

# Songwriter's Garden

Cultivating Your Creativity and Songwriting Skills



# Seeds of Creativity



- ☀️ "Songwriting is kind of like a craft. It's not something that comes in a dream; you have to work at it."  
-Sean Lennon

# Brain Game

☀ *Steady goes the chaos*

# Brain Game

☀ Hello improvisation

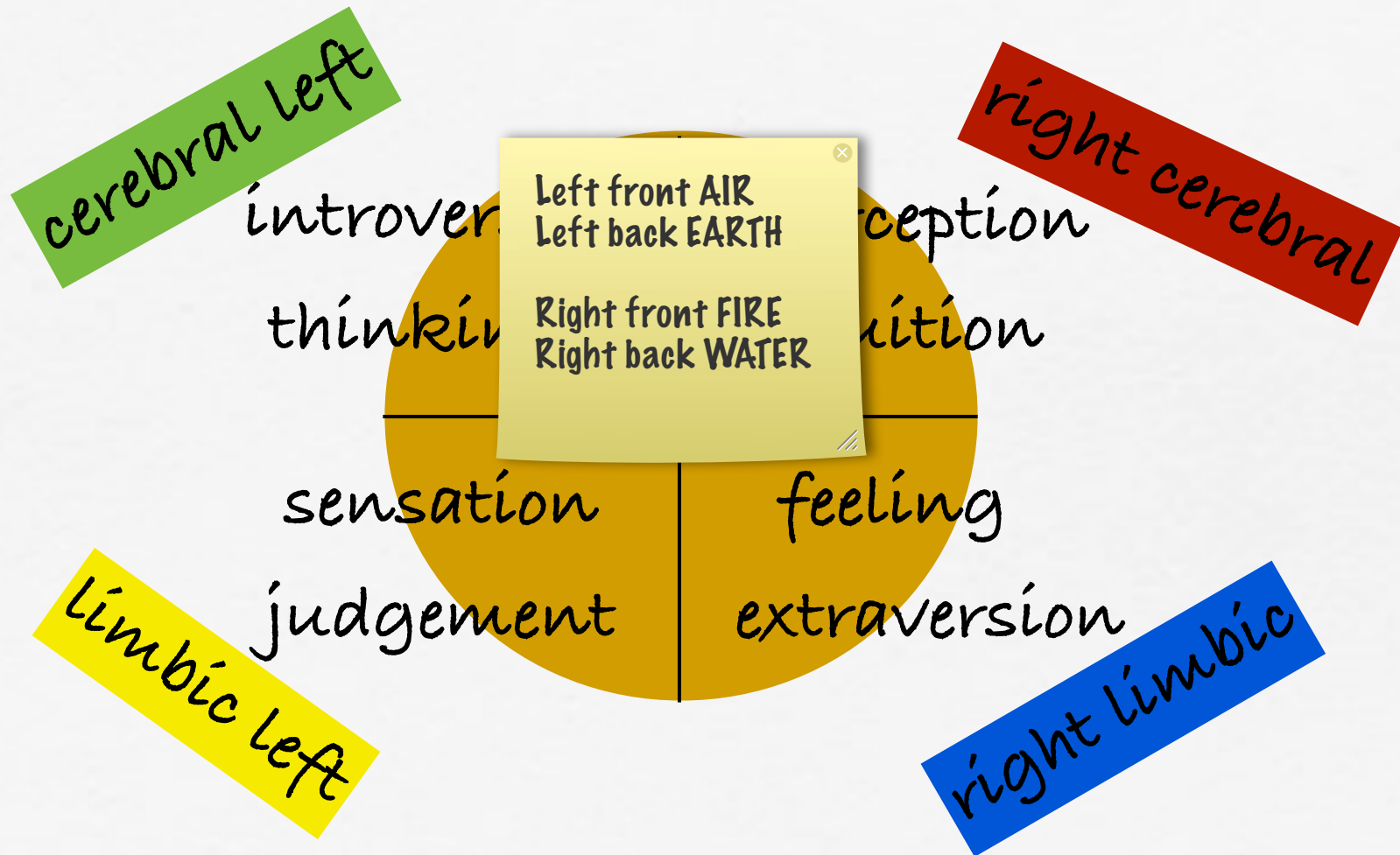
# Your Creative Process

- ☀ *Self-assessment: understanding where your creativity comes from*

# Your Creative Process

- ✿ source of your creativity: brain-dominance style
- ✿ goal: whole-brain writing
- ✿ each area has common strengths and potential weaknesses

# Your Creative Process



# Your Creative Process

- ☀ access the right brain- be physically active, move, drive, pick up an instrument, draw
- ☀ extravert- verbally brainstorm, allow random thought
- ☀ left brain- think in parts, narrow options, choose a title or motif or chord progression, have some kind of structure, work step by step

# Your Creative Process

- ☀ creativity can be thought of as a multi-step process
  - ☀ associate- be spontaneous, brainstorm for related lyric ideas, rhymes, let the music flow without critic, resist stopping
  - ☀ incubate- walk around with an idea, imagine, become the character, feel what the feeling would be like, sleep on it
  - ☀ separate- break into parts, contrast parts, sequence ideas, cause/effect, solidify rhyme scheme and meter
  - ☀ discriminate- seek clarity, unify the overall voice, viewpoint, and tone, perfect the language

# Your Creative Process

- ✿ preparation
  - ✿ mind/body connection- 90 minutes or so of work (hungry-eat, tired-rest, anxious-meditate), alternate nostril breathing
  - ✿ listen to music
  - ✿ pen/pencil, notebook, paper, computer, iPad
  - ✿ recording options

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀️ Writer's block
  - ☀️ schedule regular songwriting sessions
  - ☀️ study songs of other writers
  - ☀️ song seed collection
  - ☀️ warm-ups
  - ☀️ limit yourself (ex. 3-4 note melody)

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ Inner critic
  - ☀ you can block your brain's flow
  - ☀ ignore it
  - ☀ press on, keeping ideas flowing
  - ☀ sort good from the bad later
  - ☀ set a review session for a later date

# Sense exercise

- ☀️ Listen to the music, what is the overall feeling or sense, write about it for 30 seconds

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ Raw materials
  - ☀ riffs
  - ☀ chord sequences
  - ☀ lyrics
  - ☀ song parts (melody lines, verses, choruses, intro's, outro's, etc.)
- ☀ trouble writing a song in complete form
- ☀ kick of writing session, provide inspiration
- ☀ organize your raw materials- journal, mp3 recorder, iPad program, folders, computer, iPod shuffle

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ Method 1: Write/create all the time
- ☀ Method 2: Set aside time to write/create
- ☀ Method 3: Combination of 1 & 2

# Seeds of Creativity

- ✿ Words or music first?
  - ✿ Pros for music- develop strong chord lines and progressions, certain chord changes may lead lyrics, create initial riffs first, may limit too much diversity
  - ✿ Pros for lyrics- more creative melody line, could help keep chords from being too jumpy or not expressive of the words, avoiding common chord progressions and keep the music inspirational
  - ✿ main point is to know what works for you and avoid common pitfalls
  - ✿ try both ways to increase creativity

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ analysis of popular songs or style you are interested in writing in
- ☀ outline chords and beats
- ☀ write in other descriptions

# Seeds of Creativity

- ✿ Writing a memorable hook
- ✿ how did that song go?
- ✿ keep the hook short
- ✿ aim for several in different sections of your song

# Music play

- ✻ improvise some rhythmic elements using US states, add voice sounds

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ writing over a riff
- ☀ try several riffs, then several melody lines- pick your favorite

# Seeds of Creativity

- ☀ chord progressions
- ☀ starting with one chord
- ☀ keep same progression- then vary the length for different sections
- ☀ think of how to play it- rhythmic variations

# Seeds of Creativity

- ✿ melody
  - ✿ one hook point repeated
  - ✿ chorus should have more impact-  
ex. pitches higher
  - ✿ focused and doesn't skip around  
too much
  - ✿ melody and lyrics make the song

# An Assortment of Vocabulary



Lyrics

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

melody

Lyrics

SONG

harmony

form

Lyrics

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

pitch

Lyrics

MELODY

harmony

rhythm

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ Elements of music
  - ☀ form
  - ☀ dynamics
  - ☀ melody
  - ☀ harmony
  - ☀ rhythm
  - ☀ texture
  - ☀ timbre/tone color

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ✿ Song elements
  - ✿ melody
  - ✿ chords
  - ✿ beat and rhythm
  - ✿ genre and style
  - ✿ concept
  - ✿ hook
  - ✿ lyrics
  - ✿ song sections
  - ✿ arrangement
  - ✿ length

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ Lyrics

- ☀ nonsense in the beginning is fine-  
keep going

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ note lengths and phrase lengths
- ☀ think short, medium, long

# Word play

☀ take words and create a song line

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

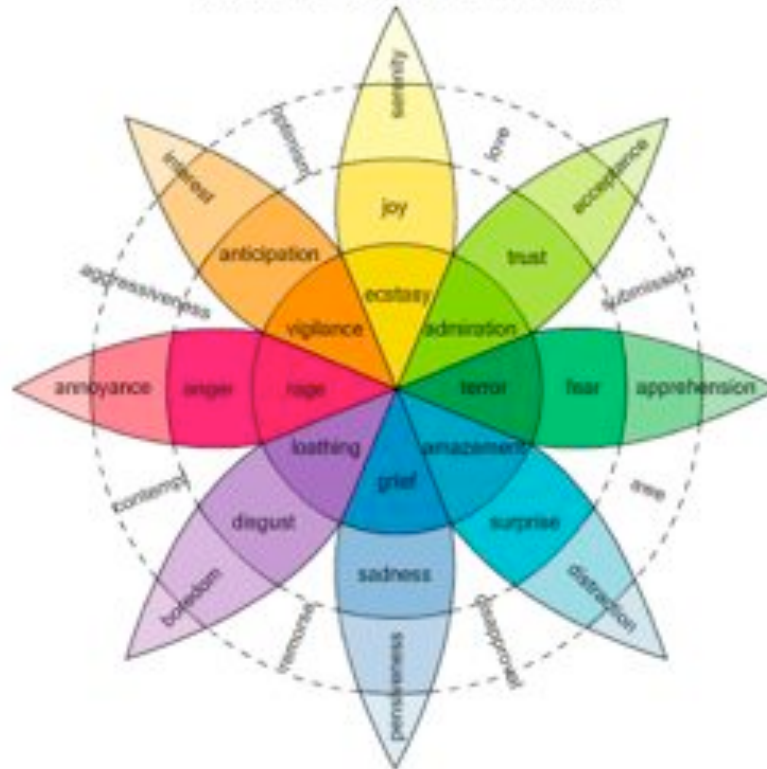
- ☀ beginning the phrase and the stress points on words
- ☀ try before and after the down beat
- ☀ what words do you want to stress?

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ phrase endings
- ☀ try masculine or feminine endings

# Sense exercise

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions



# Sense exercise to word play

- ☀ move in space, observe movements-  
explore feelings
- ☀ formulate words for movements and  
emotions

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ repetitions
- ☀ exact
- ☀ varied
- ☀ extended

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ notes over chords
- ☀ basic notes
- ☀ passing notes
- ☀ arpeggios

# Music play

- ☀ select a mode and set of 2 chords and one bonus chord

## Notes

Ionian	Dorian	Phrygian	Lydian	Mixolydian	Aeolian	Locrian
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Maj, sus4, Maj 7	min, sus4, m7	min, sus4, m7	Maj, Maj7, 6th	Maj, sus4, 7th	min, sus4, m7	dim, m7b5

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ keep the rhythm, change the shape
- ☀ keep the melody the same, change the chord
- ☀ keep the sequence and change the pitch
- ☀ keep the line, invert
- ☀ shorten/lengthen the motif
- ☀ create different sections: verse, chorus, bridge, pre-chorus
- ☀ hear the notes of the chords and then connect them

# An Assortment of Vocabulary

- ☀ key changes
- ☀ song form/structure

# Designing the Musical Garden



# Designing the Musical Garden

- ✿ Consider the arrangement and flow from one section to the next
- ✿ don't over complicate the melody
- ✿ have a memorable hook of some kind
- ✿ chord progressions flow and compliment each other- keep the listener's interest
- ✿ don't judge too soon

# Maintaining the Garden



# Maintaining the Garden

## ☀ Feedback

- ☀ This can be really hard!
- ☀ Find someone who understands music and where you are coming from
- ☀ MT Songwriter's Forum?
- ☀ accept feedback as positive- there can always be improvement
- ☀ Find the weak points and attack them!
- ☀ We have emotional connections- find someone you RESPECT
- ☀ Consult with a drummer, guitarist, singer, etc.

# Maintaining the Garden

- ☀ *Self-Feedback*
  - ☀ *re-write lyrics*
  - ☀ *try different instruments*
  - ☀ *trim away things that are not needed*
  - ☀ *listen with a critical ear*





# All Play

☀️ *Action dance*

☀️ *wacky Day*

# Melody/Hooks

- ☀ Sing what you would normally do and then change it

# Work pile

- ☀ lyrics
- ☀ rhythms
- ☀ hook
- ☀ melody