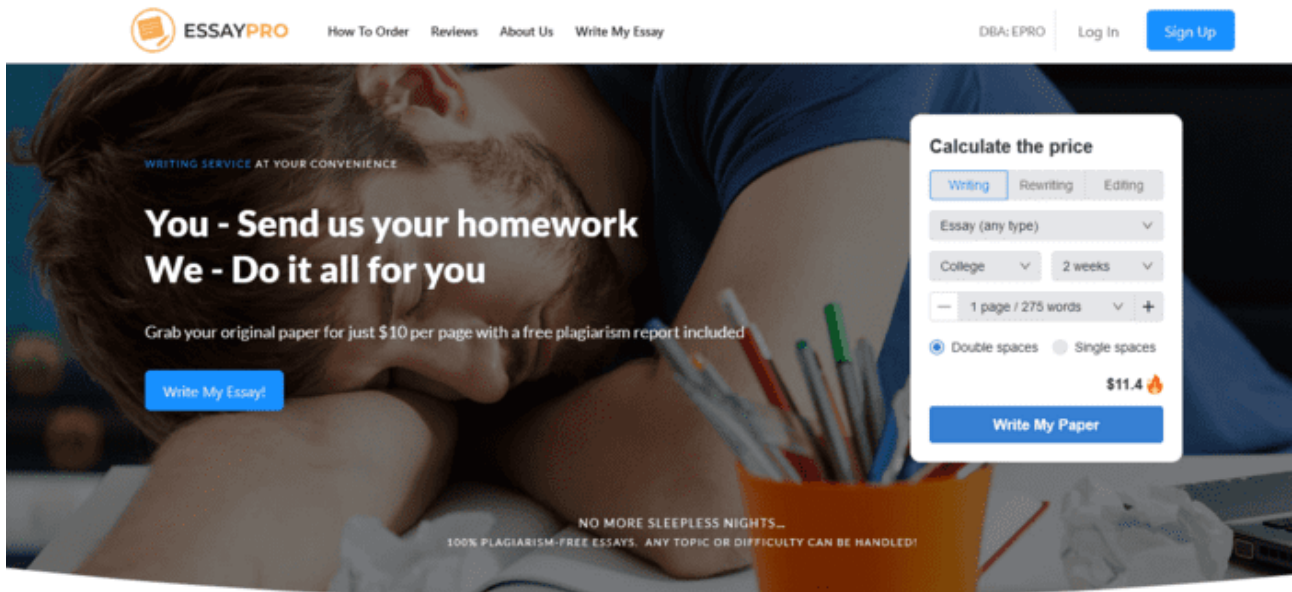


# Music as Substance and Form in Grace Notes



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## Music as Substance and Form in Grace Notes

In the novel *Grace Notes* by Bernard MacLaverty, Catherine's growth as an artist through the story provides both substance and form to the story.

Early on in Catherine's life, she was taught and influenced by the people close to her. Miss Bingham was her first formal teacher. She taught [Catherine](#) things she seemed to have known beforehand: "Miss Bingham says it's all inside her head and all she has to do is draw it out" (99). Miss Bingham also gave Catherine her first manuscript jotter, taking her on her way to becoming a [composer](#). Catherine's family was also a big influence. Granny Boyd taught Catherine songs they would sing in "the rounds of the kitchen" (145). In contrast to Miss Bingham and Granny Boyd, it seems as if her father wanted to have more control over her music interest. When listening to the Lambeg drums, her father called it "Sheer bloody bigotry" (258), yet Catherine thought it interesting with the complex rhythms. The strongest influences on Catherine, as with most children, come at an early age, and for Catherine this all happens in her home town.

There are also outside influences on Catherine's development as an artist. Catherine first

saw Huang Xiao Gang at a composition workshop at the university. Huang talked about "pre-hearing and inner hearing" (33), and other ways of thinking of music in very non-western methods. Catherine remembers the 'pre-hearing' and 'inner hearing' quite a few times later, when she has ideas about music. Catherine also learns while visiting the composer Anatoli Melnichuck in Kiev. She does not actually learn directly from Melnichuck, but learns about things when she is there. When she visits the Refectory church she hears the bells in the bell tower, making a reverberating "Tintinnabulation" (124). Catherine as well hears the monks in the church [singing](#). The singing came without warning, "it was not sacred singing - there was a lightness to it" (125). The singing there at the Refectory church reminded her of Granny Boyd singing 'The Bell Doth Toll'. The outside influences in Catherine's life gave some contrast and some interesting aspects to her music.

The influences and teachings in her life all come together to create Vernicle, which is played for the BBC at the end of the novel. Her music comes in two parts, like "the bilateral symmetry of a scallop shell" (273).

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