AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT COMPOSITION

IN MUSIC - A STUDY OF PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITHIN

THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

by

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This study deals primarily with the way secondary-school students use music to express their personal, inner feelings through composition. Because the topic of personal expression through music composition is an elusive one, my methodology borrows and combines analytical tools from the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, ethnography and English language arts, and incorporates these tools in the exploration of student's processes of self-expression through music composition.

For a period of several weeks I worked with a sixteen-student sample group in a Vancouver high school. Each of the students handed in a musical composition. Four of the students granted me interviews in which they shared their views of their compositional processes and the resulting musical works.

By the conclusion of the study, the students had displayed the ability to communicate certain ideas, images and emotions, and express themselves by articulating their own unique sense of being through their musical compositions. Furthermore, the students
demonstrated a level of musical awareness which has very little to do with the type of proficiency-based music learning that is prevalent in many of today's music education classrooms. Most importantly, however, this study spawns a methodology which examines students' compositional processes rather than their finished musical products.
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CHAPTER ONE:
UNVEILING OF THE MANY FACETS OF THE PROBLEM

A Focus on Students' Processes of Music Composition

This study deals primarily with the way secondary school students use music to express their personal, inner feelings. It studies the processes students use in selecting musical materials during music composition. This study is less concerned with the final musical product than the journey students took to reach their musical products.

Practically all studies of student composition to date have been psychological studies of cognitive strategies (e.g. Kratus, 1994; Bamberger, 1990; Webster and Hickey, 1995; Wilson and Wales, 1995; and many others). These studies are not concerned with the nature of individual expression. In view of this, no established methodology exists for this specific task. I have therefore attempted to develop a methodology based on a variety of ways of investigating the role of the individual in acts of personal expression. Because the topic of personal expression is elusive and
complex, my methodology borrows and combines analytical tools from the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics and ethnography, and incorporates these tools in the exploration of students' processes of self-expression through music composition.

The Nature of Personal Involvement in Music Composition

At the heart of this thesis are the case studies I conducted involving sixteen British Columbia secondary school students. I was particularly interested in studying the students as they were using popular idioms in the composition of music, and especially, the nature and role of their personal involvement in these processes. By personal involvement I am referring to involvement in which students engage their own, unique emotional faculties and their reservoir of musical knowledge in their own, unique, creative, musical experience. It is this journey of the individual student who engages in personally meaningful, personally expressive acts of music composition that I wish to highlight.
Since personal expression in language is one of the most powerful forms children use, I intend to present some information about students' expressive activities with language as a means for providing some reference points for the musical expressions. In addition, I conducted these case studies with a small group of students because a small informant group enabled me to better investigate the individual nature of each one's personal involvement in music composition and how this might be identified in the actual music they produce, since it is the nature of this involvement that I am particularly interested in.

My interest is catalyzed by two factors. First, I am a composer. I recognize the difficulty that lies in being objective about my compositional processes and my composed works. When I am involved in the act of composition, I can not observe myself composing from a perspective external to me. I can, however, reflect on my inner mental activities during my composing. When my composition has been completed, it is difficult for me to evaluate it objectively because my involvement with this composition inevitably results in a subjective bias - my own. Furthermore, the compositional
'path' (i.e., the sequence of explorations and choices within my process of composition) that I take towards completing a musical work is my path. I would like to find out what my path has in common with the compositional paths of the student composers I observed in this study. I am also hoping that in studying the processes of student composers as they compose, observing the processes of composition from an external perspective, and comparing the compositional paths of other composers to my own path, I might be able to locate objective points of reference for my own compositional manner.

Second, as a music educator, I am worried about the current state of affairs in music education. I refer to reduced enrolments in music programs across North America, and British Columbia, in particular. I worry about the potential extinction of my field from the general curriculum and the societal implications I feel that such a loss would carry with it. Further in this chapter, I intend to outline this problem in greater detail. In this thesis, I am concentrating on the single issue of personal involvement because I have reason to believe that this may be one of the factors
in explaining enrolment decline. I acknowledge that other factors may contribute to the decline in music enrolments, such as, for example, immigration of culturally diverse people who do not know the North American band traditions, the sudden rise in popularity of the mass entertainment media on which, we know, school children spend billions of dollars, and, of course, the growth of digital technology and the microcomputer. However, these developments do not appear to have had such a devastating effect on the visual arts and drama programs, yet both are central to the new media as much as music is. Therefore, I am assuming that there is another factor previously overlooked; namely, the role of individual involvement. This thesis explores this possibility and examines what this might mean to the individuals involved in the case studies reported on.

Although these case studies are of secondary school students from a British Columbia high school, the results seem to me to have relevance to music education programs throughout North America. This is because the structure and *modus operandi* of Canadian and American music education programs are very similar.
Programs in both countries comprise components such as choir, band, jazz group (vocal and/or instrumental), string ensemble, and woodwind/brass ensemble, and so on. The primary focus of these program components is proficiency in technique and mastery of performance skills. In my opinion, performance-based programs, however, can degenerate into largely superficial activities geared towards the improvement of mechanical and conceptual musical fluency. As Robert Walker (1984) points out, such programs can easily become a workshop in pedantry, not a manifestation of the art of music. When I write about secondary school music education programs in British Columbia, I am inevitably generalizing about secondary school music education programs in both Canada and the United States.

As a composer I know that a diet of technical exercises in performance does not, as a rule, engross an individual or captivate one's imagination in the way that music composition can. No 'pedantry' can adequately compensate for lack of artistic sensibility. Music scholars and pedagogues have been writing about composition's importance and usefulness in music education programs for decades. In particular, in the
U.S.A., such writers as Bennett Reimer, Charles Leonhard, and many representing the M.E.N.C. (Music Educators National Conference Journal) have long advocated a more prominent role for music composition in high school music programs. On a theoretical level, then, music education specialists agree on the value of composition in education. On a practical level, however, there have been very few substantial shifts to implement compositional activities in music classrooms. There was a period of time during which the focus of pedagogy was on contemporary composition.

**Contemporary Music Composition Practices in Music Education**

During the 1950's and 1960's, avant-garde developments in contemporary music by composers such as Boulez, Cage, R. Murray Schafer, Berio and Stockhausen were being reflected in a number of music education classrooms, as pedagogues around the globe began exploring the usefulness of the avant-garde in creative musical experiences. During the 1950's, composer John Cage was holding summer composition camps for students in the United States. In England in the early 1960's,
composer Peter Maxwell-Davies was composing works specially for his school students (e.g. *O Magnum Mysterium*, 1961), and encouraging them to engage in improvisation and to think about the compositional process. In *The Composer in the Classroom and Ear Cleaning* (1965), Canadian composer Murray Schafer was suggesting that students should be exposed to thinking about traditional, historical music in new, creative ways. In the mid-1960's a group of American music educators designed the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program (MMCP). The MMCP is an approach which emphasizes experiencing and exploring rather than the implanting of facts and knowledge. Brian Dennis (1970) introduced aspects of contemporary music to the classroom in *Experimental Music in Schools - Towards a New World of Sound*. Dennis followed on from George Self's *New Sounds in Class* (1967), which Self described as a "practical approach to the understanding and performing of contemporary music in schools". (p. 23) In *Sound Projects* (1976), Robert Walker set up a series of avant-garde projects for making music in the classroom. In Cologne, Germany, Gertrud Meyer-Denkmann wrote *Experiments in Sound* (1977), in which she stated
that a child's musical learning is impeded by the emphasis on singing and on musical games. She further stated that students should be directed towards non-verbal, emotional, and sensuous understandings of music's meaning. In the Soviet Union throughout the 1970's and 1980's, composer and pedagogue Dmitry Kabalevsky was composing pieces specifically for his students and encouraging them to compose for each other. Kabalevsky's experiments with composition are documented in his *How To Tell Children About Music* (1984) and *Development of the Mind and Heart* (1988).

Teachers and students were enthusiastically experimenting with composition in the 1960's and 1970's. These music education experiments were spawned and influenced by developments in contemporary music. At present, students in Britain and Australia continue to explore contemporary music. But this trend is no longer in evidence within the majority of North American music education programs, as recent *MENC* publications report.

While many North American music pedagogues urge their pupils to duplicate 'masterworks' often through musical arrangements designed for school bands or
choirs, pedagogues in other arts subjects (drama, visual art) encourage their students to create new works instead of merely recreating ones created by others. As in the field of music, in the 1950's and 1960's students in the visual arts and drama were being trained to express and reflect contemporary issues and themes rather than focusing on past traditions and techniques. In Britain, for example, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) has, since the 1950's, established itself as an institution where the primary focal point is the performance of contemporary work. If one wanted to learn to perform the 'classics', one would join The Royal Shakespeare Repertory Company after training at RADA.

In the visual arts, the central role of a student's individual creativity and expressiveness was established even earlier in this century. For example, from the 1930's visual arts education has been conducted more in conjunction with the work of contemporary practicing artists, and less with a concern for developing historical skills. In music education this shift has never occurred in most
institutions. In fact, Simon Fraser University, in British Columbia, is probably the only North American university to have a music program devoted exclusively to contemporary music.

In today's secondary school arts programs these course-content trends continue. While in visual art and drama courses students engage in creativity by expressing themselves through unique and highly personalized compositions on canvas and stage respectively, music educators, largely due to the training they received in music, are urging students, for the most part, to learn the musical traditions and works of 18th and 19th Century composers from Handel to Mozart to Mendelssohn. While learning the techniques of past composers is invaluable, such a process does very little to help an individual discover his/her own special, creative voice. It is this individualized, creative, self-expressive component that is currently accessible to students in visual art and drama courses, but not in music education programs. I believe that this teleological divergence in course content is partially reflected in the following statistics, and that these statistics are indicative of some of the
ailments of North American music education programs', since the data presented below, specifically from British Columbia, are similar in their trends to data from the United States published by the MENC.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education Information Services Branch Report 2069 shows statistics pertaining to secondary enrolment (head count) in British Columbia public schools. In the 1993/94 school year, total enrolment for grades 8-12 was 221 000. As Figure 1 (on the following page) illustrates, this is an increase of over 10 per cent on the 200 000 enroled students in 1983/84. Figures 2 and 3 show that among the arts subjects in the school curriculum, the most popular subject in the last decade was the visual arts, with a 1982 enrolment of 46 000 and a 1993 enrolment of 39 000 students. In 1982, music was in second place with an enrolment of 33 000, and drama was in third place with 19 000 pupils. A decade later, however, enrolment choices had changed dramatically. Drama increased to 25 000 while music decreased to 21 000, thereby becoming the least popular arts course. Of that 21 000, approximately 12 000 were in the band stream, 4 000 were in the choral stream,
Enrolments in Grades 8 - 12
Totals for BC Public Schools

Enrolments in Grades 8 - 12
Totals for Music, Art, and Drama

Figure 1
Figure 2

Enrolments in Grades 8 - 12
Most popular individual programs

Figure 3
and the remainder of the students were in a variety of other music courses such as string techniques or percussion ensemble. Such figures show these various music programs to be the least popular secondary arts course in British Columbia public schools. This decrease in music enrolment was occurring as overall school enrolment was increasing, thereby lowering even further the overall percentage of students enrolled in music programs. Data show that total enrolment of grade 8-12 students in music in 1982/83 was 32325. In 1993/94, however, the enrolment in music programs was 22117. Enrolment in visual art and drama programs has not suffered to the same extent over the past decade. In 1982/83, enrolment in visual art programs was 45507 and in 1993/94 was 38759. In 1982/83, enrolment in drama programs was 18522 and in 1993/94 was 25162 (B.C. Ministry of Education Information Services Branch Report 2069). At this time, in 1997, further cutbacks in funding have resulted in the elimination of specialist music teachers in practically all school districts in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Music still relies on specialists because of the focus on skills, whereas the visual arts and drama are more
readily tackled by classroom teachers, particularly at the elementary level, largely because of the focus on personal creativity rather than skill acquisition in these subjects.

This trend is evident across Canada. During a series of telephone conversations held on May 15, 1995 with employees of several provincial Ministries of Education, the following information was disclosed to me: In New Brunswick, for example, music programs have almost completely disappeared. In southern Ontario, twenty-one school boards have dispensed with music consultants and coordinators - central resource people who arrange instruction at schools that do not have the staff or money to do it themselves (which in most provinces is the majority). It appears that over one hundred Ontario elementary schools are not fulfilling their music requirement due to the lack of resource people. British Columbia, as a whole, has cut its complement of itinerant music teachers by more than half, and dropped all but five of some fifty resource staff positions at District level in recent years.
In the United States, the music education environment is similarly troubled. For example, Dorothy Straub (1993) reported that school districts in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. fought major cuts in funding in order to prevent the elimination of music programs in their respective areas. In the same publication, Richard Riley, the United States' Secretary of Education in 1993, stated that the Goals 2000 program intended to ensure a place for music education by establishing national arts standards. Evonne Nolan (1994) wrote about overcoming financial obstacles in order to maintain music programs in schools. Nolan, however, was writing particularly about band and performance programs. Will Schmid (1995) confirmed the reality of budget cuts which directly affect music education, but believes that although the United States Congress has the power to remove funds from the arts, it will most likely not do so because arts courses are in the category of core subject matter.

The North American education system is enrolment-driven. Funds, therefore, are allocated to programs according to their head counts. Enrolment in the
majority of school music programs is not sufficient to warrant adequate financial support. To a music program, inadequate financial support means, for example, purchasing instruments of a poorer quality, purchasing a smaller quantity (e.g. making a decision between a bass xylophone and a bass metallophone instead of purchasing both), being unable to afford to have an artist or guest speaker come with a presentation for the students, forsaking field trips and various learning experiences outside school grounds, and purchasing less resource material (i.e., texts, music scores, videos, magazines). This inadequate financial support directly affects teachers and students.

If enrolment figures continue their downward trend in music within education's enrolment-driven system, it seems possible that music might disappear from the curriculum entirely. Leonhard and House, twenty five years ago, suggested that course content of many North American music education programs had inadvertently taught innumerable school children to look upon music as a mechanical act or as a trade for which they have no talent. The types of music programs that dominated
the field of music education at the time of Leonhard and House's research produced "over fifty thousand school bands, around eight thousand school orchestras, and fourteen hundred community and professional orchestras". (p. 72)

Leonhard and House were suggesting that although there is an abundance of proficiency and performance-based programs, it is these programs that leave students feeling that music is a mechanical act. Leonhard and House (1972) state that in order to measure the worth of music education instruction, the following question must be answered: does the school enable the individual to participate fully in the musical life of his/her time? Programs that emphasize imitation, repetition and technical fluency in the learning of 'masterworks' for performance situations can not, by their very nature, enable a student to participate fully in the musical life of his/her time. Full participation implies students' personal involvement with musical experiences. By personal involvement I am talking about a process through which an individual identifies his/her self, his/her individuality, his/her essence with the musical task
he/she is undertaking. Acts of repetition and imitation do not catalyze this particular level of personal involvement because they do not give students the opportunity or means to engage in personal expression within the musical experience. Furthermore, it is rather unlikely that the pieces which an individual is learning in a band program reflect the 'life of the time' in which that individual lives (unless the band director is teaching his group a song by rock group U2 rather than a piece by Haydn, Gershwin, or Oscar and Hammerstein), and even then it is someone else's music.

Everyday life is enhanced by a wide range of expressive activity. In my opinion, performance-based programs are narrow in the scope of their content because of the limitations they impose on individuals in areas of self-expression and personal involvement. Creative activities, however, allow students to access these very areas. I, therefore, want to focus on the actual content of music programs, in particular, the place of composition.
Robert Walker (1984) suggests that the classroom should be a place where children are encouraged to compose and perform their own music so that they may learn about musical structure and musical thought while developing their own ideas in a musical fashion. This type of personal involvement occurs in other arts courses.

In drama, for example, a pupil can internalize a role by becoming a character, deciding on ways to shape that character's personality, and personalizing that experience. In the visual arts, one can create a work, thus personalizing that experience and expressing him/herself. Could it be that students in a band program, for example, do not attain the same depth of personal involvement when learning a piece by rote, or from a score? I am suggesting that it could, and often does. Report 2069 indicates that since 1982, enrolment in British Columbia school band programs has declined from 17 000 students to 12 000. This decline was occurring while overall school enrolment was increasing.
In the 1990's, three Greater Vancouver secondary schools began to implement music composition as part of the music curriculum for students in Grades 10-12. Over the past four years, the average number of students enrolled in the music programs at these schools has increased by 14 percent. The average overall enrolment at these same schools has increased by only 5 percent over the same four years. Enrolment statistics (Port Moody Senior Secondary of School District #43, Maple Ridge Senior Secondary of School District #42, and Lord Byng High School of School District #39, enrolment records, 1991-1995) show that since the introduction of composition classes for Grades 10-12, enrolment in music has increased at these schools. I must emphasize that there is no hard evidence directly linking music composition to enrolment increases in school music programs. Enrolment increases at these schools may have been catalyzed by a variety of other factors, particularly in the case of Lord Byng High School. Anecdotal information provided to me by the music teachers at these schools, however, seems to suggest that the instigation of music composition may have contributed
to enrolment increases in music at their schools.

The Value of Music Composition

According to John Kratus (1994), composition is a highly personalized language through which individuals can express themselves. This link between composition and personalization seems to be important. While working as an elementary music teacher in the Seven Oaks School Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba (1991-1994), I discovered that when my music program enabled students to personalize their work through self-expression by way of music composition, the program flourished in the areas of student enthusiasm, creativity and enrolment.

As a composer, I can confidently say that no musical experience enables me to achieve a deeper state of personal involvement, self exploration, self-discovery and self-expression than the act of composition. Composition is the tool which allows me to access my creative and highly personalized depths. My compositional experiences are my reference point for this research. In order to better understand my own, highly subjective view of my compositional experiences,
I want to explore the compositional processes of the sample group. To this extent, I am an integral part of this study.

The compositional process will offer students the chance to explore their own musical interests, while, simultaneously activating, developing and incorporating their music knowledge in that exploration. These, and other points were brought up in a speech presented during San Francisco's Biannual Conference of the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, when Charles Fowler (1993) said:

Music and music composition teach us divergent rather than convergent thinking, develop craftsmanship and the ability to apply aesthetics, introduce us to perceptions and understandings we could not acquire in any other way, provide us with insight and wisdom that enlighten our understanding, making it deeper and more comprehensive, facilitate human communication within and across cultures, and help us define who we are and articulate our own special sense of being.
Arnold Schoenberg (1965) asks:

Why teach composition? Because it is possible to make people with mediocre gifts use the means of composition in a sensitive manner. Composition allows them to understand music better, and so obtain that pleasure which is inherent in the art. (p. 152)

Musical independence and comprehension are almost inevitable with composition because one is involved in the type of learning which focuses on experiences with personal expression of moods, feelings and images, and in activities which are steeped in exploration, creativity, critical thinking, self-evaluation, understanding and analysis, interpretation, and justification. Composition is both a thing (a product) and an action (a process). Both the product and the process are invaluable. It is during the process of composing that students wrestle with solving musical problems of syntax, structure, unity and variety, individuality and universality. When our students compose, they reveal to us their understanding of how music works. Keith Swanwick (1988) writes:
What makes music musical is one's response to expression and musical structure. The art of music accesses, among other things, one's play, mastery, imitation, and imaginative play. (p. 2)

At the end of the process students have a concrete entity, the composition, which they can share with others, and which reflects their work, their knowledge, their process, and themselves, at that particular stage in their lives. This thesis proposes to extrapolate the nature of this type of personal involvement in which students engage throughout the process of music composition. My intent is to have a small group of high school students in British Columbia, Canada, describe their experiences with that process, the product, and the successes and failures of the process and the product as they perceive them at the time of creation.

The Soviet composer, pedagogue and scholar Dmitry Kabalevsky (1984) claimed:

Nothing else students do in the classroom (with the exception of creative writing) stimulates the kinds of thinking skills and creative powers composition does. When students compose, they must
think like composers, they must decide what to do in terms of dynamics, tonality and texture. They must decide how they want the audience to feel when they hear their piece. When students compose they become more aware of themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, their vulnerabilities, their perceptions, and their musical knowledge, and the wielding power that comes with it. (p. 138)

Individuals have a natural and innate desire to express themselves which is biologically driven. Students want to express themselves before they attend school. In North America, before attending school, kids heard their parents singing lullabies to them, commercial jingles on television, muzak in elevators, artists singing on the radio, their favourite characters singing in a Disney movie, a marching band blaring a tune during a parade, dolls that vocalize, and toys that harmonize. As well, children produce some song-like entity from within themselves. Their need to produce sound vocally and manually represents their need to make a mark on their environment. The child's marks say "I Am". In Early Ontogeny of Vocal Communication in Parent-Infant Interaction, Mechthild
Papousek (1992) discusses children's nonverbal communication and the diversity of identifiable, relevant vocal units in infants' presyllabic repertoire which are utilized in infant vocal signalling. She describes it as biologically driven. Musical experiences should perpetuate this innate need in the music classroom, and, in fact, be the primary focus of a music education program.

**Self-Expression Through Language**

But it is not just in music that children express themselves. They also find powerful expressiveness in verbal communication, both written and spoken. Van Maanen (1990) suggests that "to write is to measure our thoughtfulness". (p. 14) He claims that composing in language arts teaches us what we know, and in what way we know what we know. As a writer commits him/herself to paper, he/she sees him/herself in this text. Now the text confronts the writer. The very same process is evidenced in music. Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer (1986) discusses music's ability to teach the composer about composition while a work is being composed and after it has been completed.
If writing, according to Van Maanen, is a measure of one's thoughtfulness, then composition is a measure of one's 'feelingfulness'. As we research the possible meaning structures of our lived experiences and the role of 'feelingfulness' within these experiences, we come to a fuller grasp of what it means to be in the world as a man, a woman, a child, taking into account the socio-cultural and historical traditions that have given meaning to our ways of being in the world.

Bennett Reimer (1989) writes:

*Subjectivity is the feelingful aspect of human life. Without subjectivity there is no real human experience. Music education exists first and foremost to develop every person's natural responsiveness to the power of the art of music.*

(p. 46)

To interpret the entity of music is to understand the meaning derived from a musical experience, and to reflect on the ways in which an individual can fully experience the world as a musician, and what it is to be a musician. The ultimate aim of such reflection is the fulfilment of our human nature: to become more fully aware of who we are. A musical work is unlike a
painting or a ceramic vase in that it is not a concrete visual entity. Music interpretation is more subjective than the interpretation of visual arts. Therefore, each individual's interpretation of a musical work will differ. Keith Swanwick (1968) explains:

Musical examples are difficult to describe in words and any emotion involved is hard to analyze. So of all the arts, music with its wide range of possible interpretations has most often been used in the debate which asks the question; Does music express emotion, and if so, what is it?

Music isn't just expression. It's not just a piece of tonal architecture with a beautiful shape. During its performance it is alive, a form in flux symbolic of human feeling. (p. 5)

The stimulus for such interpretation lies in our need to live, rather than exist, by making life interesting, satisfying, and meaningful. Human beings never seem to be quite satisfied with their knowledge. They continually pose new questions, seek new answers search for better ways and more innovative ideas.
According to the rationale of Langer (1948) and Swanwick, it may be said that when students engage in the act of composition, they personally involve themselves in connecting their sense of being (i.e., individuality) and the expression of that unique individuality with an entity which is symbolic of human feeling (part of Swanwick's definition of music) and symbolic of the rhythm of life experience (part of Langer's definition of music). Performance and technique-based programs do not make such experiences available to students.

The Ubiquitous Presence of Popular Music

I want now to explain a bit about the extent of the influence of popular music on young people and to suggest that we cannot ignore this pre-dominant part of young people's lives and sensibilities.

In today's music environment, blues, jazz, funk, hip-hop, new jack swing, country and western, adult contemporary, techno, industrial, grunge, heavy metal, rock, hard rock, reggae, dance hall, rhythm and blues, Latin, and house can be, and have been, widely embraced by the masses, thus becoming popular music. 'Pop' is
the umbrella term that is used for popular music. Record sales data (*Billboard Magazine*) show that school-aged kids comprise the largest group of buyers of popular music. Musically, their interests rest squarely on the shoulders of pop. Pop, however, has not gained the same credibility as music of the world's other cultures, or of classical (i.e., musical works of the renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, and post-romantic musical periods) music in the school music classroom. Nevertheless, pop music dominates their lives. Neil Postman (1989) writes:

> The world of radio, MTV, CDs, cassettes and boom boxes provides students with their 'First Music Curriculum', while the classroom provides the 'Second Music Curriculum'. Students spend up to fifty hours each week immersed in the first curriculum and only one to ten hours in the second. (p. 29)

Joe Stuessy (1994), in his article *When the Music Teacher Meets Metallica*, states that music educators must stay informed about current popular music because students spend much more time with it than they do with the music which is being taught in music class. Music
educators are not sure what to do with pop music. They see problems with it. Does it fit into the realm of music education, and if it does, where? If brought into the music curriculum, will its popularity overpower the other musics? Should such a risk be taken? Is this, in fact, a risk? Several writers in the field of music education are addressing these questions and talking about the changing roles of the music teacher. For example, Ed Asmus and Paul Haack (1996), in their article *Defining New Teaching Roles*, write:

The music specialist should be responsible for the design and implementation of activities involving music production (composition, improvisation, performance, guided listening, movement, aesthetic inquiry, music history and music criticism). Music pedagogues should be the resource and content experts in their field, and facilitators of critical thinking used in conjunction with problem solving, higher order thinking skills, reasoning, abstract thinking, informed logic, and reflective thinking. (p. 27)
Excerpt 1: Taken from Sheila E's song *The Glamorous Life*

Composed by Prince and Sheila Escovedo, Warner Bros. Records
Copyright, 1983

Excerpt 2: Taken from Billy Joel's song *We Didn't Start The Fire*

Composed by Billy Joel, Columbia Records, A division of Sony Entertainment Corp.
Copyright, 1989.
Lon Berry (1995) writes:

Because popular music plays such an important role in young people's lives, the creative teacher should not pass up the chance to incorporate pop music into a lesson whenever possible. (p. 38)

As an example, Berry demonstrates that pop artists, at times, base their songs on mixolydian and pentatonic scales (e.g. Sheila E's *The Glamorous Life* and Billy Joel's *We Didn't Start the Fire* respectively). Sheila E's song, for example, is based upon a 2-phrase syncopated mixolydian ostinato (excerpts provided on following page). Students are able to play such ostinati in a matter of minutes. Students may use the rhythm of this ostinato to improvise other ostinati or may use pitches and experiment with changing the style of the rhythm.

Berry suggests that rather than be intimidated by change, creative music teachers have always found ways to use new techniques to enrich music education of those entrusted to them.

Furthermore, music pedagogues have been trained as students and as teachers to perform, analyze, appreciate and understand music through experiences
with music other than pop. How, therefore, can they be expected to teach genres of music with which they are not scholastically familiar and for which they lack a sound, educational foundation? Yet, currently, pop music is the music of today's youth. That youth is the same youth which fills our schools. In reality, the world of popular music forms an entire generation's fashion sense, dialect, and, to a great extent, way of life. More importantly, it is the area where students' musical interests can be found. Thus, it appears that in popular music lies the source where interests can be educated, focused and sharpened. Teachers, therefore, should perhaps feel the need to widen their knowledge base so that it includes the music with which students are comfortable and secure. Ed Edelson (1972) writes:

The music curriculum of the secondary school must offer more than just a program of band, chorus and music appreciation. Offer a student some phrase of music in which they are interested. Music will be more exciting and challenging to the teenagers when they find courses and activities with which they can identify. If our programs are going to be revitalized, we must extend ourselves and no longer
stagnate within narrow borders. (p. 5)

Pedagogues are individuals who, just like everyone else, live in an environment which touches them socially, culturally, and politically. Since pop music is a force which crosses social, political, and cultural boundaries, teachers inevitably come in contact with pop music. Such a contact should serve as a foothold for educators as they begin to expand the limits of their comfort zones within the school music program. Edelson (1972) and Stuessy (1994) both assert that in expanding these limits, teachers will become better able to adapt to the ever changing state of music education, and be better able to accommodate students' needs and interests. Their writings suggest that through this process, music education will be an active, rather than a static entity which will more successfully reflect the changing musical environment.

Vulliamy and Lee (1980) make a case for pop music in education:

Pop music can be seen as especially valuable in the light of current educational thinking. It is clearly relevant to the real experience of the pupils and is a strong source of motivation to them in a
variety of ways. At the same time the way in which pop is normally created accords with the adolescent's natural desire for independence and might fruitfully lead towards pupil-centred, self-directed work.

(p. 1)

Although I believe that due to the nature of the students in the sample and their social surroundings, pop music must play some role in this examination, the most important task of this thesis will be to illustrate how the group of high school students actually go about composing, the manner in which they sequence their actions, the reasons they give for such sequencing, and the successes and failures which were encountered by them. The information pertaining to these critical issues will come directly from the students as they reflect on their own experiences. While the researcher's role is that of interpreter, meaning-seeker, and narrator, it is inevitable that my own musical personality will intrude.

The students will be involved in the same processes which an artist undertakes - processes of constant self-evaluation, self-expression, creativity, and artistic growth. They will be confronted with the
Example 1:
Question/answer improvisation (for recorder) with a focus on melody.

Question:
\[\text{music notation image}\]

Answer:
\[\text{music notation image}\]

Example 2:
Question/answer improvisation (for non-pitched percussion) with a focus on rhythm.

Question:
\[\text{music notation image}\]

Answer:
\[\text{music notation image}\]

Example 3:
Question/answer improvisation (for xylophone) with a focus on melody, harmony and rhythm.

Question:
\[\text{music notation image}\]

Answer:
\[\text{music notation image}\]
appreciation of the work of others, and, to a great degree, their own work, the appreciation of music composition as an idiom, and as a communicative medium. It is these elements which may contribute to pushing the field of music education into a more complete, educationally sound, comprehensive, practical, marketable, and respected level.

**Composition Through Improvisation**

From 1991-1994, while I was employed as an elementary (kindergarten - grade 6) music specialist by Seven Oaks School Division #10 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I attempted to teach the grade four, five and six students in my music program to improvise and compose. These students began to improvise by creating short rhythmic and/or melodic motives within a question/answer activity. For example, I would play a four-count phrase (or 'question') on a recorder and they would play the next four-count phrase (or 'answer') using and re-organizing some of the content that I used in my 'question' without copying my 'question' note for note. (Examples of melodic and rhythmic question/answer improvisations are provided on
the following page.) With time, four-count improvisatory phrases grew in length and complexity. The students subjected their musical improvisations to experimentation, repetition, development - some of the elements which transform improvisation into composition. Throughout this transformation, I observed my elementary school students making decisions about the musical form, content and sound of their compositions in a manner similar to that of composers. In my opinion, this was a sign that even at the elementary school level, when these students are immersed in conceptual music learning, their encounters with composition are invaluable, because, eventually, these encounters may transform these students into confident, able and versatile amateur composers within whom genuine understanding and interest in composition is fully nurtured.

Today's music education specialists seem to share in the opinion that encounters with composition are invaluable, and that these encounters can occur within today's changing, musical environment. Wynton Marsalis's *Teaching Music and Bridging Gaps* (1995), Ella Wilcox's *Introducing Jazz Improvisation* (1995),
John Kratus's *How Do Children Compose?* (1994), and Plato Karafelis's *Music is the Key to Successful Schools* (1995) are just some of the articles which address the value of improvisation and composition, and the need for these components to be in the North American music curriculum.

In North America, the field of music education lacks systematic studies in music which explore students' personal involvement and self-expression during the composition of music, their objectives, successes and failures as seen through their own eyes. I intend to find out how students compose by approaching the student composers themselves for a description and evaluation of their experiences. I am most interested in the students' processes of music composition. To the best of my knowledge, most existing typologies concentrate on the analysis and evaluation of the finished product of music composition. The intent of this study is to explore and interpret the emotions, mental images and thoughts that are part of a composer's processes of self-expression through music composition. My role in this research is that of ethnographer. It involves
observing and documenting students' processes of music composition, interviewing the students about their processes, objectives, successes and failures, and attempting to interpret the collected data. But it also involves my own perceptions of what it is like to compose and to express my own inner sense of being. The exploration of a personal sense of being brings with it various phenomenological perspectives, some of which I will discuss in chapter three of this thesis. In chapter four I will describe my time with the sample group. In subsequent chapters I will discuss their work and their personal methods of self-expression through music composition, and the roles of hermeneutics, semiotics, phenomenology, ethnography and language in such a discussion.
CHAPTER TWO:

EXPLORING AND DEFINING SOME OF THE ROLES
OF COMPOSITION AS THEY PERTAIN TO MUSIC EDUCATION
PROGRAMS, POP MUSIC, AND LANGUAGE

In chapter one of this thesis, I emphasized the importance of facilitating students' individual engagement in personally meaningful acts of self-expression in music composition. I also commented on the inevitable influence of pop music on these acts. Furthermore, I commented on the powerful means of expression that most human beings find through spoken and written verbal communication. In this chapter, I intend to further highlight the links that exist between music composition and North American music education programs, pop music, and self-expression through language.

THE VALUES AND DIFFICULTIES OF PLACING COMPOSITION IN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Establishing the practice of composition as a viable alternative to the existing, deeply entrenched, traditional and misconceived proficiency/performance-based programs in the music classroom may not prove to
be a simple process for pedagogues. In *Musical Composition* (1911), C.V. Stanford (a composer himself and the teacher of composer Vaughan Williams) says that "to tell a student how to write music is an impossible absurdity. The remainder of a teacher's functions must be to give hints as to what to avoid, leaving the constructive elements to the pupil's own initiative". (p. 1)

In his *Letters*, Arnold Schoenberg (J. Kemp, Trans. 1965), one of the twentieth century's most influential composers, comments on the difficulty of teaching composition:

I have realized that the greatest difficulty for the students is to find how they compose without being inspired. The answer is - it's impossible. (p. 135-6)

In *The Republic*, Plato writes that an individual is touched by the Gods during the act of composition. Today this touch of the Gods is translated to mean inspiration. If students can only compose when they are inspired, and if inspiration is an entity which cannot be scheduled or timed, then, perhaps, to expect composition in the music classroom is to expect too
much. Schoenberg, however, does not suggest that composition per se, is the main objective that students must try to attain. In *Letters* (1965), Schoenberg states that he wants students to be thoroughly acquainted with music itself, and to attain an open-mindedness which would lead them to approach all music with an equal interest and away from superficial judgements. Schoenberg advocates the development of understanding of music and of a musical experience.

Many scholars and composers in the twentieth century have argued for a place for composition in the music education program. Ian Lawrence (1978) declares:

It is not surprising that composers should believe that the teaching of composition should form an essential part of musical education, and that the gradual 'mastery of skills' should include the mastering of compositional techniques as well as those of singing and performing on instruments. It is, however, as a part of a general music education, rather than as an isolated specialism, that they wish to see the teaching of composition proceed. (p. 137)
Hindemith (1952), for example, believed that the object of musical education was the development of general musicianship, and that:

This vast stock of general musical knowledge was the hotbed in which the germs of composing grew. Composing was not a special branch of knowledge that had to be taught to those gifted or interested enough. It simply was the logical outgrowth of a healthy and stable system of education, the ideal of which was not an instrumental, vocal, or tone-arranging specialist, but a musician with a universal musical knowledge. (p. 188)

Hindemith was interested in seeing composition grow out of a broad background. This background should be steeped in basic music training which should, then, be embodied in the acts of music composition. Conceptual musical knowledge and mastery of techniques, therefore, should be used as tools in the composition of music, but mechanical and conceptual fluency should not be a music program's final objective in its own right.
Writers of articles in The Music Educators National Conference (MENC) Journal and in Teaching Music are beginning to encourage teachers to help young children create music as early as possible. Wynton Marsalis (1995) suggests that by the end of Grade 8 children should be capable of composing short pieces within specified guidelines. John Kratus (1994) writes that by the end of twelfth grade, students at the proficient level should be able to compose music in several distinct styles, and demonstrate creativity in using the elements of music for expressive effect. Kratus claims that it is possible:

...to look inside the 'black box' of music creativity without diminishing the wonder and individuality of the creative act. Composition is both a thing (a product) and an action (a process). As musicians, we often place a high value on compositions as products. As music educators, however, we also need to value composition as a process. It is during the process of composing that students wrestle with solving musical problems of syntax, structure, unity, and variety, individuality and universality. When our students compose, they
reveal to us their understanding of how music works. In teaching composition, I believe that we should emphasize the process of how to compose over the products of finished musical works. (p. 38)

Kirk Kassner (1994) writes:

Nothing else kids do in the classroom stimulates the kinds of thinking skills and creative powers composition does. Even though their finished compositions may not be great, the process they went through to create that music is beneficial to them. When students compose, they must think like composers, they must decide what to do in terms of dynamics, tonality, and texture. They must decide how they want the audience to feel when they hear a certain section of their piece. When students compose, they achieve a powerful, heady feeling. Nothing else can compare to it. You may think you don't have time to introduce your kids to composition. But since kids perform better when they are encouraged to compose, you don't have time not to do it. (p. 98)
It is one thing to acknowledge the opinions of writers pertaining to the values and difficulties of placing composition in music education programs. It is another to incorporate these opinions in daily music pedagogy in the classroom. Music educators are the ones who are faced with the practical application of music composition to school music programs. If a teacher is to expect a student to compose a piece of music, thereby expressing a part of him/herself through that composition, then that teacher must confront the notion of that student's individuality in terms of the student's role as a listener of music and an interpreter of musical experiences. In other words, a student who is expressing him/herself through his/her musical composition is, inevitably, including his/her experiences as a listener of music in that expression. Inherent and influential in one's experiences as a listener of music are individually-based entities such as one's musical tastes and cultural background. One's musical tastes and one's culturally and societally-derived musical experiences will contribute in shaping the musical work that that individual composes.
THE COMPOSER AND THE LISTENER

To make a study of the lived experience of music, one needs to orient oneself in a strong way to the issues of individual involvement with music, and what kind of meaning such involvement entails. A person may be in the role of composer or listener, yet a musical experience should enable that individual to understand the meaning of that experience. For example, what does the experience of listening to any piece of music mean to the listener? How is the listener affected? Does the piece communicate an image, an idea, a feeling? If so, how does this communication occur? What role does the listener play in this communication? Would such a communication be different with another listener, in another environment? What are the piece's successes and failures as a musical work? In addressing these questions, a composer should be aware of his/her own role as a listener (in addition to other individuals who may be listening to his/her composition). This 'partnership' between composition and listening shall be explored in the paragraphs that follow.
Aaron Copland (1957) believed that listeners listen to music on three different planes:

- **On the sensuous plane** listeners experience the sheer pleasure of musical sound itself. The listener 'bathes' in sound without a lot of thought about what he/she is hearing.
- **On the expressive plane** the listener searches for meaning behind the notes with the assumption that that meaning constitutes what the piece is saying.
- **On the sheerly musical plane** the listener examines the notes themselves, and their manipulation by the composer. (p. 9)

Copland (1957) discusses the link between composer and listener:

Everything in music is directed at the listener. To listen intelligently, you must clearly understand not only your own role, but also that of the composer and the interpreter, and what each one contributes to the sum total of a musical experience. Listening is a responsibility. It can make our understanding of the art more profound. Music is alive when the listener is alive. To listen intently, to listen consciously and with one's whole intelligence is to further the art. (p. 265)
Igor Stravinsky (1972) said:

The listener is called upon to become the composer's partner. This presupposes that the listener's musical instruction and education are sufficiently extensive that he may not only grasp the main features of the work as they emerge, but that he may even follow, to some degree, its unfolding. (p. 179)

Both Harold Michelson (1993) and Todd Fallis (1996) discuss the importance of the listener's and the composer's roles within the musical experience, and, what Michelson calls the appreciation of music. Michelson and Fallis outline the importance of attentive listening to music. Such listening catalyzes a listener's greater understanding of the composition.

Copland (1957) examines the emotional response of the composer and the listener to a given musical work:

Given the chance, every composer would like to know two things: Are you hearing everything that is going on? Are you really being sensitive to what you are hearing? In other words, are you missing anything as far as the notes are concerned, and are you clear about your emotional response? (p. 23)
What does a composer start with? Copland believes that every composer begins with a musical idea (for example, theme, melody, harmony, rhythm). Most composers begin experimenting with musical ideas in the improvisatory phase of their creative processes. I, as a composer, experiment with musical ideas until one of them appeals to me, at which point I develop the idea by unfolding its musical (i.e. harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, thematic, or structural) and expressive potential according to my personal tastes, judgements, abilities and compositional objectives. It is somewhere within this process that improvisation transforms into composition (I will discuss this notion in greater detail in chapter three).

It is in the compositional realm that I, as a composer and listener, examine my composition's emotional and communicative significance. In my personal experiences, I very seldom reach this compositional realm without having preliminarily explored musical ideas in the improvisational realm. It is this connection between composition and improvisation that I will address in the pages that follow.
COMPOSITION AS IT STEMS FROM IMPROVISATION

Rena Upitis (1990), a pianist and music educator of very young children, suggests that improvisation and its direct link to composition in music education does not have to be a frightening and intimidating endeavour:

For the piano is indeed a magical thing. You press a key and instantly you have sound. A different key, a different sound. Touch it softly and the sound is soft. Of course children want to play this instrument and explore its workings. And almost immediately after such playful explorations begin, they want to make music sing from their fingertips. (p. 49)

Upitis says that such improvisations may go no further than the moment, unrecorded and forgotten, at least in detail, but enjoyed during the process of the creation. These improvisatory ideas, however, may be important or interesting enough to recreate, edit, store, and share. In these cases, the process is one that Upitis calls composition. What makes it composition rather than improvisation is that the ideas
generated in the improvisation are somehow fixed, and with that comes the possibility of future performance, change and development.

Upitis clearly distinguishes between improvisation and composition, and, in the process, shows that these areas can be accessible to students and teachers. The same point is reinforced by June Tillman (1986) who states that "the traditional attitude toward music may be due partly to the great stress laid on writing music down by means of a sophisticated notational system, rather than on the sound of the composition itself". (p. 5)

Tillman, like Upitis, suggests that all that is needed for improvisation is sensitivity, imagination and an outlet (voice, instrument). At the improvisatory phase nothing needs to be written down. Therefore, teachers and students need not concern themselves with sophisticated manners of notation in order to engage in the first, improvisatory steps en route to composition.
Many articles have appeared in publications such as the Music Educators Journal and the Music Index pertaining to the craft of composition and improvisation. And, one need look no further than the writings of Carl Orff and Zoltan Kodaly to notice a wealth of information about children and musical improvisation.

Improvisation is related to composition in that it is a unique, individual, and original expression of the human being who is improvising. It is an activity during which a person experiments with ideas and sounds. When the improvisor decides to retain a certain portion of the improvisation, he/she records this portion by way of notation, or an audio-recording device. Usually, the improvisor will work with the sound/idea which he/she wants to retain by augmenting, diminishing, and clarifying the content of that sound/idea. These alterations may occur before and/or during the recording process. When an improvised entity undergoes changes (in order to be the best that it can be, in its creator's opinion) so that it can be recorded, the improvised idea eventually transforms
into a composed entity. Therefore, if one wants a final product, a composition to occur in the classroom, one should expect improvisation to precede it.

THE ROLE OF POPULAR MUSIC WITHIN COMPOSITION

If we, as teachers, expect students to express themselves through music composition in a manner which is relevant and engaging to them, then we need to be prepared to deal with the influences of popular music on the students' musical creations. As educators teaching students who live in a society inundated by pop culture (i.e., music, fashion, dialect, morality), we need to make decisions pertaining to the viability and value of implementing pop in our music programs.

Charles Hoffer (1991) summarizes the curriculum selection guidelines and considerations for the use of popular music in school music classes:

Certainly, use some popular music, but don't make it the main course on the musical menu. Most of it is not as worthy of careful study as most works of art music, but the matter of musical quality is not the only factor that should affect your choice of
Hoffer is clearly cautioning the reader about the quantity and quality of popular music in the classroom. Pop music's place in school music classes, according to Hoffer, can be justified in two ways. First, pop may develop a student's interest in class content, and second, pop is an expedient and efficient vehicle in the study of rhythms, phrases, melodies, forms, and so on. Hoffer asks educators to be selective in choosing which pop pieces to implement in the classroom. Yet, the same sort of caution should be applied to the selection of material in any style of music. Hoffer shows an awareness for the rate at which the field of pop music changes, thereby presenting problems to pedagogues' abilities to remain current. Subsequently (p. 63-64), Hoffer acknowledges the presence of condescending attitudes which victimize popular music, thus, potentially, victimizing students' musical preferences. John Paynter (Vulliamy and Lee, 1980) comments on the attitudes towards popular music that he has encountered:
The acceptance of pop music in schools has been slow; in general because of misunderstandings and assumptions about the nature and purpose of the music. These assumptions are commonly accepted but rarely questioned. (p. ix)

There does appear to be an apprehension on behalf of music educators regarding pop music. The apprehension seems to be more about the performers of pop music than pop music's uses in the music classroom. A stigma is attached to pop music - rock and roll has and does grow out of rebellious attitudes. Here are several examples that illustrate where that stigma may come from: The well-publicized incident of heavy metal singer Ozzy Ozbourne biting off the head of a bat during a performance, the 'provocative' lyrics of the Rolling Stones song Let's Spend the Night Together that the band had to change for their appearance on the Ed Sullivan show, the incident of the two teenagers raping and murdering a teenage girl because, allegedly, they received their commands to do so within the songs of British band Judas Priest, the overdoses or suicides of so many pop icons (Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Dave Gahan, Shannon Hoon, Kurt Cobain, just to
name a few), the long hair and tattoos of bands like Guns and Roses, Motley Crue and Great White, stage shows which incorporate visions of blatant brutality and pornography such as those created by Marylin Manson, WASP and Alice Cooper, tasteless stage antics like those of the band Blind Melon who readily urinate on their audience, or Green Day who spit beer and gum and flick lit cigarettes at their audience.

In my opinion, the stigma that is attached to the performers of popular music is well-deserved. In the music classroom, however, a music teacher may focus on the harmonic content of a Nirvana song without discussing Kurt Cobain's drug use and suicide, or explore 'form' in a Circus of Power song without engaging in a discussion about tattoos (band members are heavily tattooed), or analyze the rhythmic component of a George Michael composition without talking about Michael's sexual orientation. We, as music educators, have the option of detaching and deleting information about Tchaikovsky's homosexuality and Liszt's use of narcotics when we examine the music of Tchaikovsky and Liszt with our students. The same option may be exercised with pop music and the artists
who create it. Hoffer (1991) and Paynter (1980) advocate the use of pop to the extent that pop songs contain some educational value for the music student. 'Classical' music, though, contains that same value. Beyond that value, however, pop has the ability to involve that student on a more personal level than the compositions of, for example, Liszt or Tchaikovsky because the majority of today's North American students are more interested in pop music than in 'classical' music.

Pop music seems to make music learning so accessible to students because it is the musical entity where most of their musical interests lie. In addition, pop music has made the act of music-making very accessible to individuals, regardless of individuals' levels of technical and performance ability, through the advent of MIDI technology which occurred during the 'synthesizer boom' of the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Musical Instruments Digital Interface (MIDI) technology is a number based (i.e., digital) language for electronic musical instruments. MIDI equipped instruments can send and receive information about
dynamics, timbre, pitch and duration. MIDI is not a sound. It is information about a sound. Prior to the advent of MIDI equipment, analog synthesizers were used. These instruments produced sound by means of variable control voltages. In other words, to change a sound, one would have to patch (combine) together various circuits. In performance, several synthesizers in combination were commonly used. One synthesizer would produce a bass sound, a second would be utilized for a brassy lead, and a third would contribute the equivalent sound of a string section. Today, different timbres sound simultaneously from a single keyboard. In other words, one keyboard can produce bass, percussion, brass, and string sounds simultaneously. Through MIDI, several keyboards can be digitally connected, with one keyboard functioning as a controller (message sender) and the others producing the sounds (message receivers). In a performance setting, then, only one person is needed. That person operates the controller, which in turn operates all other MIDI equipment (i.e., keyboards, samplers, sequencers, drum machines) by way of digital communication. Therefore, one person can activate a
vast number of sampled sounds at the same time.

In the music classroom, a student composer has these capabilities at his/her disposal, which allows for easier editing, play-back, and notation processes during the composition of music. Therefore, a student does not need to possess a high level of technical and performance ability to engage in music composition.

Lon Berry (1995) writes that "the implications of using synthesizers and computers for music education are enormous. Students can create, hear and edit their own multi-timbral compositions just by pushing a button". (p. 36)

Now, students can hear their works in progress. Composers did not have this advantage in the past. MIDI composers have access to a great number of sounds. Students can, therefore, experiment with advanced arrangement techniques, form, and texture construction. By using headphones, each composer can hear his/her piece performed, and can subject that piece to an evaluation. At any point, students may edit, save and/or erase their work. Through MIDI technology students may have their compositions transposed (moved to another key) or notated.
Sam Reese (1995) states:

For young music students, MIDI technologies can reduce the need for advanced performance skills and higher-level use of staff notation. As a result, larger numbers of students are now able to experience the initial stages of composing original, popular-style music. The emphasis of such 'Contemporary Composing' classes is on the creation, development, and extension of musical ideas into complete pieces of music and not on learning music fundamentals, music theory, music performance, or synthesizer programming skills. (p. 37)

Yes, one can use MIDI to learn music theory, practice with elements of form, work with arrangement and orchestration, experiment with colors and timbres. More importantly, though, MIDI enables students to not be delayed by mechanical problems such as not knowing which way a note's stem is notated or that the clarinet is a transposing instrument. Sure, this information is part of the broad network of Western musical knowledge, but it contributes very little to students' efforts to express themselves through their personal involvement with the composition of music.
The goals of a MIDI-based approach would include an increase in the understanding and perception of the various expressive elements of music such as melody, harmony, rhythm, form and tone color through experimentation with these elements in order to produce whole works. (It is interesting that Reese talks about composing 'popular-style' music. I wish he had elaborated.) Reese adds:

This is an approach to learning about the expressive effects of music elements from the 'inside out'. It is an integrative, synthesizing method of working with the elements of music rather than a more analytical process, wherein students study one element of music at a time. (p. 37)

**COMPOSITION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND ITS LINKS TO MUSIC COMPOSITION**

Asking students to 'compose' in music class is not an unorthodox request. After all, students are asked to compose poetry and prose in language arts classes, and to create a character in drama class.

Bob Hinz (1995) links composition and improvisation in music to improvisation and composition
Improvisation takes place when a musician's aural and technical facilities combine to create a spontaneous form of musical expression. Improvisation has its counterpart in verbal communication: the spontaneous revealing of oneself through conversation and the sharing of ideas and experiences with another person or persons. (p. 32)

A composition is the revealing of the composer's personal emotions, ideas, and/or experiences to the audience. The following poem by writer Carl Leggo (1994) will serve as an example:

A COFFIN AND A CHEVY

My father bought a '58 Chevy, maroon and new, drove my brother and me out of the city along the Trans Canada Highway to cut a Christmas tree, parked on the shoulder, left my brother and me, sank into the snow like quicksand, my brother, only four, laughing, and I was laughing at my brother laughing as my father waved a hand, his mouth a tight line, just before he was swallowed by the snow and dark trees
and my brother jumped up and down in the back seat while I pretended to drive away for help but went nowhere, and my father didn't come back, my brother full of fear, no longer laughing, and the air was thick with chewy toffee, my father gone, my brother going crazy, so I grabbed the ice scraper and jabbed holes in the maroon velvet over me like the inside of a coffin, no escape, and my father returned, creature from the snow lagoon, bearing a tree, a wide grin where the line had been, and the car was a car, not a coffin, my father was alive, my brother was laughing, and my father looked at the neat triangular flags hanging from the ceiling of his new Chevy, said nothing, drove back to the city in a Chevy once more a coffin

Carl Leggo,
(Growing Up
Perpendicular on the
Side of a Hill,
1994. p.31)
Leggo writes this poem in the first person. This work reads like an autobiographical and very personal vignette which guides the reader through a stepwise association with the author's thoughts, feelings and observations pertaining to the particular situation that he is describing. From start to finish, this composition appears to be one long sentence which is constructed of a series of small narratives, one weaving into the next. At the end of *A Coffin and a Chevy* there is no period, perhaps suggesting that the writer's overall story does not end with the completion of this particular vignette. Leggo's other compositions (*Tangled* and *Who's Afraid of Jacques Cousteau*, for example) also demonstrate writing from a very personal, first person perspective. Leggo draws directly from his personal experiences when constructing his compositions. Others growing up in the same environment as Leggo will be able to relate to his allusions. For example, Mick Jagger (singer with the Rolling Stones), Johnny Wiessmuller (actor who portrayed Tarzan), Bobby Orr (All-Star defenceman with the Boston Bruins hockey team), and Wheaties (a
breakfast cereal on which sport stars' pictures appear) are used by Leggo as if they were a part of the North American lexicon. In other words, Leggo's writing (within these examples) is folkloric.

Elizabeth Radin Simons (1990) states that folkloric writing, or writing about one's own experiences, is the easiest way to begin composing literary works:

One must keep in mind that students bring their own family, ethnic, religious, occupational, national, and peer-group folklore with them into the classroom. It is more a matter, then, of tapping an already-existing resource than of introducing a foreign subject matter. (p. ix)

James Britton (1978) addressed the notion of first person writing nearly two decades ago by assigning to the writer the role of participant and/or spectator. The student was, then, involved in the composing process either actively or passively, but personally, nonetheless.

It is active, individual and personal student involvement that music education can attain through the composition of music by students. In my opinion,
intrinsic experiences with self expression through the composition of music are at the very core of the 'individual involvement' which I have been addressing throughout this thesis because such experiences enable an individual to construct personal definitions of what these experiences mean to him/her. Furthermore, these definitions, then, become a part of the compositional process which that individual undertakes. Because these definitions are uniquely individual for each composer, each individual who immerses him/herself in self-exploration and self-expression through composition might leave that compositional experience with a uniquely individual set of discoveries and understandings regarding that experience, and, more importantly, regarding the 'self' which he/she attempted to express. For example, as a composer, I write music from an intrinsic perspective (either as participant or spectator). My music consists of personal vignettes, observations, emotions, and thoughts. My compositions contain allusions to my environment and the 'pop culture' in which I live. My compositions share these characteristics with Leggo's writings in his 1994 text.
My definition and understanding of my compositional experiences suggest to me the following (I concede that this definition and understanding of my compositional experiences is uniquely my own, and might not be shared by others who have composed, but equally, the experiences of other composers would suffer from the same problem): Musical and non-musical ideas reflected by a given piece do not end when the audible sounds of that piece end. In my opinion, these ideas continue in time and space, in a dimension that is not audibly perceptible by me, ad infinitum, taking on other shapes and going in other directions. I make silent the audible sounds, out of respect for the listener, at a point in the composition which is most suitable for departure. I believe that even when the musical sound has stopped, musical energy continues. I shall use several analogies to illustrate this point.

I equate musical energy with spiritual energy, and musical sound with a body. In my opinion, when one's body ceases to function, spiritual energy does not die. It may exist on some other plane or relocate itself to another body. Spiritual energy is most recognizable to other human beings when it is inside a living,
functioning body. In this analogy, then, musical energy exists even when no sound is audible. Musical energy, however, is most recognizable to human beings within musical sound. Yes, one hears pitch combinations, rhythmic patterns, dynamic shapes, and timbre within some music, but it is the musical energy of a piece of music which fills one with elation, sorrow, or drive. In other words, one may see a person's face, legs and arms, but it is that person's spirit which inspires or deflates one.

I think of music as a bus route. For example, the bus (music) is driving around on its route. A passenger (listener) gets on the bus (begins to hear the music) at the fifth stop on the route and exits at the eleventh stop (end of his auditory experience). The bus keeps driving without that passenger. Therefore, I believe that musical energy is omnipresent. It becomes a relevant, compartmentalized package for a listener when that listener hears it. Bus stops only serve as the most convenient places for the passenger to get on and off. In other words, the music that is audible to human ears is like a photograph. It captures a moment but not the totality.
Life's moments existed before the photograph and continue to exist after a single moment was captured on film. In my opinion, this is the case with musical energy which exists before it enters the realm of musical sound and continues to exist after it exits that same realm. Perhaps Carl Leggo's (*A Coffin and a Chevy*) sentences do not contain periods based on the same 'bus route' logic (i.e., ideas do not stop just because compositions end).

"Language is a system of patterned vocal behaviour by means of which men cooperate in society," writes Albert Markwardt (1966, p. 69). Markwardt also points out that language has sound. The fact that language and music are both audible, and are organized according to certain patterns lays a foundation on which other aspects of similarity can be placed. Markwardt, then, proceeds to talk about inflection and intonation found in language. A musician would tell you that inflection and intonation play a huge role in music. Finally, Markwardt explores the connection of language to writing and the arbitrary selection of symbols in the representation of sounds. The long, vertical stick-
like figure we know to be the letter 'l' in no way implies the sound which it represents in speech. 'L', the symbol, was randomly selected to represent 'l', the sound. The same can be said of music notation and its representation of the actual sounds one hears.

W. N. Francis (1966) states that "the most obvious uses of language are to communicate, express, socialize, and think". (p. 45) Through communication a speaker can make his/her ideas available to others with a maximum of accuracy by putting these ideas into language, either spoken or written. Expression enables one to release an emotion or a reaction, and transpose it to another level. Socialization occurs inevitably and language acts as an integral accompaniment to the complicated network of human relations. Language is a tool which may enhance our processes of thought by building into our thought such indispensable techniques as generalization, abstraction, and analogy. The same holds true for music. As in language, the composer may communicate through his/her music composition in an attempt to share his/her ideas and/or feelings with others. As communicators through music or language however, individuals have to learn certain communi-
cative conventions which will make their communicative attempts coherent to the intended receiver of that communication. These conventions are primarily mechanical techniques which focus on the organization of conceptual knowledge. Jackson Burgess (Tate, 1970) explains:

One part of learning to write is learning certain conventions... What the students must learn is, first, that writing involves a series of decisions - choices of words, word orders, constructions, and so forth - and, second, that the quality of these decisions determines the quality of the writing. (p. 241)

This reasoning is applicable to music. During the act of creativity, a composer must manipulate his/her reservoir of knowledge. The quality of the manipulation and organization of that knowledge will determine the quality of the work produced. The fact that language composers work with words (which can be defined concretely) and music composers work with sounds (which are more abstract in their definition) is important.
Schafer (1986) reinforces the similarity between language and music:

Language is communication through symbolic arrangements of phonemes called words. Music is communication through arrangements of tones and sound objects. Ergo: Language is sound as sense. Music is sound as sound. In language words are symbols standing metonymically for something else. The sound of a word is a means to another end, an acoustic accident that can be dispensed with entirely if the word is written, for then, the writing conveys the word's essence, and its sound is totally absent or unimportant. (p. 202)

This is the tip of a huge iceberg which houses the differences between language and music. It is my belief that music does not need to be symbolized by anything other than itself to make itself available to its receiver. Written language gains access to the listener by way of having the communicator create sound symbols for its meanings and ideas.

As in the field of music, there appears to be a new, vibrant emphasis on the area of composition in language. Specialists in the field are making attempts
to define composition and its objectives with ever-increasing frequency. In *The Writing Processes of Students* (1975, No.1), James R. Squire declares:

Composing is not spelling. It is not grammar, not usage, not manuscript, not penmanship, not writing neat little snatches of perfectly formed sentences. It is neither writing with 'two-inch margins', nor writing with perfect alignment. It is not rhetorical analysis of selected prose passages, nor is it completing a careful sequence of exercises on paragraph organization. Composing is none of these things. Unless we look more closely and carefully at the uniquely creative and personal nature of the processes of composing, we run the danger of stressing more and more in our programs the aspects of composition which matter less and less in terms of our pupils' ultimate growth.

(p. 1)
CHAPTER THREE:
ABOUT THE RESEARCHER AND HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH MUSIC

Growing up in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the early 1970's, I was exposed to five genres of music. The first was Art Music, ranging from Bach to Bartok and spanning periods from the Baroque to the post-Romantic. This was the music played on the majority of music-based radio stations, played at home on records and cassettes, heard in movie theatres as scores to Russian movies, presented at opera houses during balletic, operatic and symphonic performances, and taken on at my weekly music lessons. The censors, acting on behalf of the government, wielded significant power. It was common knowledge that to hear the music of Cage - An American, Schoenberg - A Jew, Tchaikovsky (his balletic works excluded) - A Homosexual, Wagner - Hitler's favourite, or Webern - too 'economical', thus, not 'popular' enough - was a huge anomaly. Under the Brezhnev regime, the government censored any entity that was thought of as being detrimental to the
communist party or the party image (as portrayed to the masses). For example, to allow the music of 'American' John Cage to be played was to commit an act of treason, due mostly to the Cold War tension which was still greatly felt throughout the 1970's in the U.S.S.R. In addition, the 1970's were the years of the Exodus by the Jews from the Soviet Union, a country which made it clear that Jews were not welcome there because they had their own land (Israel) to go to. Therefore, the Soviet regime attempted to banish all signs of Judaism from their motherland. The first to be banished were the Jewish composers, entertainers and athletes. Furthermore, the communist party took a firm stand against homosexuality, avant-garde art and anything else deemed as 'subversive' or 'immoral'.

The second genre of music which was available to me was of a patriotic nature. Hymns, anthems and parade/marching songs praising the magnificent motherland, its magnificent people, and its magnificent political regime were the propaganda which entered a child's life at a very early age. In elementary school (Grades 1-4) this musical propaganda, in my experiences, was solidly embedded in the daily regimen
of each student. I sang and marched to many songs about my wonderful country and its wonderful people, without understanding the content and the context of these songs.

Folk music was a vital part of Soviet culture and idiomatically differed from region to region. These were songs sung at camp, at parties and country dances, at a variety of social functions, by farmers ploughing the fields, and by little girls braiding each other's hair.

The teenage set followed in the footsteps of their twenty-something siblings whose approach to music was much more rebellious. Like traitors committing acts of treason, they searched for the music of The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, The Who, and Deep Purple. This music became the one thing that belonged to nobody else but them. This contingent looked to the West for music, emulated Western styles, and intentionally ignored the musics of the 'Great Soviet Heritage'.

The fifth genre of music heard by people was on television and radio, and served as a backdrop for advertisements and/or during cartoon shows. Comparable
to a North American jingle with its emphasis on a catchy hook and its lack of musical/lyrical substance, this music was categorized by Soviet people as 'fast-food fluff with a simple purpose'.

Music education in Grades 1 - 3 consisted of choir, twice each week. In choir we would learn anthems and hymns to be performed at school rallies, marches and parades. If you were interested in expanding your musical awareness beyond that which was offered in public school, you had to go to a music school. When I was five years old, my mother (a piano teacher) and my father (an engineer) enrolled me in music school to study solfeggio (music theory and aural skills) and the bayan - a smaller version of the accordion with buttons on both sides. I performed primarily folk melodies and rudimentary pieces by composers such as Czerny and Clementi. My studies continued for a period of three years, at which point my family moved to Italy (where we lived for seven months), and subsequently, to Winnipeg, Canada. In Italy I discovered pop music. I recall it being a mixture of North American, Swedish and Italian tunes played in malls, on radio stations and in car stereos.
Disco was the attitude, fashion and musical preference of a new generation. English was the primary language of pop music. I was, simultaneously, aware of ABBA's beautiful melodies and relentless pulses, and of KISS's crunching guitars and circus stage show. By 1978, at the age of ten, I began playing the piano under the tutelage of my mother, who trained me by mixing Russian piano methodology with Royal Conservatory requirements. While completing my piano and theory exams, I pursued rock and roll with a frenzy—playing everything from Boney M to Supertramp to Judas Priest songs on piano and guitar (teaching myself to play the latter).

As I entered the School of Music at the University of Manitoba in 1986 and began discovering Liszt and Chopin, I was working in piano bar lounges in the evenings and playing and singing the songs of Billy Joel, Oscar and Hammerstein, George and Ira Gershwin, and Frank Sinatra. By 1993, I had received my Master of Education Degree and was a pianist for Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet. My musical vocabulary included Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk, Varese, Stravinsky, Prince, and many others.
I do not recall when it was that I began composing. I believe it was during my teens when I was partaking in the three-chord rock of 1980's bands. Looking back at the origins of my musical creativity, I can say that I was a product of my North American upbringing. I imitated the pop stars to whose music I was listening. In constructing my compositions, I copied their song structure, their rhythms, their harmonic progressions, their melodic idioms. Soon, I was elaborating on all of these elements - augmenting what appealed to me and diminishing what did not. As my musical taste and vocabulary expanded, so did my ability to experiment technically and theoretically within my compositions. This experimentation crossed the boundaries of pop, and entered the realms of neo-classical minimalism (e.g. Michael Nyman) and jazz (e.g. Herbie Hancock). By 1996, I completed commissioned compositions for Les Ballets Jazz du Montreal, Judith Marcuse Dance, Ballet British Columbia, and Chicago's Hubbard Street Dance.

I compose, yet I can not be completely objective about my creative process because I am inside of it. In my opinion, such understanding regarding creativity
may be attained by observing, interpreting and understanding the compositional processes of others and then, transposing these understandings to gauge my own work.

I would like to take a look at the sequence of events which brings me from the genesis of the compositional process to a result in the form of a composed product:

**Improvisation** is usually the first step. It is the exploratory 'playing around with ideas' phase. The 'playing around' can be mental - one can search through thoughts, notions and concepts in one's head. The improvisation can be tactile, also. I may not have a specific idea of what I am looking for, but I will sit at the piano and see where the moment takes me. Composers 'play around' with motives. These motives can appear in a variety of forms. A combination of intervals may create a melodic motif with which I may want to work. Perhaps a rhythmic pattern will be pounding in my head on which I will elaborate. When writing a song, a motif may be a line of text, a catchy word or phrase, or a play on words. A motif may be a harmonic progression (e.g. Deep Purple's *Smoke on the*
Sometimes a motif can be a certain mood. For example, I may begin a piece knowing only what tone I want to set (i.e., dark, ominous, jovial, and so on), and what sound colors and combinations I want to use to achieve that mood.

When improvisation with these ideas begins, most improvised content is thrown away. During exploration, content is discarded because it is in some way inappropriate. When I hear something I like, I spend some time with it (repetition). The idea is unfolded and repeated until I decide to pursue/not pursue it. To pursue and retain an idea is to develop it.

Development entails the revision and growth of the motif, not necessarily in length or structure, but in precision of the role which I want it to play within the framework of the composition. It may or may not undergo a variety of changes which are dictated by the dynamic between the motif and the piece. It is somewhere between the repetition and the development that the improvisation is converted to composition. The repetition and development of an improvised idea are, in fact, the features which carry it to the phase of composition. It is in the developmental stages of
creation that the work is fine-tuned, the unnecessary entities are filtered away, and concepts are completed and finalized.

I acknowledge that my commentary consists of my own opinions, which are born out of my own, individually unique and exclusive life experiences. I inevitably carry and utilize my experiences throughout my involvement with this study. For example, I began to discover my creative potential as a composer of music when I was playing in a rock band, not when I attended music class in school. Furthermore, the medium of pop music which introduced me to the process of composition was a medium which was not accessible to me in school. The music students who pass through grade school-based music education presently are members of a society which is heavily influenced by popular music, yet, North American music educators appear to be duplicating a trend noticeable in the music education programs in the United Kingdom where music pedagogues shy away from implementing pop music in their classrooms. John Paynter (Vulliamy and Lee, 1980) addresses these trends as they are manifested in the United Kingdom:
Currently, there are numerous opportunities for musical experiences in different forms to meet different needs. Yet in all this advance the absence of pop and rock music is particularly noticeable. The acceptance of pop music in schools has been slow; in general because of misunderstandings and assumptions about the nature and purpose of the music. These assumptions are commonly accepted but rarely questioned. (p. ix)

This lack of acceptance contributes to music educators' inability to remain current by reflecting the changing musical times, and the changing musical interests of the generations which they are teaching. As a student, I would not choose an elective course if that course offered me little in which I was personally interested. Music courses in North American secondary schools are electives, and, as I pointed out in chapter one, music enrolments are decreasing. Decreases in enrolment are often a product of budget cuts to music programs, but they also tend to catalyze further cuts. Budget cuts impact on the quality of music programs, which, in turn, is reflected in further decreasing enrolment. And so the cycle goes, each part feeding
Fascinating changes are taking place in certain regions of Canada. I reside in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, where several music pedagogues are engaging in innovative work. Lord Byng High School of School District #39, Port Moody Senior Secondary of School District #43, and Maple Ridge Senior Secondary of School District #42 offer a composition component as part of the music curriculum. Students compose in laboratories which are equipped with sequencers, computer programs, and synthesizers. To be eligible for the composition lab, students must be enrolled in the school's band program. In other words, being in music class is the prerequisite to being in the composition lab. It is these three schools that were highlighted in the first chapter as having shown a 14 percent enrolment increase in their music programs while enrolment figures generally in other British Columbia school music programs were indicating decline. The music specialists at these three schools have taken an interest in developing the music composition component, and in less than a decade have reshaped music education programs in their schools.
Throughout the month of May, 1995, I had the opportunity to talk to these three music teachers about their composition labs. During our conversations, I inquired about their methods of interpretation of student compositions. When asked about the search for meaning within students' works, two of the music specialists said that students' pieces were examined in terms of the structure, arrangement, instrumentation and detail (melodic, harmonic, rhythmic content) of their compositions. The third music pedagogue described a process whereby each composer's musical work is interpreted, according to the same criteria outlined by the first two teachers, by the instructor, the composer him/herself, and the composer's peers. In my opinion, such models of analysis tell pedagogues and researchers very little about the processes undertaken by the students because, in such models, student composers offer very little information about their own, personal involvement in their work, their decision-making within the creative process, their objectives as set out at the beginning of their compositional journey, and the successes and failures as encountered by them in attempting to reach these
objectives. The type of analysis these teachers described to me does not help in understanding the communication which occurs between the composer and the listener, nor the composer's self-expressive elements inherent in the piece because it focuses on technical, superficial matters of form and structure.

Observing the students as they undertake their task of music composition is of greatest interest to me because their involvement with the process of composition, and their personalization of that experience will be highly individualized, yet, may enable me to better understand how they include their personal stamp, as it were, in their compositions. It also helps me as a composer because it makes me reflect on the manner in which I compose, which, in turn may enable me to better understand the manner in which I perceive and express my state of being, my very essence, and how my being relates to the beings of those around me. The central purpose of this is the exploration of how an individual's being or 'personhood' can be reflected in composition. This raises the complex and difficult matter of what being is. In
exploring the *perception* of one's *being*, I turn to the field of phenomenology. Phenomenological research pertaining to the concepts of 'perception' and 'being' is extensive and can not be discussed in detail within the parameters of this study. Nevertheless, I am interested in discussing an individual's *personal,* self-reflective journey toward a greater understanding of his/her *being* by way of music composition, and therefore, would like to discuss several phenomenological perspectives which relate to this journey.

Scholars in the field of phenomenology have been exploring the concept of *perception of one's being* for several decades. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1960) states that "phenomenology is philosophy in its most authentic sense and philosophy is a constantly unfolding event whose dimensions are *self,* the *other person,* and the *truth*." (p. 243-244)

In *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty,* John Bannan (1967) writes that "in philosophy, perceiving humanity takes a place as a central reference point. Perception stands as the primary human function". (p. vii)
Merleau-Ponty is interested in the concept of being or dwelling in as it pertains to the role of the individual mind and body. He takes the notion of perception to its very origin by placing it in the being of the individual. The essence of a human being cannot be described by discussing that human being's attributes, or mentioning what that human being is. The essence of a human being is that he/she always has to realize his/her being as his/her own. In macrocosmic terms, Martin Heidegger (trans. Mehta, 1967) states that "the thinking itself is a voyage, a way which is itself the seeing, a thinking which sees itself as both the way and the vision. Life is the basic fact and it must be the starting point of philosophy". (p. 174)

Art, according to Albert Rabil Jr. (1967), involves at least two perceptions, that of the creator of the work, and that of the receiver of the created work. Rabil writes that "genuine artistic expression is the journey of both the artist and the reader/viewer of his work. Artistic creativity is an inter-subjective phenomenon". (p. 196)
Further to the above statement, Rabil, in his *Merleau-Ponty: Existentialist of the World* (1967), suggests that Merleau-Ponty has an existentialist preoccupation with self-understanding. This self-understanding was determined by two human poles of thought - *self* and *world*. According to Rabil, "Merleau-Ponty spoke of the lived or pre-reflective world with which we are in immediate contact, and on which our reflective or abstract thought is based". (p. vii)

In attempting to better understand the concept of perception as it applies to a human being, phenomenologists try to better understand human beings. Richard Wolin (1990) translates Martin Heidegger's definition of a human *being* as "first and foremost, an embodied subjectivity". (p. 17)

According to Heidegger (trans. Mehta, 1967), a *being's* existence can be discussed in several ways: first, a *being* is qualitatively different from other *beings* in the world, second, a *being* is related to the world first through pre-cognitive experience, and third, *being* is itself a mode of being a particular kind of *being*. In one's attempts to understand his/her
pre-cognitive experience, one assigns meaning to that experience and, simultaneously engages in the mode of being a particular kind of being. In this study, for example, I am examining the work of individuals who are unique in their tastes, cultural backgrounds and experiences (i.e., beings who are qualitatively different from other beings) and who use mental and emotional 'images' (i.e., pre-cognitive experiences) during their processes of music composition. It is through these creative processes that students assign meaning to their pre-cognitive experiences, thereby affirming, to some extent, their personal and unique sense of being.

Human perception can be found inside these phenomenological labyrinths. Perception varies from one human being to another, from one creator of art to another, and from one receiver of a created work to another. These variances, however, embody the 'uniqueness' of one's individual experiences with self-expression through music composition. As each composer extrapolates his/her own understanding of being from the creative process in which he/she engages, he/she also begins to clarify his/her essence as a personally
unique entity among other beings.

To me, the process of composing music defines and clarifies a variety of things that relate to my sense of uniqueness, my essence; who I am as a being that feels and thinks, who I am as a being among other beings, and how I respond to my environment. I see composition as being my outlet for emotions, thoughts and notions that I can't adequately express or communicate through any medium other than music. Most of the time, when I am able to express myself through the music that I compose, I feel an emotional and spiritual release of some nameless entity that is both extremely satisfying and quite necessary. In my experience, the satisfying part of this release can come in two forms. It may be boisterous and turbulent, or it may be tender, delicate, serene, and meditative. Sometimes, I wrestle with my compositions as I try to shape them, and that process is usually tempestuous. Other times, the composition process is gentle, calm, and very peaceful. It is almost as if the piece caresses me from my inside realms. Both types of processes, nevertheless, fill me with incredible and verbally indescribable satisfaction.
When I talk about a necessary release, I am attempting to describe a release that feels very much like my need to exhale after holding my breath for approximately ninety seconds. Rather than being emotionally and spiritually-based, it is a need that is somehow related to my physical and mental health. Like breathing, this type of release is so necessary at its apogee, that it overshadows any other need I might be having at the time.

I am not certain of the nature or origin of my predisposition to musical releases, but I do know that my need for them is very real and very powerful. When I write music, it is with the urgency of making it sound like I feel. At times, I can not define my feelings, but I know their nature. Typically, their nature is active rather than passive. In other words, they are more likely to be aggressive and raucous than docile and gentle. To give these feelings (which I can not fully define) life in the auditory world by placing them in a musical paradigm is to present an indefinable (by me) part of myself to other human beings who might be able to, in their own way, define that part of me, thereby enlightening me about my own being and the
Excerpts from Alex Tsisserev's compositions:

HUMBLED

SPIDERWEBS

PERPETUAL
manner in which that being is seen by other beings.

Other times, I can define what I am feeling and, therefore, try to represent that particular emotional content as closely as I can in my music. More often than not, my 'tool' of musical composition expresses my emotions and thoughts, particularly the intangible ones, better than any other self-expressive tool that I have found thus far.

On the following page are excerpts from three of my pieces. Humbled, Spiderwebs and Perpetual were all written in 1997. I remember clearly the expressive needs and compositional processes that produced these three pieces. Each of these musical works somehow describes a part of me and, simultaneously provides me with indescribable, satisfying and necessary self-expressive releases.

Humbled embodies the type of relentless sadness and a spiritual 'self-mutilation' that I am not able to verbalize because any description of these feelings does not seem to do them justice. In this piece, the right hand was intended to be the relentless movement which, in combination with its minor sonorities and the I-VI harmony in the left hand, pinpoints that which I
was trying to express. *Humbled* is a seven minute piece. Throughout the seven minutes, its momentum and tension do not stop building. In my opinion, the climax of the piece is at the very end when the sound comes to a complete stop, expressing the end of the tension, the lack of a resolution, and the satisfaction of knowing that although the tension no longer *sounds*, the lack of resolution is the on-going act of 'self-mutilation'. Within this very notion lies my satisfaction of having communicated that part of my being at the time of composition which I was not able to subject to a verbal communication satisfactorily.

I composed *Spiderwebs* in response to my realization that the world can often be a dark place and that I, at times, feel evil enough to fit perfectly into that darkness. I entertain notions of committing the 'perfect' crime, of being a sinner, and of enjoying my transgressions. The fact that I entertain these notions scares and pleases me at the same time. I wanted to 'bathe' in a self-created sound of 'evil'. I composed this piece in order to satisfy that craving. The cello part of this piece is ominous, suggesting the presence of some inevitable evil. Perhaps that evil is
inside of me/among us. The piano and the violin display their own 'dark' undercurrents. Their parts often clash in rhythm, adding to the conflict and the organized chaos of the music, which is meant to reflect the organized chaos of the dark world in which I live and the darkness that lives inside of me.

**Perpetual** is a contrast to **Spiderwebs**. I believe that love is a chameleon-like energy that comes in many different forms and shapes, and, as such, never ceases to exist in my life. This energy caresses me tenderly, makes me feel safe, and has the ability to reach my very core. Having said that, however, I know that I can not trust love to never hurt me. **Perpetual** reflects love's constant motion in my life, my need for it, and my apprehension of it. Shortly before composing this work, I was playing J.S. Bach's Prelude #1 in C Major. I combined the simplicity and the beauty of Bach's prelude with some of my own emotions and musical ideas in creating a piece that sounds like it caresses me tenderly, makes me feel safe, and fills me with apprehension, all at once.
You may have noticed that in talking about these three works, I did not attempt to engage in a structural analysis of their content. Although I am familiar with music theory used by composers from the Baroque to the Minimalist (including Twentieth Century work of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg) musical periods, I do not consciously rely on that knowledge when I compose. Resolving tritones and setting up tone rows is not important to me. I strive to attain the ideal satisfying and necessary release through my music. It is difficult for me to talk about my music because words tend to compartmentalize my ideas and feelings a little too rigorously for my liking. I feel comfortable, however, in describing my experiences with music as being expressions of my higher self through my mortal self. The quest to understand these expressions and my higher self may be a life-long journey, but this journey may be the most effective way to examine my very essence. Perhaps, like me, student composers can recognize signs of some sort of personally pertinent journey through their experiences with music composition.
CHAPTER FOUR:  
DETAILS OF THE STUDY OF STUDENT MUSIC COMPOSITION

The Setting

The site for this research was a public secondary school located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. This particular school offers the students who are enrolled in the music program use of a 'laboratory' which is equipped with *outboard gear* (equipment such as keyboards, sequencers, and so on, which may be utilized by students as they compose music). This equipment will be described in the subsequent pages of this chapter. This school makes the laboratory available to its senior students (grades 10-12). This study was designed for Grade 10, 11 and 12 public school students because senior high school students who are participating in the school's music program should, according to the British Columbia Ministry of Education Curriculum, be focused on self-expression rather than the type of musical learning
According to the 1995 Province of British Columbia Ministry of Education Integrated Resource Package 018: Music 10 to 12, students in grades ten, eleven and twelve are expected to shift from conceptual musical work (which focuses on technical proficiencies and knowledge of concepts) to critical musical work. In Package 018 it is suggested that "during these years students should explore the realms of critical thought and create a new, musical concept of self." (p. 31)

By "a musical concept of self" the writers of Package 018 are describing a process which takes a student composer through a self-discovery which involves self-reflection, self-evaluation, decision-making, and critical-thinking throughout the compositional process. In these grades, the music curriculum is focusing on the student as an expressive being, and expects teachers to "allow their pupils to experiment, discover, create, perfect, and purify within a musical idiom". (p. 32) To enroll in a grade ten, eleven, or twelve music program, students require the prerequisite of previous music enrolment in each preceding academic
Therefore, within the parameters of this study, I do not expect to frequently engage in the definition of concepts such as melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, dynamics, and form, and a discussion of how these entities function because, due to students' previous musical experiences, I expect that the students will have developed a general idea about these concepts and their roles in musical expression already.

The principal and music specialist of "Westview Senior Secondary" (I use a pseudonym for the school where I conducted my research to maintain the anonymity of the school and its students) gave me permission to stage my study in their school. The school's music/band teacher was most accommodating. For this project, he offered a sixteen-student class consisting of Grade 10, 11 and 12 students who could participate in this study once a week, over a four week period. Each class session was seventy minutes in length. The sample group, then, was to be comprised of all sixteen students enrolled in that particular class. The four sessions and the sixteen students were the maximum that the school was able to give me. I believed that a sixteen-person sample group (comprised of students of
both genders, a variety of ethnic and musical backgrounds and abilities) was large enough for me to observe while preserving the intent and validity of this research. I also believed that four 70 minute sessions would give the students sufficient time to engage in music composition, and provide me with ample time to observe their processes and discuss their experiences with them.

During the first session, I attempted to let the students introduce themselves to me by engaging in a one-to-one dialogue with each one of them. Then, the group was given an explanation of the nature of the study and informed of their rights pertaining to anonymity, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the project at any time, and not be video/audio taped if they did not wish to be. I gave this information to them on an Informed Consent Form and, then explained the same information verbally. Each student signed a consent form and agreed to participate in this research. In addition, consent forms were signed by the school's principal and the parents/guardians of the students in the informant group.
During the second session, I used one of my compositions as an example illustrating just one of the ways in which they could approach the composition of music. By the end of the second session, each student was at his/her own work station (a desk with a keyboard, a computer and a sequencer) beginning to work on his/her composition. It was at this point that I began to record the process which was undertaken by each student in the creation/composition of his/her material. Bringing my hand-held video recorder, I visited each work station two to three times throughout the second half of session two, all of session three and session four. In addition, several visits were made to each work station without a video recorder throughout sessions three and four. The purpose of these visits was to obtain a verbal update from each participant regarding what he/she was working on at that particular time. No recording was done during any such discourse. After each discussion, however, I notated (what I considered to be) points of interest in a notebook without the interviewed student's presence. Recording of this nature was not done during the researcher-student dialogue because I believed that it
might hinder the communication process between myself and the student.

At the end of the last session (#4), each student had a musical product either fully, or nearly completed. I recorded the compositions and 'works-in-progress' of each student on an audio cassette. This was possible by connecting each work station to the Tascam 16 channel mixing console (see equipment list in this chapter) and recording each composition from the sequencer of each work station, through the Tascam, directly into an audio cassette recorder.

Equipment

All sessions were recorded on video cassette (VHS format), and audio cassette. I notated additional observations in a notebook. The music classroom where the study was to take place was a laboratory equipped with a large quantity of musical outboard equipment. The following is an inventory list of this equipment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyboards</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roland A30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland W30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roland EP7 2
Roland D10 1
Roland D20 1
Yamaha DX7 4
Yamaha DX9 2
Yamaha YPR30 1
Rhodes MK80 1
Sequential Circuits 1
Hohner Electric piano 1
Yamaha Electric Piano 1

**Sound Modules:**
Roland MT32 4
Proteus E-MU Systems Inc 1

**Auxiliary Outboard Equipment**
Roland PR100 Digital Sequencer 2
Roland TL 16 Teaching Lab Systems 1
Computer-generated sampler/sequencer
work stations 19
Tascam 16 channel mixing board 1
The Role of the Researcher and His Interaction With the Students

My role in this work can be subdivided into several categories. The first deals with recording (by means of video, audio, or notation) the proceedings throughout the research. The second role pertains to the description of the research to the sample group. In other words, it was my responsibility to explain to the students what would be going on and what would be expected of them. In this role, I attempted not to impose any of my views regarding composition and the creative process on those of the students. My third role was that of an individual who attempted to interpret and clarify the students' musical work, and verbal communication obtained during the interviews regarding that musical work, and then to confirm with them that my interpretation, according to them, was what they intended to communicate. If my interpretation was not what they meant, then, I had to obtain their meaning from them, and confirm with them, once again, that my new understanding of their communication met with their approval. In other words, the final dialogue between a given student and myself
was something along these lines:

**Interviewer (Alex Tsisserev):** "This is my interpretation of your work and what you said about it. Am I close to what you meant/intended in your composition and your interview?"

**Student:** "Yes, that's what I was going for, you've got it."

In all roles I, the researcher, was an outsider. My roles and the data collection strategies employed will be made more clear by way of the following description of my time with the students.

My initial goal was to obtain some background information on each individual in the sample group. I intended to meet each student on a one-on-one basis and have them tell me about themselves, their tastes in music, their musical experiences in and out of school. I thought that they might tell me something (in a face-to-face dialogue) that they might not feel comfortable discussing in front of their classmates out of fear of not conforming, or being 'cool'. As I had stated in
'The Setting' section of this chapter, I had the opportunity to conduct these discussions during my first session with them. Throughout the initial 45-minutes of their class, the students were completing some work that was previously assigned to them by their music teacher. This enabled me to approach each student individually and have a discourse while the others were working.

Furthermore, I wanted the students to see me as a person who took an interest in each one of them as an individual, and not as an instructor who talks at them without knowing them. I recorded these conversations on audio cassette. I decided not to write anything during our dialogue because this, in my opinion, would detract from the feeling of having a regular, casual conversation. The presence of the cassette player did not appear to be an intrusion.

I was hoping that, in acquainting myself with them through these discussions, I would gain a better understanding of the collective community which they, as individuals, make up. The conversations varied in length, from two to five minutes.
The musical backgrounds of the sixteen students in the group were quite varied. At one end of the spectrum, there were individuals who were engaged in musical activity only in school music class. Their family members did not play any instruments, there were no instruments in the house, and their experiences with music composition occurred only in their music class at school. At the other end of the spectrum were students who came from very musical families, where siblings and parents made music and encouraged creative music-making in the home. One student told me that she plays and composes music on the piano, the flute, the trumpet, electric bass guitar, and a variety of African percussion instruments. She had already worked in a recording studio and had been composing for approximately two years. Students' varied musical backgrounds seemed to impact the way in which they approached the composition of music. Some students concentrated on melodies only, others focused on the rhythmic component, while the seemingly more musically experienced individuals dealt with an entire arrangement which included timbre, harmony, melody, rhythm, and form. These varied approaches and their
impact on the data will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Several students engaged in extra-curricular musical activities. There were those who played in rock bands, those who played piano and violin and went for examinations (i.e., Royal Conservatory, Western Board), and one student said that he sings in a community choir. The group was quite diverse, yet there was a lowest common denominator - one musical commonality that all of the sample members shared. When disclosing what their preferred listening material was, they mentioned artists that fit into the popular music genre. Certainly, there were some students who stated that along with pop they like Celtic or 'classical' music. Each student, without fail, however, showed a pop influence. It was from this common ground of 'pop' that I chose to begin my first session with them as a collective group. Although I did not set out to work in a pop medium, I thought, in view of their preference, that it would be a comfortable starting point for this project.
By the time that I had concluded my face-to-face discussions with them, the students were finished their previously assigned work. At that point, I began to work with them as a group by asking them several questions. The first question was to define the phrase pop music. The initial response was that pop is any music that is popular, and that that popularity is shown by regional and national sales figures. This information is provided to the public on a record sales chart (i.e., top 100, top 50, top 10 such as America's Billboard Magazine). The second question asked the students to identify which genre/category of pop music was the one they liked? Three students answered in the form of an example. The first student suggested that pop music may be heavy rock, like, for example, his favourite group - Soundgarden. Another student suggested that Coolio is a pop artist, also. Coolio, however, releases rap and funk-based material. A third individual stated that Garth Brooks, a country and western singer, may fall under the umbrella of popular music. Using these examples, one notices that pop is perceived by these students as cross-stylistic. In other words, any style of music, no matter how alter-
native, can be called pop music if it sells enough copies (i.e., makes itself known to the public).

Question number three asked about the significance of pop music in terms of its ability to penetrate various aspects of our lives. There was quite a range of answers in response. The most concise came from a young woman who stated that "pop music is in the media, in shopping malls, in fashion, and in language, therefore, experiences with it are inescapable".

In this way, through our discussion to this point, the class came up with a working definition for pop, had discussed pop's stylistic delimitations, and had addressed some of pop music's roles in our society. My discourse with the students demonstrated that all of them were familiar with the idiom of pop music and with the artists who created/performed this music. I wanted to conflate this familiarity with the music composition assignment that I was about to give them. Because I did not plan to give the students any instructions pertaining to their processes of music composition, I felt that I should provide them with an example of the elements which such a process may incorporate. By analyzing a pop song (an idiom familiar to them), I
intended to illustrate some of these elements (e.g. melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, form, etc.). The next step, therefore, was to analyze a pop song. (In 'The Setting' I introduce the notion of using one of my own compositions to illustrate one of the possible approaches to music composition.) My second session with the sample group began with such an analysis, during which I decided to implement one of my own recorded, yet, unreleased songs titled The Road to Second Chances. (An unreleased song, according to my own definition, cannot be called a pop song because it has not been purchased by the public. Structurally, stylistically, and musically however, The Road to Second Chances was written as a 'pop-song-in-waiting'.) I made the choice to use an unreleased song because it insured that no member of the group had ever heard this song prior to the session. Therefore, every student's experience with this composition was to be his/her first. All members of the group would be starting from the same experiential point regarding the selected song. There would, therefore, be no pre-conceived notions about its structure, its social relevance, its reflection of its composer/performer, or its popularity
among any sector of the population.

Each student was provided with a lyric sheet and listened to *The Road to Second Chances* as it was played on an audio cassette player.

**Analysis of a 'Pop' Song**

**THE ROAD TO SECOND CHANCES**

**CHORUS:** I'm on the road to second chances
I'm on the road to no regrets
not asking the lord to ever forgive me
I'm only asking him to forget

**VERSE 1:** I used to put a seat belt around the price of love
and press the pedal down into forever
the windshield wipers keeping time
they're bored and tired old friends of mine
that always seem to tell me something clever

**CHORUS:** I'm on the road to second chances
I'm on the road to no regrets
not asking the lord to ever forgive me
I'm only asking him to forget

**VERSE 2:** my fortune lies behind a 'dead end' traffic sign
the street lights blink their eyes at me in silence
the tinted windows keep away the misery
the engine noises drown away the violence

**CHORUS:** I'm on the road to second chances
I'm on the road to no regrets
not asking the lord to ever forgive me
I'm only asking him to forget
After listening to a recording of the song twice, we engaged in its analysis. The harmonic content of The Road to Second Chances is, in my opinion, quite rudimentary. For example:

All choruses employ one chord structure (sequentially, rhythmically, stylistically, and tonally). All verses employ one structure. This structure is different from the structure implemented by the choruses.

**Lyric:**

**Chord:** (chords are in root position unless otherwise indicated)

**CHORUS**

I'm on the road to second

E7, first inversion A Major B Major,
chances
I'm on the road to no regrets not asking the lord to ever forgive me
I'm only asking him to forget

VERSE
I used to put a seat belt around the price of love and press the pedal down into forever

E Major,
E7, first inversion
A Major,
B Major,
E Major,
E7, first inversion
A Major,
B Major,
C# minor,
E7, first inversion
A Major
B Major
E Major,
C# minor,
C Augmented,
E Major, second
B flat diminished,
A Major,
E Major, first
F# minor,
G#7,
The Road To Second

Chances (vox/piano version)

I'm on the road to second chances

Verse (w/ chugging in the bass)

I used to put a seat-belt around the
* the second half of the verse has exactly the same chordal design (manuscript examples of the verse and chorus are provided on the following page).

**BRIDGE**

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<tr>
<td>chan-</td>
<td>E major,</td>
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<tr>
<td>ces</td>
<td>A Major,</td>
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* this lyric and its accompanying harmony are performed two more times

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cond</td>
<td>A Major,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chances</td>
<td>E major,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the instrumental section of this composition consists of the verse harmony.

The melody in the chorus is anchored, at one end, by the mediant above the tonic and, at the other end, by the dominant below the tonic. Within this interval of a sixth are motives which descend from the mediant to the tonic by step, jump down a fourth to the
dominant, skip up to the supertonic and return to the low dominant by way of the tonic. The melodic content of the verses is much more static than that of the chorus. It begins at the tonic and descends by tones and semi-tones to the subdominant. After completing an applied dominant chord (the rest of which is in the harmony) for the relative minor key, the melody skips up to its starting point. The bridge melody consists of only four notes; the dominant, sub-mediant, tonic and supertonic.

The Road to Second Chances begins with a lead vocal accompanied by an acoustic guitar. The texture builds throughout the song, as I introduce six background vocal parts (four male and two female), three additional guitar parts (one lead, two differently coloured electrics), a bass guitar, drums, percussion (shaker, guiro, cabasa), a piano, and a keyboard pad (a sustaining string-like sound to provide cohesion in the texture). Using various combinations from the above list, the texture is thrust into a constant state of change and fluctuation. Never are all of the instruments and vocals sounded/heard at the same time. The dynamics of the song, therefore, are
constantly fluctuating, also. They range from piano in the a cappella vocal section found at the end of the song, to the triple forte found in the instrumental section.

The tempo of this composition is approximately quarter note \(= 175\). This song emphasizes melody and its lyrical content. Sonically, there is a lightness of the live, percussive component's volume, a lack of 'heavy' distorted guitar parts, and the presence of keyboard instruments playing in medium/high registers, The song's structure is a clearly defined and highly sectionalized chorus/verse/chorus/verse/bridge form. Additionally, there are sonorous, uneconomical background vocal assignments. All of the above elements enable us to place The Road to Second Chances in the category of Adult Contemporary Pop Rock according to classification guidelines outlined by Geoff Mayfield (March, 1996) and Bruce Janicke (August 1993) in North America's leading music trade magazine - Billboard.

The detailed analysis of The Road to Second Chances as described above, is meant to enable the reader to have an effective understanding of the song
without actually hearing it. The analysis which was presented to the group was a simpler version which dealt with elements such as melody, harmony, arrangement, style, form, dynamics, and rhythm.

I would like to state that I realize that to play a model is to suggest what is acceptable. To suggest what is acceptable is to influence. I made every effort, however, to communicate to the students that there is no right and wrong, there is no stylistic expectation, and that the example I used in my presentation should have no bearing on the choices they make, as it was simply an illustration of one of many creative possibilities. (I freely admit, however, that my choice of any model of composition is likely to influence the students in their approach to 'acceptable' music composition.)

Upon the completion of this analysis, the group was asked to engage in the composition of a work and were informed that its style, construction, arrangement, content, instrumentation, form and length were entirely up to each one of them as a composer. For the two and a half sessions that followed, I observed and recorded the students' processes, and
questioned them about their reactions to their experiences in composing.
CHAPTER FIVE:
A DISCUSSION ON PROBLEMS
OF INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS
OF COMMUNICATIONS IN MUSIC AND LANGUAGE

Individually-based artistic work such as composition is an intricate and complex entity which does not lend itself satisfactorily to interpretation and quantification. Qualitative analysis is, therefore, the most viable option. Thus far, little has been documented in the area of interpreting personal, expressive musical works by high school students. I, however, intend to document and interpret such works by borrowing certain analytic tools, specifically, from the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics and ethnography. These analytic tools may be used in combination in the quest to better understand both the intentions of the individual composer and the musical content of his/her composition in this study. Such understanding is inevitably influenced by our perception of the
individual composer, and our perceptions are a product of our individuality.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1992) addressed this very issue concerning perceptions of human behaviours, claiming that such perceptions are a primary human function, as well as a central point of reference for each human being. Merleau-Ponty had an existentialist preoccupation with the notion of understanding what he termed the being. In order to understand (or, find meaning in) a human being or his/her work, we must, first, engage in the act of interpretation. Interpretation is a major focal point in the field of hermeneutics (to be discussed later in this chapter). What I am interested in, is the interpretation of the self-expressive communication which students produce through their personal involvement in acts of composing music.

Music is generally regarded as a vehicle for expression and communication. This communication is offered by one individual (composer), and is received by another individual (listener). The roles of both the sender and receiver of information can be explained to some degree by the field of semiology and,
particularly, the work of Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1990), who engages in work that links semiotics to music. Furthermore, both the sender and the receiver belong to some type of societal culture, or possibly a sub-culture. Therefore, the manner in which they send and/or receive communication as well as its content may be influenced by that sub-culture. Clifford Geertz (1973), suggests methods of thick description which are helpful in interpreting cultural and sub-cultural communication. This chapter will examine some perspectives from both Nattiez and Geertz, and the thesis will attempt to employ their ideas in interpreting and analyzing the student compositions which form the basis of the empirical study in this research. I now want to turn to the role of hermeneutics and how I use this tool in my attempts at clarifying and finding the most truthful and representative interpretation of the student compositions. (Within the parameters of this thesis, I intend to provide the reader with some general information about hermeneutics. Therefore, I do not intend to engage in a detailed discussion on the vast amount of research done in the field of hermeneutics.)
Hermeneutics, or interpretation, is, primarily, a tradition of thought. It is a method of philosophical reflection that tries to clarify the concept of understanding. To understand is to make sense of something. That something may be a work of art, spoken or written text, a language, an action, a person, and so on. The difficulty with this notion is that understanding turns up in a variety of contexts and can be applied to many disciplines. Making sense of something, therefore is not simply one thing. In other words, for us to try and understand a concept we must shape the entity of understanding specifically for that individual concept. Each concept receives its own, unique shaping of hermeneutic reflection. As part of my process of meaning-making, however, it is helpful to consider the history of hermeneutics. The modern notion of hermeneutics stems from two schools of thought, which may be ascribed to Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger respectively. Husserl suggested that understanding concerns ideal entities called meanings rather than minds. We search for understanding because it is not within us. Husserl's view is that there is a meaning 'out there' to be apprehended and acknowledged.
Understanding, to Husserl, means reproducing an ideal state of the sort one finds in geometry, not someone else's state of consciousness. Brun (1992) elaborates on Husserl's transcendental hermeneutic philosophy using geometry as an example:

When we understand a geometric expression, we understand not Euclid but what Euclid understood, or what anyone can understand who understands geometry, which consists of ideal objects like triangles and statements that are analytically true of triangles. Understanding is like translating, which presupposes an ideality of meaning or an ideal object that can be transported without loss across historical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. Geometric expressions are absolutely translatable and identical in every language, culture, and historical period. (p. 2)

Martin Heidegger believed that understanding is not an activity of consciousness, but a condition of belonging to a world. In other words, understanding is something that every individual possesses in his/her mind and needs to apply it to the particular entity for which he/she is seeking meaning. Heidegger saw
understanding as a mode of practical involvement with others and with the world. In this paradigm, hermeneutics is the ability to speak the language of those around you and taking as natural and intelligible the ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that are local and current. Understanding, then, is always situated and answerable to what is at hand, in place, and already occurring. There is a presupposition, therefore, of some sort of integration into an already understood world. Brun comments on Heidegger's concept of understanding:

> Ontological hermeneutics does not rule out Husserl's idea, but it does mean that to arrive at what is universal and univocal one has to try to reflect oneself out of one's situation. (p. 4)

Brun's questions outline some of the critical issues that are at work in the ongoing debate between the two philosophical camps. Of interest to me, however, is the exploration of hermeneutic phenomenology's roles in the field of education, (particularly as they pertain to this study), rather than a discussion of the merits and demerits of the two positions.
At this stage, I should make clear that there is a distinction between hermeneutics and phenomenology. Ricoeur (1981) addresses this distinction:

There exists, between hermeneutics and phenomenology, a mutual belonging which it is important to make explicit. Hermeneutics is erected on the basis of phenomenology and thus preserves something of the philosophy from which it nevertheless differs: *phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics*. On the other hand, phenomenology can not constitute itself without a hermeneutical presupposition.

(p. 101)

To engage in phenomenological reflection is to attempt to grasp the essential meaning of something. The difficulty in such a task lies in our frequent inability to move away from personal meanings and reach a reflective explication of what the meaning is. In a sense, hermeneutic phenomenological reflection strives to attain an essence of a certain experience (which may be categorized as pedagogical) by appropriating, clarifying and making explicit the structures of meaning of the lived experience.
In the field of human science, meaning can only be communicated textually by way of organizing narrative and prose. The human scientist, therefore, is involved in the reflective activity of textual labour - labour of crafting the text by analyzing textual themes and, on a larger level, the structure of meaning. To be human is to be concerned with meaning. Humans have a desire to personalize an experience by making sense of it. The reverse of this statement is also true. Human beings make sense of an experience by personalizing that experience. Making sense of, and personalizing a communication, however, is really a process of invention and discovery.

Individuals involved with the arts would argue with human scientists regarding the form of transaction of meaning. To claim that meaning can be communicated only textually by way of organizing narrative or prose is to impose limitations upon the concept of meaning which, I, as a composer who communicates through music, would argue, do not apply to all human communication. Music can and does communicate without words, as in purely instrumental music.
A human being is bombarded by communication which comes in the form of images, colors, shapes, sounds, movements, tones, intonations, and emotions. These are formed into concepts which are present within a human being's communicative paradigm even before they are given word symbols to represent them (the very same word symbols of which text is constructed, and, with which narrative and prose are organized). Unfortunately for the music scholar, all of the great writings on hermeneutic phenomenology have come from individuals who focus on language as a communicative medium.

A musician, however, may argue that music, in its own right, is a vast communicative medium because of its representational capacity. Robert Walker (1990) writes that "one of the most highly developed and universally acknowledged attributes of Western Music is its capacity to represent in sound various moods, emotions or dramatic events". (p. 97)

Walker employs a hermeneutic approach in examining meaning in Western music by tracing the historical origins of Western musical semantics back to Plato and Pythagoras. Additionally, Walker's approach can be
described as phenomenological in that he examines various samples of musical expression in Western traditions.

It was in the 19th century, however, that the most bitter debates regarding music's ability to represent specific feelings in ways (considered at the time to be) more meaningful than words took place. Composers such as Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Wagner and Liszt were regarded as being in the representational camp. These composers, and many others aimed at reflecting specific examples of humanity's spirituality and mentality in their music. Hanslick (1854/1957) argued that music was capable of expressing only abstract emotion rather than specific feelings (i.e., an abstract version of sadness rather than a specific example of a particular sadness). Proponents of this view held up the music of Brahms as the exemplar of musical expression in the abstract sense.

Nevertheless, although the art of music in the West has evolved into an independent and self-contained form of expression, the impact of language is still evident. Walker (1990) writes:
The influence of principles of construction in language, drawn essentially from the art and science of rhetoric, has been practically absolute and complete in the development of musical forms and the craft of musical composition in Western culture. (p. 103)

Considering language's influence on music, and the unequivocal historical connection between poetry and music, it should follow that a musician may better understand issues such as communication, representation, meaning and interpretation, as they pertain to music, by attaining a clear understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology as it is seen to elucidate the nature of communication through language. But there are some serious problems in simply applying to music theories of meaning relating to language. In the search for meaning, a musician may rely on language primarily because words have shared meanings and relate to concrete objects or abstract ideas in such a manner that they can be used in logical conversation. In contrast, musical sounds are vague in their semiotic functioning and cannot be used in the way that words can. Walker (1990) states:
The assignment of symbolic reference to musical sounds is, in one sense, quite arbitrary. The composer chooses a sound to be a symbol of something, and by musical convention that sound acquires particular evocation or representative powers within the context of a particular milieu. (p. 8)

Because musical meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered, it would be simplistic to think of any comment made regarding musical meaning as a conceptual formulation or a categorical statement. We are attempting here to describe human, lived experience through perception of musical sounds. Lived experience can not easily be captured in verbal conceptual abstractions. Yet, human beings have an innate desire to find meaning in, and make sense of their lived experiences, whatever the medium employed. Van Manen (1990) reduces the large entity of lived experience into smaller entities he calls themes. Van Manen suggests that a theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of a singular point, which interpretatively, is more accessible than an entire corpus of lived experience.
The sense we are able to make of something is put into symbolic form (words). Words allow us to share the sense we have made of something with another human being who understands the same words which we use, and can, thereby, reach a similar state of sense-making about the same entity. This sensibility enables us to get closer to the meaning of the particular experience, yet because a theme is a reduction of a notion, no thematic formulation can completely unlock the deep meaning and the entire spectrum of the experiential meaning of that notion. In attempting to describe or understand the entire spectrum of experiential meaning, some element of that spectrum will remain unsaid and undone. Brun (1992) suggests that "there is no doubt that hermeneutics is a name for the desire to know what it is that inspires commentary, or what provokes its desire for what remains undone". (p. 14)

Moreover, hermeneutic phenomenology's task is not to produce translations of meaning, conversions of experiences, cultural critiques, or new interpretations of an entity: instead, it is to study these and other aspects for the light that they shed on its object - the question of understanding.
The origins of hermeneutics as a historical tradition date back to the allegorical interpretations of Homer, beginning in the sixth century B.C., and Rabbinic Midrash and commentary on the Torah. The Christian tradition of hermeneutics began with the interpretation of canonical texts. Dilthey brought hermeneutics into the twentieth century where its domain reaches into the areas of sociology, aesthetics, law, and the human sciences. Gadamer (1975), in fact, has claimed that the scope of hermeneutics can be considered to be universal.

In recent decades, the science of interpretation has been approached from several perspectives. Objectivists such as Hirsch claim that he has nothing to say about the art of making guesses as to a text's meaning because making such guesses is an intuitive, imaginative, subjective, and unmethodological process for which no precise rules can be devised. Instead, the logic of interpretation as seen by Hirsch is:

that of first of all marshalling all the evidence and then constructing hypotheses and claims which will explain the phenomena. In principle, therefore, hermeneutics is no different from any
other branch of genuine knowledge, i.e., any other science. Like all the other sciences, it does no more than draw probability judgements. (Madison, 1988, p. 4)

Hirsch suggests that objective knowledge is a form of knowledge that corresponds to, and reflects a fixed, independent entity, and claims that the author's meaning leads this kind of objective existence and can, accordingly, serve as a stable point of reference by which to assess the rightness or validity of interpretations.

Those who oppose this view argue that the hermeneutical object can be best understood when one is aware of the different ways in which an object may be intended. The interpretive meanings are themselves related to the meaning of the text. The meaning of the text, then, exists in the interpretive consciousness of the interpreter. The objectivity of the text can not be divorced from the subjectivity of the interpreter. The interpreter, in fact, is the criterion for textual meaning.
The themes, to which Van Manen (1990) refers, are accessible and practical tools in the interpreter's search for understanding. Gadamer's writings in *Truth and Method* (1975) suggest that "language is the condition of understanding anything whatever. All understanding occurs not through sympathy or reconstruction, but through the medium of language". (p. 27) We can apply Van Manen's concept of themes to attain a clearer comprehension of written and/or spoken text - the medium of language. Reaching a clearer comprehension is a formidable challenge, however, because between text and interpretation there lies a metaphorical relation. A metaphorical relation can be the link between an object in the real world, the sequence of alphabetical digits which are assigned to represent the meaning of that object in a particular language, and a human being's ability to understand the notion that certain letters in a particular sequence represent that object. For example, the fuzzy, domesticated animal that barks is represented, in the English language, by three letters in the following sequence: D-O-G. People who recognize that three-letter symbol to be an English, verbal representation
of that particular animal understand the metaphorical relation between the dog (animal) and its linguistic symbol 'D-O-G'. Yet, a person, for example can write down his/her definition of 'love'. The words (unlike the word 'dog') which the writer uses to define love may carry with them a particular 'tone' (such as sarcasm), or a pun, or perhaps a double entendre, potentially making the metaphoric relation between the words and their intended meaning very ambiguous for the reader/listener. Furthermore, the speaker/writer may be attempting to communicate an experience with which the listener/reader is completely unfamiliar, thereby providing the listener/reader with no foundation on which to base an accurate metaphorical relation between the actual experience and the communication that is intended to describe it (for example, a Russian child hearing about playing an instrument found only in Bali from a child born and raised in Bali who has played that instrument for most of his life). This relation has given rise to many debates pertaining to the nature and role of metaphors and metaphoricity within hermeneutic phenomenology. Debates aside, the task at hand is to describe the nature of whatever can be
understood using descriptive language. Several variables influence this task. They are: the speakers (senders of information), listeners (interpretive audience of information), and the sign (the information). For the speaker there is a complete equivalence between his/her language and his/her reality, according to Gadamer. The logic is that a sign is a tool, and that words (conceived as signs) are instruments that the subject utilizes for its own ends—primarily communicating ideas.

Communication is the entity that gives hermeneutics life. The link between interpretation and communication is a central question of Western aesthetics: Does communication through language and music contain representations of the inner being of the person who is communicating, of the person who is receiving the communication, or of some universal human sentiment? Humans intuitively strive for comprehension by way of interpretation. We interpret what a work of music says to us, what another human being is attempting to share, what our dog tries to explain through its dog-like communication. We interpret what our senses respond to. These interpretations are
influenced by everything ranging from the physical environment where the communication takes place, to the 'tone' of the communicator. Additional variables may include the interpreter's past experiences, socio-economic and cultural background, his/her emotional and mental state, or, perhaps, the alignment of the stars at the time of the communication. In fact, the range of interpretive possibilities is vast.

Turning to music, although the range of interpretive possibilities is vast, the interpreter of a musical work needs to search for the essence of that work when attempting to find its meaning. In his discussion of musical semiotics, Nattiez (1990) outlines three large categories according to which he defines music as a whole and explores the essence of a music composition. He calls the first of these categories the neutral level, the second - the poietic (a specific term used by Nattiez, not to be confused with poetic) level, and the aesthetic level is the third. It is with the use of these categories that Nattiez attempts to explore the essence of a musical
work. As he perceives it:

The essence of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organization, and the way it is perceived. For this reason, musicology, music analysis, and even approaches to musical interpretation that are less specialized or "scientific" require a theory that deals with the practical, methodological, and epistemological results of this holistic vision of music. (p. ix-x)

Nattiez calls this theory musical semiology. All theories of semiology are based on the definition of the sign. Simply stated, the sign is the relationship between a signifier and the signified. For example, the signified is a car - the object which we see driving down the street on four wheels. Its signifier is the word which is made of the following letters sequenced in the following pattern: C-A-R. (The concept of the 'signifier' and the 'signified' in Nattiez's semiotics is closely related to the notion of 'metaphorical relation' as discussed in the previous section on hermeneutics.) The sign is characterized by its value in language (which is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term
results from the simultaneous presence of the others). The thing to which the sign refers is contained within the lived experiences of the sign's users. A sign, or a collection of signs, to which an infinite complex of interpretants is linked, can be called a **symbolic form**.

In music, then, the manner in which the composer outlines the relationship between the 'signifier' (e.g. a minor chord) and the 'signified' (e.g. melancholy) can be linked to an infinite number of interpretants because every listener will bring his/her unique interpretation of that relationship to that particular musical experience.

An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual as soon as that individual places the object in relation to areas of his/her lived experience, that is, in relation to a collection of other tangible objects that belong to his/her experiences of the world. The same can be said of a musical 'object'. To one listener, a minor chord, from the above example, may mean anger, to another listener it may suggest hopelessness. A third listener, upon hearing that same minor chord may see an image of winter stripping the trees of their leaves. A fourth listener (who happens
to be an aboriginal tribesman from Australia) does not hear anything in that minor chord which would cause images or emotions to surface because his music, as we know it in the West, has no diatonic or triadic component at all. The chord, quite possibly, is an unusual and perhaps meaningless sonic experience for the aboriginal tribesman.

Nattiez's semiology of music intends to make one's musical experience tangible and comprehensive to that individual by relating it to other objects and/or experiences in that person's life, and by demonstrating the existence of music as a symbolic form.

Nattiez's definition of sign comes from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics, who suggests that the sign is an entity which unites a concept and a sound-image. A sound-image is the impression which the sound leaves on our senses. The concept is, then, the signified, and the sound-image is the signifier. The conception of the sign is therefore elaborate and multi-layered.

Nattiez uses the neutral, poietic, and esthetic dimensions as the foundation for his discussion on symbolic form and music semiotics. In the poietic
dimension the symbolic form results from a process of creation on the part of the sender of information (composer). In the esthetic dimension the symbolic form is received by a receiver (listener). In the neutral dimension (also known as the trace), the symbolic form is embodied physically and materially in a form which is accessible to the human senses (a musical score, the printed text, sound recordings, and so on).

The reservoir of knowledge which functions as the foundation for all that a composer creates is constructed in him/her when he/she is in the role of listener/receiver. As a receiver of information, an individual brings to the experience his/her musical tastes and biases, personal standards and guidelines for assessment of musical works, social, scholastic, and other educational experiences, and moods, feelings and emotions. When one internalizes a musical experience by combining it with the fabric which makes him/her a unique individual, that musical experience takes on a different shape. In fact, with the addition of this experience, the individual's reservoir of knowledge changes shape also.
When this person steps out of the role of receiver/listener and into the role of creator/composer, and combines this 'new' reservoir of knowledge with his/her creative muse and personal compositional processes, the product that we, as listeners, receive is unique. It is unique because it is born out of a combination of elements which cannot be identically reproduced by any other individual at any other time, nor can they be identically duplicated by the composer at another time, because with any passage of time comes new experience which alters the creator's reservoir of knowledge yet again.

Furthermore, the composed product which the listeners receive is unique because each listener brings his/her unique background and subjectivity to the experience of listening at the time of that experience. Each listening experience is influenced by factors ranging from musical taste and cultural background to a momentary mood. Therefore, the reception of a musical work will vary from one listener to the next, much like a finger print. In other words, the piece will never sound the same way twice because subjectivity and personal experiences vary from one
person to the next and from one moment to the next.

In examining the experience of the composer pertaining to a given musical work, the experience of the listener with the same work, and the composition itself, Nattiez searches for the essence of that piece of music. Yet, Nattiez's 'musical semiotics' paradigm involves human beings and their individual and unique ways of sending and receiving musical information. These ways of sending and receiving musical information are inevitably influenced by the cultures and, possibly, the sub-cultures of the human beings who are involved in this act of musical 'communication'. In interpreting, and finding the essence of a particular work, one, then, needs to consider the influence of one's culture on that person's manner of sending and receiving musical information. To examine a human being's link to his/her culture, is, to some extent, to examine that person's essence. In understanding some portion of a person's essence, we have a reference point for understanding how that individual acts when he/she is in the role of music composer or listener.
Throughout this thesis I have been mentioning students' personal involvement with music and their self-expression through composition. I use the words 'personal' and 'self' because they pertain to each composer's unique and special essence, an essence which differs from one human being to the next and distinguishes one individual from another. Clifford Geertz (1973) writes that an integral part of what makes an individual unique is that individual's "total way of life" (p. 3), which he defines as culture. Geertz suggests that "the total way of life of an individual" is tightly knit with "the total way of life of that individual's people", or cultural group. Geertz suggests that culture may have the following eight meanings:

1. the social legacy an individual acquires from his/her group,
2. a way of thinking, feeling, and believing,
3. a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people behave,
4. a "store-house" of pooled learning,
5. a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems,
6. learned behaviour,
7. a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men, and
8. a precipitate of history.

The concept of culture is therefore a complex one. We can see culture as a web of significance in which one is suspended which, that individual, him/herself has spun. These webs are to be understood through interpretation. The interpreter, however, approaches his/her task with his/her own web, and attempts to interpret the meaning of an individual who is busy spinning a web, also. There is no escape from one's subjectivity and 'backpack' of personal experiences. Yet, the role of the interpreter lies not in the assessment of a work, but rather in the translation of the work's communication and the composer's intent. The meaning that we seek resides somewhere amidst the composer's intentions, the listener's perception, and the composition itself.

Because ethnography deals with description of the most detailed, elaborate and meticulous fashion, it may help in the search for meaning. Such thick description is laborious primarily because within every individual
there exists a complex, piled up structure of inference and implication. Analysis in thick description involves the sorting out of structures of signification and determining their social ground and import.

One ethnoscienific definition of culture states that "culture is composed of psychological structures by means of which individuals or groups of individuals guide their behaviour". (Geertz, 1973, p. 11) Why is this important to us? On a macro level, through an anthropological approach we can enlarge the universe of human discourse and communication, and our understanding thereof. There is a clear link between anthropology and semiology when we discuss culture. Culture is full of signs. Yet these signs are culturally and socially based and should be described 'thickly' and in the context of their environments. Through this strategy one can examine a people's normalcy in relation to a culture without neglecting their particularity and uniqueness. Culture is outwardly articulated within the framework of behaviour and social action. The act of writing down a description of such a social act is the act of turning a passing event, present only during the moment of its
occurrence, into an account which will last far longer than the actual act.

To engage in ethnographic description is to interpret social discourse. Such interpretation tends to resist conceptual articulation. Geertz (1973), however, invokes thick description in attempting to articulate the nature of a discourse. He writes:

The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics. (p. 28)

We must remember, however, that this type of analysis is innately incomplete because, although I, the observer, like the students in the sample group, am a member of Canadian culture, I am most certainly an outsider to their high school sub-culture. Therefore, to attempt to support broad assertions about the role of sub-culture from a singular perspective of one person's different sub-cultural background is a daunting task.
One of my more difficult tasks in this research was the translation and interpretation of students' ideas, as these ideas were expressed by students through their musical compositions and their interviews. The fact that I was attempting to interpret and translate the work done by a sub-culture to which I did not belong added to the difficulty. In this case, I was looking at the sub-culture of high school students who comprise the sample group. Like any other sub-culture, this one is subject to societal, geographic, behavioral, and chronological influences. It is impossible for an interpreter who is observing a sub-culture to make an accurate statement about it, primarily because the ethnographer's place is outside of that sub-culture. An observer could not overcome this dilemma by interacting with the members of that culture (for a given period of time in hopes of attaining assimilation) because, assimilation would never be the same as enculturation. In other words, we may hypothesize that a person can become an addition to a certain sub-culture, but could never become a 'core' member because that individual, although belonging to the same main culture, already belongs to his/her own
unique sub-culture. Therefore, an ethnographer (in this case, myself) who is attempting to translate a sub-culture's work (in this case, the sample group's compositions) will never be completely accurate, for I am not part of the observed sub-culture and, thus, can't holistically comprehend all of the intricacies and internal dynamics of said group. I am not an internal member, but rather an outsider.

When an individual engages in self-expression, that individual is engaging in the exploration of particular personal phenomena such as ideas, feelings or images. George Hillocks (1975) states that "we do not perceive these phenomena as isolated bits of experience, but in relationship to one another. In assigning meaning to these relationships, we are able to organize our perceptions regarding these phenomena". (p. 69) The search for that meaning crosses various domains, particularly the fields of phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics and ethnography. It is by using the various analytic tools from these fields that I hope to arrive at the most precise interpretation possible of the sample students' creative processes and their self-expression through their musical compositions.
In exploring the students' personal involvement with self-expression through musical composition I am exploring and interpreting the compositional processes which students undertake throughout such involvement. There exist many typologies that concentrate on the results (i.e., the 'finished product') of music students' creative processes. For example, Simmonds (1988), Green (1990), and Pilsbury and Alston (1996) discuss assessment of students' music compositions, while Loane (1984), Salaman (1988), and Wilson and Wales (1995) examine music composition methodology. I am not familiar with any typologies that focus on the creative process rather than the product. I am interested in the mental images, thoughts and emotions that confront a student during the process of composition. I am also interested in the composer's management of these images, thoughts and emotions throughout his/her quest for self-expression within the
creative process. Exploration of the creative process requires a typology which examines a composer's mental images, thoughts and feelings and attempts to interpret and understand the roles of these images, thoughts and feelings in allowing the composer to express him/herself throughout the creative process. Accurate and precise analytical tools are required for the analysis of a highly personal and complex entity such as one's creative process. In this study, as I have already explained, I implement analytical tools from the fields of hermeneutics, semiotics and thick description in order to most accurately examine students' creative processes.

Because I am addressing music composition's validity within the greater entity of education, I believe that a context should be provided for the understanding of students' processes of composition. This context may be effectively provided by linking compositional processes in music to similar types of processes in other educational practices and disciplines. Language arts is one of the school disciplines which most closely resembles music
education in terms of the type of experiences that an individual encounters pertaining to personal involvement and self-expression through the processes of composition. Furthermore, the analytical tools (hermeneutics, semiotics, and Geertz's thick description) which I apply to students' music composition processes emanate from the domain of language.

George Hillocks (1975), a scholar in the area of written composition, has set up various categories according to which composed literary works can be interpreted and subjectively evaluated. These categories are labelled as follows: generating ideas, developing/expanding ideas, organizing ideas, and expressing ideas. In addition, Hillocks employs an assessment method which determines the 'overall effectiveness' of the composition. The work is judged as a whole, and the impression its totality makes is of import. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling do not carry a great weight in the scoring process. These categories can be applied to music composition as they can be to composition in language arts. For example, speaking as a composer, a performer, and a listener, I believe that ideas are generated within each composer
in a unique way which can not be exactly replicated by any other individual. Some composers are inspired by a stormy ocean, others by a sunny day. Some individuals wake from a sleep with an idea, others plagiarize cleverly and discreetly from already existing pieces. The same composer, in fact, can generate creativity in a variety of ways. Once a melody, a motif, a feeling, or a rhythmic 'catch' pattern is generated, it takes on a different shape, because, invariably it mixes with the individual's fabric and, therefore, undergoes a change in its own fabric. The generated idea moves to the next level when it is expanded and elaborated upon, manipulated, moulded, and personalized by the composer. For example, the composer might have begun working on the piece with nothing more than a descending E flat to D repeating pattern. Maybe that was what woke him/her up in the middle of the night - the idea was generated. The idea was, then, developed and expanded when the composer added a note a third below the E flat and chose a clavichord to play this generated/developed idea. At the next level, the composer organizes the developed content by giving the pattern a certain sequence of repetitions, transposing it, and adding
other generated and developed ideas to it in a sectionalized manner. The organization of ideas creates a form. The last stage of the compositional conveyer belt is the expression of these ideas. This stage, like the developmental stage, relies heavily on the composer's overall musical knowledge and decision-making ability. To express his/her ideas, one needs to choose and arrange instruments, textures, dynamics, and address the many elements which comprise the act of performance. It is in the expressive phase of the composition that communication occurs between the composer and the audience. It is during this phase that the listener attempts to find meaning in the communication by interpreting the content.

Further similarities between music and language have been addressed by a number of researchers. Devitt (1990), for example, claims that both language and music are formal systems which consist of a set of basic symbols classified into various types and used for communicative purposes. Haugeland (1985) states that these formal systems "involve tokens that are manipulated according to rules, in order to see what configurations can be obtained". (p. 48) Harold Fiske
(1993) writes that music, like language, is a part of all known cultures, is a uniquely human activity that occurs in a diverse assortment of styles, types and genres, and that these styles, types and genres evolve with time.

A Language B.C. pilot study (1986) concerned with assessment in the English Language Arts compiled a list on which evaluation of language compositions can be structured (although this list applies to expository writing, it may be applied to music):

**Ideas**
- Has a developed argument

**Organization**
- Shows a clear organizational pattern
- Appropriate substantiation is evident
- Individual paragraphs are well-developed

**Sentence Usage**
- Sentence structure is acceptable
- Sentences are clear
- Sentence structure is sophisticated
Vocabulary

Vocabulary is acceptable
Vocabulary is sophisticated

Mechanics

Spelling is acceptable
Punctuation is acceptable
Capitalization is acceptable
Handwriting is acceptable (p. 69)

With some alteration in terminology, the composition of music can be subjected to the same standards of evaluation as are found for the composition of language in the above pilot study:

Ideas

Has a developed thematic/motivic content

Organization

Shows a clear organizational pattern
Appropriate substantiation is evident (i.e., knowledge of past composers, styles, and techniques are evident)
Individual sections (A, B, or C sections, for example) are well-developed
Phrase Usage

Phrase (i.e., musical phrase) structure is acceptable
Phrase structure is clear
Phrase structure is sophisticated

Vocabulary (harmony, melody, rhythm, shape, etc.)
Vocabulary is acceptable
Vocabulary is sophisticated

Mechanics

Notation of stems on notes is acceptable
Use of rests and bar lines is acceptable
Notation of clef, time and key signatures is acceptable
Clarity of notation/handwriting is acceptable

A vital difference between language and music is found in the level on which they communicate. Although in a conversation, language has one meaning to the creator and another to the receiver, both meanings fall into a certain range of comprehension which enables two lay persons to engage in a dialogue. This range is
designated by the vocabulary of the language used in the discourse. Music, however, communicates (through organized sound and silence patterns) by way of emoting images, emotions, and moods which differ from those emoted by language because they are not limited by words and the definitions of those words. This flexibility gives music a wider communicative scope in which to function. Moreover, music is limited only by our linguistic attempts to describe and define it. In other words, as Fiske (1993) points out:

Speech is ordinarily denotative and music is not. And while some would like to believe that music is also denotative, at least affectively, there is no valid way of constructing a theory of music from which a principle of denotation emerges.

(p. 52)

Music discourages our tendency to compartmentalize and categorize it as a 'language', because, unlike language, it functions on a non-denotative plane.

What distinguishes music from language, then, is the type of cognitive processing that results on the part of the sender and the receiver of a particular
non-denotative musical communication versus the type of cognitive processing that results on the part of the sender and receiver of a denotative language-based communication. How does communication function on this non-denotative, 'wordless' plane? The answers to this question will be highly subjective in nature and may differ from one person to the next. For example, a note or a combination of notes, the texture and timbre, the mode or the tempo of a piece inherently do not contain an agreed upon definition. We (having been brought up with Western musical traditions) can say that minor sounds 'sad' while major sounds 'happy'. Surely we want to discuss the communicative abilities of a composition and the self-expression of a composer beyond the boundaries of 'happy' and 'sad'!

Nevertheless, a melodic motif will never be a word, thereby, never being a symbol for which there is a general agreed-upon definition. The dilemma at hand consists of one's difficulty in searching for personal meaning within a composer's musical mode of self-expression and communication when that mode is non-denotative.
To further illustrate the dilemma of searching for meaning as it pertains to composition in language and in music, I shall employ the poem *Too Much To Ask* by high school student Melanie Hart, and the instrumental piece *Haunted*, composed by high school student Leon Freeman. I found Melanie's poem in the *British Columbia Reading and Written Expression Assessment* (*Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia, 1988*). This publication is a compilation of high school students' poems and Melanie's poem was chosen randomly. Leon is one of my piano students and is not a member of the sample group in this study. I encourage Leon to compose (and notate his musical compositions), and am fortunate enough to receive two compositions each month from him. *Haunted* is one of his most recent works. Leon is starting his last year of studies at a Burnaby high school.

*Too Much To Ask*

*If I asked,*  
*Would you collect your tears*  
*And string them*  
*On a cord of fallen eyelashes*  
*For me to wear around my neck?*
If I fell,
Would you stop, help me up
And keep the rain
Falling from the sky
From leaching away my warmth?

If I slept,
Would you watch over me
And let my head
With no pillow under it
Rest upon your shoulder?

If I aged,
Would you stay with me,
And see the wrinkles,
Covering my shrinking skin
As added decoration?

And if I died,
Would you cry for me
And kneel silently,
At my frost-cold hands
Until the sun rose once more?

Melanie Hart
(high school student)

A reader's ability to search for the poem's meaning by applying hermeneutics may enlighten that reader of the author's communicative efforts and intentions. Interpretation of Melanie's poem, however, also needs to be accompanied by pertinent contextual cultural knowledge. For example, *Too Much To Ask* resonates with Romantic, 19th century angst and use of metaphors and imagery such as those found in the works
of Byron, Keats and Shelley. The reader's ability to combine phenomenology and pertinent knowledge in the interpretation of this poem is critical if that reader is Melanie's language arts teacher.

Let us imagine, therefore, that one is a high school English teacher whose students are engaged in producing written composition. One of the students, Melanie, composes the above work and hands it in to the teacher for review. There are many considerations before that teacher as he/she attempts to interpret, to understand, and to assess the work. Does one assess this poem on its meaning, on its relevance, on its communicative effectiveness, on its style and form, on its mechanics (syntax, punctuation, etc.), or on all of the above? I shall focus first on meaning and relevance.

Meaning is a troublesome area. This poem may not house any meaning for you or 'Joe Smith', but it may be abundantly meaningful to Melanie. Meaning (to one who searches for it) is based on many factors - one's cognition, interpretation, intellect, intuition, the ability to personalize the entity at hand, social and cultural backgrounds, age, philosophy, and psychology.
Meaning can, also, be taken out of context. For example, if a reader opens a book of poetry randomly and reads a stanza in which the writer writes "mother, how great you are", the reader may interpret this sentence as displaying the writer's admiration for his/her mother. If the reader was to read the poem from beginning to end, however, he/she would realize that the writer is actually being sarcastic about his/her feelings for his/her mother. The meaning, for the creator and the interpreter, can even be influenced by something as temporary and ever-changing as a mood or the weather.

If one evaluates this poem on its relevance, inevitably one must define relevance and answer the question - "Relevant to whom?" One can only address its relevance to the writer by being inside the writer's mental and emotional reservoir - which is an impossibility. If its relevance to the writer is inconsequential to you, then perhaps, its overall relevance is insignificant. Yet the writer's work need not be relevant to you in order for it to be relevant to the writer.
Furthermore, the interpretation of a poem like this, or any other, must carry with it consideration for people. We are dealing with humans who write. Therefore, we are dealing with ethnography and social anthropology. What we are talking about here, in fact, is what we call culture, the interpretation thereof, and the construction of a theory regarding the interpretation of culture. Yet again, we are thrown back to hermeneutics, because, to analyze a culture is to engage in an interpretive science which searches for meaning within that particular paradigm.

Further issues pertaining to the act of communicating need to be considered. For example, at whom was the content aimed (communicating to whom)? What was the purpose of the communication? Did the communication fall within the boundaries of a socially established code? Did the communication fall within the boundaries of a particular physical, emotional and intellectual environment? Do this code and this environment belong to the writer, the reader(s) or both? Was the communication effective, did it have to be, and, effective or ineffective by what criteria?
Although the answers to these questions can never be complete, just as an ethnographer's commentary on a culture (to which he is an outsider) can never be authentic enough, we must continue to search for meaning in *Too Much To Ask*. Does it make sense to us, the readers? On what levels does it make sense, how and why? It is this path that will take us closer to the verisimilitude of this particular experience, thereby, bringing us closer to the meaning that we are intended to derive from Melanie's work and, perhaps, within proximity of the verisimilitude of her particular experience.

Turning to music, the search for meaning is even more complex than it is in language because meaning in music is readily more elusive as it often does not appear to have anything to do with words.

Mendelssohn's (1842/1956) famous dictum that music contains meanings too precise for words reflects the idea that music has greater powers of transporting the consciousness to other realms of awareness in a more direct and compelling manner than words are capable of. (In the 19th century there were two camps in musical semantics. In the previous chapter, I mentioned some of
the composers in the representational camp. The other camp consisted of individuals who were supporters of pure musical structure and only very generalized human feelings.) Representationalist composers such as Berlioz and Liszt (in Strunk, 1950) were concerned with the transcendental qualities of music. Liszt wrote:

Music can reproduce the impression of the soul...and presents at one and the same time the intensity and expression of feeling; it is the embodiment and intelligible sense essence of feeling. (p. 849)

Rousseau (1749/1966) rationalized that music is nearer to humanity's nature than language by arguing that language concerns itself with thought, while music concerns itself with feeling. Rousseau was of the opinion that rationalism is artificially imposed on music, while in their natural state, humans are "naively passionate". (p. 51)

In support of this view Robert Walker (1990) argues that:

It could be claimed that music is such a highly abstract art form in Western traditions that it is comprised of sounds having no clear or fixed symbolic
function or association at all, save that attributed by the composer. If this is the case, then music is a most idiosyncratic and esoteric form of communication. (p. 5)

Walker explains that words in language have more or less fixed meanings, most of which can be translated into different languages. All cultures, for example, have words that are used as a label for sunrise and that are usually different from those used for sunset. However, it is quite possible in music to use the same sounds for either and not in any way compromise the intended meanings of the musical sounds, provided the composer states his or her intention. In fact, we cannot know purely from the musical sounds what they are intended to represent unless they clearly imitate some natural sound, such as a bird call or a barking dog; but musical art, of course, operates on a different level from this kind of simple, literal reproduction.

Haunted, a musical composition by high school student Leon Freeman, will be used to illustrate the difficulty of applying hermeneutics to a work which does not contain words (see following page for
transcription).

You are a high school music teacher whose students are engaged in music composition. You may want to consider several issues: Your students, for the most part, do not possess the sophistication or eloquence to engage in a philosophical discussion of music's meaning, yet may be able to find meaning on some 'Rousseau-esque' innate and transcendental level. Furthermore, in their music they reflect their backgrounds, which are heavily influenced by North America's 'fast-food' pop culture mentality which, itself, is steeped in an updated version of 19th century angst and the flamboyance of romanticism. Leon's composition, like Melanie's poem, therefore, is based on older 19th century sentiment, unlike the post Romantic work of composers such as Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, for example. The influence of the 19th century can be observed in most pieces of popular music. It can certainly be seen and heard in Leon's composition. Haunted is filled with triadic harmonies, lyrical melodies, colorful suspensions (in the Romantic period, suspensions were considered to have expressive content that was linked to poetry), and predictably clear
phrasing. Upon exploring Haunted, I would be inclined to think that 19th century musical vocabulary, angst and sentimentality have become today's langue populaire.

Leon composes the above work and submits it for review. Just as in the language composition example (Too Much To Ask), there are many considerations before you - considerations such as meaning, communicative effectiveness, style, form, and mechanics. Melanie's poem can be approached as a totality with regards to its meaning. Yet, it can also be translated one line at a time. Her first line is "if I asked". Most Anglophones can arrive at a similar translation, understanding of, and, meaning for this line. How can we do the same for Leon's piece? Do we look at the first bar, the first system, or just the right hand part? Do we examine Haunted as a whole entity? The combinations of tones in this piece may evoke a different mood in each listener. The diversity of interpretations of Haunted will be much more vast than that of Too Much to Ask simply because Leon's composition does not consist of a set of symbols/sounds for which there is an agreed upon meaning.
Remaining, are all of the issues regarding meaning, relevance, communication, culture (and the inherently problematic nature of ethnography) that were noted in the example on written composition. I will attempt to address these issues throughout my examination and interpretation of the data produced by the sample group's creative processes and finished compositions.
CHAPTER SEVEN: 

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DATA: 
STUDENTS' PROCESSES OF MUSIC COMPOSITION, 
STUDENT-RESEARCHER INTERVIEWS, AND THE SYNTHESIS OF 
DATA WITH THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The music composition assignment given to the sample group in this study immersed the students in a variety of meaning-making and meaning-seeking predicaments which required these young composers to become decision-makers. To undertake a composition assignment without imposed and clearly defined limitations can be a daunting task because throughout the process each individual has to make a variety of cognitive, conceptual, technical, creative, and self-assessing decisions with the objective of expressing him/herself, in some way, through his/her composition.

On the cognitive level, for example, a student needs to possess and apply knowledge and understanding of the nature of the task. It is at this level that a composer must make choices about the methods which lead to the fulfilment of his/her objectives. The cognitive
and the conceptual levels are tightly linked, as many of the choices one makes are based on one's knowledge of concepts (such as melody, form, rhythm, dynamics, etc.) and the manner in which the elements behind the terminology function. In other words, it is not sufficient to understand what the definition of harmony is if harmony's roles in a particular type of music are not comprehended. Being able to define harmony has little to do with knowing how a given set of chords work in combination to produce a particular sonic and semantic effect.

The technical level may be a challenging one for students. I shall demonstrate by way of the following hypothetical situation:

'Tom' wants to create a piece which incorporates an acoustic six-string guitar and strings. The initial technical dilemma is that he can play neither the guitar, nor any string instrument. Knowing this, Tom decides to record sampled sounds for the desired effect. To do this, Tom must have some keyboard ability, as it is a keyboard which will trigger the sampled guitar and strings from a sound module. Furthermore, he needs to know how to operate a sound
module and a sampler. When/if Tom overcomes these obstacles, he will have to focus on operating a sequencer (because these sampled sounds will be recorded/loaded in to the sequencer). The sequencer, however, is part of a computer program at his workstation. Tom, therefore, must be computer-literate, to some extent.

In addition to this equipment, Tom has to be familiar with a mixing console, which will enable him to work with the timbre and volume of the sound, and provide him with the possibility of recording the composition from the computer's sequencer, through the mixer, and on to a cassette. (Let's hope that Tom knows how to operate a cassette player.)

Tom has another option. He can decide to find a guitar player and string players to whom he can verbally communicate his ideas. Tom would, then, embark on a live recording process which requires him to have knowledge about recording in a particular type of room, the implementation of microphones during the session, the potential 'leakage' of sound from the mixing console and/or the different instruments and their respective microphones, and the use of a
monitoring or headphone system. The technical challenges can easily become obstructions to the creative process and the efficiency of the project. (Also, Tom can write a technically/manually unplayable piece, which would constitute a new set of problems.)

As creators, individuals are in a position of ultimate power. Because the interpretation of art is very subjective, no one has the right to tell the composer that he/she is wrong. As master of his/her composition, an individual must make certain creative choices and then focus these choices in a manner which he/she feels is appropriate for the communicative success of a particular work. These choices demand a level of maturity and pragmatism in the creator.

The self-assessing level brings with it a composer's need to reflect on the status and the quality of the piece, his/her success in translating ideas from an internal paradigm ('muse', imagination) to an external one (paper, tape, performance), and evaluate not only the emerging product as both, a self-expression-in-progress and a completed work, but, also, evaluate him/herself as a composer actively struggling with personal change and development.
On a practical level, meaning-seeking and meaning-making was approached by the student composers in several ways. Upon receiving their instructions, each member of the class began working at a work station. While monitoring their initial steps, I observed three different approaches to beginning the task. One group of students began the assignment by working with a sampler and selecting a desired instrument sample (e.g. a brass, woodwind, keyboard, or string instrument). Due to this group's interest in instrumentation and texture, I shall call their approach timbral. A second group of students experimented with drum machines and attempted to construct desired rhythmic patterns. I shall name this the rhythmic group, as all of their exploration was layered on top of a rhythmic foundation. The third approach to composition involved a student playing the keyboard in search of vertical and horizontal pitch combinations which were to his/her liking, and to organize the piece based on these ideas. This was the melodic/harmonic group.
As the study progressed, each of these three approaches spawned its own type of composition. Those students who searched for sampled sounds were creating works which focused on texture and demonstrated a more complex layering/overdubbing of instruments than did the groups working with the other two approaches. These texture-based pieces displayed, at least, three varying parts. In other words, if four string instruments were used, two of them may have been playing the same musical content, while each of the other two instruments played its own material. In all such cases, the students created parts which all, to a 'Western ear', complemented each other.

The creations of the rhythmic group were somewhat different from those of the textural group. When a student composer was satisfied with a rhythm pattern, he/she proceeded to work on a bass or a keyboard line. Typically, such a line would be a short motif, lasting no more than two measures, which would be looped (given the computer command to repeat a segment for a desired period of time). In some cases, this motif was diatonic, in others it was pentatonic. This loop would then be sporadically decorated with a brass or a
synthesizer flourish. These decorations would be implemented modestly, thus reinforcing the economical nature of the pitched content. The rhythm track, however, was anything but economical. Each composer in this group employed a snare, a kick, opened and closed hi-hats, and cymbals (crash and wash, or both). This 'drum set' configuration was enhanced by congas, bongos, cabasas, guiros, vibraslaps, timbales, tic-toc blocks, kettle drums, triangles, bell trees, and other percussive colors. (This list is comprised of some of the percussion instruments which were used by the sample. There was no single composition in which all of the listed instruments were utilized.)

The approach of the melodic/harmonic group led to rich melodic and harmonic content. The pieces conceived in this paradigm focused on melodic shape and content, the effect of cluster chords on the melody and the manner in which the same melody changed character when a different harmony was used. In these compositions, I noticed varying playing and performance styles. For example, a melody may have been accompanied by an Alberti bass and later the accompaniment may have taken on a 'rock' feel. With a change in
style, there was usually some alteration in the instrumentation (e.g. a woodwind may have been brought in and a string taken out, or changed).

The table on the following pages outlines the division among the sixteen students into these three groups, and briefly describes the types of pieces that were produced by the different compositional approaches (i.e., timbral, rhythmic, and melodic/harmonic). In looking at the table, one may notice that out of sixteen students only two were in the timbral group, five were in the rhythmic group, while nine took the melodic/harmonic approach in composing their pieces. In my opinion, the majority of students were in the melodic/harmonic group because melodies and harmonies are the most familiar Western musical concepts. In the great majority of pieces that we learn in school music classes and/or in our private piano, violin or voice lessons, melodies are the most recognizable musical elements. The pop music that inundates Western society is mainly structured on melodic/harmonic 'hooks'. This may explain why the majority of students who are asked to compose a piece, approach that process through primarily melodic/harmonic means.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Brief description of composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIMBRAL GROUP</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 male</td>
<td>A piece for cello, recorder and clarinet in which composer experiments with textures by dividing chordal notes among the three instruments. The instruments move from one chord to another and from one key to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 female</td>
<td>Composer explores differences in textures between a piano playing cluster chords and a horn section playing the same chords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RHYTHMIC GROUP</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 male</td>
<td>Composer creates and programs a 'funk' rhythmic loop and adds complementary bass and piano lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 male</td>
<td>A Latin-style trumpet line and 'wah' guitar effect are layered over a <em>salsa</em> percussion loop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 female</td>
<td>A 'rock' rhythm is played while a trill-playing flute, an organ pad and a <em>habanera</em>-rhythmmed bass are added and manipulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 female *</td>
<td>Composer incorporates a 'soul/funk' rhythm, repeating bass and string pad patterns and flute solos in an <em>ABACABA</em> form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 male *</td>
<td>A 'rap'-style beat, two trumpet parts and a repeating bass/organ motif are conflated for the purposes of being a 'soundtrack' to a rap vocal. The vocal did not materialize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student (continued)</td>
<td>Brief description of composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MELODIC/HARMONIC GROUP**

**Grade 11 male**

Piano plays I-IV-V chord progression while violin plays melody. Piano is given solo spots also.

**Grade 11 male**

An acoustic guitar plays an arpeggiated I-IV pattern. A cello is brought in for interplay. Guitar is gradually taken out. The cello ends the piece by playing the content played by the guitar at the beginning.

**Grade 12 female**

Composer experiments with matching one note ('C') in the right hand with as many chord combinations (containing the note 'C') as possible in the left hand. This content is played on a harpsichord sample. For the 'B' section, the content is transposed and played on a glockenspiel (right hand) and harp (left hand) sample.

**Grade 10 female**

A flute plays a major-mode motif which is played in canon by a saxophone. In the 'B' section, the roles are reversed, as the sax leads and the flute follows. The 'B' section content, though, is altered from A major to A minor.

**Grade 10 female**

A piano melody is being played over a I-V-I-III-VI harmonic progression. In the 'B' section, the entire piano part is given a change of meter (from 3/4 to 4/4).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student (continued)</th>
<th>Brief description of composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 male</td>
<td>This organ sample piece composed in the 'baroque' style shifts from a minor key to its relative major. In the major, the composer adds viola and clarinet parts which imitate and ornament the melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 male</td>
<td>The composer is using a voice sound sample to play a short melodic and harmonic sequence. This sequence changes in two ways only. It increases and decreases in tempo and volume throughout the piece. The increases and decreases in both occur at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 male *</td>
<td>The composer creates a right hand melody and accompanies it with a whole note left hand part on a piano sound sample. Then he switches the parts so that the whole notes are in the right hand and the melody is in the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 female *</td>
<td>The composer writes a piece for piano in which she manipulates the tonal centers and strong beats. She explores chord clusters and 7ths and 9th chords, and brings in a bass and percussion part for variety.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates that this composer is one of the four students interviewed in detail about his/her compositional process.

It should be noted that members of the timbral group displayed elements of rhythm, melody and harmony in their compositions. Members of the rhythmic group displayed elements of timbre, melody and harmony in their compositions. Members of the melodic/harmonic group displayed elements of timbre and rhythm in their compositions.
To discuss the three compositional approaches taken by the students is to describe the skeletal structures of their work. One can address issues of textures, rhythms, arrangement, instrumentation, and pitch because these entities are concrete. A more complex task, however, is for an individual to comment on the extent to which the works communicated what the composers intended to communicate, and enabled the composers to express themselves. This task is complex because it involves individually-based notions of interpretation and meaning. I shall elaborate on and apply these notions to student compositions in subsequent pages.

My initial hypothesis was that students would become personally involved in self-expression throughout the process of music composition. This process would then be recorded and examined. The progress of the student composers exceeded my expectations, as every student presented a completed composition by the conclusion of our time together. Although the group's work may be divided into three distinct categories, all of the work has several common threads. All compositions were done at computer work
stations. All pieces displayed elements of form, texture, and dynamics. Each piece was built upon a diatonic/pentatonic, tonal or rhythmic foundation. Every composition reflected the Western conceptions, traditions and definitions of popular music-making. No group member was younger than sixteen or older than eighteen years of age. Each composer had been in Canada for a minimum period of three years. (I obtained this information orally during the one-on-one discussion periods with each student.)

The point pertaining to Canadian residency is important because culture has the power to play a very influential role in the validity of research of this nature, particularly since adolescents strive to be like their peers. I practiced "sounding Canadian" when I came here at age 10. In my opinion, three years is a period of time which is sufficient, in length, for the acclimatization of a youth to the Canadian 'mosaic'. This opinion is based on my own Ukraine-to-Canada immigration experience, and the cultural and social transitions which accompanied the move. Regardless of birthplace, each student involved in this project has been in Canada for, at least, the past three years and
has, therefore, to a considerable degree, become 'Canadianized' over that time.

Each student recorded his/her composition on an audio cassette by transmitting that composition from his/her work station to a mixing board which was connected to a tape recorder. The processes which were taken by the students in their work were notated on paper and recorded on video cassette (VHS format). Although each piece is audible, no notation was produced for any of the compositions. The only visual element that proved that a piece of music was present was the series of settings found on a screen in the work station sequencer as the piece was being played. The settings displayed information about rhythm, pitch, tempo, timbre, and texture.

In chapter five I briefly discussed the three dimensions (poietic, esthetic and neutral) on which Nattiez constructs his theory of music semiology. If we examine the students' pieces according to Nattiez's semiology, we observe that all three of these dimensions were present. Without the initial stages of the poietic, which lie in the germs of creativity, the
pieces would not have been conceived. The latter stages of the poietic dimension are found in the performance of the piece. (Each piece was performed as it was being recorded.) Performance is, simultaneously, that stage of the esthetic dimension which sets up the reception and interpretation of the work by the listener.

It is in the neutral dimension that Nattiez addresses the notation of music. Although Nattiez suggests that the notation of a piece is helpful in the analysis of that piece, he does not insist on notation's presence. Nattiez does, however, insist on the presence of physical evidence which somehow proves the existence of that musical composition. In this study, audio cassettes containing recordings of the students' pieces, and the digital settings found on the screen of each student's work station sequencer are the physical evidence of the compositions' existence. I suspect that the combination of time constraints, the lack of instruction regarding the expectation of notated content, and insufficient fluency in music notation contributed to the absence of notation.
A score is a fixed graphic sign which has been assigned a relationship to the music. This sign may or may not play a part of the interpretive process found in the esthetic dimension, and the creative process found in the composition and performance of the poietic dimension. Yet, musical semiology aspires to attain a multifaceted analysis of a musical work. This is best realized with transcription, as "music analysis has the capacity to apply itself to a symbolic substitute for the sonorous fact". (Nattiez, 1990, p. 72) He further writes that:

For the musicologist, musical notation functions in two ways. In the first, notation is indeed the trace that renders the work's identity possible. In this case we need to realize that, from the analytical standpoint, notation is an image - imperfect but indispensable - of that notation's sonorous equivalent. (p. 73)

Certainly, there is some need for transcription. Human beings are symbolic creatures who seek to interpret, categorize, and give meaning to a given trace by way of a narrative. Music, in and of itself, is not a narrative in the same way that language is
because its communication resists a uniform consensus in a manner which does not occur when a group of Anglophones attempt to reach a consensus regarding the definition of an English word. It does, however, incite human beings to make narration about it in the form of an analysis and commentary. In a semiological framework, then, one can consider music to be the object of a discourse to which it gives rise. Yet, the field continues to pose the question "How should one talk about music?" When dealing with the trace such as notation, one can implement a non-formalized analysis and speak of cells, motives and phrases. One can, also, approach the neutral level from a formalized perspective and examine the entire corpus in terms of its traits, classifications, and delimitations. Yet to observe the whole musical fact according to Nattiez's musical semiotics, one must consider the individuals involved in the musical communication (i.e., their involvement in the poietic and esthetic realms). In order to better acquaint myself with the student composers in the sample group, and better understand their manner of self-expression through the composition of music, I interviewed some of them. (All of the
sixteen students were not available for interviews, as the interview periods were set up during non-school hours.)

I used the following questions as a general guideline during these interviews: Did the composer want to communicate something? If so, what was it? If not, why? What results was the composer striving for? What techniques were used by the composer to reach the desired results? What were the various thoughts and feelings experienced by the composer during the compositional process? What were the various thoughts and feelings experienced by the composer at the completion of the musical work? Would the composer consider the work successful? Successful on what terms (the piece's ability to communicate, the work's construction, the sonic picture that it makes)?

In planning interviews with the student composers, I constructed a questionnaire which I hoped would help me obtain answers to the above questions in a clear and sequential manner. Primarily, the questionnaire was designed to elicit information pertaining to students' personal involvement with and self-expression through the composition of music (as I have discussed in
greater detail in chapters four and five). The questionnaire was also constructed around my belief as a composer that we compose on three different levels. During exploration (the first level), the composer plays with, and unfolds new ideas. This level serves as the composer's filter for the retention of the ideas which he/she likes and wants to explore further. During the development phase (the second level), the composer subjects the retained ideas to further experimentation, revision and development. The third stage of composition is repetition, during which the composer reviews the developed ideas and surveys their role in the overall fabric of the musical composition before the finished product is presented to the listener. Such a breakdown of the composition process allows me to hypothesize that those individuals who compose well-crafted pieces use various strategies for developing their ideas. 'Weak' composers, however, spend most of their time in the exploratory stage of the composition process, thereby seldom elevating their works to more complex levels of craftsmanship and communication.
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Describe the first step(s) taken by you in approaching the composition of a piece.

2. How did you explore? Describe the tools, techniques and ideas with which you worked.

3. Were the ideas which were explored pre-existing (i.e., did you have them in your head before you approached an instrument, a computer, a piece of paper, or were the ideas generated by your experimentation on the computer/instrument(s)?) Discuss.

4. Discuss your thinking behind the choices you made regarding which ideas you wanted to work with/develop, and those which you dismissed.

5. How did you develop the selected ideas?

6. Describe the process between the development of the selected ideas and the final product.
7. Describe the expressive content, or the features with which you feel particularly pleased/displeased.

8. Were you trying to express something in particular? If so, what was it, and was it expressed successfully?

9. Please make any additional comments pertaining to your piece, its successes and failures, the process of composition, and/or any part of the entire experience.

10. Tell me about yourself and the people with whom you live. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? What are your interests? I want to know about the composer, not just the composition.

Only four out of the sixteen students who comprised the informant group were able to grant me an interview. Each of the other twelve composers could not meet for an interview because of various time constraints. (As mentioned earlier, I was only able to schedule the interview period for an after-school time slot which proved to be inconvenient or impossible for many of them. I did, however, talk to every student
throughout the study. Also, I received compositions from every student in the sample and will therefore discuss the other twelve students' work in subsequent pages.) The interviews were recorded on an audio cassette, and then, transcribed on paper. These transcriptions can be found in the pages that follow. The paraphrased versions of the responses to question ten of the questionnaire shall be found in the 'about the composer' section, directly following each transcribed interview. At the end of each interview, I will attempt to qualify the work of the interviewed student by linking that work to the writings of Nattiez (on musical semiotics), Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger (on existentialism), Geertz (on thick description), and Hillocks (on categorizing the steps of the creative process).

The Interviews:

Interview I

INTERVIEW WITH A GRADE 10 MALE:

Interviewer (Alex Tsisserev): "Describe your first step in tackling the assignment."

Student: "I chose two notes arbitrarily and played
those two notes using different rhythms and volumes."

I: "What instrument did you use?"

S: "The keyboard. After some time, I began to see the
two notes as a physical shape - a picture on the
keyboard."

I: "Was it this picture with which you began to
experiment?"

S: "Yes. I decided to change the picture slightly by
filling it in. I did this by playing certain notes
between my two original notes."

I: "How did you choose these new notes?"

S: "I chose these new notes randomly. The one
thing that I wanted to avoid was playing all of the
notes between my original two pitches, so I skipped
some notes when I chose my new group of filler notes.
When I was comfortable with my new 'picture', I began
to experiment with the note order. I thought a
descending, falling effect was the most successful so
I played the notes from highest pitch to lowest in
order of appearance."

I: "Where did this exploration lead you?"

S: "I really liked the sound I was getting, but it
needed a change. When I replaced a certain note with
another, the sound which I preferred disappeared. Therefore, I decided not to replace any notes, and keep the ones I selected, while playing them in the highest-to-lowest sequence."

I: "Was that it?"

S: "No. I wanted some sort of change. To do something different while keeping the pattern the same, I moved the entire pattern up a couple of notes."

I: "How did you figure out how to transpose?"

S: "I used the information I learned about tones and semi-tones and their roles in transposition. By the time I figured out my new sequence and put it together with my initial pattern, I started to realize that I was on to a sound that I liked and wanted to keep. So, once I was happy with my right hand, I began to look for a complementary left hand part."

I: "How did you proceed?"

S: "Because the right hand was playing a lot of notes in a fast motion, I thought it would be too busy if the left hand was doing the same. I chose to find several notes on which the left hand could focus in a whole note rhythm."
I: "Did you have any notes in mind?"
S: "No, I wasn't sure which notes would sound good so I played around until I came up with a combination of notes which sounded pretty interesting and, still worked with the right hand part."
I: "Can you tell me a little more about the left hand part?"
S: "For every left hand note I played the right hand sequence four times. I had a total of six notes in the left hand. When I transposed my right hand, I also transposed my left hand."
I: "Alright. So now you have your right and left hand parts. You are getting the sound you want, and you introduce a change by way of transposing your material. What happens next?"
S: "At this point, the piece was starting to come together. The more I played it, the more it started sounding very 'hypnotic' and 'circular'."
I: "Was that the effect that you were after?"
S: "Not at all. I wasn't looking for that effect, in fact, I didn't know what I was looking for because I just wanted to experiment, but I really liked the hypnotic cycle of sounds that I came up with."
I: "Was that the end of your process?"

S: "No, I wanted more variety. To add a little bit of variety to the composition, I thought that it would be appropriate if the hands switched roles."

I: "How did you make out?"

S: "The coordination aspect of it took me a little while, but, pretty soon I was playing the whole notes in the right and the falling sequences in the left."

I: "How did you like this effect?"

S: "I thought that the balance of the sound suffered from this switch. This is why I made this section seem shorter by repeating the opening section and then playing the opening section again after the 'B'. I kept the 'B' section because it was easy to remember and seemed like a pretty logical transition from, and to the 'A' sections."

I: "So, now you are getting the structure in place?"

S: "I was getting there. When I was finally happy with the structure of my piece, I began playing around with different sounds on the Proteus (sound module)."

I: "How did this experimentation work out?"

S: "None of the sounds, really, appealed to me like the piano sound that I was originally using."
I: "What was it that you liked about the piano sound?"
S: "The piano sounded big, while, simultaneously sounding clean and 'classical'. The progressions that I was using in my composition, though, didn't sound like classical progressions, so I thought it was a pretty good variety for the ear."
I: "Were you pleased with your result?"
S: "At the end of the project I was really happy with the piece because I didn't have to do any programming or editing on the sequencer for it to sound good."
I: "If you had more time to work on this piece, what else would you have done?"
S: "If we had more time, I would have tried to come up with a 'C' section which would have been totally different from the 'A' or 'B'."
I: "Were you trying to express or communicate something through this piece?"
S: "No, I wasn't really trying to express anything through this piece. I just wanted to create something that sounded really different in style and sound color. But when I heard the hypnotic result, I liked it too much to change anything. That's when it took on a personality for me."
About the composer (paraphrased versions of what was told to the interviewer by the student): This individual was born and raised in British Columbia. His mother moved from Ontario to British Columbia several decades ago and his father was born in Alberta. He has an older sister who attends a university in another province. This student works at a record store and hears a lot of different types of music. Being around music and around people his age are, to him, the best aspects of his job. He enjoys skiing and snowboarding. This student is not sure what he wants to do upon graduation, as that is still several years away. I noticed, and commented on his pierced lip and eyebrow. He claimed to have other piercings under his clothing. His favourite style of music is heavy alternative punk/rock (e.g. The Offspring, Green Day, Rancid).

THICK DESCRIPTION OF INTERPRETED INTERVIEW 1

Grade 10 male

The apparent problem for all of the subjects was "where to start?" Hillocks (1975) suggests that this is the stage at which ideas are generated. Most of the
students in the sample generated ideas either in terms of melody, rhythm, or texture. This individual's approach, however, is an anomaly. He began his project by working with an interval (a physical relationship between two pitches based on the number of semitones which separate them). The interval was randomly chosen, but its layout on the keyboard created a three dimensional picture in front of the subject's eyes. This picture served as the guide to this composer's work, as it was manipulated (development stage according to Hillocks) by him on a physical, visual and aural level. Physically, he manipulated it by filling the gap between his two randomly-chosen notes, thereby changing the internal element of the picture (the visual level) without altering its borders. In other words, he made a decision to change the picture's tone and semitone pattern without changing the interval between the two outside pitches. The color (i.e., black and white key pattern) was randomly selected, yet based on a self-imposed rule which stated that all notes in succession may not be used - some notes must be omitted. It is fascinating that within a task which imposes minimal limitations, an individual craves a
narrower scope of focus, and thus, fabricates his own set of randomly chosen limitations which he imposes on himself to assist and/or challenge himself in his work. Here we see a premeditated manipulation of the picture on a physical level by the composer, and an experimental manipulation of the sound on an aural level. Musical decisions, then, were made with both the eyes and the ears, and therefore function from a sensory rather than a cerebral foundation (although the two are very much intertwined). With the addition of content we notice an increase in the decision-making that the composer undergoes. The main decision with a group of more than three notes has to do with their sequencing. This composer lets his eye decide on the sequence by creating an appealing physical picture, by way of having the notes descend sequentially from highest to lowest pitch. Again the composer was content with the picture his eye was seeing on the keyboard, and the sound of that picture which his ear was receiving. These visual and aural considerations serve as limitations and guidelines for the structure of the entire piece. According to categories outlined by Hillocks, this student composer is now working on the
This composer displays an interesting characteristic. He seems to be quite content with the progress of his composition. Beyond that, however, he appears to be very sensitive to time. By time, I mean the length of time between an idea being new and the same idea becoming old. It is difficult to say when his 'alarm clock' goes off. This is a very individual matter. It may be a combination of his own tolerance levels, his restlessness as a creator or as a personality, his attention span, and/or his assumption about the tolerance, restlessness, and attentiveness of the listeners. This is an issue which this person did not address. What we do know is that he didn't want the physical picture to change, thereby insuring that the aural message didn't change (as pitch relationships were kept constant and uniform). The composer's need to inject a new item of interest into the musical work is manifested through the transposition of his musical content. In the transposition process he relied purely on tone and semi-tone relationships and their mathematical structure. In other words, if he decided to move one note by two and a half tones, he would move
every note, in the same direction, by two and a half tones. We see a reliance on conceptual learning and previous musical experiences. This fellow knows enough about music's construction to realize that transposition is an option and, upon such realization, to transpose correctly. He could have infused variety in many ways. He made a conscious decision, however, not to change his sequence (note pattern), knowing that this would greatly limit the manner in which the composition could be diversified, yet proceeded to find a way to keep the picture the same, while maintaining the listener's interest by introducing transposition. This is a formidable step for someone who has just moved away from the type of conceptual learning still done in grade 9.

During the subsequent portion of the work's development the composer decided to divide his piece into two variables. The first variable, the chosen picture motif, is unaltered. The second variable, the left hand, is introduced primarily for purposes of variety. Upon transposing the piece, the composer found himself in a new geographic paradigm, which apparently served as a catalyst for further
experimentation. The results of this experimentation were whole notes which he played with his right hand sequence. He arrived at the left hand material by trial and error, keeping what appealed to him and discarding what did not. From this we can conclude that a great part of his creative process comes directly from an active 'hands-on' search for content rather than a reliance on theoretical and structural rules (which can limit the compositional process to an existence on a sheet of paper rather than an instrument).

I noticed that he made clear choices about the density of the piece. These choices may have been aided by his coordination and manual dexterity/or lack thereof. I am referring to the clear distinction he makes between the right hand and the left hand material. The right hand was playing brisk descending arpeggiated patterns and the composer stated that had the left hand been playing rapidly also, the texture of the work would have been too dense for his preference. For this reason he assigned a slow-moving, stepwise sustaining part to the left hand. This is quite a clever balance, as it enables each hand/each part to
maintain its identity, and keeps the musical content uncluttered.

At one point in the discourse, this student stated that his piece was starting to attain a "circular and hypnotic" sound. This comment gives educators a great deal of insight into students' perceptions during the creative process. We know that this person thinks visually (the intervallic picture on the keyboard). What is revealed, however, is that this individual sees other pictures. Circularity is more than a descriptive word assigned to a produced musical sound. It is a verbal symbol which is chosen by the subject to correlate with the mental image created in his head by the produced combination of sounds. The point here is that the word has been selected only to satisfy the need to communicate and share a personal mental image with those who can not be in his head to experience it (the expressive paradigm, according to the Hillocks outline). Yet the selection of the descriptor assumes that other individuals will conflate the word with the sound and produce similar results in their imaginative realms. Heidegger's belief that a human being is first and foremost an embodied subjectivity is the notion
which perpetuates the individual to search for objectivity about himself. This grade 10 composer uses his classmates as an objective reference point by sharing his musical work with them. When an individual shares a part of himself (in this case, the composition) with his sub-culture, that individual takes steps toward a greater understanding of self. According to Merleau-Ponty, human beings, existentially, are preoccupied with self-understanding. Self-understanding, however, is greatly catalyzed by perception, which is the primary human function. This student composer, in striving for clarity of perception, uses his sub-culture as the central reference point.

In his comments, this student stated that he wanted his classmates to detect the 'hypnotic' and 'circular' effect of the music. Nattiez's discussion of the sender and the receiver of a communication (and the diversity of that communication) plays a vital role in the understanding of the communicative processes between the sender and the receiver. Although the composer and the audience belong to the same sub-culture, there is no guarantee that this boy's
classmates will hear the same composition as the composer hears. He is not convinced that the audience will perceive the piece as being hypnotic or circular in sound or effect, but he knows that that is what he hears. If artistic expression is an intersubjective phenomenon existing in the journey of the creator and the audience, and if the creator attempts to convey (within that phenomenon) sounds, images and ideas, then that particular phenomenon can be HEARD, 'SEEN', and DISCUSSED by the creator and the audience.

The subject was working with rudimentary concepts. It appears as though he did not overlook the obvious. He talks at some length about switching his variables around, so that the left hand was playing the right hand part while the right hand was playing the part initially performed by the left hand. He then labelled all of his sections to have a clear idea of the structure of the work. The piece proves that this individual is fairly competent in the areas of polyphony, design, texture, and idea development. Furthermore, he displays a reasonable ability to comment on his work and describe the results in a manner which would be comprehensive to others.
Certainly questions remain. How successful would this composer have been if he decided to create a piece which was hypnotic and circular, and then work toward that end? In other words, what would happen if we changed the sequence from HEAR IT, 'SEE IT', DISCUSS IT to a sequence where HEAR IT would come last? Is the musical/compositional vocabulary and vision of this subject great enough to work from a mental image or a verbal descriptor toward attaining a sound which would match the image and the word? The composer does claim that the sound which he created was created by accident. He did not know what he was looking for, and had no premeditated objective in mind.

Speaking from personal experience, young composers tend to have a problem with limiting their focus. They work with ideas which are too large in scope, or cannot whittle a reservoir of ideas down to a small handful. In this composer we do not observe this tendency. He appears to begin from a bare minimum - two notes/one physical picture, and allows his product to grow, practically creating itself. What is most impressive is that he is very decisive about when to stop. He chooses to conclude his piece after a short
and clear ABA (ternary) format, without adding layers of sounds and rhythms to the single piano with which he has been working. This piece would indicate that he is a subscriber to the 'less is more' school of thought. Or, perhaps, he agrees with the third subject to be interviewed in this study who quoted Eddie Van Halen (1993, Much Music television interview), who said "if it sounds good, it is good", even if theoretically or technically it is not supposed to work. He does, however, seem to be slightly surprised that this is, in fact, the case. It is this surprising reality, and its synthesis with the quality of the piece, and its disposition for easy description that makes the composition a success to the composer. In these elements, the piece finds its own personality. The subject has stumbled over the joy of the creative process and its result - his creation, to some extent, left his control and took on a life of its own.

As a composer, I have frequently found myself in situations where a work unfolded in a manner I did not expect, thereby steering me in a musical and/or expressive direction which I did not expect to explore.
This 'loss of control' usually teaches me something about myself as a composer.

Interview II

INTERVIEW WITH A GRADE 11 FEMALE:

I: "Describe to me how you started the assignment."
S: "I've been listening to a lot of Enigma lately. I really like their sound. So, I wanted to see if I could compose something along the same lines."
I: "What is it about Enigma's sound that appeals to you?"
S: "It's just the kind of music that you can meditate to, or drive fast down a highway to."
I: "So what was the first thing that you did?"
S: "The first thing that I did was play around with a drum machine. My first step was to pick out the sounds that I wanted. I was looking for a soul/mid-funk sound, therefore, I wanted to stay away from the rock style."
I: "How can you tell one style from another?"
S: "I listen to a lot of R & B so I'm familiar with that genre's programmed sounds."
I: "What did you do next?"
S: "When I had decided on my sounds, I started to program a drum track into the sequencer at my work station."
I: "Did you use any of your theory knowledge in the programming process?"
S: "No, I didn't really use any theory. I just listened for what sounded good. I mainly worked with a kick and a snare drum. When they were funky, I added some color and dimension by using a hi-hat, a triangle and a shaker until I had the track in place."
I: "Were you finished with the percussion at this point?"
S: "Yes, because I went right to the keyboard sounds and looked for pads."
I: "What are pads?"
S: "They are long, sustaining, string-like sound samples. I wanted at least two that sounded differently from one another because they were both going to play the same part but an octave or two apart."
I: "What were they playing?"
S: "The part consisted of an E in the bass and a 'b-g-d' chord that turned into a 'c-e-g' chord. So, my
progression was Em7 to CM over an E bass which I doubled with a fretless bass sample."

I: "Where did the piece go from there?"
S: "After playing the progression several times, I injected variety by way of an 'a-d-f#' chord (DM), which was still played over the E bass. All of this was being played and recorded with the drum loop."

I: "How did you choose the chords?"
S: "The chords were selected by trial-and-error. I was happy with the chord when I thought it would be effective in the overall mood I was going for. I kept the left hand/bass line static because I wanted it to function as an anchor. Also, when you use pads and have a lot of motion in other parts, the sound gets to be too messy and muddy. That's one thing I wanted to avoid."

I: "Was there anything else overdubbed?"
S: "After two such sequences I added an improvised line, which was the fourth overdubbed part, using a flute sound sample."

I: "How did you go about improvising this line?"
S: "My melody was improvised in the key of E minor since my progression was VI-VII-I in the key of E
minor. Because there was a D natural in the chords I was using, I used a D natural in the melody that I was playing."

I: "How was this idea working out?"
S: "It worked quite well. I had structured my piece in an 'ABA' form with the 'B' section being the one with the flute solo."

I: "Were there any other sections?"
S: "Yes. I created a 'C' section on the A minor chord and I took out all of the pads and made it into a bass solo with the percussion still playing underneath."

I: "How did you know that the A chord would work?"
S: "I knew the A minor would work because I play blues patterns on my guitar and that combination of chords is a fairly standard progression. I knew it would work before I even tried it in this piece. So, this bass solo section in the A minor region was my C section after which I simply repeated my 'ABA'."

I: "Did you insert anything else for the sake of variety?"
S: "I recorded a different flute solo for the 'B' this time. In reality, it was an 'AB1A' section. That's how I ended my piece."
I: "How did you feel about the overall process?"

S: "The time seemed to really fly, and I thought I was working pretty fast. Doing this kind of work makes you much more aware of how music is put together and what a painstaking and long process it can be.

I: "Were you pleased with your result?"

S: "Yes, it was the effect I was going for - dreamy and funky, but I think the Enigma material sounds better because they have better equipment and more time. I came pretty close to that effect, though."

I: "Was there anything else that you were satisfied or dissatisfied with?"

S: "I really like the combination of the Em7 chord with the CM chord."

I: "Why?"

S: "That combination of notes seems to imply different moods and create different images. It just sounds kind of mysterious but inviting at the same time. I'm also pleased with my flute part because it maintains the listener's level of interest, and the flute has the type of sound that seems to give music more of an open, airy quality, like a really large, clean breath of fresh air."
About the composer: She was born and raised in British Columbia. Her father is an architect, her mother is a nurse. She has a brother who is two years her junior. Not long ago she purchased a synthesizer. She enjoys experimenting with sounds, recording ideas in the sequencer, discovering MIDI capabilities. She loves going dancing and letting the music "swallow" her. She enjoys the physical manner in which music manipulates her. She listens to a wide variety of music, from Mozart to Madonna, saying that different musics teach different lessons, and in different ways. Upon graduating, she intends to enroll either in a record production/engineering course at Columbia Academy, or apply for entry to a broadcasting program.

THICK DESCRIPTION OF INTERPRETED INTERVIEW 2

Grade 11 female

In this student's work we see a change in the HEAR IT, 'SEE IT', DISCUSS IT sequence of events. She knew exactly what she wanted to achieve based on a sound which she had previously heard and admired. HEAR IT,
then, occupies the last of the three slots in the sequence. In her approach to the project, she worked with images. These images were not the same as those found in the work of our first subject - the grade 10 male. Her images were much more concrete and clearly tied into every day life (i.e., "driving fast down a highway" and "meditation"). Because these images are less abstract, they are simpler to describe. The 'SEE IT', DISCUSS IT portions of the sequence did not present a large challenge. When trying to match a sound with one that you have previously heard, you are in a situation where a lot is given to you. Our female subject, for example, was trying to match a sound in which the instrumentation, the arrangement, the melodic, harmonic, and, rhythmic element, and the form were all given. Her skill lay in being able to analyze, understand and duplicate all of the elements which comprised the sound she wanted to obtain. The success of her endeavour can be found in places far removed from those of our first subject. This young woman displayed a reasonable knowledge of the available technology (sequencer, drum machine, sound module), the terminology of musical styles (soul, funk, R & B,
rock), and instrumentation (kick, snare, hi-hat, keyboard pads). Instead of seeing physical pictures on the keyboard she worked with theoretical structures, built chords, used inversions, played with seventh and ninth chords, and so on. We see a totally different approach to music making within the work of this subject. She appeared to have a knowledge of the functions of chords, the way voice leading worked, and the variety of options which were opened up to her by each new step. In describing her chord selection, and the duration assigned to each chord before a new one was introduced, she showed a clear control of her definition of static and active motion and her ability to manipulate both idioms. This is clearly the work of an advanced music student (who, I discovered, receives musical training in an extra-curricular setting). Her search for chords fused the ability to experiment by 'trial and error', with her knowledge of theory, particularly pop music theory, where VI-VII-I and I-III-IV progressions are highly common, made it more a process of trial than error. When she did find something that pleased her ear, she was able to rationalize it by analyzing the manner in which the
newly found content fit into the overall harmonic puzzle. It was a clear connection between her knowledge and her ability to experiment. In other words, this student does what real composers do and have been doing for centuries.

It seems that one of the strongest aspects of this composer's musicianship is that she knows what a sound sample will bring to a piece before she even uses it. She knows, for example, that too many pads will create a messy, cumbersome sound and that a flute will open the texture like "a really large, clean breath of fresh air". She hears things in her head before she materializes them. She appears to know exactly what she wants and wastes no time in going right to the source in order to obtain what she is looking for. She is acutely aware of critical issues, such as:

a. form and the slight changes in phrases that transform an A-B-A into an A-B1-A,
b. maintaining listener interest, and
c. the ambiguity that a minor seventh chord creates in terms of modality (in a root position minor seventh chord, the bottom three notes create a minor chord, while the top three notes create a major chord. In an
inversion, therefore, the distinction between major and minor becomes even less clear).

d. time

This student is able to see the given project as a whole, approach it in a sequential manner, draw on her knowledge and ability, assess herself throughout the process, and challenge herself and her listeners by creating thought-provoking work.

**Interview III**

**INTERVIEW WITH A GRADE 10 MALE:**

**I:** "Describe to me how you started your assignment."

**S:** "Well, my favourite type of music is rap. I like it because it's so real."

**I:** "What do you mean by real?"

**S:** "It seems to come right from the gut of the artists who do it. Some rappers are watered down when it comes to their lyrics. Those are the ones that haven't lived what they're writing about."

**I:** "I understand. Sorry, I interrupted your description of how you started the assignment."

**S:** "No matter what the words are about, all rap has one thing in common - the driving, hip hop music."
When I tried writing some lyrics, they sounded like they were written by a poseur - they just didn't sound real and 'hard core' enough. So, I thought that I would start by writing the music first, and that maybe the lyrics would come more naturally once I had a cool hip hop groove.

I: "What do you see as the most important part of a hip hop groove?"

S: "Definitely the rhythm track. It's always the most obvious part of a rap song."

I: "Was it the rhythm track that you worked on first?"

S: "Yes. It made sense to start with the part which would require the most time and concentration. I worked with the drum machine in our music lab before, so I knew a bit about it. I spent a lot of time programming until I got what I wanted. I played with the existing rap sounds, but the patterns still sounded too much like a rock groove."

I: "What's the difference between a rap groove and a rock groove?"

S: "Usually, the rock groove has the typical pattern of kick on 1 and 3, and snare on 2 and 4. That's what I wanted to avoid."
I: "What did you do to avoid this pattern?"
S: "I used a lot of syncopations and dotted rhythms in my patterns. I threw in shakers, whistles and claps. I've noticed that in rap tunes, the clap is mixed together with the snare, so I did the same thing. The one thing I couldn't find in any of our sound modules was the sound of a crowd speaking."
I: "Why did you want that effect in your rhythm track?"
S: "It wasn't really part of the rhythm track. It was more like a background noise track - to fill in the space. I hear that effect all the time in rap music. Anyway, I couldn't find it, so I looped a four bar percussion pattern and started to look for a bass sound. I wasn't happy with any of the bass sounds in the module, so I started playing around with different patches in the low part of the keyboard."
I: "How did you make out?"
S: "I stumbled over an organ sound which sounded great in the bass range. It fit perfectly with the drum track."
I: "What was your bass playing?"
S: "It was just a three note pattern that kept
repeating. I wanted to keep it simple, 'cause I was gonna add extra stuff on top."

I: "What do you mean by 'extra stuff on top'?"

S: "It's all the other instruments above the bass, like a trumpet that I used to do a repeating two note pattern."

I: "Why a trumpet?"

S: "I picked a trumpet because I liked its effect in *Cantaloop* by US3."

I: "So, how did the trumpet fit in?"

S: "The two note pattern seemed to be a part of the harmony. At first, I thought that it would play a more melodic role. That's why I added a second trumpet to play a little hook. But then, I had to play around a little to make sure you could tell the difference between the two trumpets."

I: "Are you saying that when you laid the two trumpet parts down, it was hard to distinguish one trumpet from the other?"

S: "Yeah, I was using the same trumpet sample for both trumpets, and playing both parts in the same registers. The trumpets were blending together to a point where you couldn't tell one from the other."
I: "Did you succeed at giving each trumpet its own identity?"
S: "Not really, but it wasn't all that important to the song. I figure, I am happy with the end result and that's what counts."
I: "How did you choose the actual pitches that your instruments were playing?"
S: "It was just random selection process. I didn't use any theory, or anything like that. If something sounded good alone and in combination with the other parts, I kept it."
I: "So, what happened next?"
S: "I thought that the music track would inspire me to write some cool lyrics, but that didn't happen. I wrote some stuff, but it was really lame."
I: "Why do you think you had such a problem writing lyrics?"
S: "I think real rappers live their lyrics, because they live a hard life. Let's face it, I live in suburbia and have just about everything that I want. I can't rap about my tough neighbourhood or the murders and drug addicts that I see every day because I don't see any of that. If I couldn't be real, then I'd want
to do a real good job of faking. That would've taken too much time."
I:  "So, how did you leave your composition?"
S:  "I think the music is strong enough to stand on its own. I was happy with the way it turned out. I think I nailed the hip hop sound that I was after."
I:  "Is there anything else that you want to add?"
S:  "Now when I listen to music on the radio or on T.V., I'm a lot more attentive, and hear more things in the mix. I think that listening closely to the music that's out there is probably the best way to learn how to do it. I'm sure that Tupac (rapper murdered by a gang) never went to music school and he's great at what he does."

About the composer: This self-proclaimed piano hacker has been attempting to start a rap group for the past few months. He expresses his frustration with the lack of venues in which to perform this genre of music. His geographic area is a very 'alternative, grunge, AAA, and neo-folk' scene. He has friends who work as disc jockeys in night clubs, who introduce him to the latest in music, equipment, trends and techniques. He would
like to give this career a try. He is an only child who comes from an affluent family and lives in an up-scale part of the city. He enjoys watching movies and playing basketball. This student listens to funk, hip-hop and rap music, and watches rap video shows on MTV. He claims that American rap videos are "real" while Canadian rap shows are "watered down".

THICK DESCRIPTION OF INTERPRETED INTERVIEW 3
Grade 10 male
The interesting part of this fellow's interview can be found in his many social statements. In trying to write a 'rap' piece, he comments frequently on rappers, their background, and, in fact, his place in the genre. He likes rap because it is real (honest). Artists in this genre openly curse, talk about violence, drugs, sex, money, politics, and death. Although I do not live a rap artist's life, I do know that these issues are their reality, and they bring them to their listeners without a lot of pretence. This gritty sincerity has earned rap music millions of fans. Our third subject seems to be one of them. He is familiar enough with the genre to be able to distinguish real
rap from 'watered down' rap, and he is quick to point out that his lyrics sounded like those of a 'poseur-want-to-be-rapper'. His self-evaluation is worthy of note. He, as a listener, would not accept anything other than realistic lyrics. He does not allow himself, therefore, to contribute anything that is not real to the medium. That is quite a position, especially when you consider that he is not an experienced composer. As a listener, however, this individual is quite attentive.

Further along the lines of social commentary, this student acknowledges that real rappers "live their lyrics, because they live a hard life". He contrasts such a lifestyle to his own suburban, semi-untroubled existence. It is intriguing how self-aware and critical this student is, and moreover, how much he seems to know about, not just rap music, but the rap culture (talk, fashion, socio-economic status, race, interests, and plagues of the rap milieu). To that extent, he is behaving like an ethnographer.

Musically, this subject displays proficiency as an arranger and programmer who is familiar with a variety of musical genres. His approach to music, however, is
more socially and culturally based than technically musical. He displays an awareness of music's influence on people and music's roles in the many aspects of Western society.

**Interview IV**

**INTERVIEW WITH A GRADE 12 FEMALE:**

I: "Tell me how you started this assignment."

S: "This wasn't my first experience with composition. I play the trumpet, percussion, the piano, and I sing. I tend to improvise or compose on all of these instruments. Sometimes I fool around. If I put together something that really appeals to me, then I'll record it on to a cassette. In this assignment I wanted to try a new approach."

I: "Tell me about it."

S: "I know how to notate music, but I didn't want to do it in the conventional way. So, instead of notes on a manuscript, I thought of composing in shapes. I was thinking of how to musically express squares, triangles, circles, stars, and a variety of squiggles."

I: "How did this approach work out for you?"

S: "I didn't like any of my experimentation so I threw
it all away. That's when I decided to work in reverse. I would compose something that I was satisfied with, and then try to notate it in shapes."

I: "What were you using to compose?"

S: "From past experience, I know that I do my best work when I'm working with real sounds that sound rich and natural. Most of the sounds on the module sound fake and metallic. That's why I chose to work with a clean piano sound. It was the most realistic sample on the module menu."

I: "Were you exploring rhythms or pitches, or something else?"

S: "I was playing around with different chords. They were writing themselves in terms of a tempo. That's when I chose a tempo and set it to a metronome on the sequencer. Now I had a click track going while I was doodling with my chords."

I: "Where did this doodling take you?"

S: "I really like arpeggiated motion. It's so lush. Yet, I like it to be sparse enough so as not to sound too 'classical'. I ended up with a I-VII-VI pattern. It just kind of played itself. I find that root position chords sound so square, though."
I: "What did you do about this squareness?"
S: "I threw in 9ths and other color notes. Primarily, I looked for notes that were not in the triad and inserted them. I like the sound that clusters make."

I: "Did you stay with your I-VII-VI pattern?"
S: "No. For the sake of interest, I moved to a section where I played IV-VII-III-IV. In essence, I made my VII the new root. This means that I was playing the typical V-I-IV-V rock progression in a new key. Then I went back to my 'A' section to finish off the piece."

I: "So you were trying to establish a form?"
S: "Yup, and I joined each section with a solitary slap bass line which played for two measures before the next piano section entered."

I: "Tell me more about the content of your sections."
S: "The 'A' sections started to develop a melody. It came about from just messing around. That's why the final product has me playing the chords in the left and the melody (with some extra triadic notes for a fuller sound) in the right."

I: "What ever happened to your click track?"
S: "I converted the click track into a programmed
percussion track. I used a kick, a snare, a hat, bell tree, and a triangle in my pattern."

I: "Tell me more about your percussion track."

S: "I never put the kick on the first beat. I wanted to refrain from the norm. That gave the beat a displaced feel. The piano implied one strong beat and the kick implied another. Both were pretty clear, but the piano is the obvious winner. Maybe I feel that because I know the piece and where it's going. The bell tree and the triangle were used for color. I thought they would add to the brightness of the slap bass."

I: "OK. Now you have the percussion, the piano and the bass. What happens to your piece from here?"

S: "The composition was left that way - as a three piece unit instrumentally and sectionally.

I: "How does this tie in with the shapes that you were talking about earlier?"

S: "At the end I pictured one shape for the entire composition. It didn't feel right to go searching for a whole bunch of individual shapes. I didn't see the piece as being several pieces strung together. I saw it as an inseparable whole. I guess that's why I
thought of it in terms of only one shape."

I: "Is there anything else that you found interesting that you want to share with me?"

S: "It was interesting to watch the people in the class mess around with the sound module. I don't think that sounds are the key to a good piece. If they are used effectively, they can maintain the listener's interest for a long while, but chances are that they will only get out of control and make the music messy and difficult to listen to. I truly believe that the simple things are the best."

I: "How do you feel about your work?"

S: "I'm satisfied with my project - not in comparison to anybody else's work, but, according to my own standards. Whether it sets a certain mood, says something to the listener, or makes you see shapes isn't really the point. To me, what's important is that it has its own sound, its own personality and makes its own statement which everybody will interpret differently. Isn't that part of what music's all about?"
About the composer: This student's parents met in San Francisco during a rock show. They spent a lot of time travelling around the world, visiting remote parts of India, Africa, and Asia in the process. Now, her mother is a vice-president of operations at a major travel agency, and her father is a professor at a Canadian university. This student has one older sister and one younger sister. The older sister is a musician. She is a percussionist who plays with a Latin and a Caribbean group. She often takes her younger sister (our composer) to the recording studio for recording sessions. The composer experiments with the percussion instruments which her dad has brought back from Africa. She plays trumpet, has been working on her Grade 9 Royal Conservatory piano examination material. She has taught herself how to play guitar and flute. Their house is constantly filled with musics from around the planet. She wants to visit all of the places where such music is made, and see the people who make it. She claims that music communicates differently in different cultures, and that she wants hands on experience with all of the world's styles of music-making. She doesn't know where life will take
her after graduation, but she is sure that she wants to travel, explore people, places, culture and art.

THICK DESCRIPTION OF INTERPRETED INTERVIEW 4

Grade 12 female

Here is a very competent grade 12 student who can do the kinds of complex musical things one would expect of a grade 12 student, but she deliberately does other kinds of things. For example, she knows what it is that makes chords work in terms of being accessible to the ear - and yet runs in the other direction! She removes the third from the chords which she employs. This makes it impossible to call a chord major or minor, as it is the third of the chord which gives us that information. In its place she inserts seconds/ninths, sixths and sevenths, thereby creating cluster chords and taking the listener's ears from the musical period of Mozart directly to that of Debussy. She challenges herself by working in an unorthodox manner by:

a. discarding standard western music notation and replacing it with stars, triangles and squiggles. She then plays what she thinks the stars, triangles, and
squiggles may sound like,
b. manipulating her tonal center by jumping around to relative keys,
c. specifically creating a musical landscape in which 'A', 'B', and 'C' will not sound like isolated and distinctly individual sections, but will be three smoothly integrated pieces of one totality, and
d. experimenting with acoustic sounds (real piano, not a sampled piano sound), and manual techniques (arpeggiated motion) to create a unique texture.
Arpeggios, she claims, are lush in their sound and quality, and a real (acoustic) piano is one of the richest sounds available to a composer and a listener.
On the surface, these may appear to be basic facts. I believe, however, these seem to be meticulously thought out points. She confirmed this belief when I approached her with my documentation of her music and her interview. I thought, perhaps, I was jumping to conclusions and giving her more credit than she deserved. My suspicions, however, were correctly placed. She stated that what I had documented is precisely what she was attempting to communicate to me.
This student seemed to be very aware of what her classmates were doing, but at the same time wanted to meet her own standards and address her own objectives. Her comments reflect the mentality of a musician moving to a higher level of achievement, self-critique, and motivation who is ready to implement new strategies and alternative approaches in reaching the objectives which she has set for herself. Her sights are set on examining those elements of music which are common to all Western listeners, yet, simultaneously represent a unique and personalized experience to each individual listener. Her music and discourse show that she plans to undertake such an examination via further contact with the world of music, particularly in the areas of composition and analysis.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CREATIVE PROCESSES OF THE REMAINING TWELVE MUSIC STUDENTS IN THE SAMPLE GROUP:

Although I was only able to interview four of the sixteen students in the sample group, I had the opportunity to observe and record the compositional processes of all sixteen students. By the end of our
fourth session, I had received compositions from every person in the group. In visiting each work station throughout the study, I was able to speak with every student and ask questions pertaining to some of their compositional strategies, difficulties, successes, thoughts and emotions during the creative process.

At the beginning of this chapter I subdivided the students' compositional approaches into three groups (the timbral, the rhythmic, and the melodic/harmonic). Of the twelve non-interviewed students, two were in the timbral category (a grade 11 female, a grade 12 male) three were in the rhythmic group (a grade 11 male, a grade 12 male, a grade 12 female), and the remaining seven (two grade 10 females, two grade 11 males, a grade 10 male, a grade 12 female, a grade 12 male) took the melodic/harmonic approach. I will discuss the compositional approaches of each one of these three groups by using the 'composition analysis' outline (as described in chapter six) constructed by George Hillocks (1975):

1. Generating ideas:
   - The students in the timbral group generated ideas by experimenting with the sound modules and searching for
sounds which appealed to them.

- The students in the rhythmic group began by exploring various pre-programmed rhythmic patterns in the drum machine.

- The students in the melodic/harmonic group began by looking for a melodic or harmonic progression with which they wanted to work.

2. Developing/expanding ideas:

- The timbral group, once satisfied with the chosen sound samples, began to use several sounds in combination. The grade 12 male was exploring the textures created by the combination of cello and recorder. The grade 11 female was doing the same with a combination of horns and piano samples. These two students did not spend a lot of time looking for pitch content. They appeared to be more interested in the 'wall of sound' the different sound samples created when playing together.

- The rhythmic group members began to add a variety of percussion sounds to their selected pre-programmed drum patterns. The grade 12 male was not happy with any of the pre-programmed drum patterns, so he started to
Grade 12 male

(Repeating funk drum pattern)

Grade 11 male

(Repeating salsa drum pattern)

Grade 12 female

(Repeating rock drum pattern)
program his own pattern into the drum machine. The grade 11 male was using a salsa drum pattern and adding triangles (in a triplet rhythm) and shakers (every eighth note) to the pre-programmed drum 'loop'. The grade 12 female was attempting to join two different 'rock' patterns together to create one new percussion pattern. All three members of this group were searching for an additional instrument to accompany the drum track. The grade 12 male chose a synth bass to play a line that consisted of an ascending octave jump from 'C' followed by a pentatonic descent back to the starting note (see following page for transcriptions of rhythmic group's work to this point). The grade 11 male selected a trumpet to accompany his salsa design. The trumpet was to play a repeating syncopated three-note pattern in a high register. The grade 12 female selected an organ to function as a mid-range 'pad' (sustained, slow moving sound usually played on string-sampled sounds).

-Once they found a harmonic progression or a melodic motive with which they wanted to work, the students in the melodic/harmonic group began to explore where the progression or the melody would take them. They
Grade 11 male

Grade 11 male (#2)

Grade 12 female
frequently brought in other instruments to assist with the development. For example, one grade 11 male had a repeating I-V-IV chord progression which was being played by the piano. Then, he brought in a violin to play a melody over this progression, which, in turn, gave him a new idea for the harmonic motion. That idea was to move to the piano part to the VI chord after three repetitions of the I-V-IV pattern (see following page for transcriptions). The other grade 11 male in this group was using an acoustic guitar sample to play an arpeggiated pattern which moved from 'Am7' to 'Dm7'. Then, he began to insert a 'C major' in the middle of those two chords. This provided him with another sonority to explore. The grade 12 female was using a harpsichord sample and playing a 'C' in the right hand while playing any chord in the left hand which did not create a dissonance (according to her) with the 'C'. In her development, she transposed her entire pattern to the key of 'F'. The grade 10 female was playing a flute melody and, in the developmental stage, assigned a saxophone to play the same melody in canon. There was no accompaniment. The other grade 10 female in this group kept playing the same piano melody in the
key of 'G major' (ascending 'D-F#-G' in the right hand). Initially, her harmony consisted of a I-V-I. In the development, she began to experiment with 'III', 'VI' and 'II' chords without altering her melody. The grade 12 male was experimenting with a 'baroque-sounding' piece in a minor key on an organ sound sample. Then, he began working on a section which would be rooted in the relative major key to the key in which the piece began. The seventh member of the harmonic/melodic group was a grade 10 male who had a two-measure melody and harmony (on a voice sound sample) which did not change in any way other than in tempo. Initially, this student was playing the melody at, approximately, a moderato tempo. Several repetitions later, he had worked the tempo up to a presto.

3. Organizing ideas:

-The timbral group students had some pitch ideas which were being played by varying instrumental ensembles. The grade 12 male arpeggiated a solid four-note chord and assigned each note to a different instrument. The first note was played by a cello, the second note by a
clarinet, the third note by a recorder, and the fourth note was played by all three instruments. The chord, when spelled out, was 'c-e-g-b' and it was the first chord in a repeating four-chord progression (CMaj7, Am7, FMaj7, Bflat7). That student had the three instruments play in the same sequence throughout the four-chord pattern. He then transposed the harmonic progression to another tonal center. The grade 11 female had completed constructing the interplay between the cluster chords in the piano part and the same cluster chords in the horn part. Both students in the timbral group were trying to create a sense of structure and form within their timbral experimentation so that instruments would 'weave' in and out, play together or in canon, and so on. With each weave, the timbre of each composer's piece was altered.

- By this point, the students in the rhythmic group had the drum pattern, a 'solo' instrument (like a horn or a woodwind) playing a catchy 'riff' and another instrument (like the piano, organ or a string pad) creating some mid-range density. The grade 12 male added a VII-I chord progression on the piano to the already existing funk drum loop and pentatonic bass.
The 'VII' was being played on the 'and' of beat 4. The 'I' was being played on the first beat of the next measure. The grade 11 male who was working with a salsa beat and a trumpet added a 'wah-wah' guitar sound to his musical texture. The 'wah' was being played on beats 1, 2 and 4, and on the 'and' of three. The grade 12 female who established a rock beat and an organ pattern brought in a bass to play a habanera rhythm on the notes of the triads in the piece. In addition, this composer brought in a flute which was assigned two-note trills which were to be played throughout the piece. There was some interplay between the instruments in the compositions of all of the rhythmic group students. Each composition also displayed at least two distinct sections (i.e., 'A' and 'B').

- The members of the melodic/harmonic group were creating a partnership between the melody and the harmony, introducing new instruments to their orchestrations, and working with notions of form (e.g. 'A-B-A'). For example, the grade 11 male who was composing a piece for piano and violin was giving melody lines to the violin which were unaccompanied by the piano for several measures. There were places
where the violin's part reciprocated, resting while the piano was given a solo. This student began to assign specific dynamic markings to each instrument. These volume contrasts provided his piece with a new dimension of color and instrumental interplay. The second grade 11 male started to weave in a cello melody line over the existing acoustic guitar arpeggios. The cello's part kept growing until it started doubling the arpeggiation of the guitar, at which point, the guitar began to diminish, decreasing from arpeggiation to sporadic melodic motives. When the composer weaved the guitar completely out of the piece, the cello's arpeggiation slowed down, finally stopping and ending the piece. The grade 12 female who was composing a harpsichord piece which experimented with a 'C' in the right hand and a variety of chords in the left, created what she called an instrumental 'verse' section and an instrumental 'chorus' section. The verse melody was played by the harpsichord and consisted of the content she was already using. For the chorus, the same content was transposed to 'F' and was played on a glockenspiel sound sample (in the right hand) a harp
sound sample (in the left hand). She structured her piece in a verse, chorus, verse, chorus, verse sequence. The grade 10 female who was composing for a flute and a saxophone created a 'B' section in which the saxophone was playing first and the flute was playing in canon, but the content was switched from A major to A minor. The second grade 10 female did not change the pitch content of her piece. In her 'B' section, though, she changed the meter from 3/4 to 4/4. She manipulated weak and strong beats by inserting rests and/or note doublings and changing the placement of bar lines. The grade 12 male who was composing a 'baroque-sounding' work created a 'chorus' section in which he transposed the content to the relative major key and brought in a clarinet and a viola sound for extra interest and density. The clarinet doubled pitch content already present. The viola was playing motives which were designed to ornament the melody (i.e., trills, grace notes, brief passages a 3rd or a 6th above the melody). The grade 10 male who was speeding up his piece from moderato to presto began to slow the piece down to its original tempo. He introduced a
crescendo during the tempo increase and a decrescendo throughout the tempo decrease.

By the end of the organizational phase of their creative processes, the students sharpened and focused their musical ideas by filtering out those elements which did not appear to fit in, or adequately contribute to their individual compositions.

4. Expressing Ideas:
When the students were sufficiently satisfied with their works, they recorded them on cassettes by way of the Tascam mixing board (see 'Equipment' section in chapter four). As each student's composition was being recorded, it was being played out loud and, thereby, shared with the other students in the class. In talking to the students at their work stations during their compositional processes, I asked them to tell me about what they were doing and how it was coming along. I was able to document some of their comments.

In the timbral group, the grade 12 male said, "Originally, I wanted each note in the chord to be played by a different instrument. Now it doesn't even
sound like a chord. It sounds more like four different melodies. That's pretty cool 'cause I guess you can hear it both ways. You can hear the whole effect with the different instruments playing together, or you can hear each instrument playing alone even though there are other instruments playing at the same time. So, you can hear the effect of the whole sound, or you can hear each melody separately". The grade 11 female who was experimenting with piano and horn cluster chords said, "I don't know if people will get this. I kind of like what I am doing because I know that I'm not just playing random notes. I thought about the notes in my cluster chords and tried them out until I got just the sound I wanted. And the same chords sound like they are actually different chords when they are played on a different instrument. It's neat to have a piano and horn duet. It's not a combination you hear very often".

In the rhythmic group, the grade 12 male said, "I really like the groove. If I had way more time, I could've made this sound like an Earth, Wind and Fire (popular 1970's R & B group) tune. The bass line just
gives you so much room to put in little funky things on a bunch of different instruments". The grade 11 male who was working with a salsa rhythm said, "This is starting to sound so Latin. All I need is to get the flamenco guitars and the bass happening and it'll sound totally authentic". The grade 12 female who was composing a piece with a rock beat, and organ pad, a flute line and a habanera bass said, "I'm kind of hearing an instrumental version of a Gypsy Kings (popular Latin-sounding band from Europe) sound. But I want it to be an instrumental with more of a rock feel. It's just that a lot of rock has such a 'dark' quality. It's probably all those crunchy guitars. That's why I think the flute works in this piece. It takes away from the darkness".

In the melodic harmonic/group, the first grade 11 male (piano and violin piece) said, "The violin/piano combination sounds 'classical'. I'm just using a standard I-V-IV rock chord progression. Actually, that's a classical progression, too. I remember my piano teacher and I dissected a Mozart piece once, and it was all mainly I, IV and V. I don't really care whether it sounds classical or not. I like it 'cause
it sounds 'clean'. You can hear everything that's happening". The second grade 11 male (guitar and cello arpeggios) said, "I saw Maxwell (popular urban/jazz vocalist) on MTV Unplugged (an MTV concert series show) and he did this tune where just his guitar player played an acoustic guitar and then, the cello player in his band started playing stuff over the guitar line. Man, it just sounded so smooth. It was really excellent. I wanted to play around with the same instruments and see if I could get that kind of smoothness". The grade 12 female (harpsichord piece) was not very vocal when I spent time at her work station. She did not offer any thoughts pertaining to any part of her work. I inquired about her progress and her strategies. She said, "It's going fine. I'm trying to figure out what I want to do". The first grade 10 female (flute and sax in canon) said, "The melody is simple, but the canon part of it is difficult. It's like a math problem. You have to figure out what's gonna work together, even though the instruments start playing at different times. I think I finally got it. I want to try and play around with
some chords and if nothing works, I'll just put in some percussion effects for some extra flavour". The second grade 10 female (meter change) said, "When I wrote this melody, I heard that it just wanted to be in 3/4 time. The three notes seemed equal in length. That's how I played them, and that's what I built my accompaniment around. So, I wanted to see how it would work in a rhythm that I wasn't hearing in my head. That's when I wrote it down on scrap paper and changed some things around so that it would be in 4/4 time. Plus, you don't hear a lot of songs on the radio that change time signatures in the middle, so I wanted to try it". The grade 12 male ('baroque') said, "I really like playing the music of Bach and Handel and I don't know why people don't compose like that anymore. The sound is so relaxing, but you gotta be skilled to play it. I thought that I wanted to try composing something like Bach and Handel did. Something that wasn't nearly as long or complicated, but just had that 'baroque' sound. After our last class, I went home and looked for baroque pieces in some of my Royal Conservatory books. Composing is different from playing. When you play, you don't really know what goes into the piece. When
you compose, though, you have to break a piece down to see how it's constructed. That way you can construct your own piece in the same style. In terms of style, it's starting to get where I want it". The grade 10 male (piece with tempo changes) said, "When I wrote this, I thought that it would sound cool as an opening to a ballad. The more I played it, thought, the more it sounded like it would work as a fast tune, too. So, I took it from the ballad tempo to the fastest tempo that still made it sound good without wrecking it. When I got there, I just figured that slowing it back down to the original tempo would be a natural way to finish it off. It sounds alright, I guess."

There are several similarities between the compositional journeys of the four interviewed students and the twelve who were not interviewed. In my opinion, the most interesting similarity is that they use non-musical terminology to describe music. Like the interviewed student composer who talked about his music's 'hypnotic' and 'circular' effects, several students from the group of twelve use interesting adjectives when talking about their pieces. One grade 11 male (melodic/harmonic group) called a sound
'clean'. Another grade 11 male (same group) used the word 'smooth'. A grade 10 female (same group) spoke of music's 'flavour', while a grade 12 male (same group) described music as 'relaxing'. It is important to note that these individuals use words like 'smooth' and 'clean' in reference to a musical sound. Can music be smooth, clean, hypnotic or circular? The answer to this question is individually-based. What I, as a listener, may describe as a 'relaxed' musical sound, another listener may perceive as 'bored' and a third may characterize as 'docile'. Our personal perceptions of a particular sound are linked to the images and/or feelings which that sound spawns in our inner being. (This process may work in reverse - feelings and images may spawn a particular sound.) Because each individual is a unique being, these images and/or emotions will be individually unique to that being. It is each individual's 'uniqueness' of being and perception that creates the variance in our characterization of a musical sound. This very point is the crux of this study because it reinforces the role of individually unique self-expression of each being through that being's composition of music. As part of this
individually unique self-expression, each composer/listener confronts his/her inner-most self (i.e., his/her emotions and images) and explores musical, creative and personally meaningful ways in which to share that inner-most self with others.

In addition, this individual 'uniqueness' may cause one to hear music in a way that differs from the ways in which others hear the same music. For example, the grade 12 male (timbral group) who simultaneously assigns each note of a four-note chord to a different instrument, stops hearing the chord and begins to hear individual notes played by individual instruments. However, I, as a listener, may be hearing the instruments working together in the playing of a chord, not individual notes played by individual instruments.

Another similarity between the interviewed and the non-interviewed students is the influence of popular artists on their musical tastes and reservoir of knowledge. For example, a grade 12 male (rhythmic group) speaks of Earth, Wind and Fire. A grade 12 female (same group) speaks of the Gypsy Kings. A grade 11 male (in the melodic/harmonic group) makes reference to Maxwell.
Like the four interviewed students, all 12 of the remaining composers had to make decisions about instrumentation, style and form. None of the students belonged to any one group (i.e., timbral, rhythmic, melodic/harmonic) only. Within the process of composition each student made timbral, rhythmic, and melodic/harmonic decisions.

I believe that through this work, these students, like the four who were interviewed, were searching for musical 'results' which most precisely reflected their personally unique visions, compositional objectives, musical experimentations and investigations, their technical capacities and conceptual understandings. In my opinion, these musical 'results', like those of the four interviewed students, are part of the students' attempts to express themselves through their music compositions. Unfortunately, I was not able to find out in detail about their experiences within their creative processes. Because the non-interviewed student composers did not have the chance to verify and comment on my interpretation and description of their work, I can not engage in the same type of interpretation and thick description of their creative
experiences and musical results that was evident in my examination of the work of the four interviewed students. Unfortunately, I was not able to discuss with the students their mental images, thoughts and emotions in detail during the creative process.

INCORPORATING THE LINKS BETWEEN COMPOSITION IN MUSIC AND COMPOSITION IN LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE PURSUIT OF ACCURATE INTERPRETATION OF STUDENTS' CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION

In chapter six of this thesis, I compared music composition to composition in language arts. This comparison was intended to emphasize the similarities and differences between the interpretation of a composed linguistic work and the interpretation of a composed musical work. This comparison, however, was of a theoretical nature. Because I am now attempting to interpret 'actual' pieces by 'actual' students, I would like to take theoretical music/language composition comparisons and apply them to real life situations.
Tom Romano (1987) stated that students have voices, things to say uniquely and powerfully if they are permitted free rein. So far, this research has confirmed this very statement, as students make themselves distinctly heard through their musical compositions and their spoken word. Romano, however, was not talking about music students. He is a language arts teacher who specializes in creative writing, and his comments refer to pupils in the medium of English Language Arts. The language arts program is, possibly, the closest relative to music within the North American school curriculum. Both music and language are creative, expressive, communicative arts which carry with them an aesthetic element which is not contained by any other subject in school programs. Graves (1983) suggests that a writer is a writer regardless of degrees. By the same token, a composer is a composer. This study has disclosed several compositions and the processes of several individuals who approached the project with unique and varied experiences, backgrounds and abilities, yet, all proved to be worthy of the title composer, regardless of degree.
I have obtained and documented information about the process of music composition directly from the high school composers themselves. When synthesized, the students' pieces and the verbal descriptions of their work validate music composition's ability to engage an individual in self-expression in a creative medium. Now, a link needs to be provided between this study and the field of education. It is within the field of language arts that this link is found. Language specialists have been working with student composers for years in the quest of becoming better facilitators for the act of writing, of attaining a better understanding of the process of composition by high school student writers. Romano faced many of the same questions which challenged this study. The parallels are significant and important. Romano states that many teachers, in their efforts to teach students how to write properly devise all kinds of schemes and methods that succeed in stripping writing of personality. Typically this is achieved by the long list of assignment instructions and guidelines which end up taking away pupils' writing freedom and individuality. Romano (1987) gives the reader one example of a fairly
standard set of manacles clamped upon students before they begin self-expression:

This composition assignment is to be a characterization of one of your friends. The format is to be as follows:

1. In the topic sentence, introduce your friend and use three adjectives to describe him/her.
2. Sentences 2 and 3 give examples of the first adjective.
3. Sentence 4 and 5 give examples of the second adjective.
4. Sentence 6 and 7 give examples of the third adjective.
5. Sentence 8 restate the topic sentence, using synonyms for each of the three adjectives.
6. The manuscript form is to be as follows:
   A. The heading should consist of three lines (Name, Date, and Characterization) and should appear in the upper right hand corner.
   B. Write in blue or black ink only.
   C. Write on every other line.
   D. Observe both margins.
E. Begin the composition on the second line of the paper.

7. Check to make sure that you have used varied sentence openers.

8. Double-check to make sure that you have followed all of these directions. (p. 5-6)

In my opinion, these limitations within a creative paradigm such as writing are nothing short of abusive because they limit one's exploration of personal expressiveness. To choose correctness of writing over meaning can be destructive to the validity of personal expression. It is through meaning and content that students can establish their own voices and their own individuality. One of the most important goals of education is to help students establish their own identity. In the past, little attention has been paid to this goal because the focus has been on developing technical and literate abilities. It is not that these are not important, but rather that they are no more important than developing individual self-awareness and the ability to adequately express oneself. In the case of music education, the focus has been primarily on technical and literacy development. It is a
teacher's job, then, to set up an atmosphere in which students feel safe to cut loose with their creativity and to set notes or words down boldly. The work documented in this paper was approached with precisely this philosophy. The students were not given a list of guidelines and limitations other than to compose. The objective of the task was to enable students to explore the act of composition and the communicative musical possibilities, and to engage in this exploration through the use of their own, personalized and highly individualistic concept of the genre and its expressive realms, thus making their experiences meaningful, even if their techniques are not always correct. According to Romano, in language, as in music, the first and constant order of business is to enable all students to establish and develop their individual voices. This is the aspect of composition that should be emphasized most in both fields. Writing and composing are learned only through participation, and this type of 'hands-on' work is most effectively done in a facilitative and expressively emancipatory environment.
Romano draws on his own research, as well as that of Nancy Atwell and Donald Graves to provide the reader with a concise and comprehensive view of how students write. He suggests that all writers come up with ideas which take the symbolic form of language. These ideas are documented on paper. Writers, then, shape the language by adding, deleting, changing and rearranging to communicate powerfully their intended and discovered meanings. They rid their writing of errors and publish their work. Each writer develops a process by which he/she works. The responsibility of writing teachers is to help students learn personal processes for creating writing that enables them to create their best writing. This argument craves to be transposed to the area of music composition. Composers come up with ideas. These ideas do not necessarily pass through the symbolic paradigm of language because language codifies and describes an entity using symbols (i.e., words). A musical idea, however, rests in sound which does not need words to codify or define it because it defines itself on a level other than verbal.
Composers do, nevertheless, shape their compositions by adding, deleting, changing and rearranging content in order to most effectively communicate their premeditated, intended, or newly discovered (by way of the process, itself) meanings. They make their compositions error-free (to the best of their abilities) and record, sequence, notate, publish, perform them. (Each composer has his/her own definition of 'error-free'.) Each composer develops a process by which he/she works and the music pedagogue's responsibility is to create the type of environment which would enable the students to create their best possible compositions. Unfortunately, a lot of music students are not given opportunities to attempt composition in music class or, the opportunities which are presented to them are heavily embedded in logic and correctness - such a model leaves a composition void of feeling and real, personalized expression, thereby producing logical and correct, but ill-conceived, half-realized, incomplete, and communicatively dissatisfying works.
Language arts has undergone a similar period. In recent years, however, new models for writing, such as the one presented by Mayher, Lester, and Pradl (1983) in *Learning to Write/Writing to Learn*, are producing writers and works of an entirely different calibre. The authors propose that writers go through five stages when producing a piece: percolating (prewriting), drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. During the percolating stage, writers share their ideas with friends, read the works of others, mentally rehearse their lines, and exist in an idea-and-image type of incubator. Percolating can take place consciously and subconsciously, and it usually lasts throughout the entire writing process. The authors define percolating as being everything that happens to the writer apart from the actual setting of marks on paper.

If percolating is brainstorming and pontificating, then drafting is getting the resulting visions down on paper. At this level the import is placed on making meaning, not refinement. Clarification, refinement and purification of thoughts take place during the revising stage. Revision may entail minimal change to the initial draft, or may involve considerable reshaping
and restructuring. Editing and publishing are the last two phases of the Mayher, Lester and Pradl model. Editing is the process through which writers clean up their copy in order to make it presentable to the reader through publication. To publish something, for all intents and purposes, is to publicly present something. Editing is the preliminary stage which deals with everything from punctuation and spelling to references and documentation.

When we refer to the work of the four interviewed music students in this study we clearly see the Mayher, Lester and Pradl model implemented throughout their processes of composition. Let's look at an example of this phenomenon at work. You will recall the interviewed grade eleven female who wanted to compose the kind of music to which one can meditate or speed down a highway.

PERCOLATING - The subject had been listening to music, primarily Enigma, and thinking about the moods that such music creates. Her thought process took her to an analytical realm in which she dissected the various elements of the Enigma composition in order to understand why the piece had the effect that it did.
This activity prepared her, the composer, to compose in a specifically chosen style with a particular objective in mind. Percolating, however, occurs throughout the entire creative process rather than just in the precompositional stage.

**DRAFTING** - At this stage she began hands-on experimentation by way of playing with the drum machine and the sound module in search of desired instrumentation, texture and rhythms. The ideas accumulated by this process were recorded into the sequencer, much like a writer would scribble brainstorming ideas down on paper in preparation for the next stage.

**REVISING** - The student composer clarified and sharpened these ideas in a variety of ways. The selected drum sounds and patterns were enhanced by the addition of color instruments such as the triangle, the shaker (cabasa) and the hi-hat. The keyboard sounds were given an arrangement. For example, both selected keyboard pads were kept but displaced by one or more octaves for a desired color and texture. The bass was given a solo, as was the flute. Improvised ideas became more concrete and less varied (thereby becoming
composed more so than improvised).

**EDITING and PUBLISHING** - The composition was given a form and all of the isolated segments were put together to create one piece. The composer listened to this piece several times to evaluate and finalize the finished product. When satisfied, the composer publicly presented (published) her work by way of recording it from her work station into the mixing board and on to a cassette while the class listened.

The work of the other three students can be examined in much the same way. All four students, however, clearly adhere to the writing model proposed by Mayher, Lester and Pradl, but they do so in a musical context instead of a literary one. This very fact validates the work done by the young 'composers' studied in this thesis in high schools because it clearly reflects, and functions in parallel to the work done by young 'writers' of the same age. The processes and results are the same while the fields of study are different. Just as writing is the reciprocal of literacy, because without it there would be nothing to read, composition is the reciprocal of comprehensive musicianship because without it there would be nothing
musically organized to hear.

Romano's writings are a compilation of his experiences with young writers. He has watched and facilitated their work and he has talked to them. Romano confirms that the Mayher, Lester, and Pradl model summarizes the manner in which student writers create new works. Romano's physical and philosophical environments for pupils' writing experiences are surprisingly similar to the environments created by this researcher for the sample of music students. In the following lines Romano outlines his philosophy:

I prescribe no form for students. No five-paragraph essays. No sketches that begin with a physical description of the character. No pseudo-poems that follow some formula, such as placing a noun on line one, writing three lines that contain present participles, and concluding with a line that repeats the noun. No. My purpose is not to corral students, but to throw open the gate. What I really want students to see is that they may try anything. Possibilities, both in approach and subject matter, abound. (p. 60-61)
It is this strategy which leads Romano's writers to "good writing" which, in reality is "writing that works" (Provost, 1980). His students work in a class which gives them physical freedom. They may sit anywhere, on the floor, the convex window frame, in the hallway, alone, or next to friends. Students face the same dilemmas of how to begin, what choices to make, when to stop, all the while subjecting their work to a self-assessment. In other words, Romano's environment allows his students to work just as 'real' writers work. As I mentioned at the outset of this project, the students in this research were going to be given the chance to work the way 'real' composers work while creating their pieces (complete with decision-making and self-evaluation components - entities which are difficult to measure with a standardized test). After all, talking about writing, just as talking about composition, will not teach one how to write/compose. Working with words/sounds, producing words/sounds, seeing how they communicate, questioning the successes and failures of such communication, and making choices regarding every/any aspect of the process will teach one how to write/compose. Students must be actively
engaged with language and music, as they are in Romano's work, and as they were in this study. Romano's work in language arts appears to be a mirror image of the process undertaken by this study in the field of music education.

The following is an example of creative writing, composed by one of Romano's high school students:

THE LOSS

I. Sweat poured off Dad's face
   as flecks of old black hay
   clung to his bare chest and forearms.
   He stacked hay like a man getting older.
   Mom sat atop the tractor,
   her black greying hair in curlers.
   The click and whine of
   the baler diminished all other sound.
   She pointed as she saw us and they waved.

II. Mom smoothed her long, pale blue dress.
    Dad straightened his tie
    as they left the house to meet their friends.
And, later, amid music and laughter, as they talked and joked, the snake appeared in another part of the nightclub. It slid through the halls, consuming chairs and tables, licking walls and carpet with its tongue. The snake's breath touched and smothered...

No one took seriously the busboy on stage. And the snake had them.

III. When my brother told us, I didn't cry much, until later, just walked into the back yard, didn't want to believe. And when the "compensation for the loss" statements come in, the venom is strong.

Dawn Koontz
In this poem Dawn is dealing with the death of her father. In talking about the poem, Dawn reveals that the snake metaphor (death) served as the germ of her idea. Beyond the snake's movements, however, she didn't know how to 'unpack' the content. Upon talking with Romano, she decided to describe the events which lead up to her father's death so that the reader may have a clearer picture of the backdrop to the poem. Dawn's revision process lead her to dissect the 'working in the field' into the sights and sounds of the moment. Dawn's critical self-critique of the three different time periods in the poem represents sophisticated thinking, involving content, design, evaluation, and editing. She revised the poem three times, adding, deleting, reshaping, restating, and clarifying the content for the reader. All the while, Romano served as facilitator in conference with Dawn. He led her to the discovery of answers (instead of giving them to her).

Romano insists on teacher-student conferences as part of the writing process. He uses the conference model proposed by Lucy Calkins (1986) which categorizes these conferences into content, design (shape/form of
writing), evaluation, and editing (final, pre-publication conference). It is through these conferences that Romano shapes his manner of facilitation.

In this study, *The Road To Second Chances* was presented to the sample. The content and design conferences took place during this presentation. The evaluation and editing conferences were bypassed because this study was interested in the raw result of the composition task, based only on the evaluation and editing instincts of the subjects, with absolutely no facilitation. I wanted to avoid what Donald Murray (1985) calls "the danger of appropriating the text and making it your (teacher's) own, forcing or manipulating the student into writing your vision in your language". (p. 139)

The most important link between writing and composing is that in both fields the voice and the vision of each individual counts. Everybody has the same purpose in common: creativity. Such an environment fosters bright moments of exploration. It is conducive to composing/writing, revising, rethinking, evaluating, exploring, discussing, sharing, and performing. Compositional strategies circulate
throughout the classroom like electricity, and
everybody is part of the circuitry.

Individuals have a natural desire to express
themselves. Students want to express themselves the
first day they attend school. If we think in terms of
musical expression, we shall see that this is no
accident. Before they went to school, they heard their
parent(s) singing lullabies to them, commercial jingles
on television, muzak in elevators, artists singing on
the radio, their favourite characters singing in a
Disney movie, a marching band blaring a tune during a
parade, dolls that vocalize, toys that harmonize, and,
in fact, they have, in all likelihood, produced some
song-like entity from within themselves. Their need to
produce sound vocally and manually is their need to
make a mark on their environment. The child's marks
say "I am".

"No, you aren't," say most school approaches when
teaching composition. Graves (1983) discusses this
very problem as it pertains to writing. Graves
suggests that somewhere down the scholastic road,
students become stifled, their creativity drained,
their motivation gone. Models and practices are
imposed upon them. Their creative freedom is limited and/or restricted. Surely, this is not healthy. Should not musical literacy be the primary focus of music education programs? The kind of literacy to which I allude deals with the understanding of the musical statements composers make and the deep meanings associated with such statements. Literacy in this context does not mean notation or technical proficiency. Why does music education tend to gravitate to a pedagogy concerned with simple acts such as interpretation of basic symbols (e.g. rhythms and pitches) and the comprehension of simple concepts, which have very little to do with the expressive, communicative and stylistic elements within which true musical awareness can be found? Robert Walker (1984) states:

    Composers and performers have something to communicate for those with "ears to hear". The main function of music educators in the general classroom is to facilitate the development of an ability to hear what musicians have to say. (p. 147)
This study reinforces several facts. Students, when given the chance, do leave their "I am" mark. This mark is filled with imagery, thought and emotion which the composers attempt to express through their work to those with "ears to hear". Students did not talk about making music - they made it, and then went a step further by sharing it, and for a moment in time, living it. It would be difficult to locate a more effective way for a person to identify him/herself and him/herself within his/her culture, and bond him/herself with that culture, than to engage in self-expression by using one of the more powerful vehicles that a culture has to offer - its art, more specifically, music. Culture is a powerful entity. It distinguishes one individual from another, yet it is the one thing all humans have in common. Every student in the high school 'sub-culture' of our grade ten, eleven and twelve sample identified and expressed a part of him/herself through musical communication, thereby leaving his/her mark ... "I am".
CHAPTER EIGHT:
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The intent of this study was to examine the nature of the role of personal involvement of secondary school students in the process of music composition. I chose not to study the finished product that the music students produced because many existing typologies (e.g. Loane, 1984; Gamble, 1984; Swanwick and Tillman, 1986; Simmonds, 1988; Bamberger, 1990; Bunting, 1988; Salaman, 1988; Green, 1990; Davies, 1992; Kratus, 1994; Marsh, 1995; Wilson and Wales, 1995; Webster and Hickey, 1995; and others) concentrate on written notation and assessment of compositions. To the best of my knowledge, there are no typologies that concentrate on the creative process of student composers. This research was prompted by the hypothesis that through the process of music composition, students would engage in meaningful self-expression and that each composer's search for a manner in which to express him/herself adequately would occur in a musical medium which is pertinent to him/her. I further postulated that this type of personalized
individual expressive involvement, as I have defined it, is not accessible to most music students because that type of involvement is not generally possible with the majority of performance-based music programs which dominate North American music education.

As this research has indicated, through music composition individuals have the chance to synthesize their conceptual musical knowledge and their individual musical interests with a personally engaging, self-reflective search for meaning within their work.

The grade 11 female (interview #2), for example, worked with a particular musical style (that of pop group Enigma) with which she found great affinity. That type of music evoked in her certain feelings and images (i.e., she said that it was the kind of music that made her want to meditate, or drive fast down a highway). To create that kind of sound, she had to utilize conceptual knowledge pertaining to the equipment that was available and the variety of sounds and textures which that equipment was able to produce. Furthermore, she had to use her knowledge of music theory to locate the pitch (both frequency and duration) content that would give her the rhythmic,
harmonic and melodic elements that she was seeking. She had to apply her knowledge of elements such as dynamics, form and texture in order to shape the sounds with which she was working. All of this application of conceptual knowledge had to be directed towards reaching a particular objective (in the case of this composer, the objective was to create a piece of music which, like Enigma's work, would elicit images and feelings of meditation or fast highway driving). The attempt to reach this objective, however, would take place within a genre of music which was chosen by, and was directly relevant to the composer at the time of composition. For her, imagery was very important to her attempt at expressive composition.

The notion of mental images has been addressed by a number of composers and scholars. Mozart said:

My musical ideas flow....the whole, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue, at a glance....I hear in my imagination the parts....all at once. (Holmes, 1845, pp. 329-330)
Like the picture or the statue to which Mozart compares the manner in which he sees (imagines) his musical ideas, our female student composer uses metaphors to describe the images (meditation, highway) which guide her through this particular composition. By attempting to realize these images in musical sound, a composer, to some extent, attempts to convert imagination into reality. Richard Wagner (Stanford, 1911) said:

My whole imagination thrilled with images, long-lost forms shaped themselves ever more and more clearly into realities. (p. 81)

A composer, then, may share that reality with a listener, who may subject that musical composition to a personalized response by applying his/her own imagination to that listening experience. Roger Sessions (1959) wrote that:

The listener's real and ultimate response to music consists not in merely hearing it, but in inwardly reproducing it, and his understanding of music consists in the ability to do this in his imagination. (p. 92)
Paul Hindemith (1952) noted that:

while listening to the musical structure, as it unfolds before his ears, the listener is mentally constructing parallel to it and simultaneously with it a mirrored image. Registering the composition's components as they reach him he tries to match them with their corresponding parts of his mental construction. Or he merely surmises the composition's presumable course and compares it with the image of musical structure which after a former experience he has stored away in his memory. The process consists of the sounding stimulus reaching the listener's ear and his active transformation of it into musical meaning by matching it with a known musical image. (p. 20)

When I compose, I enter a world filled with images. These images are vivid and rich, and are seldom done justice by verbal descriptions. Carl Seashore (1938) attempted to develop a theory of the musical mind based on the notion that musical imagery is a vital component in a composer's world. The journey through an image-filled musical mind which I (as a composer) take, and about which Seashore writes
was very evident in the work of the four composers who granted me interviews and the twelve composers who did not. (For example, the grade 10 male who talked about 'circular' and 'hypnotic' images which emerged from his perception of his music, or the grade 11 female, mentioned in this chapter, who worked with the images of meditating and speeding down a highway.) This journey, as it is represented by the compositional process, brings with it a composer's self-reflective, decisive, and personal attempts to express some part of his/her being.

In the case of the grade 11 female composer, the compositional process enabled her to be intrinsically involved with a musical experience, one she created, and to access the pleasure inherent in such intrinsic, personal involvement. This pleasure has very little to do with the type of 'mastery-of-skills' music learning that is prevalent in many of today's North American music education classrooms. This notion was addressed in the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Program (1979):

...the understanding of music is entirely different from the development of proficiencies in the mechanics of musical symbols and systems. It is
also different from learning the very precise kinesthetic skills related to musical performances. (p. ix)

The MMCP notes that one approach has to do with internalizing experiences, with "intrinsic feeling and personal values and attitudes", whereas the other has to do with "prescribed acts and tutored proficiencies". (p. ix) In having observed students throughout their experiences with the composition of music, and having talked to them about these experiences, I have come to believe that their encounters with music were of a personal and intrinsic nature. Such personal and intrinsic involvement brings with it creative discovery. The type of discovery that is achieved through self-directed, personally engaging, creative work may not exist in teacher-directed instructional activities which primarily deal with concepts and skill acquisition. I am familiar with such discovery because I encounter it when I engage in self-expression through the composition of music.

As a composer, I do not have to examine my work to know that it is not created for the sake of a structural analysis. In other words, The Road to
Second Chances is a reflection of my perspectives of a vignette of real life and not simply a collection of themes, motifs, and phrases structured in some identifiable way. To me, therefore, it is a living and a current art. The foundation for its conception can be said to be derived from a combination of elements. The fact that I have been educated in the Western traditions of music making, which include everyone from Monteverdi to Messiaen, the fact that I belong to a particular culture or sub-culture, the fact that as a being I believe I am existentially unique, the fact that I am an individual who lives in a society inundated with pop music, and the fact that I want to communicate through my compositions in a manner which the audience can comprehend, all contribute to the manner in which my work is shaped.

Therefore, I see music composition as the process which will bring individuals more in touch with the concept of their being than many other tasks which confront them in school because composition of music is a process through which one reflects and expresses self beyond the limitation of words. This highly personal experience for a composer may house meaning for the
listener, also. It is the act of interpretation of the composer's communication which takes the listener and the composer on a meaning-seeking voyage. Because this voyage is a type of qualitative research that is concerned with understanding a particular personally-expressive phenomenon from the participants' perspective, it is this voyage that catapults music education to a higher level of functioning.

In future studies it would be interesting to see the results of similar projects with an added emphasis on melodic and textual content. Recording the manner in which students create melody, lyrics, and conflate the two would give educators further information regarding the structural tools used by pupils in the creation of certain aspects of music. Furthermore, such studies in music may be validated through a comparison to disciplines other than language arts. A broader comparison might serve as a more comprehensive link between music and the entire curriculum, and not just music and language. In addition, one may try to analyze the differences between work created in a student-directed environment and those created in a teacher-directed environment. Perhaps the works
created in a teacher-directed atmosphere will demonstrate how well-versed pupils are in the mechanics of composition (e.g. incorporating knowledge of music theory), while student-directed, creative activities will display the presence of conceptual and skill-based musical elements, and then, so much more. Studies such as these might bring about a different climate in the field of music education, a climate ready to examine and strengthen its weaknesses, reflect on the changes in music trends by updating the structures, objectives and philosophies of its programs, and respond to student needs and interests by having the students directly address them in a facilitating, nurturing, comprehensive and, to a fuller extent of the term, musical environment.
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