

Concept to Completion: Composing in Real Time

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Initial Concerns — Set Yourself Up for Success!

Original piece vs. arrangement vs. transcription?
Number of octaves (range of the melody/accompaniment)
Key
Time Signature

Start Writing!

Introduction — write something that grabs their attention right off the bat! If it bores you, it will certainly bore your listener!

Writing Meaningful Melodies:

Arrangements — your melody is already spelled out for you, but feel free to take some liberties in terms of meter, rhythm, and pitch.
Original tunes — Is your melody memorable? Can you whistle it? Even more important, can you *stop* whistling it? If you can't get it stuck in your head, it won't get stuck in your listener's head.

Writing Attractive Accompaniments:

Style:

Arpeggios (ascending, descending, Alberti-esque, or something even more creative)
Block chords (root position vs. inversion; rung, mart-lift, mallet, etc.)
A combination?

Harmony:

“Traditional” chords — I, IV, V. In an arrangement, this would mean you follow the original harmony exactly.
“Modern” chords — limitless possibilities. Changing the expected harmony; minor vs. major; “blue” notes.
Chords in treble, bass, battery, or multiple locations?

Restating Sections Without Sounding Redundant:

Copy and Paste are Your Best Friend (and Worst Enemy)
Things to add:
Octaves, harmony notes, instruments, countermelody
Things to remove:
Octaves, harmony notes, instruments, countermelody

Tying It All Together

Catchy and effective transitions between sections.
Use material from elsewhere in the piece to give a sense of continuity and flow.

All Good Things Must Come to an End:

Find a way to end the piece that leaves the listener satisfied, and just a little sad it's over.
Find a way to end the piece that leaves the listener breathless.
Don't find a way to end the piece that leaves the listener asking, “That's it?”