

Proudly Celebrating the Centrepieces' Creative Writing Group

the
CREATIVE

Music





About Us

"The Creative" is the magazine from Centrepieces' Creative Writing group, bringing together a diverse range of contributions and styles. From fictional stories and poems to non-fictional articles and reflective accounts, there's always bound to be something to capture your imagination. Each issue explores a different theme explored from the unique perspective of our writers' wellness and recovery journeys.

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Feature Article

“On The Beat: Music and Emotion” by Michael J. Armstrong

Early civilisation no doubt found music beneficial. Simply blowing reeds and whistling no doubt relaxed and pleased ancient cultures as an early form of therapy, as well as bearing significance during ceremonies.

In time, instruments developed. The ‘Serpent’, for example, became the clarinet. Cylinders on phonographs paved the way for gramophones, cassettes and CDs. Sounds, after The Music Hal, were added by ‘tracks’ on films. The first sound movie, or ‘Talkie’, began with Al Jolson’s “*The Jazz Singer*” in October 1927.

Indeed, during times of conflict such as war and the US Civil Rights movement, music has been used as an extension of identity; a tool to promote morale and enable continued psychological wellbeing in the face of adversity.

The mantra of “*if music be the food of love, play on*” emerged in the 1960s, partly through the rise of pirate radio. At that time a Council for Music in Hospitals lifted the spirits of many, especially those undergoing psychiatric care. Radio broadcasts in particular benefit us all. TV further enhances this sense of immersion for events such as The Proms and Remembrance Concerts, with live performances serving as a reflection on loss and triumph over adversity.

Have you ever marched with a band? Whether military or civilian, it’s difficult not to be ‘in-step’ and emotionally inspired, with the music accentuating emotions and connections that we often overlook.

In the same vein, film music and signature tunes sway our emotional landscapes. Think, for instance, of John Barry’s highly-successful and iconic James Bond scores. Others, such as “*Whistle Down the Wind*” also resonates – with innocent Hayley Mills befriending a runaway killer – eventually arrested. “*Gone With the Wind*”, “*Casablanca*”, “*Titanic*” and more offer an emotional language that compliments the overall narratives, often being passively absorbed by the listener whilst subconsciously heightening their connection and engagement.

So stand by the Kleenex, revive a ‘45 and throw a party with musical chairs. The pleasure (and choice) is yours. All the fun of the fairground music.

Music Inspired by Mental Health

"The Wall" – Pink Floyd

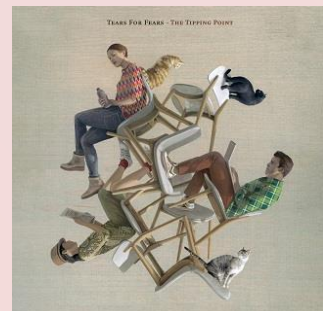


The seminal concept album owed much of its existence to trauma endured during Roger Waters' life till that point, including his father's death during the Second World War, an overprotective mother, and abusive teachers encountered throughout his schooling. These flashpoints of trauma became the "bricks in the wall" that culminate to form the symbolic barrier of alienation between the self and the external world.

Tears for Fears

Mental health struggles of band member Roland Orzabel, including depression, filtered into the band's canon. Tears for Fears 1983 debut album, "*The Hurting*", explored themes including isolation, trauma, and the overlapping nature between them. Similarly, their later album "*The Tipping Point*" considers grief and mental health from an adult perspective.

Much of their work, and even the band's name, is directly inspired and influenced by the work of psychologist Arthur Janov and his pioneering "Primal Therapy" psychotherapy he pioneered during the 1960s and 70s.



Nina Simone



Nina Simone's struggles with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and a traumatic marriage have often been cited as a foundation of her music. Her music reflected and expressed her experiences of marginalisation, anger, and suffrage regarding equality, making both the artist and her music hugely significant to the US Civil Rights Movement.

Lewis Capaldi

The Scottish singer-songwriter is a remarkable example of a musician whose work (and indeed career) has been informed by struggles with mental health. As early success negatively affected his mental health, a public breakdown during Glastonbury 2023 saw Capaldi take a break to focus on recovery. His return to music, through a triumphant live performance at Glastonbury 2025 and comeback single "Survive" showcase his resilience and reflections on his mental health journey.



"The Black Parade" – My Chemical Romance



MCR's historic 2005 concept album revolves around the narrative of a dying person reflecting on their life experiences. Whilst this narrative framing provides context, the tracks themselves explore illness, grief, and trauma, and provide a rallying-cry for resilience through hardship. The empowering message is one of overcoming darkness instead of falling to despair. It remains an emblematic message of survival through transition.

Beneath the Midnight Crown by Lesley Cody



ABOVE: "Amy Winehouse Collage" – Lesley Cody.

The beehive towered, the now iconic midnight crown,
Above a face that held both joy and pain.
She sang of heartbreak, in a mournful tone
Where shadows danced and solace was in vain
Her voice of velvet, roughened by the smoke
Could conjure storms and whisper tender sighs
Her fragile spirit, destined to be broken
Reflected in those haunted, knowing eyes
She built a bridge between the soul and sound
And poured her demons out for all to hear
Then lost herself, where solace could be found
In fleeting moments, fuelled by doubt and fear
A tragic muse, her flame burned far too bright
Extinguished early, swallowed by the night.

Special Feature

“Experiencing Music as a Deaf Person”

By Sally Thompson*

Being born Deaf, I was told I wouldn't be able to hear music. At school I wasn't allowed to participate in Music lessons or play an instrument. Though I listened to music through having my boom-box close to my ears, I stopped listening to music altogether during my teens.

In adulthood, I had a right Cochlear implant and following this, I began to listen to music again. The Cochlear implant and digital hearing aid work together and function like headphones via Bluetooth. I experience music in layers – with the implant assisting me to hear the lyrics through the right ear, and a hearing aid allowing me to hear the instrumental parts from the left ear. The first film I saw after getting my implant was *Skyfall* and I remember being so moved when hearing the film's title song that I had to purchase the single afterwards.

Due to the differences in style for modern music, I need to see lyrics visually (usually via YouTube) and I'm unable to distinguish between the different instruments used in the backing track. I generally find music from previous eras to be more accessible in terms of being able to experience the vocal and instrumental layers without these challenges.

Among other types of music, I particularly like film soundtracks as these can help add context to the visual content I've seen in the respective films. A particular favourite soundtrack is “*Top Gun*”.

I usually play music when out or travelling as I find this calming and helps to distract from any anxiety around crowds. I've never been to a concert though I would like to experience this at some point. A particular curiosity I discovered (again via online media) is that live performances of songs sound (or are performed) differently than their studio versions.

Being Deaf doesn't mean I don't listen to music; it just means I experience it differently.

* - Edited by Matthew Delaney

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“Open Your Heart” by Matthew Delaney

A mixed-media collage showcasing lyrics that have always resonated with me personally, reflecting my thoughts on feeling overlooked in certain close relationships. The use of a “ransom note” style for the lyrics is intended to be symbolic of the emotions of desperately wanting to be recognised authentically but feeling like only heightened or dramatic moments can foster an opportunity with those who communication feels a struggle with.

Mozart and Mont St Michel by *Nicola Wills*

Running up the steps of Mont St Michel,
Eating a sweet waffle with chocolate and ice cream,
I take in all the landscape of glorious Brittany,
And its blue skies and vast peaceful coast.

The music of a Mozart Piano concerto movement
jingling in my ear.
Music and the beautiful landscape work together in
colourful harmony.
As the rain pours down then the sun comes out again,
The beauty of Mozart and St Malo touches my
introverted adolescent soul.



ABOVE: "Mont St Michel Concerto" – Nicola Wills.

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ABOVE: "Deep Piano Concerto with Oval Mounts and Ferris Wheel" – Nicola Wills.

Introverted Piano Concerto by Nicola W.

Nuanced abstract shapes and images appear in my mind as I play the first movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto no 18 K 456, and I am transported back in time to being sixteen years old. I'm about to begin my A levels and I have chosen to study Art, English and Maths, having had unexpected success in my GCSE exams.

A new term is about to start and autumn is in the air. Thoughts of being abroad in France and enjoying beautiful scenery are in my head. As a shy introverted teenager I am very unsure of myself and find it difficult to talk to and interact with my peer group. I enjoy quiet time on my own being in the library and reading books at the weekend rather than socialising in noisy places with friends.

I am not keen on the hip hop, rap and urban soul beat genres of early-Nineties music played on the radio in our very basic sixth form hut – with its old couches and chairs, finding it very noisy. Instead, I prefer to listen to classical music (particularly the Mozart piano concertos) on my cassette Walkman with headphones.

My mind drifts off to other things as I am doing my French and English homework. The first movement of the Mozart Piano concerto is playing on an old 80s cassette player from the right side of my desk. It's the weekend and I'm very distracted. I'm having to get into a new routine organising myself with my studies. I've just been out with the eldest daughter of a family of three girls.

They live in a large Victorian house and each girl has her own bedroom. Two large framed portraits with brown oval mounts sit on the wall of the small living room which has a low fireplace and two settees. In the corner of the room sits a tall unit with shelves and books; there is a folder of photographs taken on a family day out. In the photos are the mum and the dad and the three girls. The mum is in her early forties - very articulate and attractive and wears simple jewellery. The dad works as a teacher in a secondary school.



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I notice a photo in a small frame of a little girl with long pigtails tied with ribbons on the middle shelf amongst books and ornaments.

“Is that you?” I asked the eldest girl who is shy, a dreamer and unsure of herself and also likes drawing.

“No” she replied, “That’s my younger sister”.

The girls all looked very similar and had the same small snub noses. The two eldest girls had dark blonde hair and the youngest girl had slightly darker hair. My attention turns towards the two large portraits in oval mounts on the main wall. One is of the three girls all together and the other one is of the youngest girl aged around six wearing a picture hat and posing prettily. As I gaze at them the repeating melody of the clarinets in unison and then the piano reflects the smiles of all the girls in the photograph.

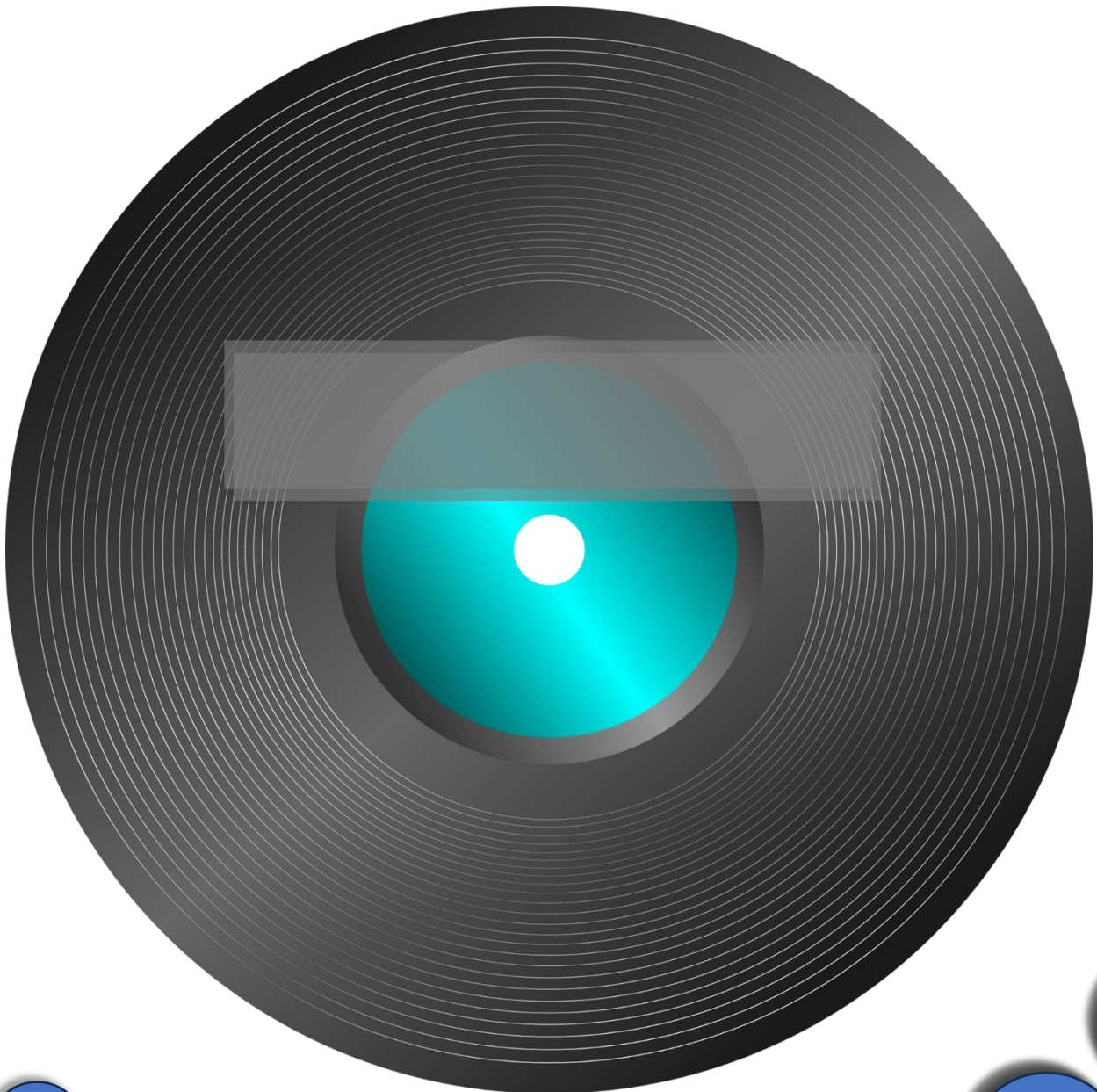
The big wheel in the picture (from Vienna, Austria) turns round in my mind as the music in the first movement ascends down in piano notes. In my dreams the mum of the three girls is wearing red nail polish and doing the ironing as the Mozart oboe melody of the first movement is playing in my mind. The shape of the instruments ends in a colourful orchestral shanty and the big Ferris wheel with its red cable cars swoops down as the violins end the movement dramatically.

Activity

“Setting A Personal Record”

If happiness (as you experience it) were a record, what would the lead track be called?

How about cutting out the record below and putting it up somewhere (the fridge, your desk, a wall) so you'll always have a visual reminder of what makes you happy?

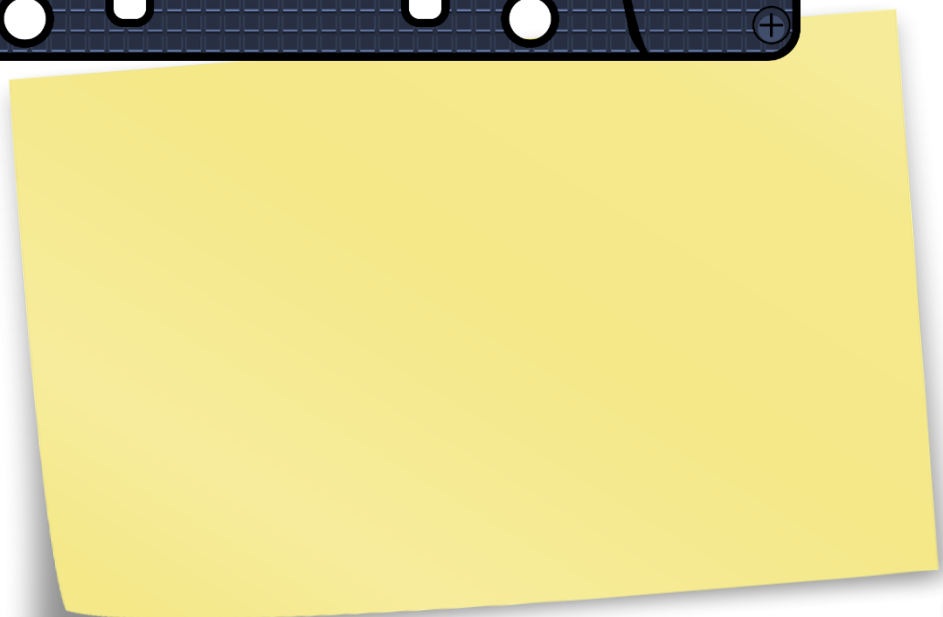


Activity

“Happiness Mixtape”

Imagine the songs that instantly make you happy, or remind you of positive times or memories. What would be on **your** personal happiness mixtape?

Be sure to keep your mixtape list somewhere handy so you can refer to it whenever a day feels a little more challenging.



Desert Island Discs

"Desert Island Discs" is a writing game our Creative Writing Group plays often. The aim is to work from a list of track titles from a specific artist and then incorporate as many of them as possible into an original story or poem. Its tremendous fun and a great way of sparking inspiration for creative projects from a unique angle.

Here's a few submissions from our creative writers. Can **you** spot the track titles and guess the respective groups they came from?

"Is This Just Fantasy" by Lesley C.

A Crazy Little Thing Called Love' lights the way
Searching for 'Somebody to love' come what may
'Cos 'You're my best friend' the journey's less steep
Can you help me find the love I seek?

'I want to break free' from every single lie
To feel 'A kind of magic' as the moments fly
But I feel 'Under pressure' – the world weighs me down
And 'Another one bites the dust' is an echoing sound

But 'Don't stop me now' makes my spirits rise
And I feel 'A kind of magic' as the music flies
For 'We are the champions' of freewill
And the lyrics of this song thrill me still.

“A Story Inspired by ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’” by Lesley C.

Nigel worked as an accountant for a prestigious law firm in London. One day when he was in the break room getting himself a coffee; the radio that was usually tuned to *Radio 3* blasted out something else entirely. The song started with a plaintive vocal asking a question: *“Is this the real life; is this just fantasy?”* The words seemed to echo the quiet despair he felt about his own monotonous daily life.

“Mama, just killed a man” the voice confessed. Nigel felt a jolt. He hadn’t killed anyone but, in a way, he had killed himself by settling for the life his parents wanted for him. A shiver ran down his spine.

The music swelled and soared into an operatic crescendo. He had put aside his own ambition which was to be an artist. He reflected on all he had thrown away to conform to his parents and society’s plans for him and, as he had done many times before, he imagined how things might have been had he summoned up the courage to defy them.

Then the voice returned – bursting into his consciousness again saying *“No! We will not let you go”*. He slammed his coffee cup down as a furious guitar riff tore through the air. Then the voice was back again singing *“Just gotta get out, just gotta get right out of here.”*

Nigel grabbed his briefcase, strode past his boss’ office, past the rows of cubicles, through the automated doors and out into the afternoon sun. His feet felt light as if he was flying. He hailed a taxi as the last words of the song echoed in his brain: *“Nothing really matters – anyone can see – nothing really matters to me.”*

He leaned back in the taxi seat closing his eyes. The man he had been was dead. He didn’t know what would come next.

Perhaps nothing really did matter in the way it used to but, for the first time in years, the thought didn’t fill him with dread.

“If I Mentioned Love (I Probably Wouldn’t Mention This)”

By **Matthew Delaney**

Oh please, please, please let me get what I want.
When the boy with the thorn in his side,
Meets me at the cemetery gates,
What we keep hidden is a miserable lie,
Oh I fear I started something I couldn't finish,
I want the one I can't have and I won't share you,
Is it really so strange to want a love with a semblance of purpose?
What of hearts unbound? Is there time to care?

But I know it's over,
And Heaven knows I'm miserable now,
Your heart is a sweet and tender Hooligan who gently breaks mine
each time they sing in harmony.
There is a light that never goes out
And this night has opened my eyes.

Oh please, please, please let me get what I want.
If I Mentioned Love (I Probably Wouldn't Mention This).
Oh please, please, please let me get what I want.
But love is a dream and sometimes we have to wake up.
If I Mentioned Love (I Probably Wouldn't Mention This).
Love is a dream and sometimes we have to wake up.
Love is a dream and sometimes we have to wake up.
If I Mentioned Love (I Probably Wouldn't Mention This).
Oh please, please, please let me get what I want.

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ABOVE: "Mr Fahrenheit" – Lesley Cody.

“My Dad, the Musician” by Nadia W.

My dad? He loves the rhythm in the music. Even now, when he can't explain the pain that racks his body, he finds his rhythm and he plays.

You see, my dad has Dementia. Vascular Dementia to be exact. When he's in pain and someone asks if he is, he says, “No” when he's meaning to say, “Yes.”

Having Dementia means my dad is living on his wits and relying on people around him to fill in large gaps in his immediate memory.

He needs this but he certainly doesn't want anyone to speak for him, condescend to him or patronise him. He's had that all his life. The look of indignation is hard wired into him. He's been branded with being made less than his potential. He's been burnished with it.

My dad is famous in his own corner of the nursing home now. His 'new' bed, his 'new' armchair, his 'new' TV, his 'new' occasional table, ready to be supplied with constant tea and biscuits, are away from the family home.

When my husband, mum and I go visit my dad in his new home, his eyes lights up when he sees us and especially the love of his life - my mum.

My dad licks dem beats out! His natural beat that he drops in 5/8 time. It's the same sort of beat that *Simply Red* play in their song “Fairground”.

You see, my dad has also been branded with rhythm. It's his heartbeat. It's his joy. It's his ultimate expression. It's his participation. It's his contribution. His tribute. It's his inherent need to be included and also to stand out. It's his essence. It's his reason why he's here now. It's what he was supposed to be - a musician; a creator of sound; a maestro.

“Musical Intelligence” by Nadia W.

There are currently 11, yes, ELEVEN known Intelligences, including the intelligence (ability) to teach.

‘The ability?!’ Yes, I can hear your inner voice utter. Yes, you can actually learn each intelligence, even if you haven’t got a natural aptitude for it. We are beings of infinite potential.

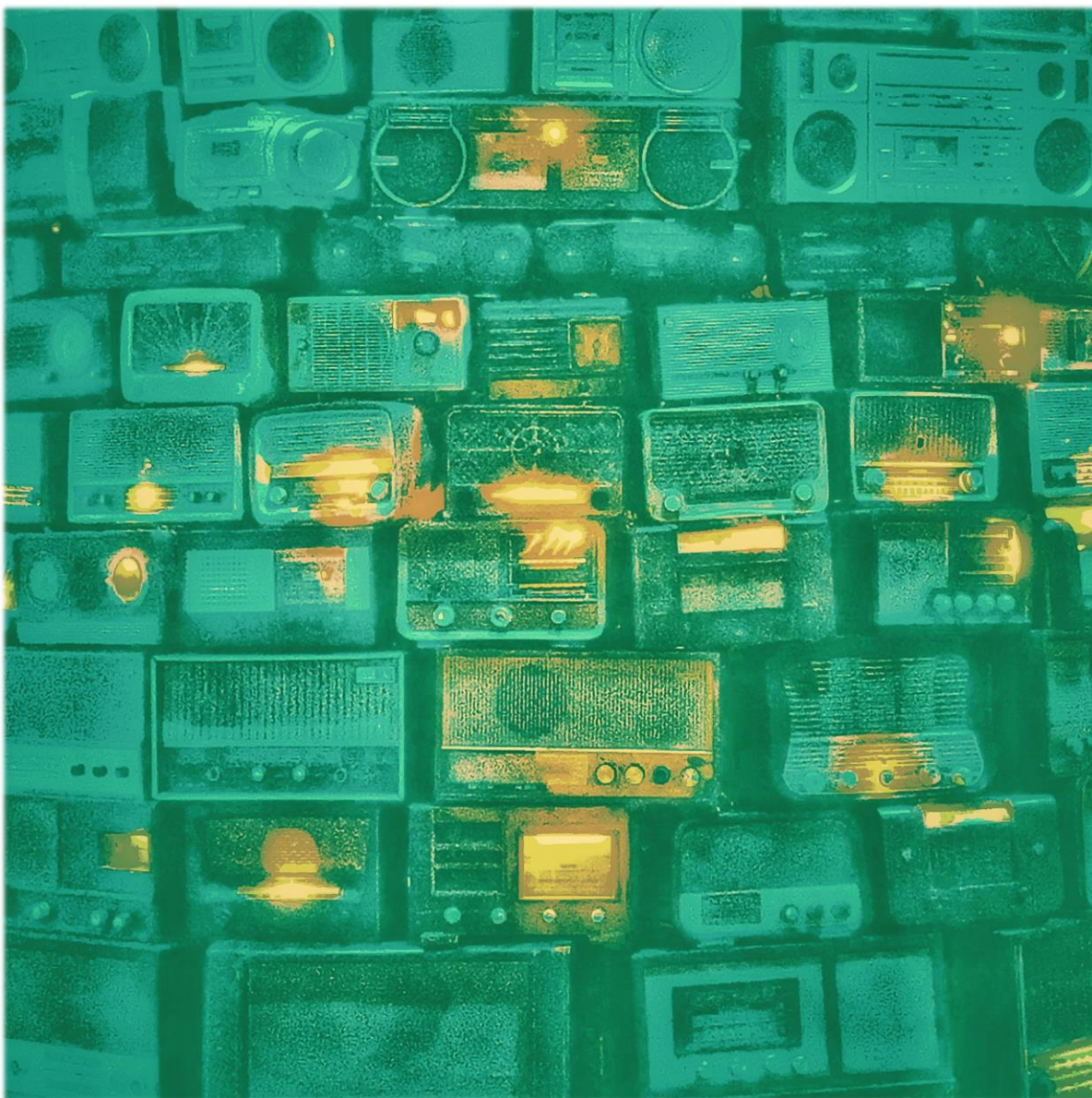
Musical vs. Mathematical Intelligence

I thought I would represent the length of notes using a mandala formation. The accompanying table shows the series of notes with the equivalent fraction.

Something to note: The bigger the denominator, the smaller the fraction. For example, 4 vs 1/4 and 8 vs 1/8.

Note	Fraction Equivalent
Breve	1
Semibreve	1/2
Crochet	1/4
Quaver (<i>one flag</i>)	1/8
Semi-Quaver (<i>two flags</i>)	1/16
Demi-Semi-Quaver (<i>three flags</i>)	1/32

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ABOVE: "Everybody's Talking at Me..." - *Matthew Delaney*

“The Castaways” by Michael J. Armstrong

My choice of records for the gramophone to play on a desert island would be as follows;

- ❖ Tchaikovsky – “The 1812 Overture”.
- ❖ Vivaldi – “The Four Seasons”.
- ❖ “Casablanca” (music from the film score).
- ❖ Greig – “Fingle's Cave”.
- ❖ Kenny Ball and the Jazzmen – “Samantha”.
As heard by myself at the Woodville Hall Gravesend.
- ❖ Emma Johnson – “Soloist Clarinet” (from *The English Chamber Orchestra LP*).
As heard by myself at Blackheath Conservatoire.

My Book: A compilation of *The Creative* by Centrepieces.

My Luxury Item: A chain of hypermarkets for one. Roy Plumley, eat your heart out!

Would you like to be rescued? It would depend on the number of people on the island. Perhaps if King Kong arrived I'd stay, provided no animal experiments were expected and the fireworks in 1812 didn't frighten him or Fay Wray!

“A Musical Nature” by Michael J. Armstrong

Listen! At first all seem silent. Sit under a tree and let nature come to you. At dawn the blackbird chortles, the Dawn Chorus sings. Woodpecker drills later then seagulls scream overhead. A dormouse scuttles in to the undergrowth. Leaves sway on trees, rustle, flutter and fall. Pitter-patter rain drops splash. Horse hooves clip-clop on a bridleway. The Church clock chimes the hour. Laughter from a haystack. A combine bales. Bees buzz. Sheep bleat, a Collie barks. The ploughman homeward plods.

“The Hippie’s Poem” *by Nicola Wills*

I was alive in the Hippie Flower Power Era.

I was at Woodstock in 1969.

And experienced the electric euphoria of transcendence,

At a crowded music festival.

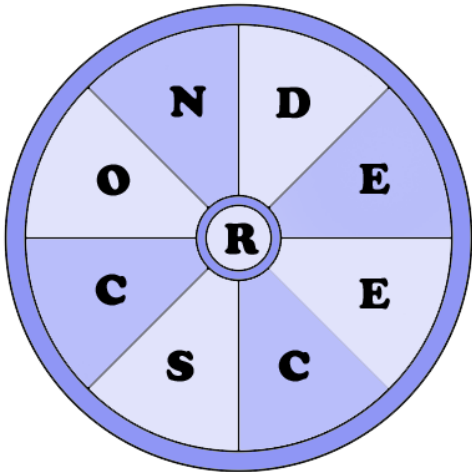
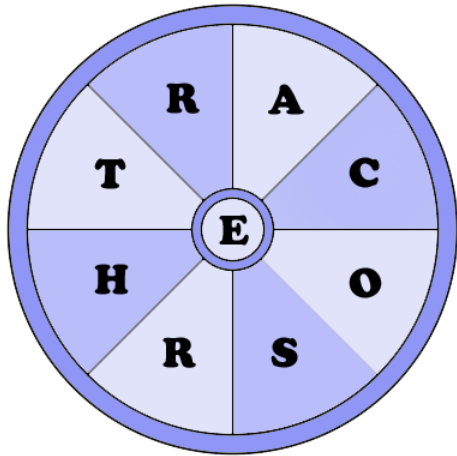
My own personal life was sorrowful and tragic,
Being rejected and ignored in love every single time,
I take a little bit of something,
To escape the pain and dull mundaneness of reality.

And bright amazing colours spin around in front of me,
Vibrant pinks and glorious deep purples,
These colours take me to another dimension which is truly out of this world,
And my soul ascends to another pink spiritual haven in the sky.

Puzzle Corner

- METRONOME
 BATON
 CONDUCTOR
 QUARTET
 ROCK AND ROLL
 MINIM
 MARILLION
 BEATLES
 RAGTIME
 JAZZ
 BALLAD
 BEAT
 ELVIS
 ORCHESTRA
 BONGOS
 OPERA
 MINUET
 BLUES
 STRUM
 TRIANGLE
 NOCTURNE
 REEL
 BALLET
 SOLO
 GENRE
 TREBLE
 CHOIR
 NOTE
 KETTLE DRUM
 ORGAN
 FOLK
 MELODY
 BOLERO
 JIG
 COUNTRY
 TRIO
 CARPENTERS
 SCORE
 BEETHOVEN
 BAND
 PAVAROTTI
 SYMPHONY
 RHYTHM
 QUAVER
 CLEF
 TEMPO
 GUITAR
 CYMBAL
 XYLOPHONE
 PRELUDE
 LINE DANCE

X	S	F	O	L	K	X	C	F	T	E	M	P	O	D	A	N	C	E	S
Y	N	T	F	N	D	L	Y	C	R	B	J	R	N	G	E	P	T	Y	
L	O	A	R	O	S	L	M	Q	E	A	S	K	G	L	R	O	A	R	M
O	T	M	P	U	K	A	B	U	B	L	J	B	A	T	O	N	V	Z	P
P	E	S	A	K	M	B	A	A	L	L	B	O	N	G	O	S	A	P	H
H	A	G	B	A	N	D	L	V	E	E	D	M	U	P	G	R	L	O	
O	C	B	T	M	R	K	E	A	T	A	Q	W	I	E	O	T	N		
N	R	E	C	B	Q	U	A	R	T	E	T	A	Y	T	R	N	T	I	Y
E	A	E	M	B	J	M	R	S	M	C	L	E	F	A	R	T	J	C	
I	G	T	H	O	G	B	P	O	W	B	E	A	T	R	S	E	I	K	A
P	T	H	T	K	C	Z	N	B	X	I	S	Z	R	L	C	H	O	I	R
J	I	O	M	E	L	O	D	Y	A	U	D	V	I	I	O	C	R	B	P
R	M	V	U	T	R	T	N	R	A	G	H	B	A	N	R	O	C	A	E
H	E	E	G	T	P	A	K	D	S	O	L	O	G	E	U	H	L	N	
Y	U	N	E	L	V	I	S	L	U	R	O	L	Q	L	T	N	E	L	T
T	V	M	W	E	J	A	Z	Z	R	C	M	E	K	D	T	S	A	E	
H	E	I	M	I	N	U	E	T	E	O	T	R	I	O	N	R	T	D	R
M	F	N	O	C	T	U	R	N	E	N	K	O	W	Z	E	Y	R	A	S
P	J	I	G	C	X	Y	O	B	L	U	E	S	R	O	C	K	A	N	D
A	G	M	A	R	I	L	L	I	O	N	D	P	R	E	L	U	D	E	M



Word Wheels

How many words can YOU find within the word wheels? Can you discover the special nine-letter word in each one?

EXTRA CHALLENGE

Try giving yourself a time limit to really test your mind.

Quick Quiz

1. In the Richard Marx song "*Hazard*", which US State is the titular town situated in?
2. Paul Simon famously sang about "*50 Ways to Leave Your Lover*" but how many were actually explained in the song?
3. Which controversial and mysterious early 20th Century historical figure was the subject of a song by Boney M?
4. Which iconic 1980s film featured Simple Minds' "*Don't You Forget About Me*" as the title track?
5. Which Tina Turner track was written by Dire Straits front-man, Mark Knopfler, and also features the same melody as Dire Straits' song "*Love Over Gold*"?

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The King's Award
for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

Issue 02 – “Music”

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Puzzle Solutions

Word Wheels: Orchestra; Crescendo.

Quiz: 1. Nebraska; 2. Five; 3. Rasputin; 4. The Breakfast Club; 5. Private Dancer.