Music Department Composition Handbook

Name	
Form	
Form Room	
Learning Coach	

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Welcome to the GCSE Music Composition Handbook. In this booklet you will find useful information which will help you plan and develop your work.

You will find:

- Lots of useful advice on composing techniques
- Planning sheets to help you plan your work effectively
- Musical conventions used by the composers of your set works
- Short projects to get you started. These are based on the 4 different Areas of Study
- Advice as to what the examiners are looking for in your work

Getting Started.....

Virtually every piece of music we listen to has the same core features:

- A planned structure
- A steady pulse which might change at some point in the piece
- A tune of some description
- An accompaniment

To create these core features, it is wise to have a plan. There are composition plan templates at the back of this handbook. You must use these to plan each of the 12 composition tasks, as well as for your final two compositions that will be submitted to Edexcel.

Structures in Composition

If a piece of music is to make sense and feel logical it must have a structure. This is what holds it together. In order to give your music structure it is necessary to decide on a *compositional form* that is appropriate to your compositional idea.

There are FIVE main types of *compositional form* you can use to create your pieces:

AB - Binary Form

Binary structure is a song with two contrasting sections. For example, Section A could be fast and B could be slow: two opposite/contrasting ideas in one piece of music.

There should be something that links the two sections together so they are obviously part of the same song e.g. the same motif/riff but performed in contrasting ways.

ABA - Ternary Form

This is a satisfying music form because it finishes in the same way as it starts i.e. Section A is repeated at the end. It 'rounds off' the piece.

Either Section A is repeated exactly after contrasting Section B has happened or it can be slightly developed and varied from its original but still contrasts with Section B.

AoS 1 - Chopin

ABACADAE...etc - Rondo Form

This music form has the use of repetition. The A section is the regularly repeated; it can either be a straight repeat or a variation every time A happens. The variations must ensure the audience can still recognise them as Section A. Sections BCDE etc must contrast with Section A.

AoS 2 - Schoenberg

A,A,A,A,A...etc - Ground Bass Form

This is a form that is more traditionally used within music from the Baroque era (1600-1750). It will usually consist of an 8-bar Bass line that is heard continually throughout the piece of music. This would traditionally be performed on a cello/lute, however, in a more modern setting the composer could chose to perform it on any low-pitched instrument.

Intro, A, B, A, B, instrumental, B, Coda...- Verse/Chorus Form

This is a very common form to use when structuring modern, commercial sounding music. The A section acts as a verse and can be varied each time it appears, with the B section representing a type of chorus-this will usually be an exact repeat each time. The instrumental in the middle will often use motifs/ideas directly from the chorus, but make it sound more virtuosic (showing-off).

AOS 3 - Jeff Buckley AoS 4 - Capercaillie

Writing a Melody

The character of a melody is shaped by its rhythm, pitches, overall form and pace.

Good melodies are:

- Singable!
- Mainly made up of stepwise movement, with occasional leaps.
- The total range is no more than an 1½ octaves (e.g.: middle C up to the G).



- ightharpoonup Use repetition.
- → 34 of the way through, the music comes to a high point and then subsides.
- Usually constructed of balanced melodic phrases, made up of pairs or four. Four bar phrases are usually in an arch-shape, where the highest point is reached in the third phrase. They can be based on a short motif which is either extended or contrasted.

Musical Phrases

When composing a piece which uses diatonic harmony, a musical phrase is like a spoken sentence. When a person talks, they take a breath after each sentence. With a musical phrase, you can almost hear a 'breath' at the end of the phrase, even when the music is played by non-wind instruments.

Scales

There are many scales on which melodies can be written. Here are a few for you to experiment with.



Minor Scale



Major Pentatonic Scale



Minor Pentatonic Scale



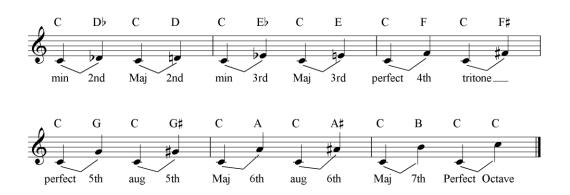
Whole tone scale





Melodic Intervals

The distance between the notes in any melody or tune are measured as so:



Another few things to consider using.....

- A *hook* is a short catchy melodic idea designed to be instantly memorable. (Ear worm!)
- A *fill* is a short flourish used to fill a gap between phrases and is often played on drums.
- A *break* is an extended instrumental section in dance music or a solo in pop and jazz, usually improvised.
- Ornaments are decorative notes which embellish a melody and make it sound more complicated.

Melodic Examples

Look at 'Greensleeves'. The notes mostly move by step, and the leaps are ones with strong harmonic implications.

GREENSLEEVES

Trascrizione di Stefano Cucchi info@questionidiarmonia.com



The melody from the piece 'Schlindlers' List' by John Williams is a good example of a very well-written melodic line with deliberate leaps in the melody at particularly expressive moments.

THEME FROM "SCHINDLER'S LIST"

By JOHN WILLIAMS



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Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' has a noble quality – again related to the use of stepwise and angular movement within the melody.



'Pink Panther' by Henry Mancini is distinctive because of both the pitches and rhythms used:

Theme Song From The Mirisch-G&E Production, THE PINK PANTHER, A United Artists Release

THE PINK PANTHER



©1963 (Renewed 1991) NORTHRIDGE MUSIC CO. and EMI U CATALOG INC.

The folk song, *Sing of Mary, pure and lowly*, uses typical repetition in the first, second and fourth phrase, with the third being the highest point of the melody. It slowly extends the range of notes outlined in each of the four phrases – and the melody has a down-up direction.



She Moved Through the Fair



A good way to write melody is to start with a short, memorable motif which can be repeated, manipulated or contrasted to form a phrase. Motifs are also useful to use for other ideas later in the piece. She moved through the fair is a good example of a variety of contours (direction of shape)

Chords and Inversions

Music contains notes in succession (a melody) and notes in combination (chords). When notes are played together at the same time, it is called harmony.

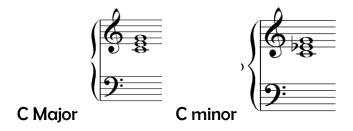
Chords

Three or more notes sounding together are known as a chord.

Triads

A triad is a chord of three notes. For example, C - E - G is the C major triad. C is the root note, E is the 3rd note of the scale, and G is the 5th.

The two main kinds of triad are called major and minor. The major triad has a major 3rd (e.g. C - E - G) and the minor triad has a minor 3rd (eg C - E flat - G).



Tonic, dominant and subdominant chords

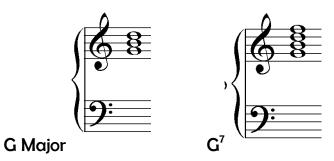
In any major key, the chords built on the first, fourth and fifth degrees of the scale are all major. In the key of C, these are the chords of C, F and G. They are also sometimes called I, IV and V (for the chord built on the first note of the scale, I, is called the **tenic**. The chord built on the fourth IV is called the **subdominant** and the V is called the **dominant**. These chords are also known as the first, fourth and fifth degrees of the scale, and are known as the Primary chords.

All the chords built on other notes in the scale of C are minor, except chord VII (the notes B D F) which is **diminished**. Chords ii, iii and vi are known as the Secondary chords.

Extended Chords

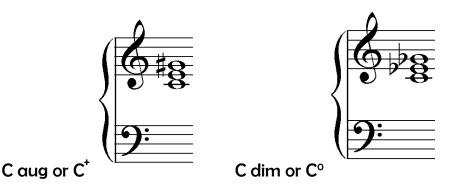
When a triad has notes added to it, it becomes an extended chord. For example, when a seventh is added to a chord this is known as a seventh chord. The dominant seventh of a V chord can be shown by the symbol V^7 .

For example G^7 is made by taking the major triad of G(G-B-D) and adding an F(G-B-D-F).



Altered Chords

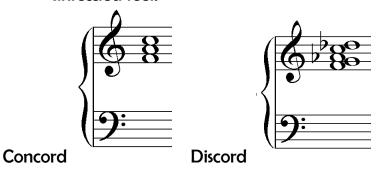
These can either be just triads or more complex extended chords. To become an altered chord, one of the main notes is altered, usually sharpened to become an augmented chord, or flattened to become a diminished chord. So, to turn a major triad into an augmented chord, C-E-G (C major) becomes C-E-G# (C aug or C⁺). It is made up of two major 3rds on top of each other. For a chord to become diminished, C-E-G becomes C-Eb-Gb, (C dim or C^o two minor 3rds on top of each other.



Types of chord

A concord is a chord where all the notes seem to 'agree' with each other, it feels at rest and complete in itself.

A discord is a chord where some notes seem to 'disagree' or clash giving an unsettled feel.



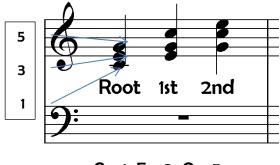
Type of harmony created by the use of chords

Diatonic harmony uses notes which belong to the key. (Handel and Mozart) Chromatic harmony uses notes from outside the key to give the chords more 'colour'. (Chopin)

Atonal harmony is when there is no tonal centre. There is no key signature and no use of chords I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi vii° (Schoenberg)

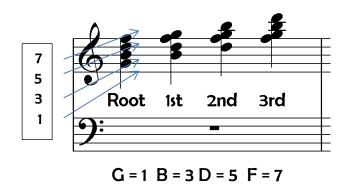
Inversions

Once the harmony has been planned out, the chords can be manipulated into different voicings. Voicing is when the notes of the chord are re-arranged into an alternative order from that of the triad. They can be in root position, 1st, 2nd and 3rd inversions. See from the example below. Note that the 3rd inversion can only be used in extended chords.



C=1 E=3 G=5

Normal triad inversions



Extended triad inversions

Accompaniments

There are many different ways of using a chord sequence to accompany a melody. Once the notes in the chosen chords are known, it is easy to arrange them in a variety of ways to create an appropriate accompaniment.

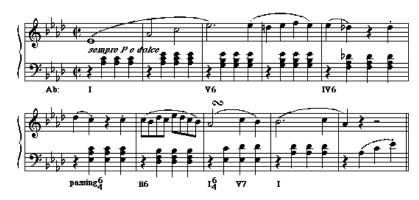
First of all, there are a number of things to consider.....

- Plan who is going to be the soloist/instrument(s) with the tune. The instrument/voice determines the range and overall sound of the music. Avoid voicing the chords too high for a female vocalist, upper woodwind/strings, or it will clash with the piano, guitar or other instrument.
- Look at the shape of the melody line in the music to determine whether the melody moves at a slow or fast pace.
- Harmonize the melody of the piece. Place chords underneath the melody in order to out-line the melody throughout the piece.
- Determine the rhythm of the bass line. Consider whether the bass line is a slow rhythm that supports movement in the middle voices or whether the bass line does something faster and more rhythmic.
- Make the overall accompaniment represent the dynamic integrity of the melody. Create a loud accompaniment for a melody voice that gets loud, and create a soft accompaniment where the melody voice gets soft. Match the dynamics of the melody throughout the piece.

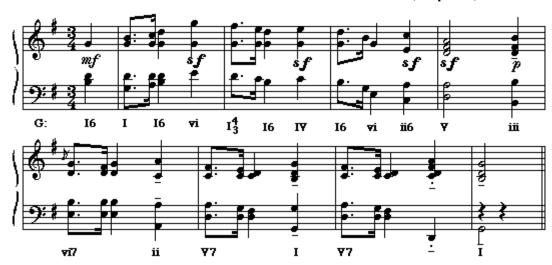
Accompaniment patterns

There are many ways a melody or tune can be accompanied. Here are just a few examples of what they can look like.

Repeated Chords - Beethoven's Piano Sonata, op. 2, no. 1, mvt. IV.



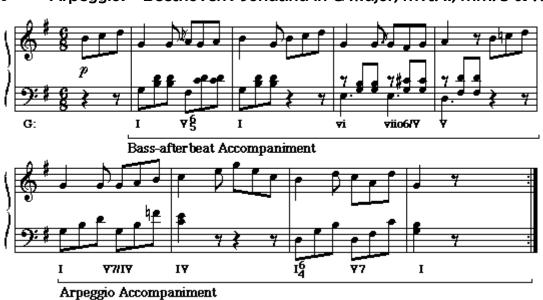
Block Chords - Mendelssohn's "Kinderstück," op. 72, no. 1.



Alberti Bass – Mozart Piano Sonata in C major K545

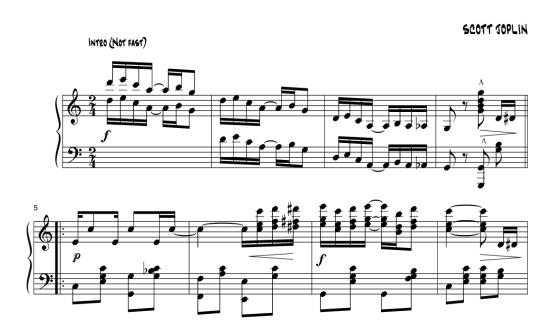


Arpeggios - Beethoven's Sonatina in G Major, mvt. II, mm. 5 & 7.



Stride Chords − S. Joplin, The Entertainer

THE ENTERTAINER



Oom cha cha Chords - L. Bart Oom-Pah-Pah from Oliver

Oom-Pah-Pah

Words & Music by Lionel Bart



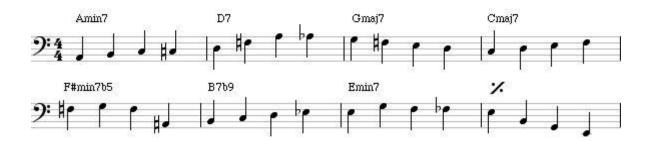
Melodic Ostinato / Riffs – Fleetwood Mac, The Chain

The Chain (Grand Prix Theme)

Nords and Music by Lindsey Buckingham, John McVie Christine McVie, Mick Fleetwood & Stevie Nicks



Walking Bass line



Musical Conventions

In this section, all the composing techniques, tips and tricks that all our different set works writers have used are explained so you can experiment with them in your own pieces.

N.B. Each of your final compositions have to have a connection to two DIFFERENT Areas of Study.

The total combined length of both of your pieces is 4 minutes.

If you write two pieces at exceed this, make sure there is good reason for the length

Area of Study 1

Handel - Baroque

Handel makes excellent use of the voice in 'And the Glory of the Lord'. He only uses the four main voice types Soprano, Alto, Tenor Bass. However, there are others to consider using as well.

Voice	Description	Famous examples
treble	a boy's high unbroken voice, sometimes referred to as a boy soprano	Aled Jones singing Walking in the Air
soprano	a high female voice	Renee Fleming, Maria Callas, Björk
mezzo soprano	a medium high female voice.	Cecilia Bartoli, Katherine Jenkins, Beyoncé
counter- tenor	male alto or soprano, sometimes described as falsetto	Andreas Scholl, Justin Hawkins of The Darkness
alto (contralto)	a high male or low female voice	Janet Baker, Kathleen Ferrier
tenor	a high male voice	Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Jeff Buckley
baritone	a medium male voice	Bryn Terfel, Elvis Presley
bass	the lowest male voice	Willard White, Paul Robeson, Barry White

Use of key

Handel uses a major key to reinforce the happy mood of the chorus. If writing a piece which uses diatonic harmony, choose your key wisely as it will have an impact on the sound and mood of your piece.

Text

Handel gives each of the four lines/ideas a separate musical idea. This helps the listener to recognise them and is an excellent starting point for development of ideas.

Composing Ideas

Throughout the piece, Handel develops his ideas in a number of different ways.

- *Motifs* − Music is based on recognisable ideas.
- Imitation one voice or instrument copies another in quick succession.

 Also, the accompaniment can imitate the solo lines.
- Sequences a pattern which either moves up or down in one direction.
- Counterpoint two or more melodies that are performed together.
- Cadences musical punctuation.
- Hemiolas a rhythmic device where the notes are grouped into 2 beats in triple time. Usually used at cadence points.
- Syllabic Word-Setting Each word or syllable has a note.
- Melismatic Word-Setting One word or syllable has more than two notes on it.
- *Terraced Dynamics* − Loud − Soft − Loud − Soft with no Cresc or Dim.
- Homophony Best described as tune and accompaniment.
- Chordal Homophony All the parts move at exactly the same time, just as if they were chords.
- Diatonic Harmony Use of conventional major and minor keys.

Mozart - Classical

The Classical period was renowned for its sense of balance and proportion within Music, Art and Architecture. Melodies and structures were all very balanced, with no sudden changes or loud clashes.

Composing Ideas

- Antiphony (Question and Answer) One musical phrase asks a question and another answers back with the answer.
- Sonata Form This is the most balanced of all the forms, developed in the Classical period.
- Contrasting Ideas The exposition has two contrasting ideas that are then developed throughout the rest of the movement.
- Quick Modulations Lots of changes of key, in quick succession.
- *Imitation* − See Handel Composing Ideas.

Chopin - Romantic

The Romantic period was all about out-pouring of emotion. Lots of dramatic crescendi and diminuendi, used to emphasize the extended and altered harmonies.

- Ternary Form ABA form Three sections containing contrasting ideas.
- *→ Homophony –* The use of tune and accompaniment.
- Chromatic Harmony Big, luscious colourful chords, made up of extended and altered chords such as Augmented 6ths, Diminished 7ths Dominant 13ths, and Neapolitan chords.
- Pedal The use of a repeated note throughout the texture of the music. Pedal=at the bottom of the texture, Inner Pedal=in the middle of the texture or Inverted Pedal= at the top of the texture.

- Pivot notes One note that can help move the music from one key to another, e.g. G# and Ab in the Raindrop Prelude.
- Ornaments Notes that decorate and add interest to the main melody.
- Triadic Motifs Look at the first three notes of the Raindrop Prelude, and our piece of Handel, and you will see that the first three notes are all in the tonic triad. This is to reinforce the sense of key.
- *Motif Direction* − The direction of your musical idea will have an effect on the mood of the piece. Look at our set works for more inspiration.
- Dynamics The use of a wide range of dynamics, from pp to ff

Area of Study 2

Schoenberg - Expressionism

In Europe, during the Expressionist movement, there was a lot of pain and suffering being inflicted on the innocent. The Expressionists used this as inspiration for their very extreme works of art, across all of the artistic fields. As a result, Music entered into one of its most expressive and divisive periods of history.

- *Atonality* − The lack of any form of key or tonal centre.
- Tone Row A group of 12 equal pitches, placed in a certain order.
- Hexachord The first 6 notes of the tone row, picked to be used as a specific group.
- Compliment The remaining 6 notes from the tone row.
- Angular Melodies Melodies that are fragmented and often very short, with no memorable tune. The contour of the melody is dictated by the wide leaps which occur.

- Extremes This is applied to pitch, timbre, dynamics texture and rhythm.
- Serialism This is a development of Schoenberg's initial concept of the 12 equal pitches. They are placed in a tone row, a.k.a. the Prime Row, which can then be used in a number of different ways. Prime, Retrograde, Inverse, Retrograde-Inverse are the four Transformations applied to the tone row. These can then be transposed to offer even more musical possibilities.
- Motivic Ideas Schoenberg, like Handel, used motifs to give some common threads running through his music. These are either based on the hexachord (pitch) or are formed around certain rhythmic ideas.
- Free Rondo Form This is when Section A keeps returning, A B A C A etc.
- Imitation where a motif in one part is repeated a few notes later in a different part overlapping the motif in the first part
- Augmentation where the note values are enlarged (usually doubled)
- Diminution where the note values are made smaller (usually halved)
- Melodic inversion where the melody is turned upside down

Reich - Minimalism

Minimal music is a style of music associated with the work of American composers La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass. It started in the New York Downtown scene of the 1960s and was initially viewed as a form of experimental music called the *New York Hypnotic School*.

Composing Ideas

Consonant diatonic harmony (No clashing chords or notes) - using notes which belong to the key rather than chromatic notes which are outside the key.

- Steady Pulses
- Ostinato A repeated melodic and /or rhythmic phrase
- Note Addition/Subtraction Notes are gradually added to or subtracted from a musical cell
- Note Phasing when the composer is using audio clips they will split the signal between left and right channels. They will then speed up one of those channels to create a looping effect. This can also be achieved with traditional performance.
- Repetition Ideas, notes etc. are repeated
- *Musical Cell* − A small musical idea
- Overall long duration and slow harmonic rhythm
- Layered textures Melody lines that are played on top of each other
- Interlocking repeated rhythms or phrases
- Melodic transformation a melody gradually changes shape
- Rhythmic transformation a rhythm gradually changes shape
- Gradual changes in texture and dynamics
- Cross-Rhythms Rhythms that go against each other
- Resultant Melody a new melody produced when a variety of parts each play their melodies at the same time

Bernstein - Musical Theatre

West Side Story is an American musical and was completed in 1957. The music is by Leonard Bernstein and the words are by Stephen Sondheim. It is a

jazzy musical based on Shakespeare's story of Romeo and Juliet but set in 20th-century New York against a background of racial gang warfare.

The musical was ground-breaking because of its tragic tone, sophisticated musical style and innovative extended dance sequences which are integral to the show. The music has elements of opera, musical, jazz and Latin-American dance music. 'Something's Coming' is one of the well-known songs from West Side Story. Others include 'Somewhere', 'Maria' and 'Tonight'.

Composing Ideas

- Dissonance Focus on the use of the tritone or other dissonant intervals
- Set themes for different sections of the piece
- *Syncopation* − in both the melody lines and accompaniment
- → Riff Short repeated pattern used in both the vocal line and the accompaniment
- Syllabic Word-setting
- Word painting The meaning of the words is reflected in the music
- Dynamics light and shade to compliment the meaning of the words

Area of Study – 3

Popular Music in Context

Davis - Jazz

Miles Davis (1926 - 1991) was an American jazz trumpeter, composer and band leader. He was one of the most important figures on the jazz scene and played a large part in introducing several new jazz styles. He studied at the

Julliard School of Music in New York but dropped out to play be-bop professionally. He later joined other musicians to play in a more laid back style which became known as cool jazz.

- Blues Notes Compared with the major scale, some notes, known as blue notes may be flattened by a semitone or 'bent' by a smaller interval. Blue notes are often found on the third, fifth or seventh degree of the scale. In 'All blues' the seventh note is flattened. Although the key note is G, all the Fs are F naturals (rather than the F sharps found in G major).
- *Modes* − Like scales but each one has its own character. There are 7 different modes and they are all different. Unlike scales where the arrangement of tones and semitones are the same for all major and minor scales respectively, modes have a different arrangement. They can also be transposed.

Mode	Tonic rel to major		Interval sequence	Example
lonian	I	1	T-T-st-T-T-st	C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C
Dorian	ii	2	T-st-T-T-st-T	D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D
Phrygian	iii	3	st-T-T-st-T-T	E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E
Lydian	IV	4	T-T-T-st-T-T-st	F-G-A-B-C-D-E-F
Mixolydian	V	5	T-T-st-T-st-T	G-A-B-C-D-E-F-G
Aeolian	vi	6	T-st-T-T-st-T-T	A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A
Locrian	vii	7	st-T-T-st-T-T	B-C-D-E-F-G-A-B

- Chromatic harmony uses notes from outside the key to colour the chords
- 12-bar form The 12-bar blues form has three four-bar phrases. The most common chord structure uses three chords the tonic (chord I), the subdominant (chord IV) and the dominant (chord V)

 In the key of G this would be:

G (I)	G (I)	G (I)	G (I)
C (IV)	C (IV)	G (I)	G (I)
D (V)	C (IV)	G (I)	G (I)

- Swing Rhythms Some notes with equal written time values are performed with unequal durations, usually as alternating long and short.
- Head arrangement a structure often found in jazz. A head arrangement is a chord progression which is memorised (in the head) by the players. There is a main tune which is also memorised and then players can mix and match with solos at different points
- *Riff* − Short repeated pattern found throughout a texture

Buckley - Rock

Jeff Buckley's 'Grace' falls under the umbrella term of *Rock* music. This general term covers a wide range of different styles that started to emerge after WWII. Rock 'n' Roll marked the birth the popular music styles we listen to today.

- Verse/Chorus/Verse Structure Intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus and coda or outro. Some songs have a third verse after the bridge
- Chromatic tonality using notes that are not in your chosen key signature. Mozart did this too!
- Melisma more than two notes on one syllable

- Cross-Rhythms two rhythms that go against each other
- Chord Sequence A set pattern of chords that repeat throughout certain sections
- Vocalisations − Wordless singing
- Falsetto Very high in the male vocal register
- Flange An effect applied to electric guitars that creates a sweeping effect

Moby - Samples and Dance Music

Dance music relies heavily on music technology to create its distinctive sound. The DJ mixes the samples and other electronic sounds together to produce layered textures.

- Samples snippets of sound recorded in order to be mixed into a track
- Loops Samples or other electronic sounds that are played one after another to produce a constant track. Drum patterns are created on drum machines
- Layered textures Sounds are built up to create thick soundscapes
- Use of effects Delay refers to any type of effect that adds a delayed version of the original signal, to create effects such as reverb or echo. EQ is short for equalisation. It is the lessening or boosting of different
 - frequencies
- *Breakbeats* − a short drum solo to break up the drum loops
- Syncopation Notes or chords played off the main beats in the bar
- Chord Sequence A set pattern of chords that repeat throughout certain sections

Area of Study - 4

World Music

Music from around the world is rich, varied and draws on each country's own cultural traditions. The three different styles we listen to have some similarities, as well as being completely unique. Each of the different styles is passed down by the oral tradition and not always written down. For study purposes we have scores of the pieces

Capercaillie - The Skye Waulking Song

Scottish group, Capercaillie, are a Celtic Rock band that fuses Gaelic folk music with more modern rock instruments. They also use the traditional Gaelic language to perform their songs. The Skye Waulking Song was sung whilst women waulked. Waulking is a process for making tweed fabric. It requires a steady rhythm so that the cloth is even.

Composition Ideas

- Compound time signature 12/8(4 main beats), 9/8 (3 main beats), 6/8 (2 main beats) and 3/8 (1 main beat)
- *Steady beat* − to help the making of the cloth
- Pentatonic melody line − Folk music uses simple melodies that were easy to harmonise. The pentatonic scale is the easiest scale to use
- Fusion of sounds bringing instruments and timbres from different styles of music together to create a new style
- Narrative Text The lyrics tell a story
- Verse, chorus structure In order to tell the song's story, there are 8 verses in total. There is also an instrumental section that allows the melody instruments to come to the fore
- Nonsense words These were used in the choruses so that the majority of the workers could join in with the singing

- Scotch Snap This rhythmic device is popular in most folk music in the British Isles. It is a short accented note before a longer one
 - *Improvisation* − The melody instruments in the instrumental section improvise around the vocal melody previously heard

Rag Desh

India has a very rich and diverse musical history. Each faith has its own types of music, which then differ from region to region. The Rag Desh we explore is from Northern India, from the Hindustani faith.

Composition Ideas

- Rag A particular scale used to convey a certain meaning
- Arr Tal A rhythmic pattern used throughout the piece
- ▶ Drone Sustained notes that provide an accompaniment
- Improvisation Making the melody up
- Changes of speed this is used to denote different sections in the piece
- Free Rhythm No set pulse
- Unaccompanied Melodies − Again, to denote a certain section in the piece

African Drumming

The music of Africa, as with India, is diverse and engulfed in culture. Each region has its own language and its own style of music to go with it. Music is at the heart of African society, with every event celebrated with music and dance of some form. The region we are studying is from Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Cross-Rhythms is the effect produced when two conflicting rhythms are heard together
- Polyrhythms Contrasting rhythms played at the same time
- Timeline A timeline is a short repeated rhythm, often played by a single or double bell. The main function of the timeline is to keep the performers in time and playing together
- Call and Response Call-and-response form has a leader who sings a line (the call) and it is answered by a chorus (the response). The chorus usually stays the same while the soloist improvises
- *A cappella* − Singing without an accompaniment
- Melodies Descending patterns, scales of 4, 5 and 6 note patterns, small intervals (2nd and 3rd movement) repeated patterns/ostinati

Planning Your Composition....

This is only a guide. If you find this too restrictive, try another way!

Step 1

Decide on an idea/stimulus that interests and inspires you to create a piece of music.

Step 2

Choose a musical form appropriate to your idea/stimulus so you know how many sections the piece will have.

Step 3

Select the instruments you are going to be writing for. You may need to check the pitch range of these instruments too. Refer to your Instrument Research Log.

Step 4

Select your time and key signatures. Remember, if you want to get top marks, being able to demonstrate a key change in your composition will allow you to do so.

Step 5

Write a brief layout of what will happen in each section, how will the sections contrast each other? When you do this you can also decide where your climax is going to add a moment of interest to your piece of music. Make sure your start and ending are strong so they have impact on the audience.

Step 6

Start creating riffs/motifs. You could have two/three that you perform differently in the contrasting sections. OR, you could have one idea for Section A, and a different idea for Section B.

Step 7

Start developing these motifs using Compositional Devices; then create a phrase. e.g. - Motif 1 + Motif 2 + Motif1 Developed = Phrase

♪ Step 8

Make sure you have dynamic changes in the piece to make it interesting; you will probably want to use different dynamics in each section to highlight the contrast. Also make sure you have clear articulation.

Step 9

Try and use a variety of Textures. You will be awarded more marks if your piece of music allows single lines to be heard along with many lines together which creates a more complex sound.

Step 10

How long will the piece last?

Composition Planning Sheet 1

1	ldea/Stimulus	
2	Form/Structure	
3	Instrumentation	
4	Key and Time Signature	
5	A brief outline of each section – include the beginning and ending	
6	Main motifs/riffs	
7	Develop motifs/riffs using compositional devices	
8	Dynamics and articulation	
9	Textures	
10	Length of Piece	

Composition Log 1

Date:....

Every composition lesson, please complete one of these logs.

Ideas/ Goals		
3	3	
3	3	

General Ideas:		

What I have achieved this lesson:		
S	S	
S	3	

Targets/things to remember for next lesson:		
GS .	<i>G</i> √	<i>6</i> -5

Is this lesson experimenting or writing?_____

If writing, roughly how long have you spent on this, this lesson?_____

Remember, you only have 10 hours of writing time in total!

Composition Planning Sheet 2

1	ldea/Stimulus	
2	Form/Structure	
3	Instrumentation	
4	Key and Time Signature	
5	A brief outline of each section – include the beginning and ending	
6	Main motifs/riffs	
7	Develop motifs/riffs using compositional devices	
8	Dynamics and articulation	
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10	Length of Piece	

Date:....

Every composition lesson, please complete one of these logs.

Ideas/ Goals		
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General Ideas:		

What I have achieved this lesson:		
3	3	
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Targets/things to remember for next lesson:			
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General Ideas:			

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Every composition lesson, please complete one of these logs.

Ideas/ Goals			
S	S		
S	3		

General Ideas:		

What I have achieved this lesson:				
3	3			
S	3			

Targets/things to remember for next lesson:			
GS .	GG .	GS .	

Is this lesson experimenting or writing?_____

If writing, roughly how long have you spent on this, this lesson?_____

Composition Tasks

Area of Study 1

1. Baroque

- Choose a short poem with a strong theme or imagery and set the words to music. Decide whether a major or minor key will best suit the theme of the poem. Start by fitting rhythms to the words (find where the natural accents come) and then add the melody. Open the song with a piano introduction. Include some piano figurations which reflect the words. Close the song with a short piano passage.
- Compose a vocal piece which uses some of the techniques found in And the Glory of the Lord. You could use some or all of the following ideas:
 - base the composition around two or more simple motives
 - use imitation between parts
 - use sequences
 - use some syllabic word-setting and some melismatic wordsetting
 - use terraced dynamics

2. Classicism

Compose a piece based on one or two motifs. Make the motifs short but distinctive. Use some of the techniques that Mozart used to develop and transform the ideas in the motifs e.g. imitation, repetition and different pitches.

3. Romanticism

Compose a piano piece in **ternary** form using some of the ideas from the Chopin prelude. The piece should be in three sections with a contrasting middle section. When the first section returns it should be shorter than the original. One section could have the melody in the right hand and the other section could have the melody in the bass.

Area of Study 2

4. Expressionism

Create a piece using some of the ideas from Schoenberg's Peripetie. You could use some or all of the following ideas: different tone colours with extreme high and low notes, dissonant chords, short ever-changing motifs, angular melodies, and huge crescendos and diminuendos.

5. Minimalism

Compose a piece that uses the main features of the Minimalistic style.

- a complex contrapuntal texture
- broken chords (where the notes of a chord are played singly rather than together)
- slow harmonic changes
- note addition (where notes are added to a repeated phrase)
- note subtraction (where the notes are removed when the phrase is repeated)
- melodic transformation (where a melody gradually changes shape)
- rhythmic transformation (where a rhythm gradually changes shape)
- gradual changes in texture and dynamics

6. <u>Musical Theatre</u>

Write a song using some of the ideas from Something's Coming. The accompaniment could be based on a **riff**. The song should be based on **two main ideas** — one quiet and tentative using short note values, and the other loud and confident with longer notes. The two ideas should be slightly varied throughout. Make use of **dynamic contrast and shading**.

Area of Study 3

7. Jazz and Blues

Create a set of 12-bar blues variations using some of the ideas found in 'All blues'. Base the chords on the standard 12-bar blues progression. Experiment with the tonic, subdominant and dominant chords, making them more colourful by adding sixths and sevenths or by changing them to minor chords.

Add an ostinato bass line where the same rhythm is used for each bar. Each variation should use the same chord progression but should create a different mood. The melody line could use grace notes or note bending. Different variations could focus on different registers of the instrument (all high notes or all low notes).

<u>or</u>

Write an instrumental piece based on a **12-bar blues** chord sequence. Play the chord sequence and then improvise a melody over the top. This could form the basis of some variations where each 12-bar section uses different ideas.

8. Rock Music

Write the chorus of a song for a rock band using a line-up of guitars and/or keyboard, drums and singer. There should be **four beats** in a bar. Include some word-painting - passages where the music reflects the words. You could use the following chord sequences or create your own.

E minor, A minor, G, C A minor, F, G, C

- Create a verse and chorus song using a rock band line-up (such as guitars, drums, keyboard and singer). There should be four beats in a bar. You could include some or all of the following:
 - an introduction
 - a contrasting bridge passage
 - a climactic coda where the band improvises on three chords

9. Sampling

Create a piece of dance music using some of the ideas Moby uses in Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad? Use a layered texture, sampling, editing, effects and looping techniques. Base the piece on two short themes with different chord sequences. You could choose from the following chord sequences or create your own.

theme idea 1	С	A minor	С	A minor
theme idea 2	С	A minor	D minor	G
theme idea 3	С	E minor	F	G minor

Area of Study 4

10. Folk Music

Choose a **folk song** and arrange it for rock band plus one or two acoustic instruments (or you could use acoustic folk instruments and add a drum kit). Use a simple harmony and limit yourself to a few chords. Add an instrumental section where the soloists can improvise.

11. African Music

Compose a piece for two instruments. Take the following **timeline** (or create one of your own) and add a part for a second player which improvises around it. This part could start off simply and become increasingly complicated. Use some of the **rhythmic ideas** found in African music such as cross-rhythms, interlocking rhythms and polyrhythms.



Create a piece for **a cappella** voices based on the words of "Bombo Lao", a work song from the Congo region. Use some of the techniques found in African **choral** music such as homophonic texture, call and response, descending phrases and vocal percussion sounds.

Bombo lao, bombo lao, bombo lao, bombo lao, bombo lao Manzo kio, manzo kio, manzo kio, manzo kio Seka tema, seka tema, seka tema, seka tema

Use the following four-note scale (used in Yiri) as the basis for a piece for two or more matched melodic instruments (eg guitars, keyboards, idiophones). One player could start with an **estinate** while the other improvises. Use some of the ideas found in African music such as stepwise melodies, interlocking rhythms and descending phrases.



12. Rag Desh



- Use the rag (pattern of notes) above to create an **alap** section for a **sole instrument** plus a **drone**. The music should be slow at first, gradually speeding up. It should have a free **improvisatory** feel. Start mainly with the lower notes of the solo instrument and move gradually towards the higher notes. Introduce the notes of the rag gradually, beginning with small groups of two or three notes.
- Take a tal (repeated rhythm pattern) that you know or invent one of your own. Transfer the tal to **percussion instruments** which should emphasise the appropriate accents. Improvise a **drum part** over the tal and add a **drone**. The piece should start off quite **simply** with some repetition and gradually get more **complex**. The end of the performance should be signalled by the use of the thrice repeated pattern **tihai**.

Total writing time for compositions....

Edexcel allow you 10 hours to complete each of your final compositions. Please record the number of hours you have completed by circling the correct number.

1 1 1 2 2 2 4 3 3 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 4

6 6 ½ 7 7 ½ 8 8 ½ 9 9 ½ 10

Controlled Assessment Deadlines

When completing the projects in this book, you will have a number of small deadlines throughout the course. However, the final composition dates given for submission are NON-NEGOTIABLE. These are carefully planned as they allow for marking, feedback and correction time. If you do not meet these deadlines, there will be serious consequences. Only in exceptional circumstances will a late submission be allowed.

In Year 11....

Composition 1 The FIRST FRIDAY in December

Composition 2 The LAST FRIDAY before we break for February half term

In Year 10....

You are expected to submit a short composition for assessment purposes in the Summer term. Again, this date is NON-NEGOTIABLE as it is an indication of your progress throughout the first year of the course.

Year 10 End of year The LAST FRIDAY before we break for the assessment composition May/June half term

Assessment Criteria.....

In order for you to see what is expected of your pieces, the official Edexcel assessment criteria have been included here. There are 3 core components which are assessed, and then 3 optional areas. Initially, when your work is marked, all of the possible criteria will be considered and only after that will the optional criteria be chosen.

CORE

Criterion A: Use and development of ideas

Many teacher examiners award five marks for compositions that are clearly not imaginative within the chosen area of study. For a mark of four or five, compositions must find and maintain a style not necessarily original but essentially containing some development of ideas. Songs often suffer in this criterion.

Criterion B: Exploitation of the medium

Resources must be used appropriately. Impossible figurations for instruments and out-of-range notes make for inappropriate use of resources. For example, piano pieces that use block chords almost exclusively make for very functional writing for the instrument. The student should demonstrate how to use resources effectively and at a higher level how to combine resources to create musical texture and colour.

Criterion C: Structure and form

There must be a sense of proportion and direction/growth in a piece to score higher marks. A score of three is standard for a simple and clear structure without any additional layer of sophistication.

OPTIONAL

Criterion D: Melody

A mark of three is awarded to a melody that works and has some sense of shape. This has to work with the other parts. Melodies scoring above this will have a sense of flow and show some character and style.

Criterion E: Harmony/accompaniment

Use of three chords will score three marks only if used appropriately with a suitable accompaniment style. The use of three chords used in triadic shape throughout the composition, is rather functional and basic. Extended chords, modulations and thoughtful accompaniment patterns will gain extra credit. However, use of any of these with misjudgements will result in a lower assessment. Some time spent on teaching how to write simply and effectively for the piano would address many problems that candidates have in this criterion.

Criterion F: Texture

Texture must be changed to good effect. This criterion often overlaps with criterion B. The student should be able to demonstrate a thoughtful use of texture. Many of the set works provide fine examples of this technique.

Criterion G: Rhythm

This section is often over-assessed by teacher examiners. A rhythmic pattern should be exploited and developed to gain higher marks. Development of rhythm can be a neglected area at GCSE. Careful study of the minimalist set work will provide a useful example of rhythmic development.

Criterion H: Dynamic contrasts

Unfortunately, this can be the poorest area of the students' work. Compositions with dynamics simply added to obtain marks are easily spotted. Dynamics, when used appropriately, can be used to enhance almost any composition.

Criterion I: Use of technology

The use of Sibelius to notate the piece is insufficient to gain credit in this criterion.

Technology must form a central part of the piece, as in dance compositions. Credit will be given for sound manipulation and providing specifically-generated sound timbres.

Useful Links.....

This is a link to a free download of a simple score writer for you to notate your music.

http://musescore.org

On this site, you can find composition tips and tricks, as well as Cubase tutorials.

http://www.haydockmusic.com/composing_tips/music_composing_tips.html

More composition techniques...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developing variation

Information sources: S. Tolputt

BBC Bitesize