

## **HUMA 2103: Introduction to Music Composition**

School of Humanities, HKUST – Summer 2022

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Office hours:	TBD and by appointment <sup>[SEP]</sup>
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Lectures:	Mon/Wed/Fri 11:00 AM–12:50 PM
Tutorials:	T1: Mon/Wed/Fri, 1:00 PM–2:00 PM T2: Mon/Wed/Fri, 2:00 PM–3:00 PM T3: Mon/Wed/Fri, 3:00 PM–4:00 PM
Room:	SHAW 103, Learning Room (Music)

### **Course description**

Studying the elements of classical composition is akin to learning an instrument: while understanding theoretical concepts is important, the crucial task is to practice their application, hands-on and systematically. *This class is extremely labor-intensive, especially as during the short summer session.* The students will explore ways to mold their own musical language and ideas through composition exercises, analysis of repertoire, study of music theory, and improvisation. Learning correct notation, production of performance materials, and working with performers will also be important aspects of the course.

There is no final examination for this course. As the final project, the students' compositions will be performed in a public concert by a hired ensemble of professional musicians, supplemented in some cases by student performers. A preliminary composition exercise is also due in lieu of a midterm examination, and will be performed in class.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, you will have

- developed your overall creative thinking;
- gained the ability to express yourself through writing music;
- a deeper appreciation and understanding of music, regardless of style;
- stronger musicianship skills; and
- a wider and practical understanding of music theory.

### **Prerequisites**

While you do not need to have extensive musical background to sign up for the course, you should have basic music reading skills (such as acquired in HUMA 2104) and the ability to play an instrument.

### **Course requirements**

1. Most of what you learn will be assimilated in class—attendance, therefore, is crucial. In tutorials, we go through students' work collectively, discussing and critiquing it; these sessions are as important as the lectures. Occasionally, tutorials will be replaced with one-on-one composition lessons, increasingly towards the end of the semester. *You are expected to participate in every class session and tutorial.* Be on time: twice late will count as once absent.

2. You must also participate in the final concert and be in charge of the rehearsals of your own work. The concert will be on the evening of Sunday, July 17, at the Shaw Auditorium, preceded by dress rehearsals. You need to reserve the entire day from noon onwards. *If you are unable to commit to the dates, you cannot enroll in this course!*

3. Midterm project: composition of a duet or solo work, with a duration of at least one minute. Depending on the nature of your project, this can also be the first draft of your final composition project (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis).

4. Final project: a work for two or more players, duration at least two minutes.

5. We will hire professional performers for the final concert. However, if you need additional players, your plan and the player need to be pre-approved. Take this into consideration when deciding what instrument(s) to write for. If you are an experienced performer yourself, you are encouraged (but not obligated) to play in your own work.

6. For the midterm composition, we will not have a hired ensemble. We will help you find players by providing names and contact information of musicians who have volunteered to participate in the past—ultimately, making sure you have the players for your piece and scheduling rehearsals *will be your responsibility*.

### **Term paper or concert report**

Your term paper will be an analytic writing assignment. If the pandemic situation permits and the class schedule is compatible, it will be on one or more works that you hear at a live Western classical music concert. If concerts are not possible to attend, however, the assignment will be adapted accordingly and based on recordings. The length is a minimum 650 words, which works out to ca. 2 pages in Times New Roman 12-point font, double spaced.

### **Grading**

Attendance and participation	15%
Portfolio of exercises/homework	15%
Term paper	15%
End-of-semester quiz	10%
Midterm project	20%
Final project	25%

## Schedule and lecture topics

### Week 1: June 20

- Introduction to class
- Thinking and listening like a composer: interaction of parameters; musical form
- Basics of melodic: crafting a line; melodic procedures
- More on musical form: large-scale vs. small scale form
- More on melodic writing: motivic work
- Contrapuntal thinking: combining two melodies
- More on counterpoint: harmonic (vertical) vs. melodic (horizontal) dimensions

### Week 2: June 27

- Instrument demonstrations begin (subject to availability of players)
- Preparation for concert report: guidelines, writing good prose; concert etiquette
- Harmonic thinking; non-tonal harmonies
- Acoustics, human physiology, time: overtone series; consonance vs. dissonance
- Orchestration: overview; writing for string instruments
- *Everyone presents their initial plan for midterm composition project*

### Week 3: July 4

- More on harmonic work and non-tonal counterpoint
- More in-class instrument demonstrations (pending availability of musicians)
- Producing scores and parts
- Modal and artificial scales (non-major/minor scales)
- Pitch collections as both melodic and harmonic material
- More on instrumentation: woodwind instruments
- *Midterm concert in class*
- *Everyone presents their plan for a final project composition*

### Week 4: July 11

- Rhythmic techniques: momentum; form; polyrhythms and triplets
- Polyrhythmic thinking
- More on rhythm and form
- *One-on-one sessions and rehearsals begin*
- Scores and performance materials must be finished
- *End of semester quiz: terminology, analytical listening*

### Final concert: Friday, July 17, Shaw Auditorium

Rehearsals tentatively to start at 12:00.

Hall time (dress rehearsals) to start 5:00 PM.

Concert at 7:30 PM.