

## Task 4 - Commentary

February 15th 2016

In this project, we are required to relate our performances to the global context, statement of inquiry, key concepts, and inquiry questions. In order to ensure I effectively do this, I have analyzed the global context and the statement of inquiry, inclusive of what they mean to me, how I can include it in my piece and how I will relate my piece to it:

- *Global Context: 'Personal and Cultural Expression: Artistry, Craft, Creation, Beauty'*  
The global context is very important to the assessment, as it sets the entire framework for the artist (me)'s approach to the piece they perform and their execution. My personal expression for me is simply singing. It is my instrument and my platform for self-expression. I have always used singing to express emotions, stances, thoughts or opinions in ways that speaking cannot always achieve. On the other hand, culture to me, has a very diverse meaning. Whilst some people may define their culture as their home country or nationality, I find mine to be both yet neither. As a Syrian by blood but an American by nationality, I have lived in either nation long enough to truly call it home, but I still feel a personal connection to both countries. In addition to this, I also define my culture to be that of Dubai, as I have lived here for 10 of my 16 years of living, making it a large influence in my life and a relevant contribution to my upbringing and approach to many situations. Dubai is known for its wild diversity and internationalism, which has led to me, in addition to hundreds of other youth studying in international schools, adopting elements of other cultures into our own lives. This combined has meant that, for me, culture has now become all of the nations that I have happened across, including Syrian, Western, Asian and Local (Emirati), predominantly, as I have stronger ties to these nationalities and ethnicities as opposed to others. Due to this, I have chosen the song, 'Reflection' by Christina Aguilera, originally sung for the Chinese-based movie Mulan, in English, with a background of the Oud, an Arabic instrument, to include all aspects of my culture.
- *Statement of Inquiry: Personal and cultural identity is expressed through stories*  
It is a given to me that personal and cultural identity is expressed through stories. One of my favorite stories as a child was 'Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain' by Verna Aardema, which speaks about an African man named Ki-pat who brought rain to Kapiti Plain, a village suffering from drought. This was a form of cultural expression for the artist, as they simply and beautifully illustrated the consequences of drought-stricken land, which is very common in Africa due to increasing temperatures as a result of global climate change. This artist has used their art to deliver a cultural message, however novels and literature are not the only means to express such ideas. Movies, paintings, music and art are all forms of art, as they are delicately crafted by an artist with a purpose and a message. As well as using art to express culture, authors use their literature to express themselves, which I aim to do, as I am of the belief that if an artist does not create art with the intention of expressing their personality and identity or transmitting a message, they have no reason to be creating art at all.

**March 3th 2016**

Today, I spent my time working on my self-reflection in regards to the ATLS. I was able to reflect on my work and my progress in regards to sub-sections such as communication, research, etc.

I also had the chance to reflect on my progress in relation to my compositional techniques. I have also combined this reflection with my self-reflection of my final performance:

I think my performance was overall successful. Although I had some issues, my piece came out successful and I was able to perform it in the way that I had envisioned.

To begin with, I was able to incorporate a number of vocal techniques in my piece, such as melisma, cultural incorporation and vibrato throughout my piece. These techniques added embellishment to my piece and made it richer, which allowed me to create a more powerful piece. I also used my skills of intonation to add riffs and runs that were in accordance with the melody. I also used warm-up techniques to help my voice grow used to singing high, challenging notes in my chest voice. Furthermore, I used these vocal exercises to help me stretch my range, which allowed me to create a more harmonious piece. By creating a melodic, beautiful piece, not only does it assist in interesting the target audience, but it also tackles the Statement of Inquiry: *'Personal and Cultural Expression is expressed through stories'*. By including aspects of music from all of the nationalities I define as, I was able to tell my story as a person, through expressing my take on culture, and my personal thoughts and emotions. The audience can then relate to the lyrics or melody of the piece, thereby transmitting a story that is relatable, and connecting the audience with the message that I, as an artist, am trying to send: Despite being lost and confused at this time in our lives due to many influences and different choices and opportunities, our reflections will in time show us who we really are, and that despite all we go through, our reflections remain the same.

In relation to compositional techniques applicable to my piece, I was able to increase the tessitura of my instrument, my voice, as well as to incorporate a disjunct in which the scale of the notes changed through a leap without a build up. I also improvised a little in my piece by adding riffs and runs in my piece when I felt that the melody seemed plain, or that something was missing. I was able to use my intonation to predict the pitch that would be suitable with the melody. I made the artistic choice to incorporate the Oud in my piece, which the original artist did not do. I also somewhat incorporated legato in my piece when I smoothly transitioned from note to note, as well as when I transitioned from one scale to a higher one. In relation to *'harmony'*, I modulated my piece, as I changed key as part of the second verse, to make the piece more exciting and lively. There was not much else in my piece in regards to harmony, as I was backed by piano and a Oud, both of which was not playing the same notes, but rather chords that were well-suited to the main melody line. All of these compositional techniques combined to create a well-rounded piece with numerous complex techniques, which gave me a large amount of experience and new knowledge, especially with modulation, which was an issue for me near the start of the unit.

One of the main improvements I felt in my piece from the beginning of the process to the end was my vocal range. The higher and lower notes in my vocal range were accessible to me in my chest voice, in addition to my head voice. I was also able to execute higher and lower notes as part of

my range, which I found to be a great achievement for myself, in addition to being able to project notes that had previously been weak and difficult for me.

In relation to my actual performance, I was able to hit the high notes, had good riffs, was able to sing in my chest voice with power and emotion, sang the notes at the middle range in a strong voice, my dynamics and the bridge were strong, my breathing control was good, I sang with good emotion and used vibrato effectively.

I also learned to incorporate instruments that, at first, seem like a bad idea and may not work together well, such as including the Arabic Oud in a Western-style piece. This made me more of a risk-taker and more open-minded, as I learned to accept changes and look at things from a new perspective. This new experience has allowed me to understand how music can be used to create a story not only about myself, but how by creating a relatable piece that can easily connect the performer and the audience, they can form their own story. This prospect changed for me from the beginning of the unit, when I thought that the only way a story could be transmitted was through the lyrics of a song.

On the other hand, I had some weaknesses that I could improve upon, such as strengthening the higher notes, keeping tempo when it comes to lower notes and riffs, working on notes that are high up in my vocal range and making them sound less breathy and more resounding, as well as learning to seize the chance for dynamics and crescendo at the end of the chorus.

This project as a whole has allowed me to acquire enough knowledge to make an informed artistic intention to provide my project with a direction, as well as observe and appreciate the use of music in telling a story to the audience.

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