

COMPOSITION - GOOD TO GREAT

CHRIS FISH AND
MARK WILDERSPIN

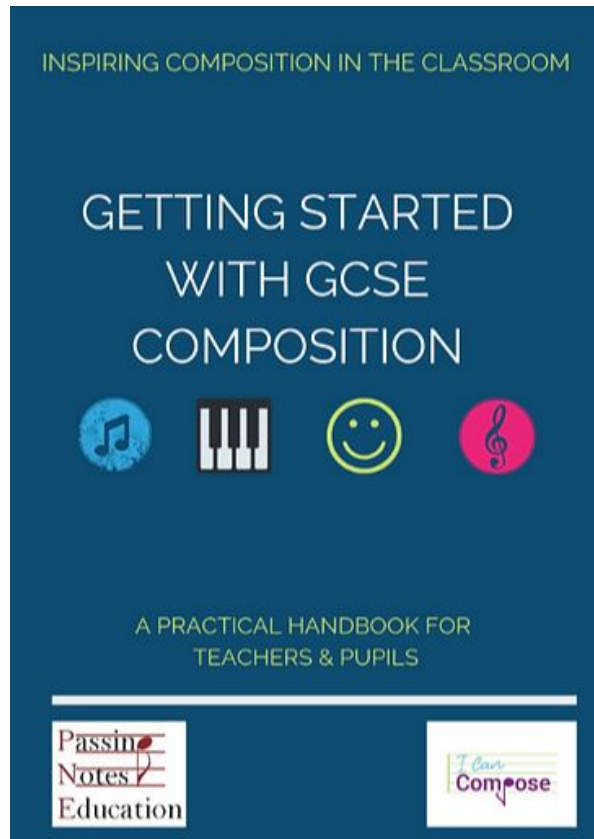
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Today's session

1. How to approach GCSE and AL Comp
2. Example tasks
3. Two approaches to taking a piece from Good to Great
4. Questions



BUT FIRST: FREE DOWNLOAD (USING THE CODE PASSINGNOTESGCSE)



How to approach GCSE and AL composition

- Bridging the gap between creativity and technical skills
- Developing and workshopping
- Generating ideas
- Score presentation and details



Score Presentation

Molto Allegro

Musical notation for **Molto Allegro**. The piece is in 2/2 time and B-flat major. It begins with a rest, followed by a series of eighth notes with slurs, and ends with a rest. The dynamic marking *p* is placed below the first note.

Andante ♩ = 63

Musical notation for **Andante** (♩ = 63) in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The first system includes the dynamic marking *p molto espress.* and the instruction *legato e sostenuto*. The phrase concludes with a tenuto mark (*ten.*) and a fermata.

Musical notation for **Andante** (♩ = 63) in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The second system starts with a measure rest, followed by the dynamic marking *pp* and an accent (>). It includes the instruction *cresc.* and ends with a tenuto mark (*ten.*) and a decrescendo (*dim.*).

Dynamics, phrasing and expression are **not** an add-on or supplementary stage... they **are** composition!

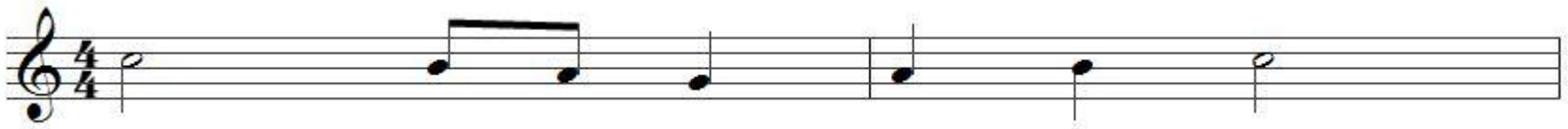


Developing Skills - Tasks (Harmony)

Same Shape, Different Harmony

Your turn!

What harmonic possibilities can you find here (which will your students think of?)



Developing Skills - Tasks (Harmony)



Same Shape, Different Harmony

Moderato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pizz.



GYÖRGY LIGETI

Sechs Bagatellen für Bläserquintett

(1935)

Allegro con spirito

The image shows the first page of a musical score for a woodwind quintet. The score is written for five instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B-flat, Bassoon, and Bassoon. The music is in 3/4 time and begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked 'Allegro con spirito'. The flute part starts with a melodic line, while the other instruments provide harmonic support with chords and rhythmic patterns. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with five staves.



Four-note Composition

Your training in composition up to now has mainly been directed towards **melody, harmony** and **standard forms**. This means you have studied a form, such as minuet and trio, then synthesised its modulations and grammar in your own version of it.

To help get you thinking about some different parameters, this exercise will restrict your melodic palette to just **FOUR NOTES**, meaning that to generate an interesting piece of music for any length of time, you will need to look beyond **melody** and **harmony** and will probably focus more on **timbre** and **rhythm**.

BRIEF

Compose a short study piece of no more than **TWO MINUTES**, using only **four** pitch classes (i.e. notes that may be deployed in any available octave). You should write for the following **FOUR instruments**:

[Insert
Available
Here]

- Initial draft/substantial sketches to be workshopped on **<DAY> <DATE>** (please bring instruments!)
- Completed scores in Sibelius by **<DAY> <DATE>**

Good luck!



Task: talk with your neighbour!

Restricting the number of pitches used can be liberating but also daunting.

What potential pitfalls are there with this project for *your* pupils, and how can we anticipate those and best support them?

Four-note Composition

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Good luck!



4-note composition: some common pitfalls

- Choosing pitches that form neat triads
- Thinking melodically, not *motivically*
- ‘Playing safe’ with textures and timbres



From Good...

Passing Notes Education

Lively and excited
♩=112

Trumpet in B♭

Piano

The first system of music shows the Trumpet in B♭ and Piano parts. The Trumpet part consists of four measures of whole rests. The Piano part has a right-hand part with chords and eighth notes, and a left-hand part with eighth notes. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 112. Dynamics include fortissimo (ff) and accents.

5

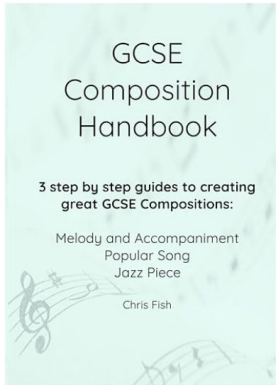
Tpt.

Pno.

The second system of music shows the Trumpet and Piano parts. The Trumpet part starts with a five-measure rest, then plays a melodic line. The Piano part continues with the same accompaniment as the first system. Dynamics include forte (f) and accents.



Buy me (cheaper on our stand here at MTA Conference!!)



Roll over image to zoom in



Read sample

GCSE Composition Handbook: 3 step by step guides to creating great GCSE Compositions Paperback – 31 Aug. 2024

by Chris Fish (Author)

[See all formats and editions](#)

Teaching GCSE composition is hard, but it doesn't have to be.

This guide aims to help every music teacher guide their students to effective GCSE compositions, and the step by step instructions can be used for both 'Free' and 'Brief' compositions.

Each of the three topic areas – Melody and Accompaniment, Popular Song and Jazz Piece, ones that are perennially popular with students – are broken down into simple, manageable chunks making this the perfect handbook for every music teacher, whatever your background in teaching composition.

At the end of each section there is an 'extensions' guide, which can be expanded to cater for even the most able students.

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English

Publication date



31 Aug. 2024

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From Good...



Passing Notes Education

Lively and excited
♩=112

Trumpet in B♭

Piano

5

Tpt.

Pno.



From Good...

Task: talk to your neighbour!

What is good about this piece?

Where do we need to coach this student to greater heights?



From Good...

Strengths:

1. Thematic consistency
2. Harmonic language includes inversions
3. Rhythm and articulation give a sense of style
4. Does move to a new key area and has some contrast
5. Rhythmic augmentation to finish



From Good...

Issues:

1. Length
2. Harmony/tonality
3. Texture
4. 'Development'
5. Coda



... to Great

5

Tpt.

Pno.

10

Tpt.

Pno.

The image displays a musical score for a trumpet (Tpt.) and piano (Pno.) ensemble. The score is divided into two systems, each starting with a measure number (5 and 10). The trumpet part is written in a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano part is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs). The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed notes and rests. Red circles are drawn around specific notes in the piano part: one circle highlights a chord in the right hand of the first system, and another circle highlights a chord in the left hand of the second system. The trumpet part includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *v*, and phrasing slurs. The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *v* and *v*.



... to Great

10

Tpt.

Pno.

15

Tpt.

Pno.



... to Great



4 Full Score Presto ♩=144

58

Tpt.

Pno.

62

Tpt.

Pno.



Good:

Trumpet in B \flat

Piano

f

etc.

Chords: E \flat , B \flat /D, A \flat /C, E \flat , Fm, Cm/E \flat , B \flat /D

Figured Bass: E \flat : I, V \flat , IV \flat , I, ii, vib, V \flat

Greater:

Trumpet in B \flat

Piano

f

etc.

Chords: E \flat , B \flat /D, A \flat /C, E \flat /G, Fm/A \flat , E \flat /G, Fm7/A \flat , B \flat

Figured Bass: E \flat : I, V \flat , IV \flat , I \flat , ii \flat , I \flat , ii7, V



... to Great



- Sequence (modulation)
- Imitation
- Variety of idiomatic textures
- Pedal points
- Fragmentation, inversion, augmentation, diminution
- Use of \flat II, \flat III and \flat VI to widen the harmonic palette
- 'A level' chords like dim7, V7d, aug6
- Harmonic rhythm



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Any questions?



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