

Composition Project: 20th Century Scales

- **Purpose:** Compose a relatively short, original piece of music that demonstrates mastery of twentieth-century pitch collections learned this semester.
- **Project Components:**
 - Draft #1 Due
 - Final Draft Due
 - Project Performance

Note: Both drafts must include labeled pitch collections, and separate print copies for your instructor, performer(s), & yourself. Draft #1 must also include printed names and signatures of all performers agreeing to participate.

- **Assignment:** You will compose a short work for solo, duet, or trio, using instruments/voices of your choosing. You are responsible for securing the performers, including classmates and others outside of class, and getting their signatures on Draft #1 as a commitment that they'll perform your work. You are required to perform on at least one of your classmates' pieces. You may perform in your own work.
- **Length:** Your composition should be quite short: no shorter than 45 seconds, and certainly no longer than 2 minutes. Aim for 1-3 pages of music. Consider this a "miniature."
- **Instruments:** If you are writing for performers other than yourself, please speak with your performer(s) early on to confirm their commitment to perform, and to ensure you have the correct clef, transposition, and range for his/her instrument/voice. You are encouraged to seek your performers' guidance on how to write well and easily for her/his instrument/voice. If you need additional help, ask your instructor.
- **Pitch Content:** Select exactly two of the following **pitch collections** mentioned in class for use in your composition:

For any pitch collections from the "Large" category below, its specific pitch content should remain static throughout the piece, and should not be subsequently transposed. For example, do not begin with E Phrygian, then later transpose it to B Lydian.

Large Pitch Collections: (5+ notes)

- Diatonic/Modal scale (avoid Ionian & Aeolian; do *not* use more than one Diatonic/Modal scale)
- Pentatonic scale (Major, Minor, or Hirajoshi)
- Octatonic scale
- Hexatonic scale
- Whole-tone scale
- Chromatic scale
- Acoustic scale
- Dual-diatonic scale

(continued)



Composition Project: 20th Century Scales

For any pitch collections from the “Small” category below, its specific pitch content *should* change multiple times throughout the piece by way of transposition. That is, if you select the Y-cell starting on Eb (Eb, F, G, A), you should later in the piece move to various transposed versions such as starting on G (G, A, B, C#) or Bb (Bb, C, D, E), and count those as part of the same pitch collection (Y-cell).

Small Pitch Collections: (4 notes)

- X-cell (0123; chromatic tetrachord)
- Y-cell (0246; whole-tone tetrachord)
- Z-cell (0167; m2, P4, m2)
- French 6th (0268; used without tonal function)

For definitions of the pitch collections above, see the following pages:

<http://openmusictheory.com/scales2.html>

<http://openmusictheory.com/atonal.html>

- Be sure to choose two pitch collections that have at least **one tone in common**, and exploit this common tone to modulate between pitch collections in a transitional phrase.
- **Form:** The form of your piece must be ABA. Use one pitch collection in the A sections, and another in the B section. The second A section may or may not be identical in musical content to the first A section, but it must use the same pitch collection.
- **Materials:** The music should be clear, legible, complete, and following all standards of notation. If notation software is used, be sure you understand the program well enough to produce proper engraving. (Technology is no excuse for poor quality.)
- **Text:** If you are writing for voice, the performer may sing text, the neutral syllable “LA”, or solfege, whichever is easiest. If you decide to set a text, be sure to clear this with your instructor well in advance to be sure it is appropriate and singable. You are highly discouraged from using existing copyrighted words without permission.
- **Difficulty:** Since this is a small project with a relatively short deadline, possibly involving writing for instruments that are unfamiliar to you, you should plan to compose music that is easy to learn and to play well with only a week or so of practice. Your composition should be original and engaging, but its level of complexity will not affect your grade. Aim for simple, clear, and manageable!
- **Draft #1:** This is a complete draft, legibly notated, and done from beginning to end. Clearly label your pitch collections on your score. Additionally, include the printed names and signatures of all performers agreeing to participate. Bring separate copies for your instructor, your performer(s), and yourself.
- **Final Draft:** This is the final copy, and may not be changed after the due date. Clearly label your pitch collections on your score. Bring separate copies for your instructor, your performer(s), and yourself.
- **Additional Drafts:** Though not required and not graded, you are highly encouraged to turn in additional drafts *prior to* the Draft #1 and Final Draft deadlines, for feedback, or meet individually with your instructor outside of class time. Label your pitch collections on your score.

(continued)

- **Deadlines:** The pieces will be performed outside our regular class meeting. It is your responsibility as the composer to have the work done by the due date, to ensure sufficient time to rehearse the piece. Late projects will greatly impact your grade, and the performance itself. Treat this as a public recital!
- **Performance:** Because the final performance is partially a reflection of your skill and timeliness as a composer, the quality of the performance itself will impact your grade.

You are highly encouraged to discuss any concerns early on with your instructor.

- **Grading:**
 - 10% – **Draft #1 Pitch Collections:** Two appropriate pitch collections used, with a common tone between them used to modulate.
 - 10% – **Draft #1 Form:** ABA, with each pitch collection appearing in its own section.
 - 20% – **Final Draft Pitch Collections:** Two appropriate pitch collections used, with a common tone between them used to modulate.
 - 20% – **Final Draft Form:** ABA, with each pitch collection appearing in its own section.
 - 20% – **Final Draft Originality:** Shows creativity, design, and effort. (Not necessarily complexity.)
 - 20% – **Final Draft Feasibility:** Score is clear, neat, complete, and free of errors; music is appropriate for the instrument(s)/voice(s) selected.