

FINDING AMELIA THROUGH THEATRE

by

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the creative process involved in conceptualizing a musical about Amelia Earhart. Amelia is a historical figure who has made a lasting impact on many people's lives but does not have much representation in Theatre. In this piece, the five steps of the creative process are described and exemplified. The essay covers extensive research into Amelia's life that was needed to formulate a plot for the concept. A sample song and plot list are included. The essay dives into the challenges of creating original work while also noting the artistic rewards.

### Finding Amelia Through Theatre

How does someone conceptualize a musical? Did Lin-Manuel Miranda watch a PBS history series and get the idea for “Hamilton” or did the idea for the show just come to him late one late night before he fell asleep? During the summer of 2019, I had the privilege to work at a theatre in Fort Worth on a new musical. I was playing Jack Frost in the first table read of *Jack Frost* and I learned a lot about the creative process. At times, the creative process can be very shallow. For example, the original concept for *Jack Frost* emerged from the musings of two men in a hot tub... with the help of a little alcohol. In other cases, the creative process develops through research and passion about a particular subject. Lin-Manuel Miranda actually was inspired by reading Ron Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton, which led to the creation of his hit musical. Every show's conception is different. These two cases inspired my Departmental Honors Project. I wanted to understand the creative process of conceptualizing a new musical. To do this, there was only one thing I could do: conceptualize my own musical.

### The Creative Process

Before diving into my journey, I had to use research to inform my own definition of the creative process. I stumbled across some very valuable words by author Betty Edwards. She is known for her best-selling book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, but also a book called *Drawing on the Artist Within* wherein she discusses the creative process. “Every creative journey begins with a problem. It starts with a feeling of frustration, the dull ache of not being able to find the answer. We have worked hard, but we've hit the wall. We have no idea what to do next” (Edwards). Through her words and my individual thoughts on the creative process, I was able to come up with my personal steps to the creative process: Inspiration, Saturation, Incubation,

Illumination, and Verification. As I look back on my journey throughout this project, I stayed true to these five steps. If one does not observe a path of creativity, one can lose sight of the original goal. This path not only led me to my story but is helped me understand Amelia Earhart, the subject of my new musical.

### Inspiration: Subject Matter

The first step of the creative process is inspiration. Inspiration manifests while attempting to solve a problem. The first problem an artist comes across when writing a show is the finding the subject. Albert Einstein once said, “The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old questions from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science”. (Einstein and Infeld). I had no idea what I was going to write about when I first had the idea for this project. I knew I wanted to write a song, and have it related to my major, but that was it. The first inspiration I came across was the hit musical *Hamilton*. What made *Hamilton* successful? The show is surprisingly educational and accurate, but author Lin-Manuel Miranda knew he had to make it appealing to all audiences. In *Hamilton*, the creative team used the casting of minorities and the incorporation of rap and hip hop to reach out to a wider range of individuals and, boy, does it work.

I was intrigued by this idea of retelling the story of a historical figure but with a twist. My first steppingstone was historical figures. I wanted my show to be about someone whose story whose story was not terribly familiar to the general public. This problem would prove harder to solve than I thought. There are surprisingly a lot of interesting stories about Amelia Earhart that aren't frequently told.

I considered writing about the ancient people of Mesopotamia and how their technology was well ahead of their time. How did this civilization fail and where did the survivors go? This initially seemed to be a great idea, but for me, it was a little dated. Additionally, it was about a group of people where we have no specific stories of individuals. Every character would need to be an original creation and source material would be scarce. I put a pin in that idea and moved on.

The first breakthrough in my project was while discussing possible ideas with certain artist friends on the way back from rehearsal. I had a summer theatre job in Dallas last summer and the forty-five-minute drives everyday left lots of time for discussions. Whilst brainstorming, I started talking about these people lost throughout history all meeting together on an island. This definitely drew inspiration from the TV series *LOST* back in the early 2000s. When discussing famous people lost throughout history, there was one person that comes to mind immediately: Amelia Earhart. Everyone my age was taught a short version of her story and disappearance. But as I went further into my research, I learned what we were taught barely scratched the surface.

Other famous missing figures I had considered putting on the island were Glenn Miller, the Lindbergh Baby, and Fred Noonan, who was with Amelia when she went missing. I eagerly took this idea to my honors advisor to see what the next step would be. After discussing the idea and some careful thought, I realized that it was a bit complex and fictional. It could work, but I could also do some research into the nonfiction sides of some of these stories and see if anything grabbed my attention. I quickly realized it was time to narrow my focus and be specific with my choice of subject. The story of Amelia Earhart is legendary, and I was baffled there hasn't been a musical created already about the mystery that surrounded her. I knew that is where my focus

should be: writing about the greatest aviator in the last one hundred years, Amelia Earhart.

Inspiration had been achieved!

### Saturation: Amelia Earhart's Astounding Life

I needed information, as much as I could find. The story of Amelia's disappearance may be a mystery, but the rest of her life is well documented. I started by watching *The Extraordinary Life of Amelia Earhart*, a documentary by David Hamilton. This documentary was perfect for initial information because it focused more on her story and less on her disappearance. Amelia Earhart was born in Atchison, Missouri, on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1897. She had a sister she loved dearly named Grace, although she had a rocky relationship with the rest of her family. Her father Edwin was an alcoholic and they were constantly on the move. While traveling, Amelia saw her first plane in Des Moines, Iowa; however, the vehicle did not appeal to her at all. Not long after that, her parents separated. At the time, marital separation was a lot less common and it really shook up the relationships within their family. Amelia wrote in her high school yearbook that she felt like "the girl who walks alone." Throughout her childhood she kept a scrapbook of famous women, detailing their achievements. This sparked her admiration for accomplished women that would influence her during her professional career.

In 1917, after starting college, Amelia visited her sister in Toronto. Little did she know this visit would change her life forever. Toronto was a base for the wounded soldier who had returned home from World War I. When she heard about the horrors of the war while she talked to soldiers in Toronto, she decided to become a pacifist. "There for the first time, I realized what world war meant. Instead of new uniforms and bass bands, I saw the results of four years, desperate struggles, men without arms and legs, and men who were blind and paralyzed. I would like to stay here and help in the hospital. I can't bear the thought of going back to school and

being so useless” (Earhart 1915). While working as a Red Cross volunteer in a Toronto hospital, she started hearing the exciting tales of pilots who had flown during the war. She was fascinated by these stories and decided to attend an air show. The stories started her fiery passion for flying and the air show added fuel. From here on out, she was hooked on airplanes and there was nothing that would stop her from becoming a pilot.

Her father helped her get inside her first airplane at a show in California. Frank Hawks was the pilot and she joined him for a simple joy hop from one landing strip to another and back. The next step in her grand plan was to get a pilot’s license. Back then, flying lessons cost a dollar a minute. She worked side jobs tirelessly so she could afford to pay for these lessons. She also insisted that her teacher would be a woman, so she worked with one of the only female pilot trainers in the world, Anita Snook. On Amelia’s 25<sup>th</sup> birthday she entered the history books for the first time by becoming the 16<sup>th</sup> woman in the world to get a pilot’s license.

The phone call that changed Amelia’s life came from Hilton H. Railey. He asked her to be the first female passenger to cross the Atlantic. The trip drew a lot of attention in the media and she was named captain of the ship, although it was actually piloted by a man named Wilmer Stultz. After the trip, something was bothering her deep down inside. Her notoriety had started catching on and her name was in the paper a lot more, but she didn’t feel satisfied. She read a newspaper tabloid explaining how she had not piloted the ship and that it was just a social stunt. This really got under her skin. She knew she had to cross the Atlantic as the pilot. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1932, Amelia became the first woman to not only cross the Atlantic but cross it solo. This was a slap in the face to all the naysayers. Eleanor Roosevelt even invited her to the White House for tea. Amelia’s relationship with the First Lady inspired her to champion equal opportunities for women. She created a women’s pilot group called the Ninety-Nines and was famously quoted

saying, “Although women as yet have not taken full advantage of its use and benefits, air travel is as available to them as to men” (Earhart 1937).

It is very important to check in on Amelia’s love life around this time because the way she treats marriage tells a lot about her personality. She married George Palmer Putnam, the man who had found Amelia for Mr. Railey’s Atlantic Ocean stunt. They married after much reluctance from Amelia. Marriage stood against what Amelia believed in, for she didn’t want to be bound to another human being. George courted her for years before she finally made a deal with him. They would be married, but it would be under her terms. She kept her maiden name, which was very uncommon at the time, and she wore her wedding band for a total of five minutes during the ceremony and never put it on again.

Amelia went on to set many records during her career as an aviator. She was the first woman to fly over the Pacific Ocean, first woman to fly non-stop coast to coast, first woman to fly solo from Los Angeles to Mexico City, first woman to fly from the Red Sea to India, and she beat her own record for nonstop transcontinental speed record. All these achievements led her to attempt the unthinkable. She wanted to be the first person to fly around the world following the equator. Men have done it while hugging the northern hemisphere, but her flight path near the equator would easily be the longest distance anyone had flown.

For this daring attempt, Amelia would need the best navigators in the field. Fred Noonan and Captain Harry Manning were brought onboard for her cross-world flight in her Lockheed Electra. They flew to Hawaii with no problems. They planned to fly west around the globe. However, their plan changed after an unexpected accident while departing Hawaii. The Lockheed Electra broke down as they attempted to leave the runway. There were no injuries, but this significantly delayed their trip. Due to this delay, Captain Harry Manning had to leave the

team to fulfill other obligations. The loss of Captain Harry Manning would have a big impact because he specialized in the use of the Bendix Direction Finding Loop Antenna, a new technology at the time. This device might have helped the plane find its landing spot near the end of its trip. Another change caused by the crash in Hawaii was the direction they would fly. Due to shifting directions of global winds, they now had to fly to the east across the globe instead of the west. This meant they would restart their trip in Florida and their flight would end with a leap over the Pacific Ocean, not start with it.

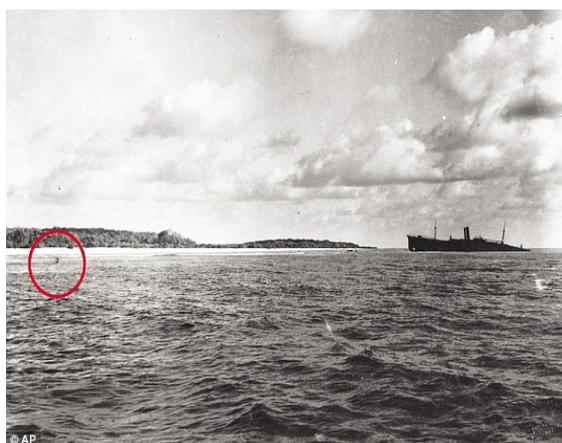
The trip went smoothly all the way until the end. Earhart and Noonan had successfully flown from Florida to Lae, New Guinea. After Lae, their last stop before reaching Hawaii would be Howland Island. Howland Island is a very small island in the Pacific on which the U.S. Navy had built a landing strip specifically for Amelia's flight. The naval boat, the *U.S.S. Itasca*, was waiting to assist Amelia and Noonan near the island. As they got closer to where they believed the island was, they realized they were off course. Due to technical difficulties, the *Itasca* could hear Amelia, but Amelia could not hear them. The *Itasca* helplessly heard Amelia's last transmission on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937. Her last confirmed word was "wait." Her husband George Palmer Putman and the U.S. Navy spent \$4,000,000 on an unsuccessful search and rescue mission. The mystery of her disappearance was never solved.

#### Incubation: Amelia Earhart's Disappearance

With so much information on Amelia's story, the ball was now in my court. I could take this musical in any direction. The challenge was deciding the right one. Mike Skocko, a teacher in California, describes this section of the creative process as a "searching for a solution, trial and error. Brainstorming. Here is where imagination and intuition play their part" (Skocko). I had to find an intriguing way to portray this story through original thought. My trial and error came

from me pitching ideas to other creatives in my field. Would I focus on her crash and death? Would I focus on her life and end with the crash? Or should I focus on theories about what happened after the crash? Theories seemed like the best option because uncertainty is always intriguing. There are many interesting theories regarding the disappearance. The most widely accepted one is that, due to complications, she crashed in the open ocean and perished. Some theorize the flight around the world was an elaborate scheme to spy on the Japanese. Others say that she wasn't spying on Japan, but their military still took her prisoner when they found her after the crash. She would have been held on the island of Saipan. Investigators reference an old photo buried in the National Archives for nearly eighty years that apparently depicts Amelia and Noonan days after their disappearance on that island.

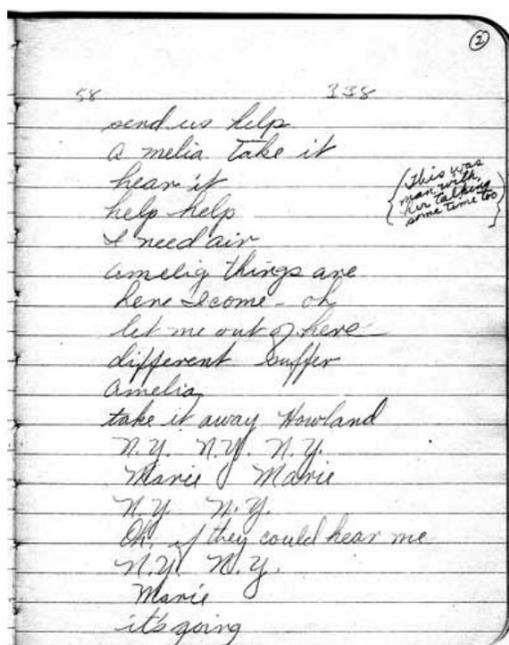
The theory that stood out to me above the rest was that she had landed safely on an adjacent island to Howland Island called Gardner Island (now called Nikumaroro). This theory stood out because it has a good amount of evidence behind it. It all starts with "The Bevington Photo." A photo taken by Eric Bevington, a British Colonial officer in October, 1937. The young officer took the picture as the naval vessel he was on scouted near the island. He did not realize what was in the bottom corner of the frame. After digital enhancement, researchers found its shape was consistent with the landing gear of Amelia's Lockheed Electra (Cohn, figures 1 & 2).



In 1937, a search pilot reported he saw recent signs of habitation on the island, but nobody waved him down, so he left the island. Little did he know the island had been uninhabited for forty years prior to the search. This report and the photo were enough to get The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR) to send expeditions to search the island.

There are many reasons why this island makes sense as a crash spot for Amelia. One of Earhart's last transmissions stated, "We are running on line 157-337... We are running on line-". It is likely that overcast conditions prevented Noonan from using the stars to navigate at night, but he was able to use the sun during the day to find out which line they were on. Amelia's last transmission told them that they were on the same line longitudinal as their intended destination, Howland Island, but could be anywhere north or south of the island, though on the same line. If you follow the 157-337 line south of Howland Island, you find Gardner Island.

The last bit of evidence is rather haunting. Betty Klenck was fifteen years old when Amelia went missing. She lived in St. Petersburg, Florida, and her family owned a Zenith 1000Z Stratosphere radio, one of the most capable and powerful consumer radios available on the market at the time. Betty would listen to random conversations of people on the radio and would write them down in her notebook. The day Amelia crashed, Betty claimed she had heard a transmission from Amelia a couple hours after the *Itasca* lost contact with the aviator. Many people claimed they heard Amelia on the radio throughout the world, although most claims were believed to be untrue. What made Betty's account stand out is her notebook. Below is a picture of one of the pages. (Hruska, figure 3)



Line 1 58 338 **AE**  
 Line 2 send us help **AE**  
 Line 3 Amelia take it **Man**  
 Line 4 hear it  
 Line 5 help help  
 Line 6 I need air  
 Line 7 Amelia things are  
 Line 8 here I come - oh **in here he complained of his head**  
 Line 9 let me out of here  
 Line 10 different suffer  
 Line 11 Amelia  
 Line 12 take it away Howland **in here they were both on radio**  
 Line 13 N.Y. N.Y. N.Y.  
 Line 14 Marie Marie  
 Line 15 N.Y. N.Y.  
 Line 16 Oh, if they could hear me  
 Line 17 N.Y. N.Y.  
 Line 18 Marie **AE**  
 Line 19 It's going

This was  
man with  
her talking  
some time too.

This was all written down before any news of Amelia's disappearance made it to the front pages of the newspapers. Additionally, in the later pages of her notebook, Betty wrote down that Amelia said she had to leave the plane because the tide was rising. The time at which Betty wrote that sentence down in Florida corresponded to the exact time the tide was rising on Gardner Island. What confused researchers was the repeating "N.Y. N.Y. N.Y.". Betty claimed she kept hearing "New York City," which wouldn't make a lot of sense. However, on Gardner Island, a tramp steamer ran aground a couple years prior to Amelia's crash called the *Norwich City*. "Norwich City" over a long-distance radio could easily be confused with "New York City."

As years passed, additional evidence has been found on Gardner Island. In 2012, an empty jar of freckle cream, the brand Amelia preferred, was found on the island by a team of researchers with TIGHAR. The fact that Amelia had freckles was known by everyone and so was the brand of freckle cream she used. The evidence led to more speculation. In 2014, Robert Ballard, the man who found the *RMS Titanic*, led a search to Nikumaroro (Gardner Island) to find some physical evidence of the crash. He was able to find the most recent piece of physical evidence. A piece of scrap metal that has the same "fingerprint" (Hruska) as custom-made

aluminum sheets that replaced some windows on Amelia's Lockheed Electra. This explanation for Amelia's disappearance is easily the most enticing and doesn't seem to be based solely on speculation. All this evidence was the solution to my problem. It helped me find the twist that would make the concept for my musical interesting. The show had to include her time on Gardner Island! I ran the idea through a couple of my peers. Their immediate interest confirmed my belief that this story was worth telling. I was illuminated! It was time to start conceptualizing a production.

### Illumination: Putting Pencil to Paper

I was on the right track. I decided my plot would include Amelia's time on Nikumaroro island, but also cover her life before that because that story is too fascinating to overlook. I didn't want to write a survival musical, but instead an inspiring musical that included an intriguing take on the end of her life. Her influence on female aviators and women in general would also be a main focal point. And finally, I had to make sure I did not create a rip-off version of the TV show *LOST*. In an ideal world, at this step in the process, I would begin collaboration. I believe it is important to tell stories from different perspectives. If I were to continue to write the book for this musical, I would want to work with a woman, so that we could collaborate on Amelia's influence as a feminist and her struggles as a woman growing up in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In theatre, splitting up music, book, and lyrics is common. With my concept, collaboration would benefit the content. All this being said, for my final concept, I still came up with a specific idea for the story.

### The Plot

- The story begins right after Amelia's first passenger flight across the Atlantic.

- The first scene occurs between Amelia and Eleanor Roosevelt after the First Lady invites her to the White House. The song I wrote would happen throughout this scene.
- The first act would follow Amelia's life rather closely lead up to the crash.
- Major characters would consist of Fred Noonan, George Palmer Putnam, Amelia's Father, Captain Manning, Amelia Earhart, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Amelia's first flight lesson teacher, Anita Snook.
- George Palmer Putnam asks Amelia on their first date. She initially says no. This scene contains a comedic duet between George and Amelia entitled *A Hop, Skip, and a Jump* where George uses flight terminology to relate to a possible relationship.
- Amelia reads the tabloid devaluing her passenger flight across the Atlantic while she is with her father. He recalls their first airshow together and helps Amelia get the confidence to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Amelia's father sings a solo in this section entitled *Memories of Newport*. Her father sings about their time spent together watching planes and how proud he was to have raised her to be ambitious.
- George Palmer Putnam successfully goes on a date with Amelia.
- Eleanor Roosevelt and Amelia start the Ninety-Nines group and discuss gender inequality. This scene contains a comedic duet called *Ninety-Nine Bottles a Beer with no Men* where the two women point out how much they accomplish while away from their husbands.
- George Palmer Putnam marries Amelia. Amelia asks to keep her last name and takes the wedding band off after the ceremony.
- Amelia and her pilot instructor Anita discuss flying across the world and Amelia goes to tell her father, but he has passed away.

- Fred Noonan, Captain Manning, and Amelia come together to fly across the world. Here is the first major group song. All members of the cast will sing *Amelia Reprise* where they point out the risks of Amelia's journey while Amelia doubles down on her intentions to set the record for longest flight.
- They crash in Hawaii and Captain Manning leaves the team.
- At the end of Act 1, Fred Noonan and Amelia successfully fly around most of the world until they start to crash. Her famous last transmission "wait" will be heard and we will see panic ensue. As Amelia yells "Mayday", stage lights fade to black and the intermission begins.
- Act 2 would begin flipping between Amelia's days on Nikumaroro island and the other characters' struggles and reactions to the news of her disappearance. A group song called *Where is Amelia* occurs where the rumors of her disappearance spread fast.
- As Amelia struggles to send transmissions from the broken plane, we will see Betty Klenck listening to Amelia on her radio in Florida.
- Amelia and the injured Fred Noonan search the island for shelter.
- George Palmer Putnam and Eleanor Roosevelt initiate one of the largest search and rescue missions of all time. George Palmer Putnam sings a solo called *Little Bit of Hope* where he clings to the small chance that the navy will be able to find Amelia.
- Amelia and her husband George Palmer Putnam sing a duet from different sides of the Earth about their lost time together in *Little Bit of Hope Reprise*.
- Amelia and Noonan spot a search plane flying nearby and they frantically attempt to get the plane's attention. They are unsuccessful.

- In an emotional scene, Amelia and Fred Noonan get frustrated with each other on the island. If their position in the Pacific had indeed been miscalculated, it would have been the fault of navigator Fred Noonan. In this scene, Noonan asks Amelia if she blames him for the crash. She does not answer immediately. Things get very tense and they both break down sobbing. The event weakens Noonan (who is already injured) and he begins to die. Amelia comforts him and tells him she never blamed him as he takes his last breath. Amelia sings a short sad song entitled *Aviators Lullaby* to Mr. Noonan before he dies. By the end of the song, he is dead.
- The musical now focuses solely on Amelia and her struggles and fear of dying during her last days.
- The ghosts of her mom and dad come down to comfort her and remind her of the good she did for the world as she passes on to the next life. The three of them sing a trio song entitled *Remembering Amelia*. At the end of their trio, lights fade to black. End of Act 2 and the musical.

### The Song

The sample I created for this project was the opening song of the show. In many cases, the opening number of a show is a big group number. In my production, I want it to start with a solo sung by Amelia. I figured this is a good way to introduce the title character to the audience. I would be happy to add in the rest of the cast as backup vocals at certain sections; but for now, the only vocalist in the song is Amelia. The title of the song is “My Own Way.” I chose this title because Amelia was one of the first female aviators. When it comes to success, usually there has been a previous trailblazer that helped guide the way. This was not the case for Amelia. Amelia had to create her own path, her own way, and that led me to my title.

The song is structured in a “ABABCB” pattern. “Part A” refers to a verse, “Part B” refers to a chorus, and “part C” refers to a bridge. This is a very common writing style and mirrors popular songs like “What’s Love Got to DO With it” by Tina Turner and “Hot N Cold” by Katy Perry.

The song starts with instrumentals as the lights come up on the stage. In the age of modern technology, I would like to have projections of newspaper articles about Amelia and old footage of flights all along the backdrop. Amelia speaks a short monologue where she introduces her name, where she was born, and her dream. Then the song would begin.

### My Musical Background

My background in music greatly enhanced my ability to write this song. I started playing piano when I was seven years old. It was my mom’s idea at the time and originally I wasn’t too interested. As time passed, I kept up the lessons and got a new teacher that I really enjoyed. I then began to take the practice seriously and learned some impressive skills. I was trained classically and was not even familiar with the musical theatre style of music until many years later. I ended up playing piano for a total of eight years. I never really delved into the composition side of piano before this project. I played violin in orchestra for three years in middle school and messed around on the ukulele in college. I have a good understanding of music theory, but have never applied it to writing songs until this project. One of the best pieces of advice I heard on composition was from a biography about the famous musical theatre composer Stephen Sondheim. During an interview, Sondheim said that he listens to obscure Russian symphonies before he starts writing. This helps him get any previous tunes out of his head while still creating an artistic atmosphere. I followed this tip every time I worked on my song.

### The Story of the Lyrics

For this section, reference the excerpt below and the full song found in the appendix to find the discussed lyrics and measures. In my concept, this song's purpose is to let the audience get a taste of Amelia's passion for flying. The song does not forward any major plot points other than allowing Amelia to realize she wants to fly across the world. In measure 23, Amelia describes soaring through the sky as "a sensational feeling I can't deny." As audience members, we see Amelia's drive and understand the influence that flying had on her. Beginning in measure 27, the lyrics read "they told me girls should just shy away, I told them I will make my own way!" This references the earlier parts of Amelia's career when she was laughed at for her ambition as a woman. In measure 58, there is an intentional *double entendre*. Amelia sings, "The longest flight that man's ever known." The word "man" references all of mankind, as in the phrase "The dawn of man," but also references the fact that she will fly further than any male has ever flown. The final lyric I would like to point out is a rather sad bit of irony. In measure 67-68 Amelia sings "Up here in these skies, I know I'm alive." This references the most romantically tragic part about her death: she died doing what she loved. I could not have written these lyrics without my extensive research. I was able to understand Amelia as much as I could without ever knowing her. That made all the difference.

### Challenges in Writing the Song

I encountered many challenges while writing this piece. Writers block affects composers just as much as it affects book authors. My first challenge was writing music for a character whose sex was different from my own. I had to do additional research to find key signatures that worked well in a woman's singing voice. I was able to collaborate with some other artists and get their input on the subject. The note at the end of the song is a high G and it can be challenging to

sing, but I have confirmed with a couple trusted female vocalists that it can be done. Another challenge I ran into was creating a bridge. Earlier, I described the structure of the song and the bridge I am referencing is “Part C.” It stands out from the song because it typically has a different sound or feeling than the rest of the piece. Writer Natalie Smith describes the bridge as “a musical departure that stirs great interest.” (Smith) The bridge to my song begins at the highlighted section.

The musical quality shifts from a “driving steady” beat to flowing arpeggios. This shift allows Amelia to take a moment inward and discover her desire to fly around the world. The other sections of the song are fast and strong, but the bridge is not. This allows the audience to lean in a little and gives the actress playing Amelia a chance to be vulnerable.

### Verification: The Last Ten Percent

Betty Edwards describes this step in the process as “taking it that final 10% after you think you’re finished, boldly going where few students have gone before” (Edwards). For my concept, this included editing the song, so it looked like a published piece of music and finding performers to sample my work.

Editing the song required that I learned the rules of musical notation. I filled my sheet music with symbols, lines, and breaks that would allow a pianist to play my music in the way I

intended it to be played. I had to add pedaling marks to the bridge that would slur the sound, creating a flow that contrasts the chorus. I made sure to add crescendos that would tell the pianist and vocalist to bring a louder, fuller sound to the conclusion of the song. In complex sections of the song, I had to adjust the beaming of the notes to clarify rhythms that could possibly confuse the pianist. If this song was ever used at an audition, it would be the pianist's first time seeing the music. The notation needs to be easily read.

The last step of my process was to have performers sample my work. Unfortunately, the outbreak of Covid-19 made this rather difficult. I originally planned to have a student vocalist and pianist demonstrate my song at the end of the semester. Unfortunately, with social distancing, this did not happen. I am still determined to see my work on its feet, so I have been working around this obstacle. I have made an instrumental of the song and sent it to a close friend of mine who attends Utah State University. She is going to perform the song on camera and upload it to YouTube. This will allow my peers and me to see the sample. This section of the process is still ongoing, but I hope to have it up very soon.

#### Conclusion: What's Next?

My work is far from done. I still believe Amelia Earhart deserves more recognition in our schools, our books, and our theatres. The goal for all concepts is to turn into a concrete product. With a plot list and a song, I am well equipped to continue writing *Amelia*. By reflecting on my process over the last year, I also have a better understanding of the effort and discipline needed to create original works. My next step is to learn to write music for an ensemble by creating harmonies, different vocal lines, and utilizing proper notation practices to clearly articulate my ideas. It will also be a challenge developing these characters. An audience builds unique relationships with the characters of a good musical. This is done through careful crafting of the

characters inner life. I imagine George Palmer Putnam radiating love, Anita Snook radiating sass, Noonan radiating intellect, and Amelia emitting passion. There is much more work to be done if I want those feelings to transmit on a stage. All this being said, I am grateful to have learned so much about such an impactful woman while completing this project. One day, I hope to see Amelia Earhart's name on the marquees of many theatres across the globe.

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The Appendix

Sheet Music:

from the musical "Amelia"

# MY OWN WAY

Music and Lyrics by Ryan Caviola

Steady, driving Tempo ♩ = 120

5

9 Amelia: "My name is Amelia Earhart, I was born in..."

*mf*

*p*

19 Cue - Amelia: "it felt like a calling."

Musical score for measures 19-22. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a melodic phrase: "Soar-ing high in the end-less sky". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) starts with a piano (*mp*) dynamic. The lyrics are: "Soar-ing high in the end-less sky A sen-

Musical score for measures 23-26. The vocal line continues with: "sat-ion-al feel-ing I can't de-ny. They told me". The piano accompaniment continues with chords and some melodic movement. The lyrics are: "sat-ion-al feel-ing I can't de-ny. They told me

Musical score for measures 27-30. The vocal line continues with: "girls should just shy a-way, I told them I will make my own way! I know". The piano accompaniment features a piano (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics are: "girls should just shy a-way, I told them I will make my own way! I know

31

I will change this game. They will know my name: A - me - li - a.

*f*

35

Step one cross the At - lan - tic Sea

*mp*

39

Up next I meet the first la - dy It's time to

43

push the lim - its and go For-get the rules I think I can show That

*mf*

47

I can be the best. What's next? What's the test? For A-me - li - a

*f*

51

I need to fly a -

*p*

55

round - the world The long - est flight that man's ev - er known!

59

I know that

*ff*

63

there's head-lines I can change. They'll say I have made my own way! Be-cause

67

up here in these skies, I know I'm a-live. I'm A - me - li -

71

a!

*fff*

Audio Link: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fe1Y56rd6f\\_tIzoEIQ4J5yQNKQ23ifUB](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fe1Y56rd6f_tIzoEIQ4J5yQNKQ23ifUB)