

W-246

## Scaffolding Strategies for the Teaching of Music Composition

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### Abstract

This workshop aims to share a series of scaffolding strategies in the teaching of music composition to upper secondary school students (13 to 16-year-olds) in Singapore, and will discuss how each strategy could be designed with and without the use of notation (e.g. midi stems; graphic materials) to enable teachers to apply differentiated strategies in the classroom and prescribe tasks based on the music literacy standards and preferences of individual students.

While the design of the strategies would depend on considerations such as the objective(s) of the lesson, as well as students' interests, areas for development and abilities, the goals of these strategies, which are bite-sized in design, generally aim to:

- address students' lack of confidence in beginning and developing a composition using one to two musical ideas
- allow students to master techniques in an "atomistic" way (Lupton & Bruce, 2010) and focus on handling each music element one at a time so that they could learn to control and appreciate its expressive possibilities to its fullest extent
- allow students to comprehend larger principles of composition (e.g. change, continuity, contrast and musical direction) in localised contexts, such as phrases and a section of music
- allow students to experience small successes before they attempt larger-scale writing

After a presentation of tasks designed using strategies (a) – (c) outlined below, participants would have the opportunity to design a task using one of the strategies based on a score provided at the workshop:

- a. "Guided scores" are scores that have *some* given musical and non-musical (e.g. guidance in the form of text) materials. Some suggested parameters of design, reflected in the order of allowing most to least student autonomy, include:
  - Provision of a layer (e.g. chord progressions) but removal of another layer (e.g. melody) for students' creative inputs
  - "Fill-in-the-blanks" where students could imitate and adapt given materials
  - Guided instructions to suggest possible creative directions and decisions students could take
  - Provide options (e.g. chord substitutions) for students to try out for themselves and select
- b. Error correction: to correct inaccuracies related to notation, note and chord spellings, voice-leading, chord choices and others.
- c. Flexible instrumentation: adapting an instrumental phrase or section for another instrument to understand the capabilities of musical instruments adapted for.

The strategies shared are meant to be non-tradition/genre specific, so that students could apply these strategies in a variety of styles that they may choose to write for.