announce the name of each student when we are ready for them to perform. Remember students, you are each performing two selections! One song must be the one that you won the class for and the other song can be your own choice. Please announce your songs to the audience when you come up to play. Sit back and enjoy the show everyone! Oh, and please turn off all cellphones, pagers and refrain from entering and exiting the auditorium while a performer is playing.”

Sitting in the audience, I am surrounded by my parents and two sisters, Shelley and Katherine. Since I am in Grade 6 piano, I am playing near the end of the evening. My sister, Shelley, is also performing in Grade 4 piano and it is almost her turn to play. My mom smiles at us reassuringly and offers my sister some Mentos. She turns to me and offers one to me as well.

Before I know it, it is my turn to play. I had performed lots of songs at the festival this year and have chosen two of my favourite pieces to play again at highlights night.

I walk onto the stage and turn to face the audience. “I will be playing *Sonatina in D* by Haydn and *Midsummer Song* by Kioke. I am much more nervous playing at highlights night than I was during the regular festival competition. I can see all the gleaming trophies and medals. They look beautiful! Despite being more nervous, I play my songs and return to my seat.

After all the performers finish playing, the adjudicator stands up to announce the winners.

“Starting with Grade 4 piano, Shelley Duerksen wins the trophy for outstanding piano performance!”

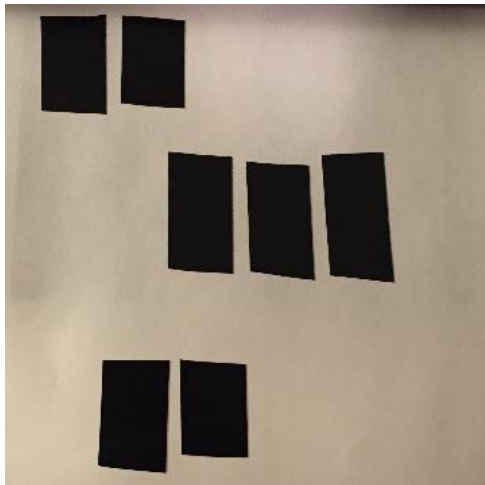
My sister had won a trophy! I was thrilled but also nervous for the winners of my level to be announced.

The adjudicator continues, “In Grade 6 piano, Jessica Duerksen wins a trophy for her outstanding festival performance.”

I won a trophy too! I am very excited and nervous, walking up to shake the adjudicators hand and receive the trophy. I had never won a trophy before!

After highlights evening, I go to McDonalds with my family to celebrate the end of the festival for the year. Since the festival happens in the spring time each year, we order Crème Egg McFlurries, an ice cream treat which isn’t available all year.

After winning the trophy, I get to keep it for a year. We sit the trophies on the piano and our names are engraved into them at the local sports store. We also go down to the offices of the local newspaper to have our photos taken with the trophies. I am very proud to win an award at the festival. I think I will play more songs in the festival next year too!



Rendering pianos s/p/laces

I

An old church piano

Upright, dark brown

The golden pedals creak

They barely move when I push them

I want to push further and further into the pedals, but they won't move

I have to trust the sounds to come out

The keys are very square and feel bulky to the touch

Their angular shapes unfamiliar to my slender fingers

Sounds emerging, brassy and clear

The shrillness and brilliance of a lark singing on a bright spring day

II

In the room of mirrors

A large black grand piano

Imposing and strong

Angular keys suit this monster

A heavy bench and hard to adjust

Will I be able to move it as I walk to the front of the room?

Bright but sensitive

Textures and colours are coaxed from the beast

Exaggerating every gesture

Every moment

Easily too harsh

Soft brushes on keys fail to sound

Challenging the extreme

Taming the beast

Yearning for control

III

Under bright stage lights

old

worn

seasoned sounds

experience

gleaming lights on black lacquer

then glimpses of fingers

dashing

running

sighing across the keys

Flickers of light drawing in

searching for an escape

in the house of mirrors

Finely tuned

possibilities become endless

soft delicate sounds, emerging across the otherwise empty stage

attacks can be tamed

tempered

controlled

Control brings pleasure creating textures, tones and sounds

varying

changing

morphing

breathing

swaying

silent



Paper cranes flying

As I get older, I start getting more nervous about my festival performances. I become more self-conscious and more nervous about making mistakes in performances. While waiting for my turn to perform had always been difficult, I now begin to feel very anxious during the periods of waiting.



Being from a small town, the performers at my level are generally the same from year to year. The more advanced students compete at the auditorium in the local high school which is home to the best piano in town. At this particular festival class, there is a last minute change in location to the community centre because of an event at the high school. I am nervous about playing on this other piano, a piano I hadn't performed on in many years.

Sitting again with my mom and waiting for my turn, I am watching members of the audience during the pauses between performers. A girl sitting next to me, who is a couple years older than I am, is fiddling with some post-it notes on her music book. She smiles at me and then starts folding one of the post-it notes in between performances. It is a good distraction for me to watch her folding this tiny post it note.

At first, I think she is making a paper airplane but she keeps folding. She is quite good at origami. After some more folding, she finishes making a miniature paper crane.

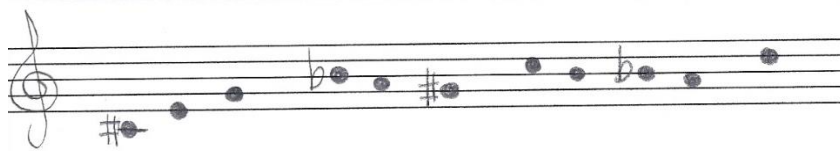
She smiles at me again and passes it to me while the adjudicator was writing about another student's performance. She whispers, "It's for you! I always get so nervous at these things. I hope you aren't too nervous and that you play really well!"

I smile back and whisper, "Thanks!"

I hold the paper crane until it is my turn to play then I pass it to my mom to hold. I perform my sonata. I had chosen an obscure piece to play for this class as I didn't want to play the same songs as other performers after my experience with *Waltz in B Minor*.

Hearing the sound of the piano ringing out when I touched the keys is exciting. I play my song, take a bow and return to my seat, taking the paper crane back from my mom.

After the class is over, I take the paper crane home with me and place it on my desk in my room. Receiving this gift made me aware that other performers feel the same type of nervousness and insecurities as I do. After reflecting on how much that paper crane meant to me, I learned that everyone needs encouragement and support when performing.



Track 5

Articulating cadences

Pencil markings

Erased from music books

Hiding mistakes from view

Can't be hidden in sound

Circles highlight

"Slow!"

Arrows point

"Don't stop!"

Keeping time

“1+2+3+4+”

Clarifying tones

“Singing”

Mood and character

“Bright and cheerful”

Messy scores

Red, purple, yellow, blue

Weekly layers

Adding through time

Green, brown, orange, pink

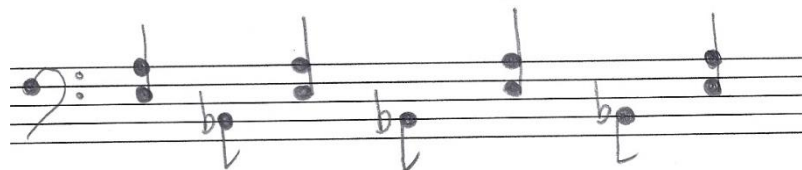
Interpretations

Carefully noted

Respecting

Valuing

Learning continues



Track 6

Utterances of Haydn

Pacing in circles in my bedroom. The fluorescent lights are glaring down on me.

“Remember to start on G and D,” I tell myself.

“G B D G!” I sing out loud.

“They have to be sparkly, vibrant and loud.”

“There has to be energy running through my fingers.”

“I need to start in time and continue at that pace for the rest of the song.”

“Can’t forget to bring out the right hand too.”

“That piano is so hard to play different volumes on!”

“G Major and then D Major at the end of the exposition.”

“The last note of that section is a high D with a D major triad underneath.”

I sigh, “Ok, I will talk through that section again.”

I continue pacing around my room in circles. My feet are keeping the beat with the music that is playing in my head. I reach the development section and I motion Alberti bass in the air while saying bass notes out loud.

“G, A, B, G...ahh what comes next?”

Walking over to the musical score open on my desk, I see that I must go down to play an F#.

“Ok, starting that section again. G, A, B, G, F#.”

“The dominant preparation on D leads me back into G major for the recapitulation.”

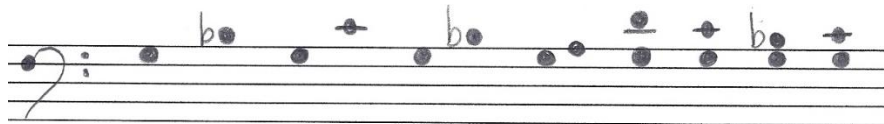
I spend another minute looking over the final chords in the score before starting again and running through the whole song in my head with my fingers and mind working together to test my memory.

Feeling confident, I hear my parents calling from upstairs. “Time to leave for the festival!” Arriving at the auditorium, I sink into a familiar rhythm, handing in my music, I sit down and get ready to play.

“Jessica Duerksen is playing Sonata in G major by Haydn.”

I walk onto the stage where bright lights shine down on me just like in my bedroom.

“Remember to start on G and D,” I tell myself.



Track 7

Ostinati

Mentos sit on the kitchen table

Construction paper covered in hand-drawn practice charts

Littering the floor

A metronome ticks

Songs practiced in the order performed

A paper crane sits on the piano

Concerts for family and friends

On a Sunday afternoon

The piano sits silent before a performance

Tally charts

Motivate

Countdowns

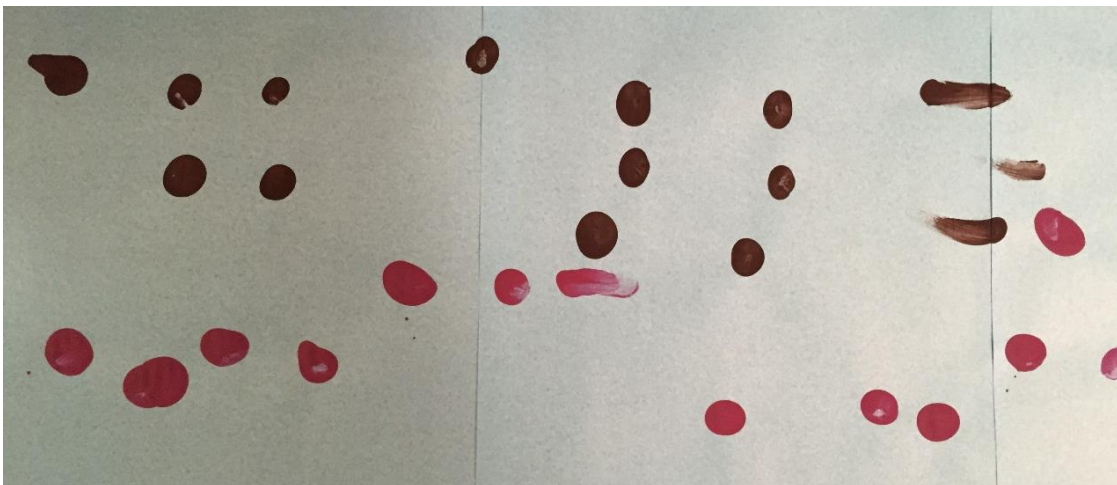
Keep time

Forgetting to remember

Ice-cream to celebrate

Practicing to perform

A metronome ticks



Spectrums in flux

While I mostly compete in the local festival, I am also recommended to represent the local music festival at the provincial level on several occasions. The format is similar to that of the local music festival. There are still classes of students grouped by instrument and level however each student plays two songs instead of one in the class. The provincial festival is hosted in large cities throughout the province. It is usually over a weekend and I travel with my family to perform. We stay in a hotel the night before and then I perform the following day.

One of the challenges of this is that I am not able to warm up prior to performing. This is stressful as I have to trust myself to remember my songs even though my fingers aren't warm before playing on stage. At the provincial level, adjudicators provide written and verbal feedback on my performance to help me improve my playing.

At the provincial festival, I have an identity crisis. There are so many people who look just like me! Teenage girls playing the piano all dressed the same with flared black pants and shirts from the mall in the same style. I wonder if the adjudicator has trouble distinguishing between so many people who look quite similar. There are also boys who perform at provincials although there are fewer boys than girls.

The winner of the provincial festival is almost always from a large city and as a girl from a small rural town, I am not sure if I belong.



Track 8



Memorizing memories

I have been watching a class where my sister Katherine is playing the piano. The first student to go up and play can't remember how to start his song. This is a somewhat common occurrence and the adjudicator offers that the student play with the music instead of playing for memory.

The student is clearly flustered but agrees. With the music now in place, he tries to continue. He isn't able to continue. After numerous more tries at restarting the student leaves the stage and returns to his seat without completing his song.

This experience represents my greatest fear of performing...that I will forget my song and not be able to continue in front of an audience.

The class continues on and the rest of the students performed their pieces. When the adjudicator stands up to provide comments at the end of the class, he says encouraging words to the student who forgot his piece. He also notes how difficult it is to be the first performer on the stage.

The class finishes and all the performers are leaving. The adjudicator walks over to the student who forgot his song and asks if he would like to try it again for just him after all the students leave?

The student nods and smiles.

Music is taken away

Is the sound gone?

No

The sound is remembered

It is felt

It is heard

It is movement

How do you remember sounds?

How can you recreate sounds?

How can sounds be exactly the same?

How are sounds played again and again?

Sounds are refined

Sounds are studied

Sounds are learned

And sometimes sounds are forgotten

Dressing up

I am 14 years old and getting dressed for a piano competition. It is the Provincial Finals – a big deal for a Mennonite girl from a small town. I had noticed differences in ethnicity between competitors before but when I looked in the mirror, I felt like I had no visible representation of my ethnicity. And Mennonites have a reputation of being musical too!

I had a problem though, I didn't look like a Mennonite. The judges at the competition wouldn't be able to "see" me as a Mennonite. Without knowing it, I am looking for ways to represent part of my identity.

I rifle through my closet until I find a long plain grey skirt. It reaches to my ankles. I put a zip up sweatshirt over a green blouse. I wear no makeup and pull my hair into the traditional hair style of my ancestors.

As I emerge from the basement, my mom bursts out laughing and asks if I mean to compete "looking like that". I explain to her that I thought this was a way I could show the judges that I am a Mennonite.

I arrive at the provincial music festival in my "Mennonite outfit". It gives me confidence as I am preparing to perform. It makes me feel proud of my heritage and I hope that others would recognize me as a Mennonite. I am focused on my appearance and I perform with confidence.



Exchanging harmonies

Four hands

Fingers flying everywhere

Rehearsals are held across the street

Running back and forth

Six hands

Mozart singing

Dancing over top

Rising between strings

Voices breathe

Harmonies expand

Drawing inwards

Soaring outwards

Brass gleams

Horns in fifths

Medieval melodies

Trumpeting new songs



Ants!

Playing piano at an advanced level, the festival classes have fewer performers in each class but the songs are quite long. Fellow performers are friends and acquaintances from many years of performing together at the local music festival. We share Mentos while waiting between performances and cheer each other on.

I am playing a song by Debussy in a class on Impressionist music. In Debussy's music the sonorities are rich and I enjoy the changes in tone quality and pacing throughout the song. After all the performers are finished playing, the adjudicator calls us to sit at the front of the auditorium and she conducts her adjudication in a workshop style where she calls each performer up to the piano and works with us to improve our pieces.

I enjoy this approach for several reasons. I sometimes find it hard to read the adjudicator's writing on the page so this way I can speak with the adjudicator directly. Also I have a chance to learn from everyone else's workshop time too. Sitting at the front of the auditorium with my friend Sara, we are watching one of the other students on the stage.

The adjudicator is describing how to pedal in impressionist music. "It's important to follow the markings the way they are written in the musical score. The composers themselves often wrote these markings in and had particular ideas about how to pedal their music. It's very different from the romantic period. Musical style is evolving...."

The adjudicator continues speaking but my attention is drawn to Sara who is motioning to me to look at the big ant crawling across the floor.

I smile. This is highly unusual!

We both continue to follow the ant with our eyes while the adjudicator continues speaking about some of the challenges of performing Ravel, Debussy and Satie.

Sara is called on the stage to receive feedback on her performance. My attention is diverted from the ant to watch her. The adjudicator is coaching her to bring out the melody in her left hand thumb.

“The left hand thumb must sing through the right hand chords. Do you see how the melody transfers between the hands here? It’s very important that the audience hears this transition. Try it one more time for me, really sing those left hand thumbs!”

Sara continues playing and my attention momentarily shifts back to the ant....

It’s still crawling on the floor!

I clap for Sara who has finished her workshop and it is my turn to go up and play.

I smile at Sara as we pass on the stairs up to the stage.

The adjudicator starts talking about having a flowing left hand as move across the piano.

“Try playing this section a bit faster. I think it will help the flow of your left hand.”

I play the section faster.

“Much better,” says the adjudicator. “Now can you also try slowing down more when you get to the end of that section, but maintain that sense of flow. Oh, and don’t forget to keep highlighting the top of the chord in your right hand. That’s the melody and we must hear that at all times.”

My workshop time continues as I try out a few new ideas with the adjudicator.

Returning to my seat, Sara can barely contain her laughter.

“What’s going on?” I whisper.

“It’s the ant!” she replies. “I can’t find it!”

“Where did you last see it?”

“It was crawling under the chairs close to where you are sitting!”

Listening backwards

“A nice quick march”

“Good pause before performing”

“Opening felt a bit rushed”

“Pedal was a bit blurry – work for better clarity”

“Make sure the opening 8ths are exactly in time”

“A gentle character to this playing, very appropriate”

“Expressive playing!”

“Opening phrases were well shaped”

“Work for more legato phrasing”

“Good sense of Haydn style”

“Well done!”

“m. 9-11 start quietly!”

“Nice control of trills”

“Promising musician”

“Place octave firmly m. 27-30”

“Watch that sounds don’t become pressed into the keys”

“Beautiful lyrical approach to this piece!”



Showcasing

Now I am at an advanced piano level and the local music festival has introduced Showcase evenings. At these evenings, the trophy winners from all of the disciplines across the festival are invited to perform and there is no adjudication at the event. It is meant rather to showcase the talent in the local community. Trophies also start to be presented on this evening.

In my last year participating at the local music festival, I win a trophy. I am allowed to select any song to perform on the showcase evening. This is to be my final performance at the local music festival. I choose my favourite song, *I leap through the sky with stars* by Alexina Louie. It is a song I am very proud of and have practiced hard. I enjoy the style that Alexina Louie composed in and I feel an emotional connection with this song. I have already performed the song in the festival and was recommended to play this song at the provincial level.

The lights shine down on me as I walk on stage.

After pausing for a moment, I begin to play.

Quietly sounds emerge, swelling louder and then back down.

A sharp trill, long and loud chords punctuate the left hand.

Music of the extremes.

I feel my body move with the music and I am transported to another time.

There's a ringing.

It's loud.

It's not my music.

I continue to play and I realize that the fire alarm is sounding!

I continue to play, perhaps it will stop. Another 30 seconds and the fire alarm doesn't cease adding to my musical score.

I stand up and leave the stage with the audience who are also filing out of the auditorium.

Outside, the director of the festival informs me that there is no fire and someone pulled the alarm. I can continue to play if I choose so when everyone returns. It is my decision.

Once everyone returns to their seats, I return to the stage,

And take a bow.

Chapter 4: Performing soundscapes

This chapter engages with materials from my arts-based journal drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape. Listening to themes and variations in my stories, I consider a multiplicity of ways of bringing the notion of a soundscape into my experiences participating in competition music festivals. I conceive of the smaller sections in this chapter as a performance collage of sounded moments, writings, and music (Jenoure, 2002).

While inquiring into my lived experiences drawing on the terminology of a soundscape, text is not placed higher than music or visual art-making. I encourage this chapter to be read in any order allowing for new understandings and interactions between moments in the collage to come to the foreground. These multiple entry points into soundscapes remind me of the notion of a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I am inspired to begin in the middle engaging with a/r/tography as a process-oriented inquiry.

The soundscape I present here is my own and is performed for an audience of readers/listeners. I experienced music festivals as a participant for over 10 years including performances in solo piano, violin ensembles and bands. I encourage artist/researcher/teachers to inquire into lived experiences as part of artistic praxis and I hope that the audience will hear a resonance in stories, soundscapes and connections.

Soundscape 1

While composing a musical soundscape I reflect on possibilities of including music-making and musical form as ways for structuring my inquiry. The basis for my compositions are many of my improvised sounded moments from my arts-based journal in Chapter 3. This process of joining and combining musical fragments to create a large work is a familiar activity for musicians, composers and improvisers across a variety of music styles.

Music-making has been included as an important process throughout this thesis. I now draw attention to some of these experiences so that audience may also reflect on the compositional process of my soundscapes. When I started my inquiry into my past experiences as a participant in competition music festivals, I spent much of my time working with written materials sitting at my piano. I would improvise small sections of melody and harmony at the piano while thinking about details, contexts and meanings, of my past lived experiences.

At other times, I re/learned and re/played songs that I performed in the festival many years ago. As part of this process I located musical scores from when I was a student participating in music festivals. I reviewed markings written in the scores and also re-read adjudication forms while playing the songs. Some of the music came back quickly to my fingers. It was as if I had played the songs only days ago, even though it had been years. Others returned to my fingers and body after much practice. For these songs, I had to practice small sections over and over. I was returning not only to the experience of performing but also to the experiences of practicing and preparing for a performance.

I improvised melodies on the violin as well, sometimes transferring melodies from the piano to the violin and then back again. This process made me aware of the timbres and technical considerations of different musical instruments. I also became aware of the distinctness of sounds. This distinctness created different resonances as I interrogated my experiences and reflected on my sounded past.

As a current piano teacher, I also considered moments from my musical past while teaching my current students. Listening to my own students perform songs that I had once played in the festival brought back my own sounded moments including the struggles and challenges of learning new pieces in time for festival performances. These experiences as a

piano teacher also shaped my current inquiry as I reflect on moments from my past as a participant in competition music festivals.

In writing this soundscape, I reflect on Gouzouasis (2013) who reminds me that music as arts-based research is not necessarily accessible for an audience of non-musicians. Gouzouasis notes his own disappointment when collaborating with visual artists and poets that questions from an audience were rarely addressing the musical aspects of the presentation. He expresses further frustration about having to defend and explain his musical art while other artistic disciplines do not always require the same amount of explanation. It is my hope that listeners will be able to engage with this soundscape as part of the arts-based findings of this project. The music included here is not meant to be “decorative” but rather contributes to understandings and questions that emerges from this inquiry.

I

8va

II.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The treble clef staff contains notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The bass clef staff contains notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. A dashed line connects G4 in the treble to G2 in the bass. A trill 'tr.' is written above the C5 note.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The treble clef staff is empty. The bass clef staff contains notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. A trill 'tr.' is written above the C3 note.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The treble clef staff is empty. The bass clef staff contains notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. A trill 'tr.' is written above the C3 note.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The treble clef staff is empty. The bass clef staff contains notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. A trill 'tr.' is written above the C3 note.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The bass clef staff contains a sequence of notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The treble clef staff is empty.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The bass clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The treble clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5. There are some handwritten annotations like '7' and '3' above the notes.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The bass clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The treble clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The bass clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5. The treble clef staff contains notes: F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5, F5, G5, A5, B5.

III.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The treble clef staff has a 5/4 time signature and contains two whole rests. The bass clef staff has a 5/4 time signature and contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The treble clef staff has a 3/4 time signature and contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7. The bass clef staff contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The treble clef staff has a 3/4 time signature and contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7. The bass clef staff contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The treble clef staff contains four chords: G4, A4, B4, C5; D5, E5, F5, G5; A5, B5, C6, D6; E6, F6, G6, A6. The bass clef staff contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The treble clef staff contains a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note G4 in the second measure, and a half note A4 in the third measure. A slur connects the G4 and A4 notes. The bass clef staff contains a sixteenth-note scale starting on C4: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The treble clef staff contains a whole note chord (F4, A4, C5) in the first measure, followed by a whole note chord (G4, B4, D5) in the second measure, and a whole note chord (A4, C5, E5) in the third measure. A slur connects the second and third measures. The bass clef staff contains a sixteenth-note scale starting on C4: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The treble clef staff contains a half note chord (F4, A4, C5) in the first measure, followed by a half note chord (G4, B4, D5) in the second measure, and a half note chord (A4, C5, E5) in the third measure. The bass clef staff contains a sixteenth-note scale starting on C4: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The treble clef staff contains a half note chord (F4, A4, C5) in the first measure, followed by a half note chord (G4, B4, D5) in the second measure, and a half note chord (A4, C5, E5) in the third measure. The bass clef staff contains a sixteenth-note scale starting on C4: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff. The top staff is in treble clef and contains two whole notes: a C4 (middle C) and a G4 (one octave above middle C). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The notation is handwritten and includes some additional markings like a brace and a fermata-like symbol above the second note in the top staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

An empty five-line musical staff.

Soundscape 2



One of the challenges I experienced while writing this thesis was discussing my project with others who were interested to hear what I was working on. I found myself explaining my thesis in different ways depending on who I was speaking to. When I was struggling to understand an idea and how it would fit into my project, I would call upon my thesis supervisor or fellow graduate students to discuss my project with me. Our discussions were on-going from when I started graduate school until the completion of this project. These sounded interactions and the feedback I received played a critical role in shaping this project to its completed form.

When discussing the project with others who weren't involved in the project directly, I would often generalize and state that my project was about "music education", "music festivals and the student experience" or "my experiences competing in music festivals as a student". If someone expressed interest in this topic, I would expand my discussion and inform them about some of the complexities and details of the project. It was through these discussions that I became aware of the importance of audience. I realized that I wanted to make my work accessible to a number of different audiences including academics, musicians, and others who were interested in music festivals and their role in music education.

I was already in the process of writing my thesis following many months of arts-based journaling and music-making when I was discussing my project with some interested friends and family. Someone suggested that I form a visual representation from excerpts of musical scores that I performed in music festivals as sounded moments to create a model of some of the connections and interactions that occurred through my experiences participating in music festivals. Mark, who suggested this idea, kindly offered to help me make a digital model, however, in the spirit of using my hands and body in performance, I opted to make a hand-made model and photograph it to be included in this project. Many thanks to Mark for giving me this new perspective on visualizing my experiences through the music I performed in competition music festivals.

The idea of creating a visual sculpture drawing on fragments of music that I performed in music festivals appealed to me for several reasons. Initially it reminded me of R. Murray Schafer's (1980) article on sound sculptures using found and recycled objects. Schafer states that his "junk sound sculptures are forms of bricolage; they are expressions of energy conservation and recycling. They breathe new life into old objects" (p. 33-34). In the article, Schafer chronicles how he had never conceived of sound sculptures until he started constructing one with a friend made from found materials in his barn in southern Ontario. Through constructing several sound sculptures and by observing others interacting with his sound sculptures, he concludes the article by reflecting on possibilities for constructing sound sculptures with students as a new way to interact with music.

This concept of representing my experiences through a sculpture or model also reminded me of the notion of the rhizome. Several scholars have started to make connections between the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and new pathways in the field of music education

(Gould, 2006; 2007; Lines, 2008; 2013; Richerme, 2013). Reviewing the work of previous scholars helps me conceptually situate my own work with/in this space.

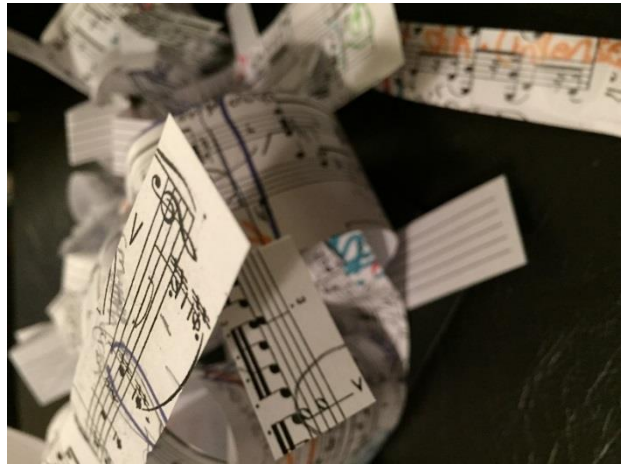
Lines (2013) conceives of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies as "machines for change" in music education (p. 23). Learning is characterized as a rhizome, pathways extending in all directions, a metaphor for emerging possibilities. The rhizome encourages music educators to reconsider understandings of differences within musical education. "Always in the middle, the Deleuzian music educator is aware of the historical past and the prospective future in relation to the immediate musical events they are immersed in" (p. 28). This notion of the middle along with the rhizome inspires me to consider my musical past performing in competition music festivals.

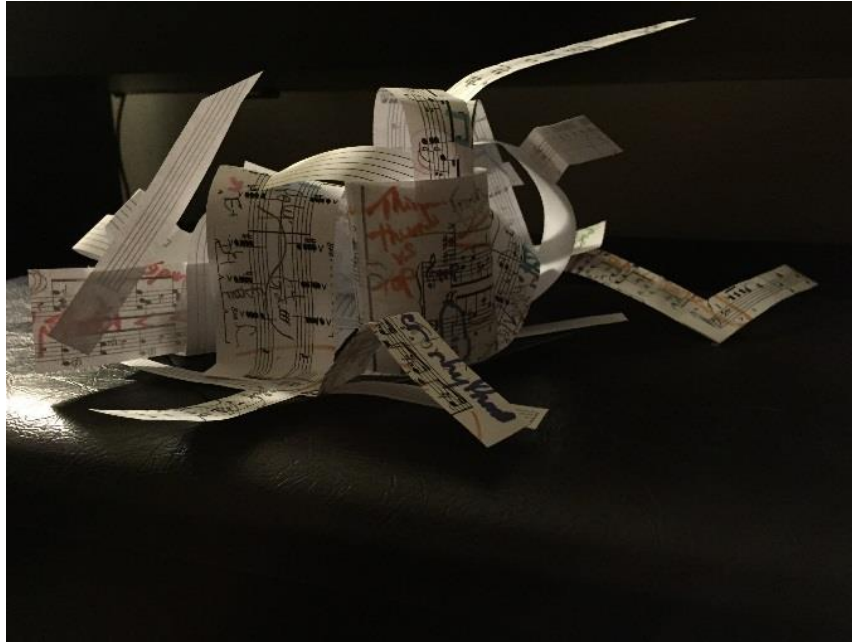
Richerme (2013) calls on music educators to make more localized connections between music education and the communities where their students live. She draws on the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari including the notions of mapping and nomads. She suggests that educators must become nomads and continually redraw their mappings and understandings of music education. Richerme also urges music educators and students to actively work to form both global and local connections in their lived experiences in music education. The idea of mapping reminds me of soundscapes and possibilities for connections with place that can emerge through inquiry.

Considering my own experiences through the notion of the rhizome, I compose my musical soundscape and visualize my experiences not as a way of simplifying my experiences but rather a way of capturing some of the complexity and interactions between my many lived experiences participating in music festivals. Through this sculpture I recognize how performances from music festivals are part of my sounded memories still playing themselves

with/in my hands and my body. Rhizomatic soundscapes emerge as I continue my inquiry drawing on musical, visual and textual methods of arts-based research.







Soundscape 3

“A soundscape consists of events heard but not objects seen.”

(Schafer, 1994, p. 8)

Interrogating my lived experiences based on Schafer’s (1994) terminology of the soundscape, I listen to fluttering polyphonies, intensities of reverberations and echoes of stillness. Schafer (1994) defines the soundscape as “any acoustic field of study. We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape or an acoustic environment as a soundscape. We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape” (p. 7).

In interrogating my lived experiences participating in competition music festivals drawing on Schafer’s terminology of the soundscape, I position myself as a soundscape analyst. Through my work in the previous chapters, I have composed and constructed soundscapes in a variety of forms, both literally and metaphorically through my engagement with my sounded

memories. I now listen to Schafer (1994) who reminds me, “What the soundscape analyst must do first is to discover the significant features of the soundscape, those sounds which are important either because of their individuality, their numerousness or their domination” (p. 9).

Interspersed throughout this section, I reflect on Schafer’s work by including quotes on soundscapes and the importance of sound as a way of viewing lived experiences. These quotes provoke questions and interconnections in between my own sounded moments.

Schafer describes the tonality of a soundscape using the term keynote. This refers to the musical “key” that a soundscape is composed in. Metaphorically, it also represents the sounds in a soundscape composition that form the foundation of the musical piece. Modulations (moving away from the keynote or tonality) can occur within a soundscape, but the keynote sounds are still the reference point around which the musical moments in a soundscape are centred. Schafer (1994) reminds me that “keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously; they are overheard but cannot be overlooked, for keynote sounds become listening habits in spite of themselves” (p. 9).

While keynote sounds may be conceived as existing in the background of a soundscape, the term signals is used to describe foreground sounds in a soundscape. Schafer (1994) notes that technically any sound can become a signal within a soundscape since signals enter the foreground when “they are listened to consciously” such as the example of bells and sirens as foreground sounds in an urban soundscape (p. 10). These sounds are designed specifically to exist in the foreground as they signal a message to be communicated within the soundscape.

In my work as a soundscape analyst, I consider signals in my own soundscape to be like epiphanies (Denzin, 2014) or epiphonies (Gouzouasis, 2013). The notion of an epiphany or

epiphony describes important sounded moments which serve as turning points or tensions in my soundscape from my past participating in competition music festivals.

Schafer also uses the term soundmark to describe sonic moments in a soundscape. “The term soundmark is derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by people in that community” (Schafer, 1994, p. 10). In my soundscape, I consider moments of cultural significance, such as my identity as a Mennonite-Canadian to be a soundmark with/in my soundscape.

Reading my experiences through the structures of a soundscape, I notate some of my musical experiences in textual form, bringing sounds onto the page. Schafer (1994) reminds me, “Notation is an attempt to render aural facts by visual signs. The value of notation for both the preservation and analysis of sound is therefore considerable...” (Schafer, 1994, p. 123).

Keynote sounds

The keynote sounds of a landscape are those created by its geography and climate: water, wind, forests, plains, birds, insects and animals. Many of these sounds may possess archetypal significance; that is, they may have imprinted themselves so deeply on the people hearing them that life without them would be sensed as a distinct impoverishment. They may even affect the behaviour or life style of a society... (Schafer, 1994, p. 10)

In the quote above, Schafer (1994) mentions how keynote sounds may have “imprinted themselves” within a soundscape. While reflecting on my experiences participating in music festivals, I begin to listen to sounds that reflect the tonality my own soundscape. I come to listen to these sounds as grounding sounds with/in my participation in competition music festivals. The keynote sounds of my soundscape may have varied from time to time, but they are the sounds that continued, supported and conveyed the tonality of my experiences.

Festival conventions

It didn't matter what discipline or music festival I was participating in, the conventions of the music festival remained similar. Upon arriving at the festival site, there was a secretary who signed me in and collected my musical score to give to the adjudicator. After handing in my musical score, I walked into the room where the competition was scheduled to take place and sat down. There was never anyone warming up in the performance room. If there were practice rooms available, participants might use those, but the performance room was always silent before the competition began.

At the beginning of the festival class, the secretary welcomed participants and introduced the adjudicator. A brief biography of the adjudicator was read by the secretary, explaining where the adjudicator had studied and the experiences that qualified him/her to adjudicate at the festival. Following these introductions, student names were called, one by one, to perform on stage. The performer walked on stage, performed their song, took a bow and returned to his/her seat. The room was very quiet between performances when the adjudicator would be consulting the musical score and writing comments for the participants.

These structures became familiar and constituted "conventions" from my experiences participating in music festivals. Occasionally a student would forget to bow on stage and would walk off quickly. This would elicit a smile from the audience as a convention had been broken (often nervousness was apparent as a factor in the lack of bowing).

Another convention of my music festival experience was the issue of memorization. While it didn't apply to larger musical ensembles like choirs or concert bands, solo performances in piano and violin demanded that the musical piece be memorized. Participants could still

perform a piece if it wasn't memorized, but memorization was considered a mark of excellence and students were very unlikely to "win" a class if their musical piece wasn't memorized.

Memorization was my biggest source of anxiety while competing in music festivals. I was always nervous about forgetting my song and being left on the stage unable to continue without the assistance of the adjudicator to help me find my place. As a result, I spent a great deal of my preparation time working on memorization. Not only would I memorize the piece of music weeks in advance, but I would also work with my teacher to determine places in the music I could "jump" to if I had a memory slip. These places were usually cadence points or the start of a new section that I would practice starting at, as if they were the beginning of a song. My teacher marked these places in my music with stars and I would always review them in the days leading up to the performance at the festival.

In addition to having spots to jump to if I had a "memory slip" during a performance, I would also make sure I memorized the final notes of a piece I was performing so that if I couldn't remember anything else, I would play the final notes, take a bow and walk off the stage. My piano teacher would schedule many practices prior to the festival to give me a chance to "practice performing" my pieces to see if there were any places where I would forget my songs. Having these practice sessions, where I could get "practice nervous" was also another technique to make sure that memory slips didn't happen.

Reflecting back on my experiences performing, it was a common occurrence for me to forget some notes while on stage performing. It seemed to be a common occurrence for others as well. While I was always able to continue playing, the threat of forgetting my song on stage motivated me to practice and added increased anxiety to my experiences performing in competition music festivals.

Rituals

Many rituals became part of my preparation and participation in competition music festivals. I conceive of these rituals also as keynote sounds in my soundscape. I have already mentioned how I prepared for memorization at the festival. This method of memorizing pieces was part of a much larger system of preparation which I enacted annually and which became ritualistic through my participation in competition music festivals.

As part of my preparation for music festivals, my teacher would hand out practice charts to all her students. I wasn't normally given practice charts throughout the year but around festival time I would keep track of the amount of time that I practiced. I would receive a prize from my teacher if I spent lots of time practicing. I extended this idea of creating practice charts and also made my own charts and lists as part of my preparations for my performances. I kept some paper by the piano and would write out a daily schedules for myself of what I was going to practice. After making the daily schedule I kept a tally chart of my practicing and returned to the piano throughout the evening until I had completed my practice goals for the day. These daily tally charts surrounded the piano, and keeping track of my preparation became a ritual in making sure I was prepared for my performances.

Another important ritual which was part of my preparation for festival was to "practice performing". This was a phrase I first heard from a choral director when I was in elementary school. She told us that if we practiced performing our songs the way we wanted them to sound in performance then that would be the result in the real performance. I would practice performing for the festival in many different ways. My piano teacher would host practice performances before the festival both at her house and at the venue where the festival was being

held. These events would be conducted as if they were performances to give students a chance to “test out” musical pieces.

I would also perform for family and friends prior to the festival. My family, including grandparents, aunts and uncles would come to visit and my sisters and I practiced performing our songs for them prior to the festival. This was another opportunity to get nervous and make sure that I remembered my song. Friends who were also performing in the festival came over to my house and we would take turns performing for each other. This helped us all prepare and test out our songs in a safe environment. Recording songs using audio or video also became part of the practicing performing and preparing for the festival. I would take turns with my sisters and we would record each other performing in preparation for the festival

Festival traditions

“Sound affects individuals differently and a single sound will often stimulate such a wide assortment of reactions...” (Schafer, 1994, p. 146).

There were a number of traditions that emerged through my years of participating in competition music festivals which I also conceive as keynote sounds. These annual traditions as keynote sounds served as central tonalities in my lived experiences.

One tradition that started when I was in Grade 6 piano was going for Crème Egg McFlurries on the final night of festival with my family each year. It started as a celebratory event at the end of the music festival (after the highlights night). Crème Egg McFlurries were available at McDonalds around festival time each year and they were only available for a limited time annually. My whole family enjoyed ice cream and we went at the end of the festival which was usually on a school night. It was a treat to be able to stay out late with my parents and get ice cream. As a family, we discussed what had happened that year in festival. For example, was

the adjudicator kind? How did the performances go? Did we hear any songs we liked and wanted to play next year?

After highlights night, which could be very stressful, it was something to look forward to each year. We were able to go for McFlurries regardless of our performance (it wasn't a reward for doing well). My parents were always positive about our efforts in the festival. It was a way of giving us confidence, debriefing after the experiences and making us feel good about working hard (regardless of the outcome).

Another tradition which became part of my festival experience was bringing Mentos to festival performances. This tradition started when my mom first offered me some Mentos when I had to wait before for my performance of *Waterfall* in Grade 4 piano. Having Mentos at the festival became an annual part of my experiences participating in music festivals. My mom would buy several packages of Mentos in the weeks leading up to the festival. They would sit un-opened on the kitchen table, a sign that festival time was coming.

When we first started bringing Mentos, my mom, my sisters and I would eat them. Eventually as friends started sitting with us at the festival too, we would offer friends and acquaintances Mentos at the festival. The tradition grew and some of my friends also started bringing their own Mentos and we shared them together between performances.

The tradition of bringing Mentos started from my mother who was offering me and my sisters support while we were nervous and waiting for our turn to play at the festival. It grew into a tradition through which performers supported each other. By sharing Mentos with friends, especially right before and after performances, it was a way of sharing support and encouragement for an activity which was stressful, involved lots of waiting and could be very anxiety provoking especially if a performance didn't go as planned.

Support from teachers, parents, community and friends

“Repetition is the memory medium for sound. Repetition is the means by which sounds are retained and explained” (Schafer, 1993, p. 167).

Support I received from my teacher, parents, the community and friends represents another keynote sound in my participation in competition music festivals. Without this support, I wouldn't have been able to participate for many years and the experience wouldn't have been such a positive part of my music education. While the foreground sounds of the adjudicator's words and the outcome of my performances were often the most vivid memories of my experiences, it was the support from those around me which represents tonality and the foundation of my experiences.

My piano teacher put lots of effort into helping me to prepare for the music festival. This included choosing songs that were an appropriate level as well as engaging to learn. I received high quality teaching which ensured that I was prepared both technically and mentally for the challenges of performing. I have already mentioned how my teacher spent extra time preparing her students by creating practice charts, hosting extra rehearsals and booking performance spaces in advance so students had a chance to perform on the piano which was used in festival competition.

In addition to these very practical ways of assisting in my festival preparation, my piano teacher also had a very positive attitude towards teaching and music making. She provided feedback on my performances in both oral and written form at each lesson, continually pushing for improvement in my playing. No piece of music was ever “perfect” or “finished”, the emphasis was on process, learning and improvement. While she always congratulated her students for performing well in the festival, she also ensured that the process of learning music

was fun, engaging and challenging. By teaching this way, it made the competition aspect of the festival less important and put the focus back on learning and improvement. Having this focus on learning helped encourage lifelong learning in music and I believe is one of the reasons I continue to improve my own skills playing piano and also teach others to play piano.

The community that I grew up in was also very supportive of music learning. I will discuss this in more detail when I talk about Canadian-Mennonite identity and music-making in my community as a soundmark, but music was highly valued in the community that I grew up in. There were many opportunities to perform and take part in musical activities. Additionally, the local community came to watch events at the music festival. Especially on highlights nights, there were members of the community in attendance who didn't have children currently competing in the festival. These community members congratulated performers on performances after the competition. This support and recognition was very encouraging and made learning the piano more relevant to me.

Having parents and family who supported my participation in competition music festivals was also a critical part of my success and played a foundational role in the soundscape of my experiences. Support from my parents included driving me to weekly music lessons and extra rehearsals and festival classes. When I was younger my parents would help me practice to make sure I understood the assignments and also learned to practice regularly. These skills became habits which I continue to use into adulthood.

My parents had a similar philosophy to my piano teacher. Hard work was valued but winning wasn't the most important part of participation in competition music festivals. My family also played an important role in debriefing from festival experiences. There were times when participating in the festival was stressful. This included when a performance didn't go

well or when a performance did go well but the adjudicator didn't like it. In these moments it was important to have a supportive family to discuss the outcomes and debrief about events and experiences. By having this support underlying my soundscape of lived experiences, I continued my participation in competition music festivals for many years.

Soundmarks

“Sounds that have been in a particular place for a long time I call soundmarks. Like landmarks, they define its essential character, rendering it unique.” (Schafer, 1993, p. 108)

I begin thinking about the soundmarks of my soundscape through sounded moments in my music education. Looking to my past (musically), I am reminded of Aoki's (1983) article, *Experiencing Ethnicity as a Japanese Canadian Teacher*. I consider how sounded moments and my experiences have become inextricably tied to my identity. My identity as a Mennonite-Canadian and the music-making practices of my family as part of my past becomes a sounded moment which I introduce into my soundscape, improvising four part harmonies on the piano.

Reading Dueck's (2005) article, I am transported on a journey. I feel tension as I am reminded of issues of social class that created challenges for Mennonites in Manitoba, Canada in the early 20th century (p. 126). My own family were *Russlaenders* coming to Canada in the 1920s. As I read Berg's (1985) social history of the growth of the four-part choral singing in Mennonite communities, I hear the sound(ed) voices in my past. These traditions of choral singing and participation in orchestras were nurtured and grew to be identified as part of the collective musical past of Mennonites in Western Canada (Berg, 1985). I am drawn to Dueck's (2005) call for more individualized studies of Mennonite music-making as it resonates with/in

my own identity. His research seeks to explore “unexamined notions of difference and to collaboratively make new meanings for global Mennonite music” (p. 131).

Four parts together

Voices rise, voices falling

Sounding

harmonies?

Growing up in a Mennonite community meant that music was a large part of my childhood.

From an early age, I studied piano and violin along with all the requisite rudiments, counterpoint, harmony and history of Western classical music. I was raised on the understanding that performing in church was an important part of everyday life and that local musicians in the community were esteemed for their musical abilities and talents.

I feel with Epp who states that “to say that music is an important element of Mennonite cultural and religious identity is merely to state the obvious” (Epp, 2005, p. 9). There has been an increased interest in recent years in defining what constitutes Mennonite music and music-making practices. Much of the work in this area has occurred through festival/conferences held at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

The first joint conference/festival was held in May 2004 and was entitled “Sound in the Land”. Weaver (2005) notes that, “This event marked the first time that Mennonites, in their 300-plus years of being in North America, gathered together for the express purpose of discovering, hearing, studying and celebrating collective Mennonite voices in music” (p. 7). The 2004 gathering focused primarily on Mennonite music-making in North America and encompassed a wide range of musical styles including hymnody, folk music, popular styles and jazz. A subsequent conference hosted in 2009 expanded on the first conference to include Mennonite music-making from around the world. The conferences and subsequent publications

(2004; 2009) “champions the widest possible definition of what it means to be Mennonite, and with it, the broadest possible definition of what might constitute Mennonite music. In doing so, it challenges traditional assumptions and biases that restrict the potential for dialogue by constructing false boundaries and borders” (Janacek, 2011, p. 22).

My identity as a Mennonite works as a soundmark on my experiences performing in competition music festivals. It is something unique to my experiences and located in the community, culture and places that I grew up in. By reflecting on my identity as a Mennonite Canadian, I become aware of the soundmarks present with/in the soundscape of my arts-based journal. During my childhood, music-making was closely tied to music and music-making opportunities in the church. Attending church on a weekly basis, music was a part of the services including choral singing and playing instruments.

I was first invited to play in church when I was around 10 years old. I was invited after several members of the church listened to me play the piano at a festival highlights evening. Since festival highlights evenings were well attended by the community and later broadcast on local radio, members of the community were aware of my music making abilities. I was invited to play a piano solo as an offertory as part of the church service. I learned a special song for this occasion which my teacher helped me to prepare. After this first experience, I continued to perform music in church in various capacities throughout my childhood. The music festival was connected to the community and was therefore also connected to the church and church music-making. Reflecting on my childhood, music festivals were a training experience for students who played in church and likewise, performing music in church offered a place to improve my skills in an authentic learning environment. Sometimes I learned songs for the festival that were

also suitable for church and I would perform them in church after the festival was over. This was usually as part of a prelude or offertory section of the service.

Other opportunities for performance also came from having members of the church hear my performances in festival. For example, when I was in Grade 10 piano and an advanced player, I was invited to perform my festival songs as part of a fundraiser concert for emergency relief funds to be sent overseas. Having another opportunity to perform my festival songs in a different context provided me with the opportunity to connect my experiences performing in festival with my experiences in the community making music. The type and style of music that I was performing was valued by others in the community and this encouraged me to continue making music and learning to play the piano.

Participation in the local music festival was also rewarded by members of the church community. The local festival was announced as an upcoming event at weekly church services. In addition, following the completion of the festival, the pastor invited participants of the festival to stand and the congregation would recognize our efforts with a round of applause. This was a very special moment as other events recognized with applause included announcements of marriage engagements and the birth of new children. It was very rewarding to be recognized by the community for my efforts to learn and take part in music making activities.

Sometimes when my sisters or I would win a prize in the local music festival, a member for the church community would leave a card in our mailbox explaining that a donation had been made in our name to a charity on behalf of our “win” in the festival. As soundmark events, my efforts were recognized and supported by the community I lived in as I learned and improved my music making skills.

In Chapter 3 I mentioned how I chose to “dress Mennonite” at a provincial finals competition. I wanted the adjudicator and audience to be able to see my Mennonite identity. I was aware from a young age of the connection between being Mennonite and making music. Displaying this identity gave me confidence in performances where I was out of my comfort zone such as performing at the provincial music festival.

Pianos as place

Reflecting on the numerous instruments that I performed on as part of my participation in competition music festivals represent numerous other soundmarks on my soundscape. Pianos in particular were always different depending on the location, and many of my memories of the festival are rooted in the piano that I performed on.

In my arts-based journal I included some descriptions of some of the pianos I played on regularly as part of the festival experience. The physical feelings and places where these pianos were situated each represent unique sounded moments in my soundscape. Not only did the pianos shape my experience, but I would often practice my song with a particular piano and acoustic space in mind. For example, if I knew that I was performing on a piano which sounded brighter but was in a small room, I would make sure that my accents and dynamics weren't too exaggerated. Whereas, if I was playing the same song in a large church auditorium, I would expand my range of articulation and dynamics to create the same effect in a larger space.

With solo piano especially, the places where I performed are soundmarks in my soundscape. Each performance in the festival took into consideration the instrument and space where I was performing. These memories are marks of place represented in the soundscape of my lived experiences.

Signals

Sounds cannot be known the way sights can be known. Seeing is analytical and reflective. It places things side by side and compares them (scenes, slides, diagrams, figures...). This is why Aristotle preferred sight as “the principal source of knowledge.

Sights are knowable. Sights are nouns.

Sounding is active and generative. Sounds are verbs. Like all creation, sound is incomparable. Thus there can be no science of sound, only sensations...intuitions...mysteries....
(Schafer, 1993, p. 162)

Signals are the sounds that are noticed in the foreground of a musical soundscape. In my own musical soundscape, I reflect on signals as several different types of events. As Schafer (1994) notes, any sounds can become a signal in the foreground of a soundscape when they are noticed consciously by the listener (p.10). While the readers/audiences of my soundscape may have noticed different sounds coming to the foreground in the soundscapes that I perform here, I now lead the audience on a soundwalk, pointing out the sounds that are noticeable to me as I journey through my past and walk in my own musical soundscape. This process of soundwalking was originally proposed by Schafer as a way of engaging with a soundscape.

Schafer describes the soundwalk as “an exploration of the soundscape of a given area using a score as a guide. The score consists of a map, drawing the listener’s attention to unusual sounds and ambiances to be heard along the way” (Schafer, 1994, p. 213). As I consider signals, I now trace a map seeking to act as a guide, drawing attention to sounds along the travelled path and bringing an audience into my performed soundscape.

Adjudicators as educators

I reflect on my experiences with the adjudicators of competition music festivals as signals in my soundscape. Each adjudicator shaped the tone of the festival and emphasized different

types of learning through their feedback and discussions at the festival. For example, some adjudicators spent more time writing comments for individual student feedback while other adjudicators spent more time coaching students in a workshop format following the session. When providing feedback to students, some adjudicators focused on the technique of playing the piano while others focused on the interpretive decisions regarding the music of performance.

The educational focus of the adjudicator as well as the tone in which they addressed students had a large impact on my annual experience of the festival. Each adjudicator was responsible for setting the tone of the festival as an educational experience. My first experience at the music festival was with Mr. James, an experienced music educator who worked with young students and presented age appropriate curriculum within the festival context. His choice of topics to discuss with beginning piano students was appropriate for my age level and development as a pianist. The tone he set was positive and students were encouraged to play their best.

Festival songs

Continuing through my soundwalk of signals, I listen to the songs that I performed in the festival. These songs, chosen with the help of my teacher, represent lasting signals in the soundscape of my experiences. While I performed each song only once for an adjudicator as part of the festival, I spent most of my time practicing my songs by myself in preparation for the festival. I also performed the songs weekly for my piano teacher who would provide me with feedback. The music I played was central to my preparing and performing in the festival. Many of the songs that I performed, I continue to play for my own enjoyment. The experience of re/visiting and re/performing songs as part of this thesis project has furthered my connection with the music I performed in festivals.

As a piano teacher myself, I also often recommend and perform songs I played in music festivals for my own students to learn. This is not just because of my familiarity with this music, but also because I hope my own students will feel the same emotional connection and understand the joy of learning a musical instrument.

Musical scores as “messy texts”

Looking through and playing with the musical scores that I performed has made me aware of the many lessons I learned from my piano teacher and through my participation in competition music festivals. Especially when I played the scores in chronological order, I can see a path of learning through the markings written by myself and my teacher as I studied each musical score.

Though the convention was to erase markings on the musical score prior to a festival performance, I often left my markings on the score, making my scores “messy texts” (Palulis & Low, 2000). This evidence of my learning was too valuable to erase and traces a path of my learning as a process oriented endeavour. The markings on my music don’t simply comprise a record of past challenges, learning and struggle. They also are living, breathing, changing as I continue to perform these musical scores beyond my performances in the festival. I continue to add markings to the musical scores, changes in my performances representing the continuing process of learning beyond the festival.

I also consult these markings when teaching my own students. These markings show a progression of a beginning student, concerned with performing the correct notes, rhythms and dynamics to a performer adding interpretive elements beyond the scope of the musical score itself. These writings on the score have been a valuable resource as a young teacher by

providing insights into my own learning and offering ways of providing feedback to my own students about their performances.

Breaking in/to festival noise

I notice how breaks in the conventions of the music festival experience also represent signals in my soundscape. These breaks were the memories that I recalled the most easily about my participation in music festivals. For example, when my friend Sarah and I weren't able to locate the ant which we had been watching, we laughed and bonded over the experience. To someone else, the story might not sound very funny, but we thought it was hilarious. I think this was because we had both had been competing in the music festival for many years. Observing an ant in the festival environment was out of the ordinary and made the experience extraordinary and notable with/in the soundscape of my past. This signal, an epiphany, helped me to realize the value of the friendships and partnerships I made as a result of my participation in music festivals.

Many of my stories in my arts-based journal are breaks in convention in my festival experience. When I was performing violin and the adjudicator ran down the stairs and interrupted the start of my performance, I was very anxious about my performance after that interruption. I learned from that experience to be sensitive as an educator about how vulnerable students may feel when performing and to consider the form and timing of the feedback I provide to students. This is a lesson that I continue to draw on in my own teaching. These breaks in the conventions of the festival are meaningful epiphanies, memories that stand out vividly in my festival experiences.

Chapter 5: Understandings



It is a series of utterances, like sounds themselves, each occurring at its own point in time or space, some carefully prepared, others more spontaneous or passionately argued. To have arranged things in a more linear progression, to have given them a methodology, would have been to surrender to the visually dominant culture and its love of systems that stands in opposition to the uncontrollable work of sounds. (Schafer 1993, p. 8)

Listening through chromatic melodies, rubato ebbs and flows as I reflect on the processes of my thesis project. I consider understandings that have emerged throughout this project by re/visiting my research questions through performance inspired by my entanglement with/in the sounded forms of a musical concert/performance. I reflect on the nature of sounds as generative and how my own engagement with soundscapes has generated more questions than answers on a euphonious pathway on the road to becoming.

Sounding inquiries through the arts

With Schafer (1993), I consider how presenting my understandings in a linear progression would “surrender to the dominant visual culture” (p. 8). Instead I choose to structure this chapter as a rhizomatic soundscape, a performance of understandings generated through this inquiry recognizing sounds.

Drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape in my inquiry brings musical/acoustic ways of thinking about lived experiences into my praxis as

artist/researcher/teacher. Considering music as the study of sound, sounds from my past experiences are an important part of my inquiry involving music. While I reference terminology from classical music as part of my soundscape, other musicians drawing on the framework of a soundscape might include musical language and forms from their own music education.

I also acknowledge the importance of the environment in my sounded moments. By recognizing this connection with/in environments, I connect my experiences to larger social, cultural and political landscape situating my learning and experiences in an autoethnographic context (Ellis, 2004).

The Musical Program

University of Ottawa
Adjudicators: TBD

April 18, 2015

Class 7999 (MA Thesis in Education)

1. Jessica Duerksen.....
 - I. *How do my past experiences as a music student shape my current practices as an artist/researcher/teacher?*
 - II. *How can my current music praxis and identity as an artist/researcher/teacher facilitate my inquiry into my festival experiences?*
 - III. *How can theoretical notions of a soundscape facilitate a/r/tographical inquiry?*

Practice and preparation

I arrive at my piano lesson a couple of minutes early today. My teacher welcomes me and asks me to sit on a chair next to the piano. She has a stack of music open, the light above the piano shines down onto the crisp, clean pages.

“Today we are going to choose some songs for the festival!”

I listen to a Haydn sonata, the light and humourous melodies flow quickly off the page. I imagine my fingers sparkling, flying quickly and imaginatively through the air as I move to strike the keys.

Next I hear Schumann, chords pressing deep into the keys. There is tension throughout, easing for brief moments and then emerging again through a crescendo of rich sonorities.

Several songs by Alexina Louie glimmer across the keys. I hear strings inside the grand piano resonate and ring as they are struck and caressed. Changes in timbre are imaginative, musical styles that are yet unfamiliar.

“What do you think, Jess?”

I connect immediately with the laughter and lightness in Haydn’s music. I love how the sonorities work together and how the music doesn’t take itself too seriously.

I have already played Haydn in the festival several years in a row and I tell my teacher that I would be delighted to play another Haydn sonata. All of my past experiences, performing and receiving feedback on Haydn’s sonatas has given me plenty of

Arriving to my class at the University of Ottawa, I climb the staircase to the fourth floor. I sit down in a chair, next to several of my classmates. Today we are discussing the requirements for our thesis project.

“Please form small groups of three or four students and share with your colleagues some of the ideas you have for your thesis.”

Suzy speaks first, “I am interested in studying visually impaired students and their experiences at recreational summer camps. It’s something I have been interested in since I worked with visually impaired students several years ago.”

Jonny chimes in, “I want to write something about the social studies curriculum, I am still searching for ideas though.”

It’s my turn to share next. I think about my love of music and my experiences performing piano and violin at a variety of different venues. “I would like consider something in the area of music education, I think.....”

“Spend some time thinking about your projects over the next several weeks and make a decision about your topics!”

I read Gouzouasis (2006) who observes that, “few musicians reside in the world of both general education and arts education, and even fewer attempt to draw connections, content to either perform music, research music or teach music and never seem to hear the connections between broader possibilities” (p. 28).

experience to draw from as I continue my learning.

I also choose a song by Alexina Louie, inspired by the changing textures and intrigued by the unconventional musical notation.

The cycle of practicing and preparation for a performance is a familiar one to me.

Playing the written notation on the page, my fingers feel slow and heavy. My body isn't familiar with the movements of my new repertoire.

I re/turn to practice each day, first learning notes and rhythms, and then adding to the markings on the score, some were added by the composer and others are added at weekly lessons through the support of my teacher.

I engage with a process of practicing. Each day I re/visit my songs through practice. Part of my practicing is researching the musical context in which each song was written. This allows for new connections to be formed in my interpretations of the musical score.

The process of practicing includes reflecting on my practicing and performance to continue my learning as I engage with music.

I listen through this statement and am immediately inspired to consider some of the connections between performing, teaching and research in my own life.

I decide to consider these connections in my own lived experiences, drawn to the possibilities of this inquiry.

The cycle of practicing and preparation for a performance is a familiar one to me.

Reading the written notation on the page, the ideas are unfamiliar. The process is tedious as my mind is engaging with new ideas.

I re/turn to practice each day, first learning and studying my initial sources, gradually I expand my thinking, connecting new ideas as I engage with material through the support of my thesis supervisor.

I engage with a process of practicing on a daily basis as part of my inquiry. I also begin to consider the process of conducting research through a model of practicing. My continued engagement in this process-oriented inquiry adds complexity to my understandings.

The notion of practice becomes an important part of my identity as a researcher as I engage with the musical processes of "practice, reflection, performance and research" (Gouzouasis, 2006, p. 30).

Soundings (backstage)

Parents

Do you need any help practicing?

Is there anything you don't understand about your assignment?

Make sure you practice today!

Would you like me listen to you play your songs?

Wow, that song sounds really good today! All that practice is paying off!

Why don't you try playing that one again for me?

You can do it!

How's the memorization going for your sonata?

Time for your piano lesson!

You played well!

Participation is important, winning isn't the most important thing.

Let's go for ice-cream after the festival!

What did you think of the adjudication this year?

Did you hear any songs you want to play next year?

You worked really hard, that's great!

How's the thesis going?

What sections are you working on now?

Can't wait to read it!

Teachers

Keep working on your memory!

Nice playing, Jess! Now, take a look at the dynamics and we will add some this week!

What do you think about changing the pedalling at m. 15?

After listening to that recording of your Chopin, what did you like about that performance?

What did you learn in the festival this year?

I can't believe how much your songs keep improving!

Why don't we try adding some of the adjudicator's suggestions?

I love how sparkling your Haydn is!

Why don't you try playing with the metronome this week to make sure your tempo is steady?

We don't have to take all the advice of the adjudicator, but we can incorporate some of the suggestions!

What a great performance! You have worked hard to improve your songs!

I enjoyed reading a draft of your thesis!

Why don't you try reading Pelias (2014) while you are writing?

Have you thought about including Gouzouasis (2006) in this section?

I really like how this passage flows onto the next page!

Friends

How's your practicing going?

Do you want to get together and perform for each other some time?

When are you playing in the festival?

How's the adjudicator this year?

Hey Jess!

Awesome performance!

I made you this medal because I thought your playing was amazing!



What section are you working on now?

Do you want to have lunch and discuss our thesis projects?

Could we exchange writing and provide feedback?

Email me a draft! I would love to read it over!

Audience

I look out over the audience as I take a bow before my performance.

My parents and siblings are clapping and smiling at me. My teacher is sitting near the back at the top right of the auditorium with the other piano teachers. Henry and Fran from church are sitting with their children near the front of the auditorium.

There are many unfamiliar faces, connections made through performance only.

Woman	Child	Man	Kate	Seth	Jon		Woman	Woman	Woman
Lisa	Frank	Jeremy					My Teacher	Another Teacher	Another Teacher
Man	Woman			Adjudicator	Secretary			Fred	Marie
Zach	Paula								
Child	Child	Man				Dad	Katherine	Shelley	Mom
Man	Child	Child	Woman			Woman	Man	Child	Child
			Henry	Fran	Frank	Julie		Man	Woman
Tracy	Emily	Sara	Kara					Child	Hanna

Piano/Thesis	Jessica (bowing)
--------------	------------------

Performance

Walking on stage feels like habit

Each time, the heart pounds and the knees shake

My mind is fluttering,

I remember my preparation and I remember how to act as a performer.

Smile

Take a bow

Adjust the bench

Test the pedal

I place my fingers on the keys and I begin to play...

Pelias (2014) reminds me, “Performance is an opening, a location – a curtain drawn, a wooden floor washed with light, a window that invites the voyeur, a circle in the square, a podium that stands before, an arena of play, passion and purpose” (p. 143).

My fingers strike the keys

Melodies ring out, fading slowly

A paintbrush swishes across paper

Swishes cease, colour remains

A pencil scratches, erases and scribbles

Scratches notate sounds

My fingers tap a computer

Capturing, moving to a new beat

Sounds swirling

I stir the sounds

Sonorities mixing

“Performance is an opening, a transitional, liminal space, where one learns, for better or worse, the heart of the social, the clash of the cultural, and the twist of the linguistic. After, one may never be the same” (Pelias, 2014, p. 143).

Each finger presses at a different strength

The feeling of these pressures is artistic

Flowing

Melodies rising and falling

Rhythms pounding and swaying

Harmonies consonant and dissonant

I am filled with movement

My body is in flux

As I navigate feelings of tension and joy in performance

“Performance is an opening, a breach, a deconstruction of the discursive system, be it artistic, linguistic, or social that offers possibilities” (Pelias, 2014, p. 144)

Once the performance ends, I return to old habits

Smiling

Standing

Bowing

ADJUDICATION SHEET

Class 7999 (MA Thesis in Education).....Grade: _____

1. Jessica Duerksen performing.....

“It’s festival time again”: Sounding tensions with/in an a/r/tographical inquiry into participation in competition music festivals

ADJUDICATOR’S COMMENTS:

Post-performance (reflections as a current music educator)

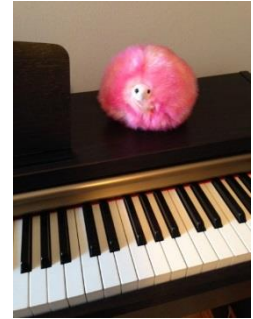
My experiences performing in competition music festivals have influenced my current practices as a music teacher. As a student, I only had several music teachers but through my participation in competition music festivals, I was exposed to a variety of teaching styles and received different forms of feedback on my playing. Reflecting on my performances as a participant in competition music festivals, I re/visit sounded moments, connections, which emerge through my identity as an artist/researcher/teacher.

Learning from adjudicators

Through observing adjudicators teach myself and other students, I learned about interpretations of musical characteristics in different musical styles. For example, listening to an adjudicator provide feedback on how to perform the music of Chopin has influenced my own interpretations of Chopin's music. I also learned how to teach musical concepts such as rubato in ways that were appropriate for students by listening to different adjudicators model discussions on the topic and apply it to specific musical pieces. Now as a music teacher myself, I draw on these memories from competition music festivals as I present this same knowledge about interpreting Chopin and rubato to my own students.

In addition to teaching musical concepts, adjudicators had a variety of approaches as they interacted with and provided feedback to students. Adjudicators, as educators, had different philosophies of education which determined what they valued in musical performances. When Mr. James was my festival adjudicator, it was a very memorable experience to have Fred the polar bear on the piano to help students not be nervous when performing for the first time in a music festival.

When I teach piano to my students, I also have a stuffed animal, Harry, who sits on my piano. I place Harry on the piano because I want my own students to feel comfortable playing the piano like I felt when performing for Mr. James. My students and I practice performing for Harry and reflect on how practice is an important part of learning to play the piano.



Re/listening

When I was re/visiting videos of myself that I had recorded as part of my preparation for competition music festivals, I am not only re/listening and re/watching myself to re/experience sounded moments but I am also re/listening to myself as a current music educator.

When viewing and listening to myself perform a sonata by Beethoven, I was surprised at how well I handled some of the technical challenges. I remember being really disappointed as a student that I couldn't play the piece "perfectly". My sounded memories were filled with mistakes in my mind. I remember that I was especially disappointed in my performance at the music festival as not only did I make mistakes but I also had some trouble with memorization.

Re/listening to myself perform through the perspective of an educator made me realize that my performance was developmentally appropriate for my current level in piano. Even though it wasn't a "perfect" or professional level performance, I felt proud looking back at my performance and what I had accomplished. Through the lens of an educator, I heard my performance not as simply correct or incorrect notes, but as sounded moments on a pathway of my own learning.

Interpretation

As I became more advanced, comments from adjudicators stopped addressing mistakes I made in my performance (mistakes always existed in my performances) but the feedback

reflected issues of interpretation which would help me further improve my playing. It was assumed that more advanced musicians could address mistakes in notes and rhythms by themselves and adjudicators provided comments regarding additional musical elements to add to the performance. As a result of this change, an adjudicator's feedback became more subjective based on their musical training and opinions.

Through discussions with my music teacher, I was aware that multiple interpretations of pieces of music were possible and that there was not one correct way to perform a musical work. This possibility of multiple different ways of performing and interpreting music is something that I consider in my multiple roles and identities as artist/researcher/teacher. Through a combination of support and learning modeled by my music teacher and festival adjudicators, I recognize the complex nature of teaching identities and the continued development of my identities as artist/researcher/teacher as an important part of this process-oriented inquiry.

Epilogue

Splashes of sound

Sonic movement flutters

Extending directions

Pianos echo

Acoustic colourings

Questioning

Processes of inquiry

Ways of knowing

Soaring in/to soundings

Openings are unfinished

E/merging

Rhizomatic soundscapes

This inquiry has encouraged me to walk through sounds and silences, listening as frequencies amplify in a spectrum of tempos. The utterances clash, sway and emanate while rendering my arts-based project through music, visual art and textual métissage (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). I consider my musical past as a rhizomatic soundscape. Linear progressions reverberate amplifying as sounds proliferate in weed-like resonances (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I listen with Schafer (1993) as sonic methodologies resist linear chord progressions insisting on polyphonically inspired soundings.

Connections unravelling cultivate relationships between reader/listener and soundscape creator/analyst. Drawing on the theoretical framework of a soundscape, awareness(es) of past occurrences articulate multiple openings and generative possibilities. I consider how reflecting on rhizomatic soundscapes within other lived experiences in education will generate further questions and new understandings.

Re/sidues re/sounding

This inquiry informs several areas of research including the student experience participating in competition music festivals and arts-based research involving music. While there have been previous studies examining the student perspective participating in competition music festivals, most of these studies are from the perspective of students as members of musical ensembles (Gouzouasis & Henderson, 2012; Stamer, 2004). These studies also rely on survey data from a large number of students while my project focuses on the in-depth experiences of one music student drawing on a/r/tography to inform my understandings. In future research projects, it would be valuable for others, including current participants in competition music festivals to examine their experiences drawing on arts-based methodologies to allow for further understandings and complexities to emerge.

My current work offers an example of an autoethnographic, arts-based project which considers the student experience learning music. Gouzouasis & Ryu (2014) have also conducted an autoethnographic study on the importance of the relationship between student and teacher in private piano lessons. Using autoethnographic methods to draw attention to the process of teaching and learning in music education, I add my voice to Gouzouasis & Ryu's call for additional studies which focus on autoethnographies involving music teachers and students as ways towards new understandings music education.

Additional studies drawing on the notion of a soundscape in arts-based research may further consider the possibilities of the soundscape as a theoretical framework for inquiries in music education. For example, arts-based research involving soundscapes conducted in classrooms with music students or by individual artist/researcher/teachers who wish to inquire into experiences learning and creating music may enable inquiries into lived experiences in music education in the school system. Soundscapes can also offer possibilities to researchers interested in applying the theoretical framework of a soundscape to collaborative research projects.

My process-oriented and sounded inquiry is not finished with the completion of this thesis project. I will continue to inquire into my past experiences as a participant in competition music festivals living as an artist/researcher/teacher. As a next step on my sounded journey, I hope to create a live performance of some of my experiences participating in competition music festivals drawing on the forms of musical portraiture inspired by Jenoure (2002) and multidimensional sonic performance (Leavy, 2015). Drawing on these forms, I will re/engage with soundscapes from my musical past participating in competition music festivals to present live musical renderings drawing on some of the sonic materials from my inquiry. Through echoes, silences and sounds, I reflect on my continued engagement with musical moments from my past.

[In]conclusions (Morawski & Palulis, 2009): I listen with Schafer (1993) who reminds me:

Now I wish to speak of sounds.
The world is full of sounds.
I cannot speak of them all.
I shall speak of sounds that matter.
To speak of sounds, I make sounds.
(Schafer, 1993, 161)



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Certificate of Ethics Approval

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Patricia	Palulis	Education / Education	Supervisor
Jessica Anne	Duerksen	Education / Education	Student Researcher

File Number: 03-15-08

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: "It's festival time again": Sounding tensions with/in a/biographical inquiry into participation in competition music festivals

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
04/01/2015	03/31/2016	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:

N/A



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This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated for the period above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at:

<http://recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/submissions-and-reviews>.

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:

<http://recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/submissions-and-reviews>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Germain Zongo

Protocol Officer for Research Ethics

For Dr. Barbara Graves, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

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