Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Composing music

Contents

1. The compositions
2. Starting and developing ideas
3. Using the elements well
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

The compositions

- (AQA) Component 3, Composing music, is worth 30% of the GCSE.
- (AQA) You write two compositions: one in response to a **brief** set by AQA (released each year), and one **free composition**.
- Together they must last at least 3 minutes. Each is marked on developing musical ideas, using musical elements, and technical control.

Starting and developing ideas

- Start with a short idea: a melody, a chord sequence, a rhythm or a riff.
- Develop it with repetition, sequence, variation, **inversion**, changes of key, rhythm or instrumentation.
- Plan a structure, such as ternary form or verse–chorus, so the piece has **contrast** and **unity**.

Using the elements well

- Use a clear harmony plan with cadences at phrase ends.
- Vary texture and dynamics to create interest and **contrast**.
- Write idiomatically: use each instrument's range and techniques.
- Record or score your piece clearly, with tempo, dynamics and instructions.

Key terms

Brief	The task set by the exam board for one composition.
Free composition	A composition in any style you choose.
Development	Changing and extending a musical idea.
Inversion	Turning a melody upside down.
Idiomatic writing	Writing that suits an instrument's range and techniques.

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Unity	The sense that a piece belongs together.
Contrast	Differences that keep a piece interesting.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. How much of AQA GCSE Music is composing worth? (AQA)
2. How many compositions do you write?
3. What is the minimum total length of the compositions?
4. What is a brief?
5. Which is a way to develop a musical idea?
6. What is inversion?
7. What is idiomatic writing?
8. Why plan a structure such as ternary form?

Answers

1. 30%
2. Two
3. 3 minutes
4. The task set by the exam board for a composition
5. Using a sequence
6. Turning a melody upside down
7. Writing that suits an instrument's range and techniques
8. To give the piece contrast and unity

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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