

Summer Composition Task for Non-GCSE students

Compose a Theme and Variations. Read the whole of the instructions before you start, then come back and do each section in turn. You could write for piano or for a melody instrument and piano.

1. Compose a 16 bar melody.
It will help to sub-divide your 16 bars into two pairs of 4 bars. Within each pair try to create a 'question' and 'answer.' Try to end the first 4 bars with notes that would suit an imperfect cadence and the second 4 bars a perfect cadence. Take this approach with the second pair.
2. Work out some chords that will fit your melody (you could compose the chords and melody at the same time – I would)
3. Compose a set of variations on this theme. Each variation should explore different techniques for changing the theme and its harmony.

Each variation will be based on a different musical texture:

1. Unison
2. Homophonic harmony - doubling in 3rds or 6ths
3. Homophonic chords
4. Accompaniment patterns – choose ONE from arpeggios, broken chords, alberti bass, repeated rhythmic chords and stride piano.
5. Melody with Accompaniment – create a more varied accompaniment, combining two or more of the above (e.g. a held chord followed by a couple of bars of alberti bass etc.)
6. Polyphony - canon
7. Polyphony - counter melody.

Within your seven variations you should also explore all of the following:

- **Changing the mode (swap major for minor)**
- **Changing the metre (time signature)** and adjusting your theme accordingly.
- **Rhythmic alterations** (e.g. introducing dotted notes, using triplets)
- **Melodic Ornamentation** – elaborate the melody, perhaps making hiding it within semiquaver or quaver runs.
- **Reharmonisation** – changing the harmony, including introducing chromatic chords.
- **Transposing** some variations into different keys

Remember that composing is an **expressive** as well as technical exercise. You should think about what mood or atmosphere you want each variation to create, and include detailed dynamic, articulation and tempo markings from the start of the process.