Unit 08: Composition

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **3 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

As the culminating project for the course, students will compose an original musical work that synthesizes the knowledge and skills developed throughout their study of music theory. Their compositions will demonstrate an understanding of melody, harmonic progression, and phrase structure through the creation of a complete work consisting of, at minimum, a melody and a chordal accompaniment. Students are encouraged to write for instruments they play or with which they are familiar, allowing them to apply theoretical concepts in a meaningful musical context. Students will be encouraged to perform these original compositions, which will provide the opportunity to share and celebrate their creative work while demonstrating their growth as theory students, musicians, and composers.

Revised: July 2026

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.3E.12adv.Cr1a	Generate melodic, rhythmic and harmonic ideas for compositions and improvisations that incorporate digital tools and resources.
1.3B.12adv.Cr1a	Describe and demonstrate multiple ways in which sounds and musical ideas can be used to represent extended experiences or abstract ideas.
1.3E.12adv.Cr2a	Select, develop and organize multiple melodic, rhythmic and harmonic ideas to develop into a larger work that exhibits unity, variety, complexity, and coherence using digital and/or analog tools and resources.

1.3B.12adv.Cr2a	Assemble and organize multiple sounds or extended musical ideas to create initial expressive statements of selected extended experiences or abstract ideas.
1.3B.12adv.Cr2b	Analyze and demonstrate the development of sounds and extended musical ideas in drafts of music within a variety of moderately complex or complex forms.
1.3E.12adv.Cr3a	Develop and implement varied strategies and apply appropriate criteria to improve and refine the technical and expressive aspects of draft compositions and improvisations.
1.3B.12adv.Cr3a	Research, identify, explain, and apply personally developed criteria to assess and refine the technical and expressive aspects of evolving drafts leading to final versions.
1.3E.12adv.Cr3b	Share a portfolio of musical creations representing varied styles and genres that demonstrates musical and technological craftsmanship as well as the use of digital and/or analog tools and resources in developing and organizing musical ideas.
1.3B.12adv.Cr3b	Share music through the use of notation, solo or group performance, or technology, and demonstrate and explain how the elements of music, compositional techniques, and processes have been employed to realize expressive intent.
1.3E.12adv.Pr4a	Develop and apply criteria to select varied programs to study and perform based on interest, an understanding of the musical characteristics, expressive challenges in the music, and the performer's musical skill using digital tools and resources.
1.3B.12adv.Pr4a	Identify and select specific sections, movements, or entire works that express personal experiences and interests, moods, visual images, concepts, texts, or storylines in moderately complex or complex forms.
1.3E.12adv.Pr4b	Examine, evaluate and critique how context, musical aspects of the composition and digital media/tools inform prepared and improvised performances.
1.3B.12adv.Pr4b	Analyze how the elements of music (including form), and compositional techniques of selected works relate to the style, function, and context, and explain and support the analysis and its implications for rehearsal and performance.
1.3E.12adv.Pr4c	Demonstrate how understanding the style, genre, context, and integration of digital technologies in a varied repertoire of music informs and influences prepared and improvised performances and their ability to connect with audiences.
1.3B.12adv.Pr4c	Develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, style, function, and context, explaining and justifying how the interpretive choices reflect the creator's intent.
1.3E.12adv.Pr5	Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
1.3E.12adv.Pr5a	Apply appropriate criteria as well as feedback from multiple sources and develop and implement varied strategies to improve and refine the technical and expressive aspects of prepared and improvised performances in varied programs of music.
1.3B.12adv.Pr5a	Create rehearsal plans for works, identifying the form, repetition and variation within the form, compositional techniques, and the style and historical or cultural context of the work.
1.3B.12adv.Pr5b	Using established criteria and feedback, identify the ways in which performances use compositional techniques and convey the formal design, style and historical/cultural context of the works.
1.3B.12adv.Pr5c	Identify, compare and implement strategies for improving the technical and expressive aspects of multiple contrasting works.
1.3E.12adv.Pr6a	Integrating digital and analog tools and resources, demonstrate an understanding and attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities of the music in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods.
1.3E.12adv.Pr6b	Demonstrate an ability to connect with audience members before and engaging with and responding to them during prepared and improvised performances.

1.3B.12adv.Pr6a	Share live or recorded performances of works (both personal and others') and explain and/or demonstrate understanding of how the expressive intent of the music is conveyed.
1.3B.12adv.Pr6b	Explain how compositions are appropriate for a variety of audiences and contexts, and how this will shape future compositions.
1.3E.12adv.Re7a	Select, describe and compare a variety of musical selections based on characteristics and knowledge of the music, understanding of digital and electronic aspects, and the purpose and context of the works.
1.3E.12adv.Re7b	Justify (by using examples) how an analysis of the structural characteristics, context, and technological and creative decisions, informs interest in and response to the music.
1.3B.12adv.Re7a	Apply researched or personally developed criteria to select music that expresses personal experiences and interests, visual images, concepts, texts, or storylines in moderately complex or complex forms, and describe and justify the choice as models for composition.
1.3B.12adv.Re7b	Analyze aurally and by reading the scores of musical works the elements of music (including form), compositional techniques and procedures, relating them to aesthetic effectiveness, style, mood and context. Explain how the analysis provides models for personal growth as a composer, performer and/or listener.
1.3E.12adv.Re8ea	Examine and cite research from multiple sources to connect the influence of the elements of music, digital and electronic features, context, purpose, and other art forms to the expressive intent of musical works.
1.3B.12adv.Re8a	Develop, justify and defend interpretations of varied works, demonstrating an understanding of the composer's intent by citing the use of elements of music (including form), compositional techniques, and the style/genre and context of each work.
1.3E.12adv.Re9a	Develop and justify the evaluation of a variety of music based on established and personally developed criteria, digital, electronic and analog features, and understanding of purpose and context.
1.3B.12adv.Re9a	Evaluate the effectiveness of the technical and expressive aspects of selected music and performances, demonstrating an understanding of theoretical concepts and complex compositional techniques and procedures.
1.3B.12adv.Re9b	Describe and evaluate the ways in which critiquing others' work and receiving feedback from others have been specifically applied in the personal creative process.
1.3B.12adv.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills related to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.
1.3B.12adv.Cn10	Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
1.3B.12adv.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills related to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.
1.3B.12adv.Cn11a	Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
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Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

- How does a composer write a large piece of music?
- How does melody, harmony, and rhythm interact to create a cohesive piece of music?
- What do I hear when I listen to music?

Enduring Understandings

- Composers change musical elements to represent abstract ideas, express personal experiences, and communicate their specific creative intent to an audience
- Following the conventions and guidelines of music theory can make composing music more difficult, but more cohesive and interesting in the end.

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- Composition is a balance between a creative and formulaic exercise.
- How to determine the phrase structure and form of the composition to be written.
- How to expand upon a melody or harmonic progression they have already written.
- How to sketch out a composition to get a sense of cadence points and how long the composition might be.
- How to synthesize the musical knowledge and skills they have to create a large piece of music.

Learning Plan

- Preview the essential questions and return to them throughout the course, in discussion and written assignments.
- Students begin to write, either using pencil and manuscript book or music notation applications, such as MuseScore as available. Teacher provides space, time, resources, and support for these work sessions, including individual check-in sessions and ongoing feedback.
- Students complete their written compositions and rehearse them with their performers.
- Students create a preliminary sketch of their composition, outlining the form and main themes. Teacher and the rest of the class provide feedback.
- Students experiment with how to begin the composition process, writing various short elements including motifs, melodies, harmonies. Teacher provides a reflection sheet for students to record their creative process.
- Students perform their compositions and write critiques. Students write critiques as if they were doing a listening assignment, looking at specific objective elements of the musical composition.
- Teacher provides examples of how composers approach the creative process of composition, including video and print examples. Invite the class to explore a variety of cultural approaches including classical, popular, folk, and non-Western traditions.
- Together, teacher and students create rubric for the composition project. What elements will be required and what will we look for in determining if the piece is successful?

Evidence/Performance Tasks

- Students will create sketches for their composition which include short harmonic progressions, melodies, motifs, and themes that could be expanded and developed within the piece.
- Students will write a complete composition. The composition will demonstrate a basic understanding of melody, harmony, phrase structure, and form.
- Students will write a description and critique of their composition based on the musical elements present.

- Students will write critiques of each other's composition using objective statements about the musical elements presented.

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations: Performing Arts Accommodations & Modifications