

2016

Composition Workshop

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Mauldin, Michael D.. "Composition Workshop." (2016). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nm_composer_archive/652

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Composing & improvising can be fun, whether you're a music-theory expert or not. The trigger for most of us is enjoying (with the listener) musical gestures that remind us of things in our environment that we all share. The gestures can be explored even before learning about chord-function. You and another instrumentalist or two can experiment with them with surprising results.

Gravity/Magnetism:

- +Pulling away, being pulled back (“board-pool”)
- +Progressively overcoming the pull (small jump, big jump, rocket)
- +Melodic/harmonic pull of the half-step: “come here” (as with 7-8 in major or 2-1 in *Phrygian* mode)

Flight:

- +Being “in one” in a waltz (“touch-fly-fly” or “ground-air-air”)
- +Interrupted or irregular, as in the “injured leg” feel of 5/8 (strong-weak-weak, strong-weak)

Running:

- +upper and lower body move differently (rhythmic underpinnings of flowing melodies, Debussy’s “salient” and “recessive” lines) (centipede legs vs centipede body)
- +more than one person (or horse, animal) running, as in “*hemiola*” (2-groups-of-3 trading or overlapping with 3-groups-of-2).
- +a chase (canon, fugue)

Stasis:

- +Rest, trance, slow-motion, dream

The human “2/3” relationship (two eyes, one nose, etc):

- +The square yet round feel of 8-measure “*sentence structure*” divided into three phrases (2 ms, 2 ms and 4 ms)

Predictability:

- +”Same but different”

* * *

If any of these spark good experiments, you might explore the “geography” of the keyboard by learning the (super powerful) 12 major triads by putting them in 4 groups by their “shape:”

1. “all white” (CEG) (FAC) (GBD)
2. “mountain in the middle” (DF#A) (EG#B) (AC#E)
3. “valley in the middle” (D-flat, F, A-flat) (E-flat, G, B-flat) (A-flat, C, E-flat)
4. “unique” (F#A#C#) (B-flat, D, F) (BD#F#)

Michael Mauldin, May 2016, Eldorado High School Orchestra