



The Joy of Composing

with Fredrik Holm

Task 10: Putting it all together

In this task, you will use all the techniques from the previous lessons to create an impressive composition.

Step 1. Create a vision and an action plan!

A common question that actors are asked is: “What do you want to say?”. This is followed by: “How are you going to make this happen?”. Writing a good composition uses the same process: you need a clear vision and a step-by-step outline of how to achieve it.

My vision is to create something that is both fun and beautiful. It is also to show you how to use a variety of compositional techniques. I will achieve this by making a step-by-step approach, which I would like you to follow.

Step 2. Pick three instruments for your composition. I chose a violin, a bassoon and a guitar.

Step 3. Research the instruments if you are not completely familiar with them. What clefs do they use? What’s easy? What’s difficult? What sounds good on the instruments and are there any special techniques that you need to be aware of?

Step 4. Make up a scale. I picked the notes A, C, D, E, G for the first half of my introduction and C, E, F, G, B for the second.

Step 5. When you compose for a number of instruments, you don’t need to use them all at once. Make up a melody for one of the instruments using your scale. Why not also be inspired by some of the rhythms we looked at in task 6? If you like, you can have the other instruments playing something basic in the background. Long notes or a simple riff would work well.

Make sure you use your whole palette of dynamics, articulation, tempo, time signature, etc.

Here is my introduction:



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Violin $\text{♩}=90$ $\text{♩}=120$

Bassoon f $\text{♩}=90$ p $\text{♩}=120$

Guitar $\text{♩}=90$ $\text{♩}=120$

Vln. $\text{♩}=90$ $\text{♩}=60$ sul pont. $\text{♩}=120$ nat.

Bsn. f p f

Gtr. pp $\text{♩}=90$ $\text{♩}=60$ $\text{♩}=120$ mf

Vln. 11 rit. $\text{tr} \dots$

Bsn. rit. $\text{tr} \dots$

Gtr. rit. $\text{tr} \dots$



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For your next section, we will let all the instruments play together.

Step 6. Choose key and time signatures that work well after your introduction and then come up with a set of chords that can be repeated in a sequence. Develop these for one of the instruments like we did in task 8 – by using inversions, voicing and chord patterns. Let your instrument play this pattern on its own as an introduction. I decided on three chords in a two-bar phrase:

The image shows a musical score for guitar. It is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90. The notation is in treble clef and starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first bar contains the chords Am (ACE) and C/G (GCE). The second bar contains the chord F (FAC). The melody consists of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand.

Step 7. Make up a melody for one of the other instruments that goes nicely with these chords; use the chord notes, passing notes, etc. Make up a melody for at least two rounds of the chord sequence (I did four in my example).

Step 8. I would like you to have a bit of fun with the instrument that is not playing the melody or the chords. This instrument could do a number of different things that would work well:

- Play in unison with the melody.
- Play the same rhythm as the melody but use other notes (chord notes for example).
- Play another counter melody.
- Play long notes.
- Play a riff.
- Something else... for example create sound effects or echo the melody.

I got my bassoon to play in unison with the violin for two bars, a chord note for one bar and a short moving melody for one bar. Finally, I allowed my bassoon to perform a four-bar off-beat riff:



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18

Vln. *p*

Bsn. *p*

Gtr. *p*

22

Vln.

Bsn.

Gtr.



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Step 9. Create at least four bars of something different.

You could, for example, change the key, chords, structure or functions given to the instruments.

I did two bars of quick chord changes and then used a different chord sequence for six bars (FGAm).

26

Vln.

Bsn.

Gtr.

pp *f* *p*

Am Am C/G F Dm Dm F/C G Am Am C/G F Dm Dm F/C G

3

29

Vln.

Bsn.

Gtr.

pp *f* *p*

G Am pizz.

33



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Step 10. Repeat what you did in step 7. However, this time why not develop your composition slightly and add a good ending?

36 nat.
Vln. *p*

Bsn. *p*

Gtr.

40

Vln.

Bsn.

Gtr.

43 rit.

Vln.

Bsn.

Gtr. *pp*