

Integrated Portfolio

EXPLORING YOUR PRACTICAL SKILLS

Performing and composing are fun! You can explore the capabilities and limitations of different instruments by developing your ideas and skills in these two areas.

The Integrated Portfolio relates to Area of Study 1: My Music. By the end of AoS1 you will need to produce the following:

- A performance on your chosen instrument.
- A composition for any instrument (or instruments).

Together, these form **30% of your total GCSE Music**.



The performance can be on any instrument, voice (including styles such as rap, beatboxing, or DJ-ing), or be part of a multi-tracked recording. Whatever instrument you decide upon, you need to provide a continuous, unedited performance.

The performance can be one of the following:

- You perform alone.
- You perform accompanied by a live or pre-recorded part.
- You perform as a significant part in a group (with no one doubling your part).
- You perform at least one track of a multi-tracked recording.
- You program all the parts of a sequenced recording.

The total length of this performance and your Ensemble Performance from the Practical Portfolio combined should be a minimum of **four minutes**, with at least **one minute** as part of an ensemble. You may perform several short pieces for either of both components.

You will set yourself a composition brief for your chosen instrument(s) or technology. You can choose any style and can use any combination of instruments, voices and/or music technology.

The total length of this composition and your composition from your Practical Portfolio combined should be a minimum of **three minutes**.

Performance

Enjoy your instrument and play with confidence. Here are some tips to develop your performance skills.

The key to a successful performance involves the following:

- Choosing the right piece for you.
- Regular and targeted practice.
- Performing with confidence.

Choosing the right piece

Musicality is the most important word here. The most convincing performances are expressive; they make good use of phrasing, dynamics, and articulation. In order to do this, you must be able to play your piece confidently, and have a good command of any technical challenges it presents.

Choose a piece that you know you can play confidently, as opposed to attempting to stumble through a difficult piece. Make sure you consult your class teacher about your decision, and if you have an instrumental teacher, ask for advice from them as well.

Will any piece do?

You should choose a 'commercially available piece' (which means not your own composition or a friend's composition but one that is available to buy as a recording or as sheet music).

For performers of non-Western instruments (e.g. tabla players or sitarists), you can choose a recognised piece. This means that the examiner has something to refer to when listening to your performance. Improvisation is allowed, but only as long as it fits the instrument and the style of the piece – ask your teacher if you are not sure whether this applies to you.

Teamwork

Who else will be involved in this performance? Any piece of music that requires an accompaniment should be performed with it.

If your performance involves a small group, will it be possible to practise regularly with them? If you do choose to perform with a small group, don't forget that your part should not be doubled by anyone else.

DON'T BE DIFFICULT!

Remember, there are more marks to be gained for 'Expression, interpretation and fluency' than there are for 'Difficulty'.

LITTLE AND OFTEN

It is better to practise for 15 minutes every day than one hour every three to four days.

Regular and targeted practice



Preparing for your performance should not just involve practising your piece by yourself. If you can, get involved in an ensemble such as a choir, orchestra or band.

Through this you will develop musicianship skills and understand how to make changes to a piece of music, all of which you can then apply to the performance of your chosen piece.

Practising your piece in plenty of time is crucial to making progress and maintaining stamina. Set aside time to practise regularly.

If you have to practise in school, make sure you liaise with your music teachers about using space in the department. If you have chosen a group piece, it is your responsibility to organise the other members of your group to attend rehearsals.

Having good control of the notes is not enough. You must observe any performance instructions in your music, so that you communicate your performance with musicality and style. If there are no performance instructions in your music – e.g. dynamics, articulation, etc. – consult one of your teachers and they will help you add appropriate markings.

Do 	Do not 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Warm up before you begin. ■ Play through a piece slowly and gradually – build up to the appropriate speed. ■ Isolate tricky bits and work on them separately. ■ Make sure you practise with the appropriate accompaniment. ■ Get involved in other performing opportunities in order to widen your musical experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Go straight into playing your pieces without warming up. ■ Play everything fast and incorrectly. ■ Get so excited that you got that tricky bit right once, that you never practise it again. ■ Stop every time you get something wrong. ■ Only play the whole piece through with the accompanist for the first time on the day of your recording!

Performing with confidence

Overcome your nerves by trying to perform your piece to smaller groups of people. These might include your music class, other students, your parents, or even your pets!

This way, when you come to the actual performance, you will be less nervous, or at least know how to control your nerves. Decide where you perform best – do you need an audience to help you focus, or would you prefer to perform with just your teacher present?

Do a rehearsal with your teacher, and record that as well. Getting a recording done early means that you will have an opportunity to re-record if you feel you need to.

Getting the best possible marks

Listen to your recording and consider the assessment criteria below:

Technical control and fluency (12 marks)

- Can you perform your piece fluently without any major mistakes?
- Can you perform your piece in tune?
- Are you performing the correct rhythms?
- Are you performing in time with your accompaniment?

Expression and interpretation (12 marks)

- Can you bring your piece to life?
- Do you shape your phrases?
- Are you considering the dynamic markings and articulations?
- Are you playing stylistically, according to the conventions of the piece?
- If your piece contains improvisation, is it imaginative and stylistic?

Difficulty (6 marks)

It is best not to dwell on this too much, as the most important thing is to choose a piece that you play well. This will then give you the best chance of achieving the best marks all round, and more importantly, producing a musical performance.

Total marks for performance: 30 marks



Checklist

- Give your teacher a copy of your part (either a score, a lead sheet or another appropriate form of notation).
- Practise regularly throughout the course, leading up to your performance.
- Warm up and tune up before you start to record.

TARGETED PRACTICE

Targeted practice is essential if you want to overcome any difficulties in your piece. Do not fall into the trap of playing your piece all the way through each time, skipping over your mistakes.

To practise effectively, isolate any tricky sections and then practise them slowly to begin with, speeding up until you are fluent. If you continue to struggle, make sure you consult your instrumental or class teacher. They will have useful advice about how you can improve these awkward areas.

Composing

Here are some ideas for creating your very own piece of music.

For your coursework you will need to produce **two** compositions and the combined total length of these should be a minimum of **three minutes**. One composition will be to a brief of your own devising, which is what we are looking at here.

The examiners are looking for compositions that 'make use of musical elements, techniques and resources to create and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence'. Responding to the brief is an important part of the process, especially if you wrote the brief yourself!

Your composition should demonstrate an imaginative development of musical ideas. You should employ musical conventions as necessary. You must ensure that the musical structure is interesting and your choice of resources (instruments, voices, sampled sounds, etc.) is used idiomatically – that you understand and utilise the special characteristics of your chosen instrument(s).

Creating your own brief

This first composition is based on Area of Study 1: My Music. You can use any instrument or voice (including styles such as rap and beatboxing). You can write for a solo part or for any combination of instruments/voices.

You have three options:

- An unaccompanied solo piece.
- An accompanied solo piece.
- An ensemble piece, using any combination of instruments and/or voices.

The composition should be submitted in a recorded form and accompanied by a score, lead sheet or your written account of the composition. You don't have to physically perform your composition, but you need to show that you were solely responsible for writing it. Evidence needs to be provided for any part of your composition not performed by you.

Getting started

It's a good idea to research the capabilities of any instruments that you use.

Instruments in the string family can be bowed or plucked (**pizzicato**). Guitars can pick out individual notes or strum chords. Think about what different instruments can do, and use that information to help you write your piece. Get to know your chosen instrument(s) well by looking at music that already exists for the instrument(s).

For example if you decided to write for flute and piano, you might explore the following contrasting music:

- Fauré: 'Morceau de concours' – a slow piece for flute and piano that shows the lyrical nature of the flute with long phrases and some faster scale passages.
- Mike Mower: 'Sonata Latino' – shows how rhythmically exciting the flute can be. It also makes use of extended techniques with less conventional sounds made on the flute.

Both of these pieces are available on iTunes and YouTube.

Devising a brief

You should devise a brief that sets out what you would like your composition to achieve. You may want to write a list of instrument-specific features you would like to include but also refer to other aspects of the composition.

The mark scheme focuses on the following points:

- The composer's intentions.
- The sense of style.
- The range of musical elements exploited.
- The development of material.
- Using a range of appropriate compositional techniques.
- The structure being well-defined and appropriate to the chosen musical style.

You would be wise to refer to the above categories in your composition brief and you should consider your thoughts on each as you devise a brief.

- Decide on the style of the composition. The style might help to create the mood, character and atmosphere you hope to achieve in your composition.
- How are the musical elements generally used in this style? What might the harmony be like? What rhythmic ideas will be important (dotted rhythms, triplets, **syncopation**)?
- Consider how you might develop your initial ideas: perhaps you might use certain compositional devices such as adding a **countermelody** or an **ostinato**? You might try to repeat an idea, sequentially?
- This will naturally lead to consider the structure: how many sections will your composition be in? How will these sections relate?

Now to the composing

Make sure you listen to a wide variety of music.

If you have a vague idea of what you hope to achieve in your composition then look for pre-existing music that might be similar to the composition you hope to write:

- Research music that uses similar instruments.
- Research music that has a similar mood, character or atmosphere.
- Notice how many sections the music has and how these sections relate. It might give you ideas on how you can connect your sections.
- Notice how the initial ideas change as the piece progresses - repetition will undoubtedly include development of the original idea, for example.

Example 1 (note pattern)



For example, you might have been doodling at the piano and found the above combination of notes.

Let's imagine that the brief that you wrote said:

To write a slow and expressive piece for piano solo I will make use of interesting harmonies and a strong melody that will be in the right hand at the start with a flowing accompaniment in the left hand...

From this very precise brief I know what to do next. I need to write my melody, but first it might be useful to create the flowing left-hand accompaniment. The notes in Example 1 could make an interesting accompaniment, using our pattern of notes as an ostinato.

Example 2 (accompaniment pattern)



PLAN AHEAD!

The more planning you do at these earlier stages, the more successful your composition can be at the end. Be ready to alter your brief (if necessary) as you get more involved in the composing process.

Searching for a melody

To create a 'strong melody', as mentioned in our brief, it is important that your melody is 'singable'.

Singable melodies use intervals that the voice can manage (within the octave mostly) and will most likely be a combination of steps and leaps. At first, try using just one note per bar, to create a simple melody that is easy to sing.

Example 3 (accompaniment with basic melody)



Now try adding some extra notes to link your melody together. Again, make sure that these phrases are all 'singable'. Notice in the example below that the rhythm of the first three bars is exactly the same, and only the fourth bar has a different rhythm. This isn't cheating at all - repeating some rhythms is a good way to create a memorable melody.

Example 4 (with finished melody)

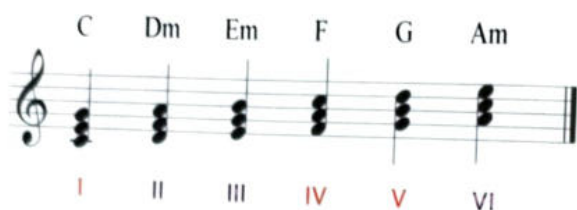


Discuss with your classmates how you might continue this piece. Would you repeat the melody, but change it slightly? Perhaps you would change the rhythm or the pitch of the left-hand ostinato?

DOODLING IS TIME WELL SPENT

Do spend time experimenting your instrument, or another instrument. Play around with scale patterns. Keep experimenting by playing different combinations of notes that you like until an idea strikes you as promising.

Primary triads

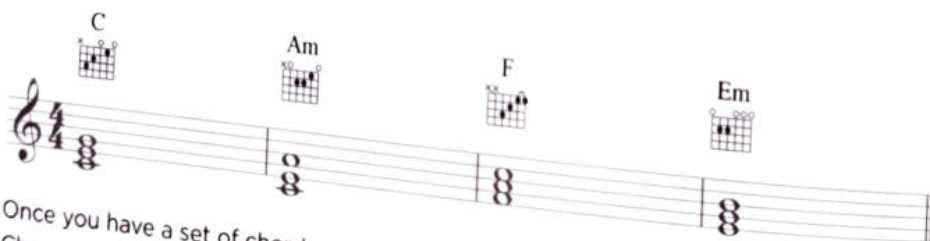


Primary triads (chords I, IV and V) are the lifeblood of nearly all Western music. Many pieces and songs will add other chords to create more interest (perhaps chords II and VI). Primary triads need to be treated with some imagination to make these rather basic materials interesting for the listener.

ASSIGNMENT: CHORDS AND MELODY

A lot of composers and songwriters start off with a **chord sequence**, and write a melody that fits it. Write a simple 4-bar chord sequence, using the chords of C major (shown above). Below is a step-by-step example of how you might build a melody around a chord sequence. The example is written for violin with the chords played on the guitar, but you can use other suitable instruments.

Chord sequence



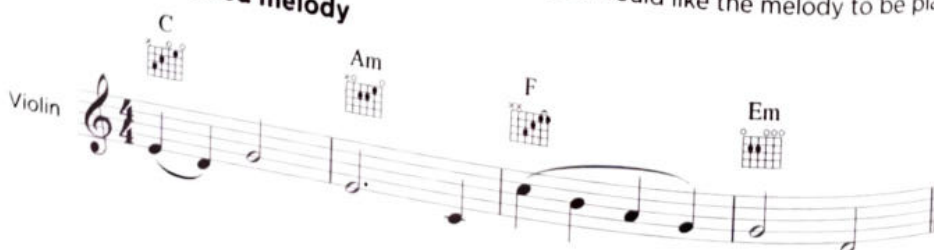
Once you have a set of chords you might try to add a melody to the chords. Choose one or two notes per bar to make a melody that will immediately fit with your harmonies. You may notice that the basic melody below only uses notes from the relevant chords. This isn't essential, but might be a good place to start.

Chord sequence with basic melody



Now experiment with filling in some more rhythms, so that the melody has more of a 'flow' to it. You can even write in some slurs to show how you would like the melody to be played.

Chords with finished melody



Imaginative rhythms

Rhythm can help to create more urgency in a composition and build up the intensity – to achieve this, move from long notes to shorter note values. The reverse can then happen when you slowly move to longer note values again.

Rhythm can help to create clarity in your textures – give the most interesting rhythms to the melody and try to keep the accompanying parts less rhythmically varied. The accompaniment can still be interesting and complex (perhaps in a **polyrhythmic** texture) but it might be more repetitive than the melody. This way, the difference between melody and accompaniment is always clear.

You could experiment with repeating a previous section in your composition. When you repeat a section, try making all the rhythms more exciting by having shorter note values, or **syncopate** them to add interest.

Tips for making compositions exciting

You can make a section more intense by varying the harmonic rhythm (how often the chords change) more often. Alternatively, you can relax the intensity by changing the harmony less often.

A **pedal note** can relax the mood of a piece but the pull between the pedal note and the changing chords can make the section build with excitement. Play through these two musical examples: the first uses the **root** note of each chord in the left hand, while the second uses a repeated pedal note. Notice how the pedal note creates a subtly different mood.

BASS NOTES

A bass part often supports the chord playing 'above' it. For example if the chord being played is G major, the bass may well play the note G. This is called playing the **root note** of the chord. There are no rules as to what a bass part has to play, though – bass lines often use ostinatos, pedal notes and other notes taken from the relevant chord.

Root notes in the bass



Pedal note (C) in the bass



Instrumental writing

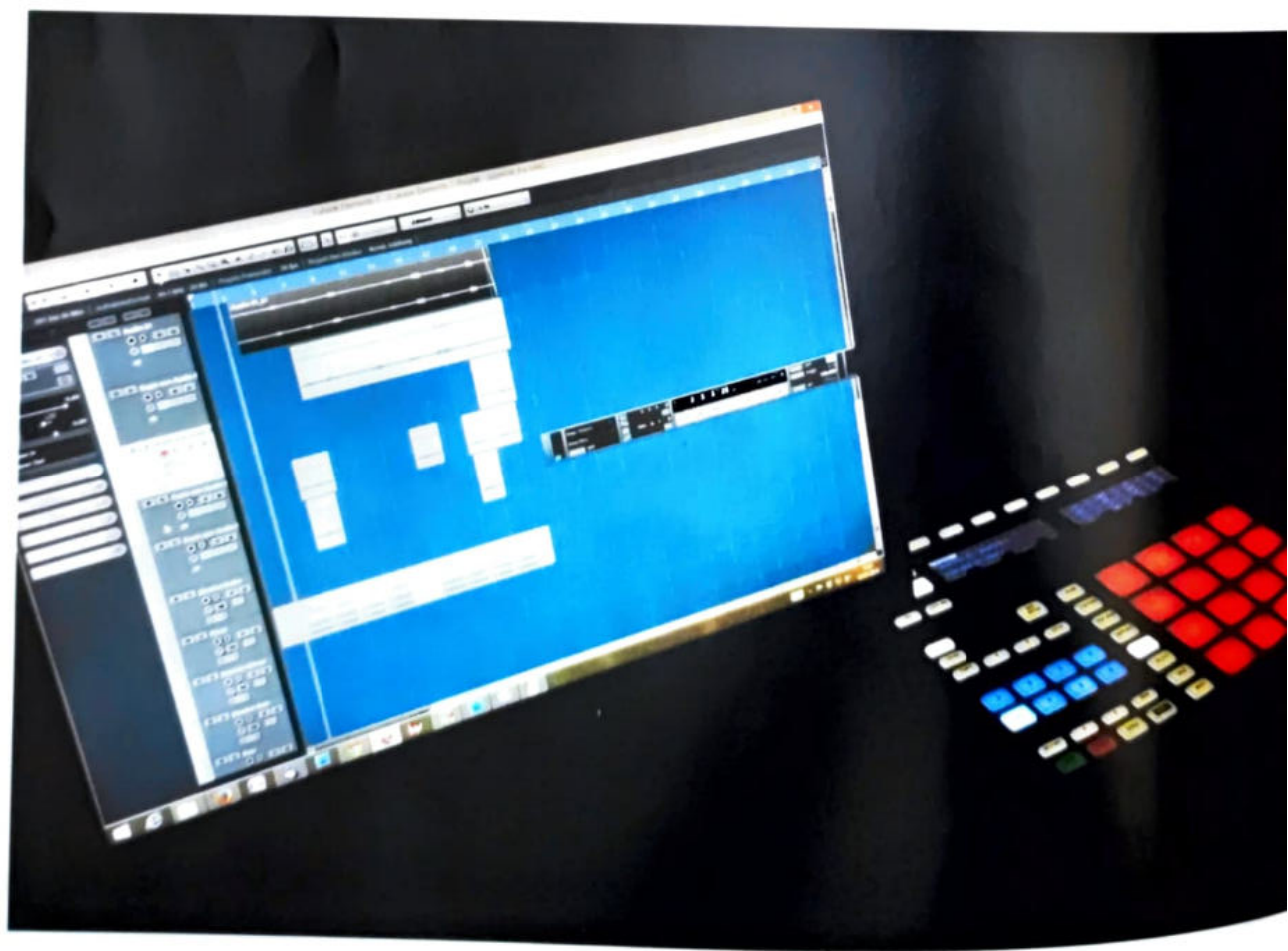
It is important to show that you are writing well for your chosen instrument(s).

Check carefully by playing your composition through on the relevant instrument.

- Are all the notes playable?
- Are the combinations of notes and the movement between them achievable?
- Are your chosen effects/techniques possible?

Sequencing and notation software such as Cubase, GarageBand and Sibelius will let you write whatever combination of notes you wish. Be aware that these notes may not necessarily be playable by a human being! If you are using a 'physical' instrument, it is important that the notes are physically playable for this coursework to be successful.

If you use an electronic instrument (e.g. DJ-ing, sequencing) then the range of possibilities is not restricted by human abilities and the examiner will hope to see that you have exploited what these forces offer (e.g. making good use of effects such as **panning**, **reverb**, EQ, etc.).



Things to consider when using sequencing software

If your composition is created using sequencing software, you are welcome to submit screenshots in support of your recorded composition. Do show as much detail as you can (e.g. settings for each track). Show how you have created a variety of expression (changing volumes, effects).

Be wary of excessive copying and pasting – which is achieved with ease. Even in music that is seemingly repetitive there is always change. Listen widely and notice how regularly subtle changes happen. This is noticeable in many works by Steve Reich and contemporary composers like Nico Muhly, for example. Many pop songs, despite being quite repetitive, will vary the instrumentation and texture throughout the song. It is this careful management of change that makes the music exciting and not boring.

STRUCTURE

Consider how many sections your composition will have and how the sections return. It is important to create balance in GCSE composing. Musical ideas return, but always try to make the return as interesting as you can.

Extending ideas

Fragments of ideas should be developed into phrases (or musical sentences). These phrases can be built up to make musical paragraphs (or sections). Ideally, to help create a consistent sense of style, your sections will not have widely differing ideas within each phrase.

Consider connecting the different sections by taking ideas from one section that were seemingly unimportant and making them more prominent in a new section. Try out the opposite of what was happening in a previous section (for example, if the melody was in a particular part or hand, have a section where the melody moves to a different part or hand).

ASSIGNMENT: STRUCTURE

Listen to 'Flim' by Aphex Twin (from the album *Come To Daddy*).

Notice when things change in the music:

- How many repetitions of an idea are there before something new happens?
- How different is the new material to what has happened before?
- How are different sections varied when they are repeated?
- How many different sections are there in this piece?



Developing Your Musical Skills

ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE AND COMPOSING TO A SET BRIEF

In your Practical Portfolio, you will produce the following:

- An ensemble performance.
- A composition to a brief set by the exam board.

Together, these form **30% of your total GCSE Music**.

Your Ensemble Performance can be on the same instrument as the one you chose for the Integrated Portfolio, but this is not obligatory.



An ensemble performance is defined as:

- Performing an individual part within a live ensemble consisting of two or more voices or instruments. Other parts should not consistently double your part.
- A multi-tracked performance consisting of two or more voices/instruments, in which you perform and record some or all of the parts.
- A sequenced performance of a piece for two or more instruments using any appropriate sequencing software.
- The other performers in the group do not have to be GCSE Music students.

Like the Integrated Portfolio, your chosen piece should be commercially published or recorded, or be a recognised piece. You may perform your own or someone else's compositions, provided there is a detailed score of your part. Again, you must provide a copy of your part (score, lead sheet, etc.) for your teacher to submit to the moderator.

The length of the ensemble piece should be at least **one minute**. Don't forget, though, that the total length of the performances of the Integrated and Practical portfolios is **four minutes**. You may choose to perform several short pieces for either or both components.

For your ensemble performance, you will be assessed on how well your part fits in with the others.

- Are you performing in time?
- Do you perform with confidence, but with an awareness of the other parts (e.g. do you consider who has the lead part and who has the accompanying part)?
- Are you responding to the other performers?

Composing to an OCR set brief

What to expect

Each of the briefs that you see will connect to a particular Area of Study. You should select one.

After you have chosen a brief you should then select **one** from the choice of eight **stimuli**. The examiners will look to see not only how you have satisfied the brief but also how you have used your chosen stimulus creatively to write your composition.

You will be able to select a stimulus from the following options:

- Note pattern (choice of two)
- Rhythmic phrase (choice of two)
- A short story
- An image
- A set of words
- A chord sequence.

Some of the stimuli are better suited to certain Areas of Study but you will usually be free to choose whatever stimulus you wish in your composition. The only rule is that the complete stimulus must be used in your piece and there should be evidence that it has been developed and extended. You may transpose the stimulus, if necessary, and your composition can be for any combination of instruments and/or voices. The composition should be your own work – group compositions are not permitted. If you used other people to perform your composition, you need to provide evidence that you wrote what they performed.

Submit your composition as a recording. It must be accompanied by a score, an annotated lead sheet or a written account of the piece. Colour screenshots would be suitable if an ICT-produced piece is submitted; an accompanying commentary can explain your process. Make sure your intentions are clear whatever method of notation you use, particularly with regard to expression.

Your composition should reflect your developing understanding of:

- Different musical elements such as rhythm, melody, harmony, structure and compositional devices.
- How to compose appropriately to a defined brief and extend musical ideas and devices in order to develop a composition.
- How to combine and develop various musical elements successfully within the composition using an appropriate structure to create a coherent piece.
- How to create a composition that shows an understanding of the style, audience and/or occasion dictated by the OCR set brief.

The concerto through time

The concertos of famous composers can lend us some interesting ideas for our own compositions.

Sample brief

Create a melodic solo-and-accompaniment composition, suitable for presentation at a performing arts showcase evening.

Important considerations

The brief asks for a melodic solo with an accompaniment – something typical of the concerto.

You could consider the following when looking at the brief for this Area of Study:

- The relationship between the soloist and the accompaniment.
- Creating an effective melody that fits harmonically with the accompaniment.
- The solo part could involve some technical **virtuosity** – something that is typical of a concerto.

Where do you start?

OCR is keen for your composition to address the audience and the occasion. Read that part of the brief carefully and consider the nature of the event.

In the example above a 'performing arts showcase' is perhaps most suitable for your composition. A solo at this kind of event would demonstrate an instrument's unique properties and the best of what it can do.

Listen to works for a solo instrument and piano. You might try Rachmaninov's 'Vocalise' (listen to the violin and piano arrangement from Nicola Benedetti's album, *Fantastie*).

GCSE MUSIC STUDY GUIDE

Notice how there is a clear distinction between the melody and the accompaniment in the first section (up to 0:35 on the Benedetti recording) but immediately afterwards we hear a **dialogue** between the solo and the accompaniment. This use of **question-and-answer phrases**, and a melody-and-accompaniment texture is typical of concerto movements and would be useful to include in your composition for a brief such as our sample brief.

Texture

In Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2, we hear these two types of textures mentioned above. You can search for it on YouTube by typing: 'Mozart Flute Concerto No. 2 First Movement James Galway'.

Listen to the first movement (you can focus on 0:58-3:00 of the video) and pay attention to the melody and accompaniment texture. Which instruments are providing the accompaniment? Do you notice a dialogue between the parts, and can you hear any **imitation** between the flute and the rest of the orchestra?

Writing an effective melody and accompaniment texture can be tricky, as it is easy to make your accompaniment complex, which could compete against your solo melodic line.

Notice in the Mozart and Rachmaninov examples that when the soloist is playing, the accompaniment often uses much simpler rhythms. The accompaniment may become more repetitive if it is using faster note values such as semiquavers. Either way, the accompaniment never gets in the way of the soloist. This will be important to consider when working on this brief.

TIPS FROM MOZART

Look at accompaniment patterns in the concertos in the suggested listening for this Area of Study. How many different patterns do you see in Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 2?

If you wanted to create something lively and energetic you could use repeated notes. You can create even more rhythmic energy by using rests in addition to notes.

LISTEN TO BEETHOVEN'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1, MOVEMENT 1

You can easily find this on YouTube by searching for 'Beethoven Piano Concerto 1 Bernstein' with Leonard Bernstein (a famous American composer) both playing the piano and conducting the orchestra - talk about multi-talented!

Notice how the piano part not only demonstrates the best of what the piano can do (in terms of range and technique) but also the best of what the soloist can do. It always sits on top of the orchestral sound. Most importantly, the piano and the orchestra make space for each other, and often take it in turns to play the melody. When writing a piece in a concerto style, remember that none of the instruments need to play the whole time - even the soloist!

Which stimulus will work best for this brief?

You are welcome to choose whatever stimulus you feel is appropriate for this brief.

The stimulus below is an example of a note pattern you may be given in the composition briefs:

Stimulus



You need to present the note pattern at the beginning of your piece. You should then develop it as the piece progresses. Here's an idea for how you could add rhythm to turn this note pattern into an 8-bar melody. Some possible chords have also been suggested.

Melody

Am E Am Dm E

Violin

ACCOMPANIMENT TASK

Am (chord I) E (chord V) Am (chord I)

Violin

Piano

Guitar

You will probably want (and need) to create some kind of accompaniment for your melody. Your accompaniment will often play chords. You may need to experiment by playing different chords along with your melody to see which chords fit best.

Above is an example accompaniment pattern, which has a strong waltz-like feel. Can you continue the pattern (either on piano or guitar) for the remaining four bars of the melody?

Writing an answering phrase

To create a balanced phrase (similar to the kind we heard in the Mozart example), we will need to add eight more bars on to our melody, creating a 16-bar phrase.

Your answering phrase needs to share some similarities with your original 'question' phrase, without copying it note-for-note. You can use some of the same rhythms or intervals, and in general the mood and 'feel' of the phrase should be similar.

Below is our original 8-bar melody, with two possible answering phrases beneath it. Can you see or hear how the answering phrases use some of the intervals and rhythms from the question phrase?

Melody

Violin

Answering phrase 1

Violin

Answering phrase 2

Violin

ASSIGNMENT

Write your own 8-bar answering phrase, following on from our original melody.

TIP: Try to use the notes of an A minor scale. You may also find that finishing your phrase on the note A (the 'tonic') is a good way to bring your phrase to an end.

EXTENSION: Continue the accompaniment pattern (see the previous page) for your answering phrase.

Think carefully about the structure of your composition.

It will be important to consider how many sections there are and to work out which (out of the soloist and accompaniment) is the most prominent part in each section.

Manipulating the stimulus

Your chosen stimulus must be used complete in your composition.

It is likely that you will want to start with the stimulus in its complete form before developing it. Again, you can reuse details from the original stimulus (e.g. intervals, rhythms, chords) to create new musical material.

Don't forget about the original stimulus, though! It should be a significant part of your composition. For that reason, you may want to repeat it in its original form later in the piece.

