



The Joy of Composing

with Fredrik Holm

Task 8: Developing melodies and chords

In this task I will develop a melody from *Harry Potter* called "Lily's Theme" from:

Piano

to...

Pno.

You will use your own melody and chords and develop them in the same way.

The first steps are built on earlier tasks

Step 1. Come up with a chord sequence that includes at least two chords. Play your chords in root position.

Step 2. Write a simple melody that works with your chords.



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I have used “Lily’s Theme” in my example, and this is what the melody and chords look like after steps 1 and 2:

Piano

Dm (DFA) Bb (BbDF) Dm (DFA) Bb (BbDF)

Step 3. Find suitable inversions to your chords. Remember that it usually sounds best if your left hand moves up and down the keyboard as little as possible when changing chords.

I chose to put my second and fourth chord in the first inversion.

(By the way, the chord signature Bb/D means it's a Bbm chord with the D as the lowest note, i.e. a Bb chord in first inversion.)

Pno.

6 Dm (DFA) Bb/D (DFBb) Dm (DFA) Bb/D (DFBb)

Step 4. Next, we will be looking at **voicing**. Voicing is how we choose to spread out our chord on the keyboard. You don't have to play chord notes close together; you can put them anywhere on the keyboard as long as it sounds good and is playable.

In my example, I wanted my chords as far down on the keyboard as possible for this song. However, playing chord notes close together in the low register sounds muffled and unclear, so I decided to spread the notes out as in the example below. Play around with how you can spread out your chord notes, and pick something you like.



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10 Dm B \flat 3 Dm B \flat

Step 5. Let's make up a pattern for the chords. Try different versions and consider how your pattern will sound with the melody and the mood of the song. Make sure you stick to your chord notes.

14 Dm B \flat 3 Dm B \flat

Step 6. Now let's edit the pattern slightly. Even though my pattern works well, there are three extra things I could do:

1. Add more notes to your chords. If it sounds good, why not add, for example, the second, fourth, sixth or seventh note to your chord? In my example I added one extra note: the seventh note (the A in the B \flat chord) in bar 4.
2. Are there any clashes? Play the music really slowly and see if there are any notes that don't work well together. For example, I have a clash at the end of bars 2, 3 and 4 (left hand D; right hand C).
3. The general rule is that if nothing much is happening in the melody (such as a rest or a long note) then the accompaniment should do more, and if the melody is busy then the left hand can be simplified.

In my example, I decided to simplify the end of the first three bars to avoid clashes. I kept the pattern in the last bar as the melody was doing very little at that point:



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18 Dm B \flat 3 Dm B \flat

Step 7. Now, let's develop the right hand by adding chord notes. You could add chord notes on every note. However, this creates quite a busy, full-on sound, which I don't want in this rather slow song.

I decided to transpose the melody up an octave so the chords wouldn't clash with my left hand.

When you add extra chord notes, have a look at what notes you already have. If you want to double chord notes, it generally sounds best to double the first or third note of the chord (D and A in D-minor).

Here are the chord notes I added to the right hand:

22 Dm B \flat 3 Dm B \flat *p*

Step 8. This is an easy step: add all the extras, such as dynamics, articulation, phrase marks, pedalling, instructions, a tempo mark or anything else you can think of.



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27 $\text{♩} = 80$

Pno. *p*

Dm Bb Dm Bb

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *