

Modern Molly

Pop Music and the Folk Process for Dance

How does one go about turning a pop song into a dance?

- What works
- What doesn't work
- How to do the work
 - Additional notes

Something that works: Byker Hill

If I had another penny

I would have another gill...

I would make the piper play

'The Bonny Lass of Byker Hill'...

Byker Hill and Walker Shore...

Collier lads for ever more...

Byker Hill and Walker Shore...

Collier lads for ever more...

- 4/4 Time
- Verses and choruses are 4 measures each
- Notes happen on beats and ands, not between them
- Lives happily in 55-65 bpm range
- ABABABAB structure, no wierdo bits

Something that didn't work: I See Fire - Ed Sheeran

[Intro]

Oh misty eye of the mountain below
Keep careful watch of my brothers' souls
And should the sky be filled with fire and smoke
Keep watching over Durin's sons

[Verse 1]

If this is to end in fire, then we should all burn together
Watch the flames climb high into the night
Calling out father oh, stand by and we will
Watch the flames burn auburn on the mountain side

[Verse 2]

And if we should die tonight, we should all die together
Raise a glass of wine for the last time
Calling out father oh, prepare as we will
Watch the flames burn auburn on the mountain side
Desolation comes upon the sky

[Chorus]

Now I see fire, inside the mountain
I see fire, burning the trees
And I see fire, hollowing souls
I see fire, blood in the breeze
And I hope that you remember me

[Verse 3]

Oh, should my people fall then surely I'll do the same
Confined in mountain halls, we got too close to the flame
Calling out father oh, hold fast and we will
Watch the flames burn auburn on the mountain side
Desolation comes upon the sky

[Chorus]

Now I see fire, inside the mountain
I see fire, burning the trees
And I see fire, hollowing souls
I see fire, blood in the breeze
And I hope that you remember me

[Bridge]

And if the night is burning, I will cover my eyes
For if the dark returns then my brothers will die
And as the sky's falling down it crashed into this lonely town
And with that shadow upon the ground I hear my people screaming out

[Outro]

Now I see fire, inside the mountain
I see fire, burning the trees
I see fire, hollowing souls
I see fire, blood in the breeze
I see fire (oh you know I saw a city burning out)
I see fire (feel the heat upon my skin)
I see fire
And I see fire burn auburn on the mountain side

- Non-ideal structure - abbcbcde (not even including instrumental breaks)
- Inconsistent and long phrases
- 76 bpm and syncopated
- Lost all of it's punch when evened out and slowed d to 65bpm.
- Too much air space that could not be filled in a percussive way

Get the words

When I was a child, I heard voices
Some would sing and some would scream
You soon find you have few choices
I learned the voices died with me
When I was a child, I'd sit for hours
Staring into open flame
Something in it had a power
Could barely tear my eyes away
All you have is your fire
And the place you need to reach
Don't you ever tame your demons
But always keep 'em on a leash
When I was 16, my senses fooled me
Thought gasoline was on my clothes
I knew that something would always rule me
I knew the scent was mine alone

All you have is your fire
And the place you need to reach
Don't you ever tame your demons
But always keep 'em on a leash
When I was a man I thought it ended
When I knew love's perfect ache
But my peace has always depended
On all the ashes in my wake
All you have is your fire
And the place you need to reach
Don't you ever tame your demons
But always keep 'em on a leash

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Andrew Hozier Byrne

Arsonist's Lullabye lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

- Transcribe from a recording - takes longer, but gets them into your memory faster
- Harvest them from the internet - be careful to actually read all the way through what you copy/paste; check for typos, misheard lyrics, etc...

Prepare the text

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Arsonist's Lullabye lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing
LLC

- Completely strip all native formatting from the text, if you copy/pasted it from anywhere; this will make several of the next steps much easier. In google docs, click Format>Clear Formatting.
- Check for any practical word swaps - this could be gender swaps, if desired, replacing digits with words, or replacing words that we do not wish to use in public performance, or at all.

Mark the Parts

Instrumental

When I was a child, I heard voices
Some would sing and some would scream
You soon find you have few choices
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- Identify musical units, and rearrange them into a danceable order.
- This is where you start to shape the dance; does it start with a chorus or verse? Which will it end with?
- I use cyan for verses, and magenta for choruses throughout my notation, just to keep it consistent.

Make it March

When I was a child, I heard voices.....
Some would sing and some would scream.....
You soon find you have few choices.....
I learned the voices died with me.....

All you have is your fire.....
And the place you need to reach.....
Don't you ever..... tame your demons.....
But always keep 'em on a leash.....

This is the “marching” version of the song as recorded.

- Find it with your feet! Or alternately with a metronome
- I find doing the notation for this to be infinitely easier with a highlighter on printed paper, rather than virtual.
- Effectively you are flattening some of the style of the piece so that the sounds are happening on the main and down beats, not in between.
- This will probably expose some gaps in the arrangement that will need to be filled.

Kill the Extra space

When I was a child, I heard voices.....
Some would sing and some would scream.....hey yeah.....
You soon find.....you have few choices.....
I learned the voices died with me.....

All you have is your fire.....
And the place you need to reach.....down inside.....
Don't you ever.....tame your demons.....
But always keep 'em on a leash.....

Red text are added lyrics

Underlined areas signify stretching and respacing

- Redistributing cramped phrasing - spreading out areas that are cramped into half of the available beats, or extending notes that fall off quickly in the original recording.
- Diddles and Nonnys - any kind of off script vocalizing, it could be heys, yeahs, oohs, or other short phrases that fit into the flow of the lyrics. You can often lift the tune for these from instrumentals in the original track.

Make it Pretty

Arsonist's Lullaby

Don't you ever...tame your demons...
But always keep 'em on a leash...

When I was a child, I heard voices...
Some would sing and some would scream...hey yeah...
You soon find...you have few choices...
I learned the voices died with me...

All you have is your fire...
And the place you need to reach...down inside...
Don't you ever...tame your demons...
But always keep 'em on a leash...

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All you have is your fire...
And the place you need to reach...down inside...
Don't you ever...tame your demons...
But always keep 'em on a leash...

- Set up your page for printing:
 - Add the title
 - Copy/paste any lead in, or pickup phrase at the beginning. This could be a couple of words or half a verse/chorus, depending on the tune.
 - Choose a font you can read easily
 - Make the font as large as possible, without breaking any lines into two.
 - Add page breaks to prevent cutting any units in half.

Get it into your Bones!! Practice so you can be the anchor.

Arsonist's Lullaby

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But always keep 'em on a leash.....

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Some would sing and some would scream.....hey yeah.....
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Performance concerns

- Breath support and Endurance
 - Slowing pieces down can make them more demanding in terms of lung capacity and the ability to hold a note for longer times, while speeding them up can make it more difficult to find a place to breathe
 - Speeding pieces up can also increase the cognitive load for enunciation or result in tongue twisters, be vigilant!
- Altering vowel shapes for volume, sustainability
 - Pop musicians are more likely to use conversational pronunciations that start to break down, when you try to develop them for this purpose. Be open to altering your vowels to make things better serve the dance.
 - There are several youtube channels that do series' with names like vocal coach reacts to (popular music) who do real time critiques of various performers, these notes can be applied to your own performance. Links on the resource page.
 - Online vocal coaches can be booked if you feel like you are too far from your goal to figure it out on your own.
- Adding color and character to your performance with tonal shifts and distortion.
 - Especially important in adapting pop music, because those are a lot of the elements that make a particular song feel like it does.
 - Sound of silence cover, linked on the resource page is a masterclass in the use of both key shift and tone to shape the emotional impact of a performance.

The Dance - Original inspiration



My 3am rendering of the chorus inspiration.

Staggered crossing into a flame shape then casting back to a 6 hand star.

Adjustments have been made, to get everyone home, but the core idea is still there.

Figures

Armored Pilaf - 1 + 2 arm for one turn, then 1 peels off around the set and home while 2+ 4 arm for a turn, then 2 peels, while 4 + 6 arm. 4 peels off and home, while 6 + 3 arm and stay home.

Eyeball Hey - Parallel full hey with 1 pushing forward for 3 phrases, then on the last phrase each pair faces and turns clockwise, with eye contact, then peel off counterclockwise on 4 to go home.

Threes - 1,4,5 go in to the center for a right hand star while 2,3,6 cast right and out to make a cloverleaf for 8, then pairs 1,2 3,4 5,6 all turn by left hands for 8, then repeat part one with 2,3,6 in the middle and 1,4,5 out for 8 then everyone steps clockwise around for 8 to go home

Reversing rounds - needs pictures, next slide...

Reversing rounds - all go clockwise around the set 4 places, then without turning, back up 2 places. Sharp turn to face corner, and all pass through the middle of the set by right shoulder and then step 7 places clockwise around the set to go home

Dance ends out of a chorus.