

BCMG Creative Composing Lab: Flourish!

Supporting resource for composing a fanfare

What makes a good fanfare?

A successful fanfare is a musical flourish that grabs attention, has good pace, shows development of musical ideas, has a clear and coherent structure, uses the available instruments effectively and idiomatically, and fulfils your intentions as well as those of the brief. How could you make your fanfare unique and stand out? What occasion might it be for? This could range from solemn and ceremonial to celebratory and joyful, to the personal or even the absurd.

How will you grab people's attention and hold it for a minute? Will you creep up slowly like the emerging minimalist music of John Adam's *Tromba Lontana*, or whisk the audience into an immediate frenzy like the start to his *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* or will it be the uniqueness of your music that makes people notice it, like Ligeti's *Vorspiel* for car horns.

Where do you have your best ideas? Some people go for a walk, others like to be surrounded by their favourite objects or sitting on the bus or the train. Some composers work at the piano, others at the computer and some with pen and manuscript paper. Some composers like to mess around, play and improvise using a musical instrument or software to help them create music. Others use games and rules to help them generate unexpected musical ideas.

Throughout these activities remember this resource is just a guide and the best guide for your composing are your ears and your imagination. Do take risks and trick yourself into finding new ideas.

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN COMPOSING YOUR FANFARE

When you start to compose, sometimes a blank page or imagining the infinite sonic possibilities can be intimidating and daunting. Maybe you can't think where to start or maybe you have too many ideas. Remember that there is nearly always potential in an idea however small. It is easy to discard ideas too early because they are not perfect. Try to stick with an idea and see where it takes you. You might be surprised.

Your first ideas might not be what end up being the beginning of your piece. Most composers don't start at the beginning and continue until they finish. Often it can be a process of assembling and collaging ideas, of cutting things up and rearranging. This can be done using software, through using more traditional notation or through improvisation.

Some composers might have a clear idea of the overall shape and structure of piece at the start and then fill in the detail. Other composers might start with a tiny seed of an idea and see where it takes them.

Generating multiple possibilities is often a good idea, for example, ideas that contrast completely, ideas that change subtly and ideas that complement.

REMEMBER:

- Every idea has potential
- Try and stick with your ideas even if they don't seem perfect
- Generate lots of different possibilities not just one
- You don't have to start at the beginning
- Listening to lots of different music can stimulate ideas
- Small ideas can develop into entire pieces
- Fewer ideas can sometimes result in a better and more coherent piece
- Try different ways of working and take yourself down unexpected paths
- Work with your friends to try out ideas
- Allow for surprises
- Rules can be/are designed to be broken

WARM UP PROJECT: FANFARE ON ONE NOTE

This activity is designed to make you think about how different musical elements can be used to create the expression, atmosphere or effect that you would like in your fanfare. By only using one musical pitch to compose your fanfare this simplifies the task and allows you to concentrate purely on the other elements.

Some composers like to set themselves limits and rules to narrow down multiple possibilities or discover new ideas. The ultimate rule could be to only use one note for your entire fanfare. (One note could mean everyone playing the same note all the way through, everyone playing their own but different one note all the way through, or, the composite sound made by unpitched and untuned percussion instruments). As you compose, remember to imagine what an entire ensemble playing one note might sound like.

How could you make a fanfare with just one note grab, and keep people's attention? Do you want it to grab people's attention immediately, build up slowly, or for it to be intense for the whole 1 minute? If you only have one note to use, expression can't come from the shape of the melody you will need to think about durations (sounds and silence), colour and dynamics.

Durations

Start with durations using long and short notes and rests. Improvise on one note using long and short notes, thinking about the drama of your fanfare. If you want to, you could use ideas from the rhythm section of this resource. You could draw your ideas using dots for short notes and lines for long notes, and leave different amounts of space in between for rests, or you could use traditional notation. Try playing your ideas with different overall speeds. What happens if you make all the short notes very short? A good idea might be to not just have a stream of long and short notes but to create patterns that repeat or develop. Think carefully about using silence(s) dramatically.

Adding colour

To add colour, or 'light and shade' to your fanfare you might want to consider which instrument or group of instruments you would like to play which parts of your fanfare. The quality of the sound is called *timbre*. You could also add *dynamics*, *articulations* or *extended techniques*. *Dynamics* refers to how loud or quiet a sound is. *Articulation* refers to the way that sounds are played. They generally apply to all instruments but are achieved in different ways. *Extended techniques* are particular to individual instruments or groups of instruments.

Timbre

Timbre is the tone quality of an instrument. It's what makes one instrument or group of instruments sound different from each other. Different instruments are good at doing different jobs and play different roles. Balance is important too. It's no good having low flutes playing at the same time as very loud trumpets!

Dynamics

As you were playing with your long and short notes you might have found yourself naturally playing with dynamics (how loud or quiet). Did some of the long notes crescendo (get louder)? Were some of the short notes loud and accented? Maybe the fanfare became louder and louder as the fanfare progressed. Here are some examples notated in two different ways:

Articulations

Musicians can play individual or groups of notes in different ways to change the character of the notes. This may involve them hitting, strumming, tonguing or bowing their instruments in different ways. Here are some common words used to tell musicians how to articulate the music. Staccato (short), legato (slurred/smooth), sforzando sudden, strong emphasis, tenuto full length, accent emphasis.

Instrumental techniques

Each instrument has a range of ways of being played that change the colour of the sound of the instrument. The more unusual ones are called extended techniques that often involve musicians being asked to play their instrument in more unconventional ways such as sing or hum as well as play.

Performance directions

Sometimes using 'non-musical' descriptive words can be a very effective way of changing the colour and feel of your music. E.g, majestic, joyful, spikey, rippling, crazy, smooth, bouncing, pointed, excitable, calm.....

MAIN FANFARE IDEA: BORROW AN IDEA!

The melodies of traditional fanfares often use simple triads or move up and down the harmonic series (the notes you get on an open string or through a brass instrument using no valves). In this project we are asking you not to do this but instead to borrow a snippet (melodic or rhythmic) from traditional, folk or popular music – maybe one which is well known in your country. Composers often borrow snippets of music from each other to create their own versions or to use in completely new ways.

1. Listen to a range of traditional, folk and popular music. Decide on a melody, choose a snippet/section of it (could be just a couple of bars) and have a go at playing it.
2. Think about whether you are you going to use it in its original form with the same rhythm etc. or strip it down to its bare pitches and add new rhythms? Or strip out the pitches, use the rhythm and add new pitches?
3. Play around with your chosen section – change the rhythm, change the character – make it spikey, make it solemn, make it dramatic, play it with a dotted rhythm. Think of a character and perform it like that person.
4. Play it as if you are creeping into a room, play it as if you are falling down the stairs, play it as if you are the most important person in the world. Use some of the ideas from the One Note Fanfare
5. Try adding notes, breaking it up or repeating parts of it.

You may decide to take both the melodic and rhythmic ideas from your snippet but if you don't here are some ideas how to create rhythms for melodic ideas and melodies for rhythmic ideas.

ADDING RHYTHM to borrowed melodic ideas

Rhythm and tempo will be big factors in determining the character of your fanfare. This section suggests two approaches to generating rhythmic ideas: one uses games and abstract ideas and the other uses extra-musical idea such as narrative, an emotion and character. Try different ideas out and remember these aren't fixed rules rather ways to generate ideas you might not think of through only improvising or playing with/using notation. The following ideas can be used to create rhythms for your melodic contours/tone rows or can be used to create rhythmic ostinatos that you could use as accompaniments.

Improvise on your instrument

Play your snippet of melody/tone row over and over or listen to them using Sibelius. Experiment with different ways of rhythmizing them. Change the rhythm to make your snippet sound majestic, joyful, spikey, rippling, crazy, smooth, bouncing, pointed, excitable, calm....Think of a character. How does the person move? What kind of situation are they in? Is there a story? Now try rhythmizing your melody or tone row thinking of your character. Don't forget to audio record or jot down your ideas for later use.

Toss a coin

Find a coin and decide whether heads is a long note or a short note and the same for tails. Toss the coin the same number of times as the number of notes in your melody. You could use a dot to indicate a short note and a line for a long note. You can decide how long the long note is and how short the short note is. It is a good idea to experiment with this. Very very short notes that sound like grace notes can be very effective. You may want to also add rests into your melody and/or try the melody out at different speeds.

Throw a dice

Composers from Mozart to John Cage have used games to create musical ideas. Roll a dice. Each number of a dice equals corresponds to the duration of a note or rest.

1 = two quavers, 2 = 4 semiquavers, 3 = crotchet, 4 = crotchet rest, 5 = minim, 6 = semi-breve

Throw the dice several times and write down the rhythmic pattern you produce. Using your melodic idea you can decide whether to:

- have one note of the melody per roll of the dice
- have strictly one note of the melody per duration

Listen to and/or play your melodies at different speeds and notice how the character changes.

Morse Code

Many composers including Liszt and Shostakovich have used codes in their music. Using your name or a secret code word translate your name into Morse Code. Morse Code uses combinations of dots and dashes to represent letters. You can decide whether to:

- have one note of your melody per letter
- have strictly one note of your melody per dot or dash

You can decide how long or short the dots and dashes are and could add rests at the end of words.

ADDING MELODY to borrowed rhythms

Improvise

Record yourself improvising six completely contrasting melodic ideas using your borrowed rhythm(s). Come back to these later, listen to the recording and choose elements or whole sections of your improvisations. The idea is to go outside your comfort zone and force yourself to find something new.

Making modal melodies and using limited pitches

A mode is simply a type of scale with a particular sequence of intervals that gives it its melodic character. The most common modes are major, minor and pentatonic scales. This is a

technique that many composers use to close down limitless possibilities and to create a particular sound world or character. Experiment with different modes using your borrowed rhythm(s).

Pick between 3-6 notes your to make your own mode. A five-note mode is a good number but using just 3 will be fine too. Experiment including different accidentals (sharps and flats/white notes black notes). Play it as a scale up and down – experiment with starting on different notes of the scale. Try to avoid them sounding too much as though they are in a major or minor key. What kind of quality, colour, emotion, character does your mode have? Experiment using your invented mode using your borrowed rhythm(s).

Making audio recordings would be another way to keep track of your musical ideas.

Harmonic series

Many traditional fanfares are composed using the notes of the harmonic series. This is because many of them are written for trumpets and other brass instruments as they were loud instruments that could carry over long distances. Every tube produces a harmonic series with exactly the same spacing of intervals which get closer together as you get higher in pitch.

Here is a basic harmonic series:



The Last Post for a solo bugle player is the most famous fanfare using this series and you will hear it on Remembrance Sunday. Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* also uses it, as does Benjamin Britten's *Fanfare for St Edmundsbury*. In fact, *Fanfare for St Edmundsbury* uses three trumpets playing three different harmonic series simultaneously.

You could use the harmonic series with your borrowed rhythms.

Twelve tone row - serialism

Stravinsky is best known for *The Rite of Spring*. Not so well known are the pieces he composed using the 12-tone technique otherwise known as serialism (most associated with the composers Schoenberg, Berg and Webern). *Fanfare for a New Theatre* for two trumpets is one of these. Twelve-tone technique emerged in Europe at the beginning of the 20th Century when conventional tonality based on keys was breaking down. 12-tone technique was a new way of creating, ordering and organizing melodies. In twelve-tone music a melodic note row is created using every note of the chromatic scale once. This row can appear backwards (retrograde), upside down (inversion) or backwards and upside down (retrograde inversion). In strict 12 tone music this is the only melodic material allowed and everything is created from it.

Listen to Stravinsky's *Fanfare for a New Theatre* and Dave Brubeck piano pieces <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/album/john-salmon-plays-brubeck/id144626048> to hear how different twelve-tone melodies can sound. Here is the tone row Stravinsky uses:



Here is the melody he creates from it:



Creating a tone row

Write down the 12 notes of the chromatic scale on separate pieces of paper, shuffle them and then deal them out in a line. Play/listen to the row you have created. Now refine it using your ears and thinking about your initial ideas until you are satisfied. You can use the pitches in any octave you choose. The only rule is that you must use all the notes in your row.

- Now write it out backwards to create the retrograde (backwards)
- Now create the inversion (upside down). To do this start on the same note as the original then count the number of intervals (in semitones) to the next note. If it is two semitones up in the original count two semitones down to get your second note.
- Now create the retrograde inversion (backwards upside down). To do this create a backwards version of your inversion.

Use the row and its different versions with your borrowed rhythms.

WHAT NEXT?

- think about adding colour (timbre, articulation, dynamics) (see before)
- think about developing your ideas further (see below)
- think about organising/structuring your ideas (see below)
- think about creating an accompaniment (see below)

DEVELOPING YOUR IDEAS FURTHER

When composing you have three simple options as to what to do next: you can **repeat** your idea, **vary** your idea or do **something new**.

Sometimes once you have generated some initial ideas these will be enough to get you going. Many people frequently don't realize how few ideas whole pieces are built upon, even symphonies. Listen to the opening of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and notice how many times the original idea is repeated in different ways. How many can you spot?

Sometimes just playing and improvising with your idea will help you discover variations. Sometimes having a narrative or other extra-musical idea you have will help you decide what comes next. However, if you're stuck or would like to try something new this section is for you.

It is also important to remember that some music does not evolve from creating variations of musical material but instead from cutting it up and rearranging or layering it in interesting ways.

VARIATIONS: developing ideas horizontally

A variation is a musical idea that is repeated but altered in some way, for example the pitch, rhythm, timbre, dynamics etc. Playing with and creating variations of your original material is at the heart of much classical composing. Using variations in your fanfare can help give your music coherence and give it a satisfying structure. Keep all your ideas, as they might be useful later as ostinatos and other accompaniments.

Melody:

- Transpose – the same melodic contour and intervals but starting on a different note
- Stretch the pitch contour – the intervals between notes become wider
- Squash the pitch contour – the intervals between notes closer together
- Keep the rhythm, change the pitches
- Retrograde – the same pitches but backwards
- Insert new notes or melodic ideas/cells
- Extract smaller melodic cells from the melody to develop into new ideas
- Additive ideas – add a new note/part to the end of the musical idea
- Take away notes from the melody
- Add spaces in the melody

Rhythm:

- Keep the same pitches, change the rhythm
- Shift the rhythm along
- Augment (make longer) and diminute (make smaller) the durations
- Change the speed of all or parts of you melody
- Reverse the rhythmic pattern
- Invert the rhythms – long becomes short, short becomes long
- Extract smaller rhythmic cells and add new pitches

Colour:

- Change the instrument the is playing the idea
- Changing the timbre e.g. from bowed strings to plucked strings
- Allot different parts of the melody to different instruments
- Change the dynamics of all of it or part of it
- Change the articulations
- Change the way part or all of it is played

Other:

- Add something contrasting in the middle
- Juxtapose different versions or parts of different versions

You can also create combinations of the above or take ideas through one process and then another and another....

ACCOMPNIAMENTS & TEXTURES: developing ideas vertically

Creating accompaniments for your main ideas can create change the feel of your fanfare. There are lots of different ways of creating accompaniments. With the ideas below remember to think carefully about which instrument or group of instruments you would like to play your accompaniment(s). You could use more than one of the ideas outline below.

A good piece of music to listen to that helps makes different kinds of accompaniment clear is the first movement of Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet*. Here the four instruments have very distinct musical roles, and you can clearly hear a drone, the solo line, an ostinato and interruptions.

Rhythmic and melodic ostinatos:

An ostinato is a pattern that repeats. This could be melodic or rhythmic or both. Many kinds of music from Classical Indian music to minimalism to jazz use ostinatos (or riffs) as accompaniments. Sometimes more than one ostinato is layered on top of another to create more complex patterns. Ostinatos can stop and start or change the number of layers by stopping starting different ostinatos. Adding more and more ostinatos can build tension in music just as taking them away can release tension.

People tend to associate ostinatos with percussion instruments and the rhythm section but any instruments in the ensemble could be used. Your ostinatos might be fast repeating short high-pitched melodies that use instruments at the top of the ensemble or might be funky plucked double basses riffs. You can create ostinatos by:

- Experimenting through playing along with a recording of the main idea, building tracks using Garage Band or other similar software.

- Extracting a small rhythmic or melodic idea from something you have already created and repeating it. You could keep it at the same speed as the original or speed it up or slow it down.
- Use the rhythmic ideas from the rhythm section to generate new ideas
- Look back over all the ideas you have created – is there something there that could be used?

Drones:

A drone is a special kind of ostinato and usually refers to a long held note beneath the main musical idea. This note might change pitch occasionally and might change colour through instrumentation, articulation, dynamics or different instrumental techniques. Changing dynamics and technique can create tension or release in the music e.g.

- a crescendo in the drone increases the tension
- going from tremolo strings to bowed strings could release the tension
- moving from a note that sounds dissonant to one that sounds consonant would release the tension

The note or notes you choose could be notes of your mode or a note which is dominant in your melody, or you might want to experiment by ear.

Punctuations and interruptions:

Punctuation or interruption refers to a musical idea that interacts with the main musical idea. A punctuation fits with what else is going on and can highlight the main idea whereas an interruption cuts across the main idea creating contrast and seeming to put the music of its course. What you decide to do will depend on the character you want for your fanfare. Your musical punctuation or interruption could be completely new idea or they could be taken from existing rhythms or melodic ideas you have generated previously – maybe with its character changed.

Cloud textures:

What is meant by a cloud is texture which is made up of lots of almost identical simple musical ideas which repeat but not necessarily in a rhythmic/metronomic way. One way to imagine this is to think about different textures: for example, a doormat's bristly texture is made of lots and lots of little spikes or, the rough texture of corrugated cardboard being made up of lots and lots of ridges.

Musically, a cloud texture might be made up of lots and lots of staccato individual plucked notes on string instruments or layers of rippling fast melodic lines in the woodwind. If there are lots of these ideas happening close together we would call it a dense texture, whereas if they are spaced out we would call it a sparse texture. Textures might evolve to become more or less dense and therefore help to either build or release tension in the music.

Creating layers:

One way to structure your musical ideas is to layer them. Three different examples of layering that you could use can be heard in:

- In Britten's *Fanfare for St. Edmundsbury* three contrasting melodies are layered on top of each other.
- In John Adams' *Tromba Lontana* you can hear layers of ostinatos with a melody on top.
- In the first movement of Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* the layers include a drone, an ostinato, a solo melody and interruptions.

Juxtaposing musical ideas:

If you have created contrasting material, you might want to chop it up and juxtapose sections of the different ideas in sequence to create your fanfare. The speed with which you change between your different ideas can create or release tension i.e. the faster you move between different bits of material the greater the tension.

ORGANIZING/STRUCTURING YOUR IDEAS

You will already have thought about how you are going to orchestrate your musical ideas i.e. which musical instrument you would like to play which bits of your music. This section includes ideas of how you might further organize your musical ideas/melodies, their variations and the accompaniments you might have created.

Antiphonal: Two instruments or groups of instruments play alternate musical phrases of the fanfare (sometimes with the same dynamic sometimes a contrasting one).

Punctuation: As mentioned earlier. One instrument or group of instruments plays the main melody with another instrument or group coming in at certain points to punctuate particular moments. Listen to Movement I of Stravinsky's *Three pieces for String Quartet* for an example of this.

Hocket: A single melody of the fanfare is divided up among two (or occasionally more) instruments or groups of instruments such that when one voice sounds the other rests. Listen to *Hocketus* by Louis Andressien for an example of this.

Canon: The melody of the fanfare is imitated by a second voice (and third, fourth...) after a given duration. The second voice plays either an exact imitation or one that keeps the same intervals, rhythms or pitches. Also known as a round. In Stravinsky's *Fanfare for a New Theatre* though the two trumpets start together they then play in canon.

Polyphonic: The simultaneous playing of different versions of the melody.

As you make decisions about organizing your musical ideas you may need to lengthen durations/notes, add rests and shift the musical lines until they work effectively with each other.

Building and releasing tension in your music:

Creating an effective structure for your fanfare also involves building and releasing tension. Building tension in music can be done by:

- Increasing the tempo
- Using faster notes
- Adding in more new notes from the mode to the melody
- Rising in pitch
- Spreading the pitch higher and lower simultaneously
- Increasing the density of events
- Changing the harmony from consonance to dissonance or moving through degrees of dissonance
- Making the texture thicker by adding more voices
- Getting louder
- Increasing the dynamic contrast

You can also use ideas in combination. To decrease and release tension the opposites apply.

Reflection questions:

- When you have finished your fanfare ask yourself:
- Does the fanfare have good overall timing and pacing?
- Are the moments of transition and change where I would like them to be?
- Does the fanfare have a clear direction or does it sometimes lose its way?
- Is the overall structure coherent and satisfying?
- Are there any ways I can enhance the overall character of the fanfare? How can you make it more X?
- Are my ideas clear? Does it do what I wanted it to do?
- Have you chosen the right instruments for the right roles/parts?

A NOTE ABOUT NOTATION

Notation is something that many people struggle with but doesn't have to be very complicated. The first thing to decide is **WHO** the notation is for? If it is simply for yourself to remember what you have done, then you can do it in any way you like. If, however, you have to communicate your ideas to other people who will be playing your piece it's useful to have an idea of the best way of writing things down. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to use 'conventional' notation, although if you were getting your piece played by an ensemble then this would be the easiest (and quickest) way of hearing the music.

The other thing that is important is to have a clear idea of what the most important things are that you want to communicate. It might be that the exact pitches aren't what gives the music its character, so you might not worry about that! Or it might be that you want a particular dramatic effect that needs a written instruction?

LISTENING

The Big Turtle Fanfare from the South China Sea: György Ligeti

This short 39 second fanfare was taken from a larger piece for puppet theatre. Composed for solo trumpet it demonstrates how a very simple idea can be varied and added to.

Fanfare for a new theatre: Igor Stravinsky

Stravinsky wrote this for the opening of the New York State Theatre for two trumpets who were meant to be placed either side of the balcony. It is 40 seconds long and the melodic line is a 12 tone row. After the first bar, which the trumpets play together, the two trumpets play in canon using all inverted, retrograde, and retrograde-inverted rows. The tone row is in a symmetrical with the four first and the four last intervals being the same, but in reversed order.

Fanfare for St. Edmundsbury: Benjamin Britten

Fanfare for St Edmundsbury is for three trumpets and was composed for a 'Pageant of Magna Carta' in the grounds of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds in 1959. It consists of three separate verses which are played one at a time and then simultaneously. Each verse is in a different key and could be played on natural trumpets (no keys or valves) and use the notes of the harmonic series. The three verses are also very different in style: the first, marked smooth, ripples up and down arpeggios, the second is a bouncy 6/8 marked brilliant, and the third is martial sounding and marked heroic. When they are all played simultaneously the initial effect seems chaotic but as the music progresses unity emerges from the chaos as the long notes start to settle and overlap.

Appellinterstellaire: Olivier Messiaen

Messiaen composed this brief movement for solo horn as part of a collection of short pieces for solo instruments in memory of a young French composer called Jean-Pierre Guézec. The title translates as 'Interstellar call', as if this music were a horn call that reaches across the vast span of outer space. It is extraordinarily difficult for the player, who must master a range of techniques: flutter-tonguing, closed notes, glissandos, and faintly-sounded oscillations produced with the keys half-closed.

Tromba Lontana: John Adams

Composer John Adams said that *Tromba Lontana* (literally 'distant trumpet') takes 'a subversive point of view on the idea of the generic loud, extrovert archetype of the fanfare'. The four-minute work that barely rises about mezzo piano and features two stereophonically placed solo trumpets (to the back of the stage or on separate balconies), who play gently insistent calls, each marked by a sustained note followed by a soft staccato tattoo. He described the orchestra as providing 'a pulsing continuum of serene ticking in the pianos, harps and percussion' with a long, almost disembodied melody for strings that passes by almost unnoticed like nocturnal clouds in the background. 30

Short Ride in a Fast Machine: John Adams

These two pieces are also known as Fanfare for Great Woods as the Great Woods Festival of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra commissioned them. Both derive their style from minimalism. The music is tonal and transforms over time through slow imperceptible changes in harmony. Repeating rhythmic patterns, ostinatos are layered and the shifting of their placement creates rhythmic dissonance and propels the music forward.