

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT for the **ARTS**

And the National Alliance for Musical Theatre

MUSICAL THEATER
SONGWRITING
CHALLENGE

In collaboration with Concord Theatricals, Disney Theatrical Productions,
and NMPA S.O.N.G.S. Foundation

MODULE 3: MUSIC & LYRICS

What makes for a powerful song? When the Music & Lyrics are telling the same story. Now that you have explored the Tone, Style and Characters of your song, you are ready to make tangible changes to strengthen your music and sharpen your lyrics to tell the story you want to tell.

MUSIC

WHAT IS MUSIC?

The melody, beats and quality of sound expressing the song's **TONE, STYLE & CHARACTER.**

QUESTIONS EVERY SONGWRITER MUST ASK ABOUT MUSIC:

- ♪ Why does this moment have to be sung?
- ♪ Does the music clearly convey the tone of the song?
- ♪ How is the music using **CONTRAST** to take the audience on a journey?

Music makes us **feel** and conveys the **emotional journey** of your character in your song. Through its tone and style, music **situates** the audience in a particular world. When we listen to music, we identify **patterns** in the melody and chords, and our ear starts to fill in what comes next. As a songwriter, how can you play with **contrast** and **variation** to surprise your audience and keep them interested?

Think about **experimenting** with the melody, harmony, rhythm, volume, tempo and orchestration to take your music one step further in your next draft.

LYRICS

WHAT ARE LYRICS?

The spoken language and visual images supported by **TONE & STYLE** from the perspective of **CHARACTER**.

QUESTIONS EVERY SONGWRITER MUST ASK ABOUT LYRICS:

- 🎵 Why does this moment have to be sung?
- 🎵 Are the lyrics clearly written in my character's **VOICE**?
- 🎵 Does each lyric build upon the one that came before it?

Lyrics make us **think**, and convey the **message** of your song. Each thought in a lyric has to be **clear**, and lead into the next one in order to **track** your character's thought process. Lyrics often rhyme to create **patterns** that the audience can latch onto and sometimes start to anticipate the next lyrical thought.

As a songwriter, how can you use rhyme to **surprise** your audience? Can you set up a pattern of rhyming and then break it to **emphasize** a dramatic moment?

Think about how **devices** such as wordplay, repetition, metaphor, simile and imagery can take your lyrics one step further in your next draft.

WRITING A HOOK

Every song needs to be boiled down to **one main idea**, and songwriters focus this idea both musically and lyrically through the song's hook. The hook is the **catchy phrase** and **melody** that will get stuck in your audience's head if it is effective at **conveying** the **message** and **emotions** of your song. A hook should be one line or phrase in the lyrics and music. The hook is where everything from the song should **build** out from and **relate** back to. It is the intersection of strong music and lyrics.

In an AABA song, the hook is in the **A section.**
In a Verse-Chorus song, the hook is in the **chorus.**

Use the FLOW CHARTS on the following pages for ideas to incorporate feedback in your music & lyrics

- *Incorporating Musical Feedback (pg. 5)*
- *Incorporating Lyrical Feedback (pg. 6)*



