

Composing Challenge Pack

Inside the Score – November 2020

Welcome to the 30-Day Composing Challenge. The objective is simple, at least on a surface level:

Compose and finish a new piece of music which stretches your abilities just a little beyond your comfort zone.

That's it – simple, right? Well – perhaps not!

I recently surveyed hundreds of musicians, many of whom said they would like to compose more music, but don't have the time, inspiration, inclination, or direction to finish the job. Others said that they would come up with an idea, but struggled to develop that idea into a full piece of music.

This Composing Pack is supposed to help you get through the next 30 days, and write a full, finished piece of music within that time limit.

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Introduction

This Composing Pack is designed to help you to compose something from start to finish, in 30 days. It is structured to **cover all the major bases of composing, in roughly the order you might approach them.**

The first sections, **'Finding Time'**, and **'Pushing Out of Your Comfort Zone'**, are about the initial steps of commitment - of preparing yourself to write.

'Finding Inspiration', and **'Initial Sketches'** are about the first stages of idea generation, and starting your work.

'Structure', **'Full Sketches'**, **'Emotional Arc and Flow'**, and **'Make Sure the Lines Work'** are all about turning your initial ideas into a full, coherent piece of music.

And finally, **'Thickening it Out'**, **'Polishing Your Music'**, and **'Sharing Your Work'** are about the final stages - finishing and appreciating your work!

How long you spend on each phase will be unique to you - and there's no need to follow them to the letter. These are just general guidelines for approaching a full composition, from start to finish.

At the end, there is an **Example Schedule**, which estimates how long you might spend in each phase. If you like, you can use this for guidance; or, you can completely ignore it. **Each project will be different, and how long you spend on each phase will depend on the music you're writing, your level of experience, and what you feel needs most time.**

Finally, there are many bits of advice in this document which come from Rhyger and Mattheas, two of our composing veterans from the Discord community. They actually do monthly 'Composing Challenges', hosted on Discord. If you're interested, then check out our Discord Server here: <https://discord.gg/cEy3Mj8>

So, once again: the following sections of this Composing Pack are just guidelines - nothing in this process is set in stone, and, while we're here to help, feel free to proceed in whatever way you think is best!

Finding Time

One of the most common issues that comes up is that people feel they don't have the time to compose. One of the first parts of this challenge will be **marking out a regular time** where you can commit to composing, **once a day**.

Every successful composer that I've met, and most of the successful dead composers I've studied, had regular routines, where **they would carve out regular time to compose every day**. For some, it was early in the morning, for some, late in the evening, but the important thing is that they would make a habit of it.

They wouldn't "wait for inspiration to strike". They would sit down and get on with it. When you begin to do this, you'll find that inspiration doesn't come from sitting around – **inspiration tends to come when you're *already at your desk, doing the job!***

That being said, a very common habit for creatives is to go on walks, often in the early afternoon, after lunch. Walks are a time where you can process your thoughts, and come up with ideas or solutions to problems. I recommend taking walks with a notepad and pen, or with your phone as a voice recorder, so you can record ideas as they come to you (Beethoven and Mahler both took afternoon walks, bringing manuscript paper with them in case they had a lightbulb moment). However, it's crucial to leave your phone on flight mode, so that there'll be no distractions. These walks are not for being distracted, or playing on your phone. They're for unwinding, solving problems, and coming up with ideas.

HOWEVER, I acknowledge that many of you are not interested in being professional composers. You just want to write something, to fuel your hobby. Not all of you want to write for 3-5 hours a day.

And here's the thing: You really don't need to write for that long. I've found that even doing 30 minutes per day of something, consistently, with strong focus, can reap exponential rewards. Try it with piano practice, composing, or whatever other skill – do it *every day*, for 30 minutes, with absolute focus, and you'll notice your skill level will improve surprisingly quickly.

For this challenge, **45 or 50 minutes a day would be better. 90 or even 120 minutes is absolutely ideal**, for a really solid composing session. Shorter than 45 minutes might mean that you don't reach your full creative flow.

You could also, for example, do **45 minutes per day on weekdays, and then do 90 minutes per day on weekends. Or an hour in the weekdays, and two hours per day in the weekends**. In any case, **the most important thing is that you keep it consistent**.

The other important thing is to **eliminate all distractions**. Your phone, your computer, your TV – studies have shown that when we get distracted from a task, it can take *up to 20 minutes* to get back into the flow of things. **That's a tremendous waste of time**. If you're going to commit to composing every day, then also commit to turning your phone or internet off, and working in a

quiet, distraction-free zone. It's only for a short while every day, but it will make a huge impact on your productivity.

If you think you don't have time to compose – check how much time you're spending on your phone every day (I use an app called Digitox). The answer might shock you into turning the darned thing off for a while...! And you'd better believe that Mahler didn't have any of those distractions, when he was composing his symphonies in isolation on an Austrian lake.





Tasks:

Find a regular time when you can work on your composing, every single day. I recommend sessions of at least 45 minutes, though 60 or even 90 might be optimal. I personally like to take a day off on Sundays, to take some space from my work, but that's up to you.

Go into your calendar, and mark this time out over the next 30 days – **this is sacred time, where you'll turn off your phone, internet, and get away from any other distractions, to just write music, and do nothing but write music.**

Tell yourself that **you are committed to writing music at this time, every single day.** Some days will be harder than others – some days, you'll be struggling with an idea, and some days it will just flow naturally. **But whatever mood you're in, and whatever point you're at in the process, you will show up, sit down, and focus on writing for this time period.**

A second thing worth doing is finding a place to walk – ideally somewhere green. A park, some countryside, or even your back garden will do. It should be close to where you work. This might sound strange, but it was extremely common for great composers, and creatives in general, to take long “thinking walks” after lunch, to allow their ideas to unfold mentally. You could bring a notepad, a voice recorder, or a phone (on flight mode to avoid distraction), so that you can record any significant ideas that you have.

There's something about walking in beautiful places that is mentally and physically stimulating, and can bring about solutions to problems. Throughout the next 30 days, I

highly recommend taking “thinking” walks when you are stuck on a problem, or need some creative refreshment.

To summarise:

- Commit to a regular time, each day for 30 days, where you can compose music with no distraction. Your phone will go off, and you will do nothing but compose for this time period. I recommend at least 45 minutes – 60-90 is optimal. If you think you don’t have time, check how much time you are spending on your phone every day. Remember, you could do, for example, 45 minutes per day on weekdays, and 90 minutes per day on the weekend. You could also, if you like, take one day off per week to refresh your creative mind.

- Find a nice place where you can walk, close to home. Being surrounded by nature is better than walking on a busy street. Walking in nature, without distraction, can be a great way to stimulate creative thought.

On Pushing Out of Your Comfort Zone

The first part of this challenge is simple enough: **Start and finish composing a full piece of music, in 30 days.** The second part is “**which stretches your abilities just a little beyond your comfort zone.**”

This is quite crucial – it’s an important part of learning, and getting into that “flow” state where we lose a sense of time, and everything we create seems to happen naturally. If we work on something that’s too easy for us, we may get bored or lose interest. Too difficult, and it can be demotivating, stressful, and sometimes unpleasant. But just the right level of challenge – a bit beyond your comfort zone – is perfect. You’ll learn more, and you’re more likely to get into that wonderful state of creative “flow”.

Your comfort zone will depend on your experience. For some, you may want to compose something *just* for piano, or *just* for your primary instrument (this is how many, many composers started). For others, you might want to push the boat out – composing for voice and piano, or for four voices or instruments – or maybe eight. A full string section, or a wind band. If you’re new to this, I definitely wouldn’t recommend attempting a full symphony orchestra right out of the gate. Start smaller, and work your way up. You’ll learn a lot more by starting small.

What you’ll find is that writing for fewer instruments can be an excellent challenge. You’re limited in your scope, and **limitations actually enhance creativity.** You have to be creative to find solutions to those limitations, and to work within whatever boundaries you choose.

In any case – you know your level of experience best, so choose something which will push you just beyond your comfort zone, but not so far beyond it that it will become a burden to finish in 30 days.

And my last piece of advice is: **Baby Steps.** You don’t need to write your entire piece, all at once. Just keep taking one small step at a time, and you’ll get there. More on that below...!

Tasks:

Write down what you want to achieve. What is your level of experience? Are you completely new to composing, or are you a seasoned veteran? What kind of music have you written in the past, if any? Was it for solo piano, or a full orchestra? How long were your pieces of music? Work out what you’ve achieved in the past, and what your level of experience is. Then, you can make an informed decision about what you want to achieve in the next 30 days.

Again: push yourself just a little outside of your comfort zone. Look at where you are now, and decide what would be the right level of challenge for you next. What would be an exciting, yet achievable challenge for you, that would teach you along the way?

So, to summarise: Write down your composing experience, and write down, with clarity, what you think would be a good challenge for you over the next 30 days

Finding Inspiration

As I said earlier, waiting for that ‘lightning bolt’ of inspiration to strike is often a waste of time. More often, inspiration strikes when we’re *already at our desk, doing the work*.

However, it can sometimes be a challenge to find that initial nugget of inspiration, which starts the whole thing off. Often, to kickstart this process, we want to find something that will excite us, and motivate us to keep writing.

Often, this ‘initial nugget’ can come from improvising on an instrument. If you’re comfortable and familiar with an instrument, then try playing around with it; improvise on it, try to let go of any “muscle memory” of music you already know, and just play freely. It’s possible that, after doing this for a while, you will have one or several nuggets that have serious potential.

Here’s some advice from Rhyger and Mattheas, who run the monthly composing challenges with our Discord community:

Sometimes, all it takes is a nugget of an idea. Something improvised, emerged from chaos. A tiny melodic or rhythmic motif of your own or grabbed from a piece that already exists. It can truly be anything! See how that building block can be changed or expanded upon. It’s all about sheer creativity without judgement! Having even the smallest of fundamental building blocks and committing to it can help keep the composition process focused. Once you’re done crafting the unshiny rough nugget into a jewel, it’ll be quite different, personalized, and fully realized. And remember: Choosing to build a house by a lovely view you found is much more practical than scouring the whole earth for the best possible view.

Improvising isn’t always the answer. Sometimes, we can get stuck in our muscle memory, and struggle to find something new to us. So another option I recommend is taking a long walk in a beautiful place, and letting yourself think up an idea that would really motivate you to get writing.

Here are some random ideas to help you find that initial inspiration:

- Think of a combination of instruments you find beautiful. It could be piano and cello. It could be piano, cello, and harp. It could be guitar and voice. It could be more unusual. It could be literally anything. But sometimes, thinking of combinations of sounds can inspire musical creativity.
- Think of an inspiring poem, psalm, or speech. You could write a song which sets those words. Or, you could write a “Song without words” – that is, use your text to inspire or influence your music, even if you don’t include words in your song. For example, you could use the words, “To be or not to be” to set a melody for clarinet. The clarinet doesn’t actually sing the words, but it has inspired a melody.
- Similarly, think of a favourite book, or film, or play, which could inspire music. I recently read Captain Corelli’s Mandolin, and could think of huge amounts of music to write for the many diverse scenes in that book.

- Finally, something I've often done is to find a movie scene on YouTube, or a short animated film. Animated films work well, because there's often no dialogue, so you're just writing to picture. Silence it – completely mute the video! You don't want to be distracted by any music. Then, write music inspired by that silent movie scene.

Daily Goals

Rhyger and Mattheas suggest having daily goals - so that when you sit down each day, you know exactly what you're going to be focusing on. Of course, things might go in a different direction from what you expect, and that's all part of the fun! But a goal will help your mind to focus and get into a productive state.

I would recommend that you scan through this entire Composing Pack first, then create a goal before each composing session, to get you moving in the right direction.

Here is their advice:

Working on the piece every day, whether at your 'desk' or on a walk, will help keep your mind focused while increasing your creative potential. A composing habit will build upon itself over time, so it is very important to build the habit with consistency!

Set aside some time to brainstorm or polish. Try not to get too stuck on one specific thing for the whole time; it might resolve itself tomorrow (though don't delay it for too long). Have something musical written down every day. Creativity is never a failure, so no judging!

At the end of a session, write down something specific that you managed to accomplish today. Perhaps you managed to solidify the structure, perfect the melody, create an interesting variation or development upon the melody, sort out the harmony in this important moment, come up with a cool or more fitting mood, etc. Keep the positives in mind.

Initial Sketches

Idea sketching is a process done by many composers, from Beethoven and Mozart, to John Williams and Hans Zimmer. I recommend that for the first several days, you keep a journal of ideas and sketches. This can be a complete free-flow of ideas, with no judgement attached to them.

An important thing is: from one day to the next, don't go back and delete or edit yesterday's work. There's no judgement on the work you're producing – you're just consistently adding to the journal, day after day. You're never going back and deleting – you're just adding ideas to it.

These ideas might be new themes, textures, harmonies, or anything at all. Or, for example, you might come up with an idea on the first day, and then explore the possibilities of that idea on the following days. You might come up with multiple ideas one day, and then explore how those ideas could interact with each other on future days. Or, on a future day, you might decide to go in a different direction, to put aside your earlier ideas, and explore different thoughts altogether.

The key is: it doesn't matter. Let your creativity unfold, and crucially, **keep adding to this journal**. Don't delete – add new things day by day.

NOTICE that at this stage, we're not writing the "full piece" yet. We're simply exploring ideas, developing them, and exploring all the different possibilities. We want to unleash the full potential of your nuggets. Later on, we'll start turning these sketches into a proper structure.

Here's some more advice from Rhyger and Mattheas at the Discord community:

If you have a nugget but seem stuck, bring on the creativity! Try experimenting with the nugget in ways you hadn't thought of before. Switch up the rhythm. Invert or reverse the pitches. Turn it into 9/8, or take the tempo all the way down to 20 bpm. Change the mood. Add / remove some instruments. Perhaps it's better as a minimalist piece. There are many possibilities for the nugget, so while exploring, one might beg you to continue. The bounds of creativity are endless, so even the extreme fringes give helpful perspective.

Focus on a musical fragment. How might it vary? Develop? Get substituted for something else? Become a harmony itself? This can fill gaps while building cohesion at the same time!

During this creative phase, don't shy away from ideas or harmonies that are strange! Just because it doesn't fit with Mozart's musical style doesn't mean that it is wrong! The only caveat is to keep some structure or cohesion to the strangeness. The more you experiment with surprise or dissonance or odd moods, the more comfortably you will handle such tools.

Write without judgment! See where both the nugget and the space take you. This stage is about more quantity than quality. We'll focus more on cohesion later. This is about filling the room with some furniture in order to get a proper perspective and see where things fit or should be moved.

In any case, the point is to take your nuggets or ideas, and explore their full potential. See what you can do! Remember, we're not worried about making it a full, clean piece of music at this stage. That will come later. Right now, we're just exploring the possibilities.

You should be able to 'feel' when you're coming to the end of this phrase. You may have a journal full of ideas - some of which have more potential than others. Now it's time to decide which ideas you want to run with, and turn into a full piece of music.

Structure

So, you've probably got some sketches and good ideas. You now need to turn this into a clear piece of music.

An important thing to think about as you're planning your piece is **structure**. There's a reason why structures have stuck around for hundreds of years: they're effective, and **they make the presentation of your ideas very clear**. Listeners like to be able to follow what's going on in your music; if you have no structure whatsoever, your music might sound like chaos, and it's difficult for a listener to anchor themselves onto the emotional journey.

A simple way to start is with "**Strophic**" form. That's a bit like having multiple verses of a song. You'll hear a verse, and then another, and then another. However, to keep things interesting, each time the verse returns, there'll be slight differences or developments to keep things moving forwards, and to keep a sense of dramatic journey from start to finish. For a very basic example, the first verse could be quiet, and each verse would get progressively louder and more exciting, until the final climactic verse, with all guns blazing.

Another of the most common structures is to have **two contrasting sections**, like this:

A – B – A'

The A section will be in one mood, the B section will be in a contrasting mood, with contrasting musical material, and the A section will return to round off the piece. You might want them to be in contrasting keys, too. The ' after the second A means that that A section is "different" – that when it comes a second time, it has changed, developed, and transformed over the course of our musical journey.

You might want to go a little more complicated:

A – B – A' – B' – A"

Or even

A – B – A' – C – A'' – B' – A'''

Or, for something a little more advanced, you could write in "**Sonata Form**", which looks something like this:

A section – B section (in different keys)

Free Development of material from both A and B

A' return – B' return (B section now in same key as A section)

OR, You could even flesh that sonata form out a little:

Slow Introduction

A Section – B Section

Free Development of Earlier materials

A' return – B' return

Coda, giving a climax, while referring to earlier material

One final suggestion is to do a **Theme and Variations**. This is where you take a fully-fledged theme, and then provide several, self contained variations on that theme. So, in terms of letters, this would look something like:

A – Theme

B, C, D, E, F, G – Variations

H – Final Climactic Variation

Whatever you decide on should depend on your level of skill, and the level of challenge you want to take on. Be bold, but don't make it so complicated that you can't follow through!

So, decide on what structure you want to use. **You can always alter it later, but it's important to have a clear idea moving forwards. Direction and Clarity will help your writing.**

Here are some words from Rhyger and Mattheas:

*It can be helpful to think in terms of **contrast** of stylistic elements. Loud vs. Soft. Busy vs. Sparse. Fast vs. Slow. While I think it's great to think in terms of traditional forms, I think what's most important is to find ways to properly organize your contrasting sections, so that they make sense together.*

Task:

- Decide on a structure or form that will help you write your piece with direction and clarity. Based on the sketches you've written, and your level of experience, what kind of form would be most appropriate for this piece? Perhaps you need to organise contrasting sections of music. Or perhaps you want to focus on one musical idea, and develop that in various sections, which form an overall dramatic arc.

Full Sketches

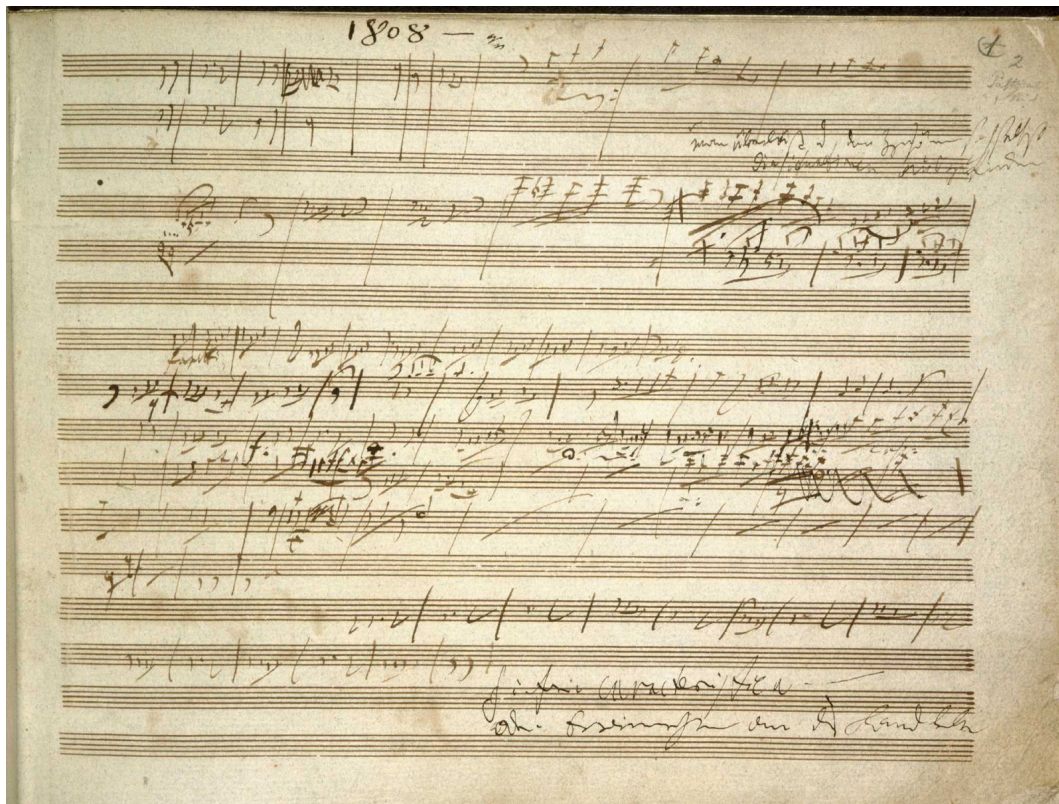
Before you commit to writing it out in full, I would recommend starting with sketches. This means that rather than getting lost in every tiny detail, you can first focus on making sure the piece will work as a whole, and that you know where you're going.

Imagine painting a detailed portrait of someone's face. An artist would start by sketching out the face, and making sure that the proportions and character are correct. Only later would the artist then spend time trying to get the skin tone and complexion just right. The full, sketched outline needs to come, before we focus the tiny details that make it more special.

It can help to just sketch out (on paper, or on a computer) your musical ideas and themes, with a basic harmonic outline. You want to sketch out the journey your piece is going to go on, before you write it out in full detail.

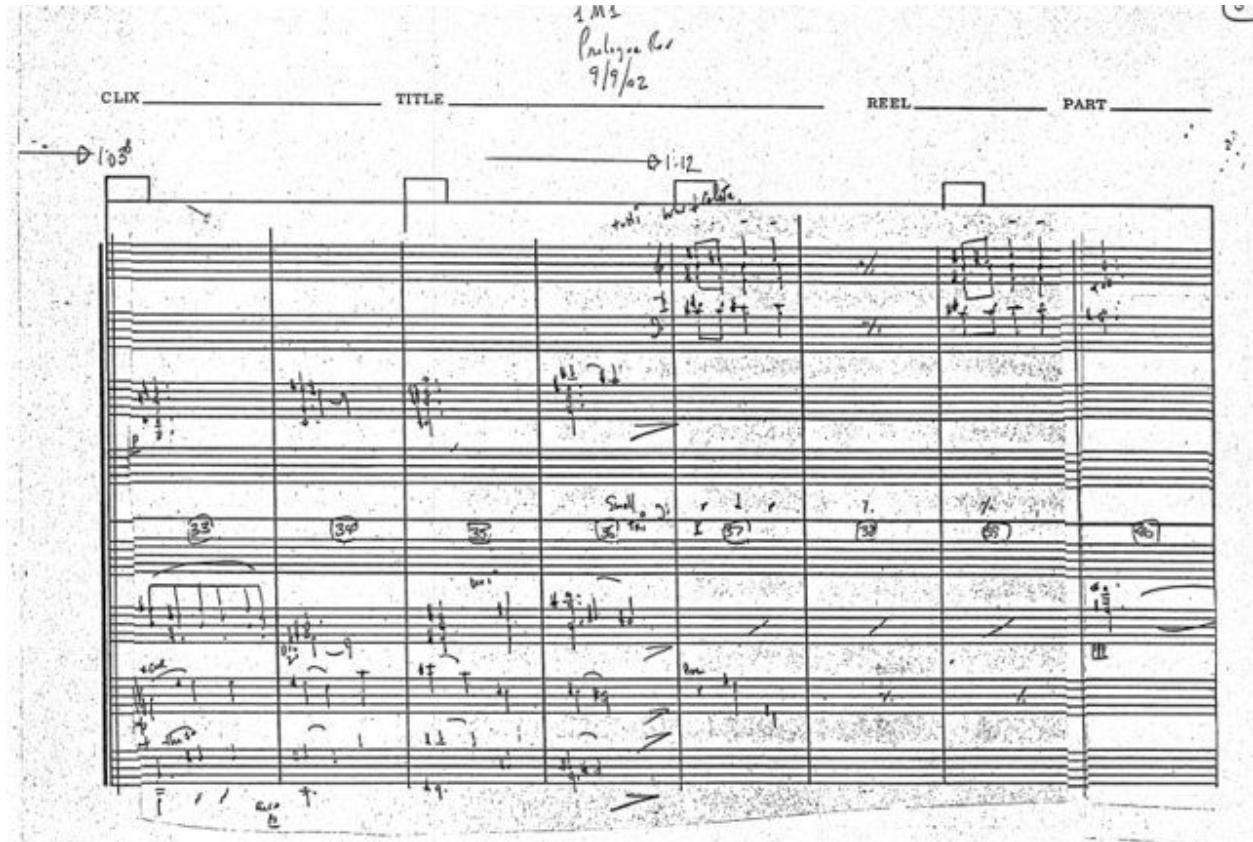
Remember – things might change later down the road! This is totally normal. But it definitely helps to sketch and plan your piece of music, before you rush off down the road. It may save you getting stuck later.

Here is what Beethoven's sketches look like, for his 6th ('Pastoral') Symphony:



Pretty illegible – I know! But he would take a theme or idea, and roughly map out how it would continue, and what would accompany it. These sketches are just for him, not for anyone else, so it doesn't matter if they look a little ugly.

Here are some of John Williams' sketches:



You'll notice in this case he doesn't map out the full orchestration. The bottom 3 or 4 staves are saved for strings, the middle staves will be brass and percussion, and the top 1 or 2 staves will be woodwind. Then later, the orchestration will be written out in more detail.

For another slightly intimidating example, look at how John Powell moves from sketches to full score:

Sketch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1nR6B_wLK0&ab_channel=JohnPowell

Orchestral "mock up":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyEB-6y0miA&ab_channel=JohnPowell

Final Product: <https://youtu.be/leIMnvpaf0s?t=65>

Don't let yourself be put off by these composing masters! They've devoted decades of their lives to this. All you need to focus on are the steps in front of you, and plotting the course of your piece.

So, over the next few days, sketch and map out how your piece will go from start to finish.

Finally, here's a piece of advice from Rhyger and Mattheas:

*Try not to judge yourself or the piece too harshly, especially if it isn't manifesting exactly how you want it to. Sometimes the music grows beyond our own ideas! Sometimes our expectations are unreasonable or simply **beyond what we are capable of at this present hour**. When others see your piece, they will not know your perceived failures and will simply see the piece as it exists. They will like it because you have created something novel in the world! They will see the aspects of the piece that work very well and brush over the little annoying aspects that still bother you. Imperfection is progress and growth, not failure.*

Emotional Arc, and Flow

One thing to think about which is often a problem in student composers, is the concept of giving your piece a natural emotional journey. **You want to make sure that your piece has a sense of moving in a direction, of 'going somewhere', of flowing naturally.** It doesn't want to just stay in one place the whole time – it wants to take you with it on a journey, where it visits different places, moods, atmospheres, and returns home 'changed'.

Whatever you do with your music, **make sure that it "goes somewhere", and doesn't just sit in one place for 3 minutes.**

How you do this depends on the style of your music, but you might want to listen to other music in a similar style, so you can figure out how they maintain a clear sense of 'journey', 'flow', and movement in their music.

Make Sure the Lines Work

Another common mistake I see with students' work is that the musical lines 'don't work'. The melody will often make sense, and be coherent. But the bass line, and the middle lines of harmony are all over the place.

Something I learnt in choral music is that **every line in every part should have its own flow, and make 'sense' musically**. Of course, some parts are going to be much more important than others. But even so, the less important parts should also 'make sense' musically.

Sing your bassline. Is it singable? Or does it jump and bounce all over the place, making no musical sense at all. **Would it work as a musical line, in its own right? Or is it just a mess?**

As you begin to fill out the 'middle parts' of your harmony, ask the same questions. **When you sing them, are they all over the place? Or do they flow cleanly, from one note to the next?**

This could make the difference between a clear, well executed composition, and a messy, confused one.

If you want more information on this, you can look up "Part Writing"

Thickening it Out

Once you're confident with your sketches, your structure, and that your piece is going to make sense, you can begin to write out your music in full! Take your time with this, and enjoy the process of getting really stuck in to each instrument, and the lines that they play.

Now is the time to 'fill in the gaps' - turn your sketches into the full thing. You will want to do things such as fill in the harmony, make sure the rhythms and accompaniment are interesting, and write out the finer details.

At this stage you can also add extra parts or details. Your sketches are just that - a sketch - but you can absolutely add more at this stage, to make your music more interesting.

You'll probably focus on fleshing out your plan, making it fuller, and perhaps adding extra frills, details, and textures to make it even more special to listen to.

For an interesting example, check out this track - it's the Demo version to the track, *Day One*, from the movie *Interstellar*. It's clearly more of a 'sketch' - just piano and strings.

<https://open.spotify.com/track/1GelvXCuNRJkSTV8UwAAGw?si=j3U2r0lfQoquBHacYEjang>

Then listen to the finished track, *Day One*, from the final album - now with woodwinds added, as well as an organ part. It sounds much more captivating, and interesting to listen to.

https://open.spotify.com/track/4WmB04GBqS4xPMYN9dHgBw?si=dlmtc_mzTfyAmlMh12QsYw

The piece is the same in its essence, but Zimmer and his team have built upon the sketch, added things, and enhanced the details. What I find particularly interesting, is that the thing I always thought of as ‘the theme’ in this track didn’t even exist in the original demo! They added that organ part later, as an extra detail on top - and yet to me, that is now ‘the theme’ from *Interstellar*! What a surprise!

Often in life, it’s those details that lift something out of the ordinary, and can make your art special and beautiful. The sketch and structure are still there, underneath it all, but the details are what make it shimmer.

Polishing Your Music

If you haven’t already, you will want to add dynamics to your music, to make sure that it has a dynamic structure, and isn’t just “loud” or “quiet” the whole way through. You can also add articulations - accents, slurs, and so on - to help show how the performers should play your lines.

What I like to do, and highly recommend doing at this late stage is: **sing through every single line in the piece**. Sing the violin part, sing the flute part, sing whatever - just sing each part. It doesn’t need to be in tune, it doesn’t need to be in the same octave. **The point is that this makes you carefully focus on each individual part of the music**. You will often notice some mistakes, some lines that don’t quite work, or some extra dynamics or articulations that you’ll want to add in to make it sound more musical.

Remember, as always, **you can visit the Facebook community, or the Discord server, if you want to ask for help**. There are many people on these communities who are happy to give you advice or guidance, if you need it. So don’t be afraid to ask!

Sharing Your Work

You don't have to share your work if you don't want to. This challenge is about personal enrichment above all else. However, **if you'd like to share, then we in the community would love to hear it.**

If your music is handwritten, you could send a series of photos. If it's written on software, you could export it and share it as a PDF. You can also share the audio of your music; don't worry if it sounds dreadful and robotic on your computer playback - we're used to that, and we won't judge your music on that!

You can ask for feedback if you like (we will be positive), or just share it for the joy of sharing, with no request for feedback.

Finally, if you're proactive, you might even be able to get your music performed and recorded. The easiest way, by far, to do this, is to know people who play instruments that you're writing for. Often friends will be happy to come together and record something, in exchange for the promise of cake, beer, or other treats. If your music is advanced, you might want to pay higher-level students to record it.

You can even find people online to play your parts for you, on websites such as Fiverr (though I've never tried this myself).

If you're a member of a choir, for example, and you feel ready, it can be a great idea to email your new choral piece to the director. Don't be pushy about it, but simply email them saying "I've written this and wanted to share it. Let me know what you think." You never know - it might be on your choir's next program!

As Rhyger and Mattheas say:

Always maintain the perspective of what went well with your piece. Others will often be able to keep you from getting too negative, if you just share your piece :) Join the creative community! The more you practice, the more you'll grow! And heavy critiques on yourself will only serve to demotivate you. Don't be the new Mozart, be the new you!

Example Schedule

Remember - **there's no need to follow this schedule at all. This is simply some rough guidance**, in case you want to see how the process *might* pan out.

How long each phase takes you will be different for everybody, and for every unique project. So this is only an example - not something set in stone!

Days 1-2: Finding Inspiration

Days 3-6: Initial Sketches

Day 7: Off

Days 8-10: Structure

Days 11-13: Full Sketches

Day 14: Off

Days 15-18: Full Sketches Continued (think about Emotional Arc and Flow)

Days 19-20: Making Sure the Lines Work

Day 21: Off

Days 22-25: Thickening it Out

Days 26-27: Polishing Your Music

Day 28: Off

Day 29: Final Check Through - Make Sure You're Happy!

Day 30: Share Your Music! (Or save it, and be proud of it!)