

Community Music Center Composition Workshop

This hands-on class explores general composition methods through a series of weekly, short exercises. In each class we discuss specific techniques and share/critique student work. Knowledge of music notation is not required, but notated assignments are welcome. No specific level of music theory knowledge is required and students will be encouraged to compose at whatever level they feel comfortable. This class will also serve as good preparation (but is not required) for students who plan on taking Davide Verotta's Composition Workshops during the fall, winter and spring quarters.

The goal of this class is to develop compositional skills by studying a variety of established techniques through listening and writing exercises. Class meetings will be a mixture of reviewing student work and discussing specific techniques. Students are expected to record and/or notate (with photocopies) assignments prior to each class meeting—or be willing to provide a live performance. Recordings supplied to me electronically (via email) will be posted on our class website.

In most cases your compositions will be short (i.e. 1-3 minutes in length) exercises that ask you to limit your focus to one or two specific techniques. Because of this, your "exercises" may not feel like "real" music—you may need to exclude (or set aside) ideas that you think "sound good" for the sake of accurately featuring the assigned technique(s). While this may feel frustrating, down the road it could help you develop more discipline and productivity if ever you hit a writer's block within your creative process.

Ideally, to make the class function efficiently, you will email me an mp3 or score/chart of your assignment by Wednesday afternoon. This will give me time to download/evaluate it before our Thursday night meeting. I will then be able to play your assignment in class, although you are always welcome and encouraged to perform your assignments yourselves. If you cannot get an assignment to me by Wednesday afternoon, the next best thing would be to bring it to class on an mp3 player (iPod, laptop, phone, etc.) so it can be played for the class. Of course, if you plan to perform your assignment, a recording won't be required, but you should bring your specific instrument to class.

Week	Topic & Class Materials (subject to change as the class evolves)	Assignment Due/ Student Examples
1: June 22	<p>Overview: compositional process; outlining and breaking down a composition into component</p> <p><u>Composition Overview</u></p>	***
2: June 29	<p>Imitation (as flattery) and derivation</p> <p>Chopin: <i>E Minor Prelude</i> / Radiohead: <i>Exit Music for a Movie</i> (modeling the melody)</p> <p>Field: <i>Nocturne No. 8</i> / Chopin: <i>Eb Nocturne</i> (modeling the melodic leap and general texture)</p> <p>Armstrong: <i>What a Wonderful World</i> / Mozart: <i>Ah, Vous Dirais-Je, Maman</i></p> <p>Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 7, 2nd movement</i> / JK: <i>Beethoven 7th/5th symphonies mashup</i></p>	<p><u>Diagramming and annotating an existing composition</u></p>

3: July 6	<p>Emphasizing/highlighting a single method or idea</p> <p>Gyorgy Ligeti: <i>Musica Ricercata I</i> (using mostly one note; focusing on rhythm, dynamics and density)</p> <p>JK: 5ths (focusing on the interval of a 5th) (audio) (score)</p> <p>Bartok: <i>Mikrokosmos No. 129, Alternating 3rds</i> (focusing on 3rds)</p> <p>Debussy: <i>Pour Les Quartes</i> (focusing on 4ths)</p>	<u>Imitating/modeling another piece</u>
4: July 13	<p>Motif: variations and development</p> <p>Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 5, 1st movement</i></p> <p>Rollins: <i>Tenor Madness</i></p> <p>Beethoven: <i>Symphony No. 7, 2nd movement</i></p> <p>Beatles: <i>Eleanor Rigby</i></p>	<u>Feature a single focus, method or idea</u>
5: July 20	<p>Rhythm only: motif/density/dynamics</p> <p>JK: Rhythm (audio) (score)</p>	<u>Melodic motif with variations</u>
6: July 27	<p>Melody and text</p> <p>JK: melodic version instrumental version</p> <p>SS: Romney Quotes</p>	<u>Rhythmic/percussive piece organized around a motif, varied density and conscious dynamics</u>
Aug 3	NO CLASS – JK TRAVELING	
7: Aug 10	<p>Form and contrast</p> <p>Beethoven: <i>rondo from Op. 13, 2nd movement</i></p> <p>Deathwish: <i>Tailgate</i> (utilizing the slow-fast-slow... technique)</p>	<u>A melody based on a text (poem, etc.)</u>
8: Aug 17	Modern ideas (time permitting)	<u>Short composition in a specific form utilizing contrast</u>