

COMPOSITION COOKBOOK

NDSU MUSIC
COMPOSITION

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Composition Prompts submitted by
Connor McCormick
Jon Meier
Kyle Vanderburg

For additional copies or information, email
hi@ndsucomposition.com

CONTENTS

Prompts	1
Ranges and Transpositions	3
Common Ensembles	5
Common Forms	6
Resources	7
About NDSU Composition	76

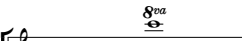















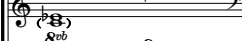
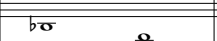
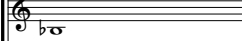
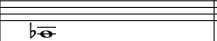
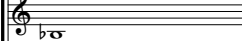
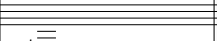




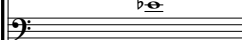
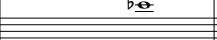
PROMPTS

The following prompts are ideas for generating musical material, motives, chord progressions, melodies, and so on. Feel free to modify the prompts for your purposes.

1. Use a work of art as inspiration. Use your composition to produce a soundtrack for a scene. Suggested artworks: Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, van Gogh's *Starry Night*, Cole's *Voyage of Life*.
2. Take your inspiration from a creative title. Titles with a strong narrative element work rather well. Examples: *Jet-Powered Cowboy*. *Stealing the neighbor's garbage*. *Driving to Minot in a blizzard*.
3. Use an instrumentation as a starting point. Pick an ensemble and write a piece that highlights each instrument's strengths. Examples: Woodwind quintet, Brass quintet, piano trio (not what you think).
4. Check the news, and use politics or current events as a starting point. Be as specific or vague as you feel comfortable. Examples: A political debate as a trumpet duet. A social media soundtrack. A piece where the audience gets to vote on what happens.
5. Use a scientific concept or scientific news as inspiration. Examples: Literally anything NASA does.
6. Use a location as inspiration. It could be large-scale or small-scale—maybe your bedroom, your hometown, Madagascar, Jupiter, the best gas station on the way to your grandparents' house—the possibilities are endless. How do you feel when you're in that place? What do you see or hear? Have you even been to this location (not necessarily a requirement)? How do you distill the essence of that location into your music?

7. Write a piece for drone and melody. (Optional: have the drone be produced by something other than an instrument. For example, write a duet for clarinet and the hum of a microwave.)
8. Write a theme song (or part of the score) for a movie that doesn't exist. Who is your main character? Who is your villain?
9. Write a piece using only notes from the pentatonic scale. (Or a scale of your choice - no cheating! Make it entirely diatonic to whatever you pick.)
10. Write a solo for the bassoon. Make it as gross as you can while still keeping it playable.
11. Write a melody that uses a small set of notes, such as C-F-G. (Bonus: Can you write an interesting piece of music using only one note?)
12. Write a 12 tone melody. A 12-tone melody uses all 12 notes, such as E-A \flat -D \flat -A-F-B \flat -B-E \flat -C-G-D-G \flat .
13. Make a chord progression by encoding a secret message. Assign a key to each letter of the alphabet (for example, A=F, B=F \sharp , C=G, D=A \flat , etc.). Pick a word or phrase, substitute the letters for keys, and see if it works!
14. Make a rhythm using Morse code. Encode a message into Morse code and let dots be equal to an eighth note and dashes be equal to a quarter note.
15. Generate a melody by picking a text to set to music. If you're writing for voice, choose a compelling poem. If you're writing for instruments, you may use whatever text you want. Try a newspaper headline, or the directions for macaroni and cheese.

RANGES AND TRANSPOSITIONS

Professional	Written	Sounding
Piccolo (Sounds Octave Higher)		
Flute		
Alto Flute (Sounds P4 Lower)		
Oboe		
English Horn (Sounds P5 Lower)		
Clarinet in Eb (Sounds m3 Higher)		
Clarinet in Bb (Sounds M2 Lower)		
Bass Clarinet in Bb (Sounds M9 Lower)		
Soprano Saxophone (Sounds M2 Lower)		
Alto Saxophone (Sounds M6 Lower)		
Tenor Saxophone (Sounds M9 Lower)		
Baritone Saxophone (Sounds M13 Lower)		
Bassoon		
Contrabassoon (Sounds Octave Lower)		

Professional

Written

Sounding

Horn in F (Sounds P5 Lower)	
Trumpet in Bb (Sounds M2 Lower)	
Tenor Trombone	
Bass Trombone	
Euphonium	
Tuba	
Glockenspiel (Sounds 2 Octaves Higher)	
Xylophone (Sounds Octave Higher)	
Vibraphone	
Chimes	
Marimba	
Timpani	
Violin	
Viola	
Violoncello	
Double Bass (Sounds Octave Lower)	

COMMON ENSEMBLES

Solos

Any instrument or voice

Duets

Any two instruments or voices

Instrument or Voice, Piano

Trios

Any three like instruments or voices

Piano Trio: Piano, Violin, Cello

String trio: Violin, Viola, Cello

Brass Trio: Horn, Trumpet, Trombone

Reed Trio: Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon

Quartets

String Quartet: 2 Violins, Viola, Cello

Sax Quartet: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

Clarinet Quartet: 3 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet

Quintets

Woodwind Quintet: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, Bassoon

Brass Quintet: 2 Trumpets, Horn,

Trombone, Tuba

Reed Quintet: Oboe, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Saxophone, Bassoon

Large Chamber Ensembles

Chamber Choir

Choirs of like instruments: Clarinet choir, Flute choir, Saxophone choir, Trumpet ensemble, Horn choir, Trombone Choir, Brass Choir.

Pierrot Ensemble: Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano, Percussion

String Orchestra: 2 Violins, Viola, Cello, Basses (multiple players on each part)

Large Ensembles

Choir: SATB, SSA, TTBB, SSAATTBB, etc.

Concert Band

Marching Band

Orchestra

COMMON FORMS

Through-Composed

⌈ A ⌋

Strophic

⌈ A ⌋

Binary

⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ B ⌋

Rounded Binary

⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ B A' ⌋

Ternary

⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ B ⌋ ⌈ A ⌋

Rondo

⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ B ⌋ ⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ C ⌋ ⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ D ⌋ ⌈ A ⌋ ... ⌋

Theme and Variations

⌈ A ⌋ ⌈ Var 1 ⌋ ⌈ Var 2 ⌋ ⌈ Var 3 ⌋ ... ⌋

Sonata-Allegro

⌈ Expo. ⌋ ⌈ Dev. ⌋ ⌈ Recap ⌋

RESOURCES

Here are a few books about music composition which we find useful.

Jorge Variego. *Composing with Constraints: 100 Practical Exercises in Music Composition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. ISBN 978-0-19-005724-4.

Alan Belkin. *Musical Composition: Craft and Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. ISBN 978-0-300-21899-2.

Samuel Adler. *The Study of Orchestration*, 4th edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2016. ISBN 978-0-393-92065-9.

Samuel Z. Solomon. *How to Write for Percussion: A Comprehensive Guide to Percussion Composition*, 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-19-992036-5.

Richard Bellis. *The Emerging Film Composer*. Self-Published, 2007. ISBN 978-0-615-13623-3

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NDSU MUSIC COMPOSITION

North Dakota State University offers the first and only Bachelor of Music in Composition program in the Dakotas, and one of the few in the region. NDSU Music Composition combines the robust educational opportunities available at a large research university (13,000 students) with the personal attention available through the Challey School of Music.

NDSU's Music Composition curriculum focuses on the entire composition workflow. Students write music, seek commissions, produce professional scores, market their sheet music, and produce concerts. Composition majors have the opportunity to pursue additional topics, such as publishing, computer science, and entrepreneurship as part of their degree plan.

Students who want to pursue composition as a major complete a performance audition (in voice or on a standard band/orchestral instrument) and also submit a portfolio of original works for evaluation.

Up-to-date information on applying to the Challey School of Music is available at <https://ndsu.edu/music/prospective-students/>.

For more information about NDSU Composition, visit <https://ndsucomposition.com>