

COMPOSER CUBES!



Anyone can compose music—even a beginning student!

How to prepare: After printing out onto A4 card, cut out each template and make into a cube with tape or glue. Perhaps colour-code the card used to help recognise different cubes quickly: e.g. GCEA = white, C Penta = Red, D Penta = yellow, F Penta = green, etc.

Here's a few ideas for how to use GCEA 'Composer Cubes' in your Music classroom:

+ After a rhythmic dictation activity, put students in groups of 4, giving each a different rhythm from the dictation. Focussing on only one Composer Cube (e.g. the GCEA for beginners, or Pentatonic depending on level), let each student roll the cube, writing down a note for each beat in their rhythm. Write the new melodic pattern on manuscript for a quick transcribing exercise, or practise and play the new 4-phrase song that has just been composed by the group!

+ Extend the previous exercise by giving each student a different cube to compose a melody based on a chordal progression. Basic progressions will include the 1st, 4th and 5th chords in a series (here with the 1st repeated), resulting in combinations such as:

$F - B^b - C - F \quad C - F - G - C \quad D - G - A - D \quad G - C - D - G$

Simply compose each phrase by matching the cube to the desired chord! Perhaps have each chord strummed as a backing/accompaniment...

+ "Pass the Cube"! For a whole-group aural exercise, choose a cube to match the desired class level, and have it pass around the first 4 people in a circle, with those 4 playing the note 'rolled'. The next 4 people have to play the same notes in exactly the same sequence from memory, then the next 4 play a new 4-note phrase, and so on! Make it as easy or as challenging as you wish!

+ Since all Composer Cubes feature a 'Major' pentatonic scale (and its corresponding chord), the relative Minor scale can be used by simply counting down 3 notes, then playing that new note's Minor chord to the same scale. So: the 'C Pentatonic' can also be played to an A Minor chord to realise the 'A Minor Pentatonic' scale. Add the new Minor chord into the progression above, and you get: $C - F - G - Am$, and so on...

Got any other ideas that you'd like to share? Let me know! info@nathancahill.com.au

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C/Am Pentatonic

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