

Assignment Ideas

Your Favourite Music

Why do you like the music you like? Really think about it ('I don't know' is not an acceptable answer!).

- What do you hear in the foreground and background/middle ground? Foreground is those elements that listener perceives as important at a given time (usually *melody*/sometimes *rhythm*). Background is those elements that listener perceives as not as important at a given time but contributes to overall character of the piece. It is how the background enhances the foreground but doesn't get in the way of the foreground. This is the *texture*.
- What factors determine the unity and variety in the piece (old material and new material)
- Any interesting melodic, harmonic, rhythmic devices?
- What is the rate at which information is presented? A lot of information...meaning rapid changes in rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc (rapid rate at which the audience can barely process information) or not a lot of information (meaning a steadier rate of information or slow rate at which the audience can process the information).
- What can you say about the balance of the piece in terms of highs and lows, thick and thin textures?

Closed Assignments

- Using the melody provided, rewrite the melody by using the sequence method. Play the original and play the sequenced version.
- Continue a four-bar melody for an orchestral instrument.
- Compose an eight-bar melody using a particular rhythm/scale (pentatonic).

Open Assignments

- Compose a piece in binary/ternary/theme and variations/song form.
- Compose a piece in fugal style.
- Write a piece based on how you felt when you first received a gift from someone you love.

Other Composers

- Use simple melodies (foreground elements) that have already been composed.
- Manipulate those melodies using compositional techniques discussed below.
- Discuss Scales and Guide Tones (Root, 3rd, 5th) and Tension Tones (2nd, 4th & 7th). Teach Intermediate to Advanced Harmony.

Composing Your Own Music

When transferring from the cognitive/inspirational to the definitive, follow the steps:

1. Students must have a steady tempo (pulse, beat), usually the crotchet note is the pulse.
2. Once a steady tempo is established the students must proceed to figure out what rhythms they are trying to reproduce for their motifs (motifs). If students do not know how to subdivide the beat this is the perfect opportunity to teach that skill.
3. Once students figure out the rhythm of the motif, then students go back to review pitches on their instrument. Application of pitch to the rhythm is the main goal of this step.
4. Revise, Revise, Revise. The revision process is an important process in composition. It is this phase that an idea can be revised, rejected, or accepted. If a student is not happy with a motif- the student can continue to experiment and revise the current motif, start over with a new motif (this takes the student back to experimentation and step 1) or keep the current version.

5. Developing Phrasing and Composing Simple Melodies (same process 1-4, but longer melodies)
 - Phrase, Period (Question/Answer-Echo Singing or Playing)
 - Theme & Variations AA1A2A3etc...(very good for a beginner)
 - AABA or ABA form or Song Forms
 - AB songs (Binary Form)
 - Rondo, Scherzo, Sonata Forms
6. Middle & Background Elements (Texture). This is where orchestration and larger ensemble writing takes place. After melodic writing has been introduced it is a great idea for students to write for instruments that they know well...i.e. sax duets, trios, quartets or flute plus piano, or soprano with piano etc... This is so that they can get their pieces played by their friends. Performances of a student pieces are crucial for feedback. Teaching transposition, range and practicality of all instruments is an important step to larger ensemble writing.
 - Treble and Bass Only (Background (unison) and Foreground (unison))
 - Bass Only
 - Original and Ornamented Version Presented at the Same Time-Heterophony
 - Harmony Only (Very Rare) (Background Only)
 - Melody (unison), Countermelody (unison) & Bass Only (unison). No Harmony
 - Full Accompaniment: Melody, Bass and Accompaniment Pattern or Harmony-Homophonic (Foreground & Background)
 - Polyphony: two or more voices presented at the same time. (Foreground, Middle ground, & Background)
 - Inner Textures-Chordal Backgrounds representing the harmony. not the bass.
 - Sustained Chords
 - Detached Chords (Repeating Chords, Chordal Ostinatos)
 - Arpeggios
 - Vamping...Bass plays one note on each new chord (sometimes not sustained) the other middle voices or upper voices plays vamping rhythm or accompaniment pattern.
 - Shimmering (Tremolos or Trills).
 - Wavering (Slow trills in crotchets or quavers)
 - Oscillating (Similar to slow trills but over an interval of a third).
 - Various figures (Alberti Bass, lower and or upper neighbour tones, syncopation).
 - Multidimensional. More than one type of the above presented at the same time. (more complex, so used in Tutti situations, but to be used *sparingly*).
 - Pedals. Sustained tones in the bass while harmony and accompaniment patterns change above (ostinati in bass sometimes).

It is very rare that a texture holds throughout a piece or a section without changing to a different texture. Remember variety is the spice of life. If the foreground changes then it is a good to have the background change as well. Textures should change as the form changes (E.g. The A theme is going to have a different texture than a B theme and so on but there are always exceptions.) Textures contribute to moods. Inner textures should not be merely busy or filling in of the harmony.

Some Melodic Techniques

- Methods that Keep Both Pitch and Rhythm Intact
 - Repeat the motif exactly-not too useful
 - Changes in volume: a loud section vs. the same loud section played softly. This doesn't really apply as true development
 - Changes in timbre: a mild disguise
 - Change of register: octave displacement/change of voice. Again this would be mild development
 - Change of key: better than nothing at all.
 - Addition of new counterpoint: old and new material intermixed. This is better!
- Methods of Keeping the Rhythm Intact (Changes in Pitch but NOT in Rhythm)
 - *Sequence*: one of the most useful devices in all music to develop melodic fragment. Either diatonic (moving up or down by step in the key) or Chromatic/Real (moving up or down by step but by chromatic notes to preserve the exact intervals...this can change the key).
 - A change one or more melodic intervals of the melody. A leap of 3rd can become 4th and a skip of a 5th can become a 7th, etc...
 - *Mutation*: involves changes between the major and minor modes
 - *Melodic Inversion*: free-contrary motion that retains the basic interval identity but in the key; or strict-chromatic motion that matches the interval identity exactly (this also can change the key)
- Methods of Keeping the Pitch Intact (Rhythm changes NOT the pitch)
 - Partial Alteration of Rhythm
 - *Rhythmic Alteration*: changing of position of accents or change in meter.
 - *Augmentation*: doubling the value of all notes
 - *Diminution*: cutting in half the value of all notes.
- Methods of Changing Both Pitch & Rhythm (Simultaneously-An application/combination of any of the previous techniques)
 - *Gradual Metamorphosis*: Motifs are established early in the piece...the motifs then go through small changes to morph into a new melody.
 - *Sudden Metamorphosis*: The old motif suddenly moves to the new motif.
 - *Decoration (Heterophony)*: taking the original melody and ornamenting it both by pitch and rhythm.
 - *Fragmentation and Extension*: taking a part of the melody putting it through a sequence, or inversion thus extending the melody as much as the composer desires.
 - *Cadential Extension*: delaying the resolution of a melody by extending it through sequence or other devices (much like fragmentation and extension).
 - *Interpolation*: internal Extension (variant on fragmentation and extension)
 - *Truncation*: starting of a motif but jumps directly to the end of the melody-leaves out the middle of the melody
 - *Elision/overlap*: overlapping of a melody on itself (much like a stretto but involving one voice)
 - *Retrograde*: writing or Playing the melody backward
 - *Retrograde Inversion (Free & Real)*: writing or playing the melody backward but also inverting the melody at the same time.
 - *Condensation*: shorting of melody by stages...State the motif, repeat it, and then repeat half of that, then a repeat a quarter of that, until the composer decides where else to go.

- The rules for motivic development...there are NONE. New ones are being developed all the time. Any of the above can be used in combination.
- The Rule of 3—State a melody, Repeat or Vary the Melody, Take the Melody in a different direction or a different melody. (ABA or AAB...never AAA too monotonous.) Bring the original melody back either partially or fully/varied

Assessment

- Aesthetic Appeal (Is it interesting to the audience? Is it effective?),
- Creative (Unusual, Imaginative, Not Cliché, manipulation of ideas, explores musical elements)
- Craftsmanship (complete music idea vs. incomplete, use of musical elements to organize material, balance between unity and variety) in addition to the other component line elements.

Dimensions	Mastery	Proficient	Developing	Beginner
Aesthetic Appeal	Strong appeal and general impression. Would be enjoyed by many listeners. Keeps the listeners interested.	Includes some music interesting music ideas. The general impression is pleasant and moderately effective.	Includes at least one interesting musical idea. Yet, the overall impression is not effective.	Does not present an effective general impression. Musical ideas do not hold the listener's interest.
Creative	Includes very original, unusual imaginative musical ideas. Explores and varies at least two musical elements.	Involves some original aspect(s) or manipulation(s) of musical idea(s). Explores and varies at least one musical element.	Musical idea is neither familiar nor a cliché. However, there is no development, variety, or exploration of musical elements.	Musical idea is familiar or a cliché. No variety or exploration of musical elements (range, timbre, dynamics, tempo, rhythm or melody).
Craftsmanship	Presents at least one complete musical idea. Has a coherent and organized form with a clear beginning, middle and end. Uses musical elements to organize musical ideas or the form.	Ending Feels final. Uses at least one musical element to organize the musical ideals and overall form.	Presents one complete musical idea. However, composition lacks overall completeness. Fails to use musical elements to organize musical ideas or forms.	Gives no sense of a completed musical idea. Exhibits no clear beginning, middle, or end section. Form appears to be random rather than organized. Musical elements (range, timbre, rhythm etc...) do not connect well or are not used to organized musical ideas or the form.

- Composition reflects a proper balance between unity (old material) and variety (new material).
- Composition reflects shape and design, and creates the impression of conscious choice and judicious arrangement on the part of the composer. (How the composer controls and shapes the form, the pacing of musical events)
- The composition reflects craftsmanship in orchestration, demonstrating a proper balance between transparent and tutti scoring and also between solo and group colours.
- The composition is sufficiently unpredictable to preclude an immediate grasp of its musical meaning.
- The route through which the composition travels in initiating its musical tendencies and probable musical goals is not completely direct or obvious.
- The composition is consistent in its quality throughout its length and various sections. (A Symphony-Quality is representative throughout all movements, even a single movement work has to have quality throughout its' construction and between the various sections)
- The composition is consistent in its style, reflecting a complete grasp of technical details, clearly conceived ideas, and avoid lapses into the trivial, futile, or unsuitable passages.
- The composition reflects ingenuity in its development, given the stylistic contexts in which it exists
- The composition is genuine in its idiom and is not pretentious
- The composition reflects a musical validity which transcends historical importance, or factors of pedagogical usefulness.