

Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session
Monday, August 19, 2019

The Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session was held in the conference room of Congregation Beth Israel on Monday, August 19th from 6:59 to 9:51 pm, MST (musician's standard time). We had twelve attendees and heard eleven wonderful works.

We started the meeting with a brief discussion (and ensuing *optional* challenge for next month) to control a verse's motion with three identically-stressed lines and a fourth line with a different amount of stresses.

Michael Stinson started the critique session with his newest tune, entitled "Hiding Place" which was a direct-address song to his wife about hesitating to commit to a relationship. This well-written song had a number of nice hooks and was memorable. Comments from the listeners were minor and included some possible lyric phrasing changes. Thanks, Michael!

Michael R. J. Roth (visiting from Albuquerque, NM) played his guitar and sang, "The Price Of A Song", a vividly descriptive (and reminiscent of Leonard Cohen) account of what songwriters must endure to have their music consumed by the public. Suggestions included a potentially interesting change of turning the first verse into the chorus. Wonderful work, Michael – thanks for joining us – come back soon!

Stewart Moser played his 1940s Gretsch and sang "Eat, Drink, And Be Merry", another commentary on the state of our presidency, describing how some ignore society's decay. Stewart nicely used small phrases in his verses and comments were very positive with only a few minor lyric and melodic tweaks. Thanks, Stewart!

John Stearle played a recording of his hilarious song "Fart Etiquette", providing (perhaps *too many*) details in John's Adam Sandler voice. The vivid descriptions generated a lot of laughter – especially the different voices/musical styles that John included. Suggestions were few but included simplifying the lyrics just a bit to shorten the song. We're still laughing, John!

India Taylor played a recording of her song "Flow With The Go", which described the singer's beliefs concerning confronting issues. Once again, India's use of wonderful internal rhymes was excellent and listeners comments included some minor melodic and lyric changes, with some verse rethinking. Great work, India!

Richard Paul Thomas played guitar and sang his song "She Cried", a heartfelt description of a long-past relationship and feeling sad about its circumstances. Comments from the group included come clarification (point of view and tense) as well as options for the chorus location. Very nice, Richard - thanks!

Kent and Tina Franklin (visiting from northern Virginia) played/sang "Under These Stars", a sweet tune (wonderfully sung by Tina with great guitar work by Kent) describing the reasons for a broken relationship and longing. Great prosody and a wonderful bridge. Comments were very positive and welcome to Austin, Kent and Tina – thanks for joining us – come back soon!!

Aaron Clift brought a rough demo recording of his song "Bet on Zero", which described difficulties with a gambling metaphor. Aaron's vocals were impressive and added great depth. It'll be interesting to hear the big band version of this! The group suggested some lyric possibilities as well as point of view. Great start, Aaron!

Joe Strouse brought a recording of his most recent tune, "Thoughtfully Seeking Susan", a lament about reconnecting with a childhood friend. While this song employed the July optional challenge, group suggestions included some small lyric changes to support the impact of the bridge.

Songsmith-Salado regular, David Davenport, played his song "Let The Child Grow", which described difficulties between a veteran and civilian life, namely, adjusting to civilian life. Comments included some verse re-writing, verse order, and some melodic possibilities for the third verse lines. Great work, David!

Long-absent Susanna Lee completed the session with an a cappella version of her recently-written song entitled "Almost 40", which described the singer's angst and lamentation about how quickly time has passed in her life. Comments from the group included detailing descriptions in the verses as well as some minor chorus work. Nice, Susanna – welcome back!

As always, the Songsmith - Austin monthly critique session meets on the third Monday of each month in the most excellent and spacious conference room at Congregation Beth Israel, 3901 Shoal Creek Blvd, Austin, TX 78756. It's located on Shoal Creek Blvd, just north of 38th Street (near Central Market, Seton Hospital, etc...), and just west of Lamar. Our next session is Monday September 16th. We hope you can join us!