



LONG-FORM COMPOSITIONS



Tips & Tricks for Media Composers

powered by the Music Interval Theory Academy.

<https://musicintervaltheory.academy/>

Tell An Interesting Story

Structure your composition like a story.

- Start with your overall plot and work out more details, branches, or side stories later.
- What's the difference between a short story and a novel? - It's the quantity (while keeping up the quality) of how much you have to say about a topic.
- How to say more (interesting things)? - Keep your story conversational; you (the composer) will sense when you've said enough.
- Form (like AABA, sonata, rondo, etc.) can help you structure your musical ideas, but very often, a story given to you sets the form for the music (like a movie).

Figure out how to say more about a specific topic!

Example: "Planet 9" (composed by Thomas Chase Jones)

- Overall story: Let's fly to Mars.
- Dividing the story into sections: "Prepare to Say Goodbye," "The Flight," "The Landing," and "Building the Colony."
- Each section turned into 4-5 minutes. It's easier to describe specific things or emotions in those sections. This will help you stay inspired and creative.

How to translate such a story into actual music?

- Think about what you want to talk about before you start composing => put your focus on gathering a ton of materials! (sometimes several pages)
- These musical snippets will trigger a solid connection to the Creative Pool and provide more inspiration than needed for this long-form composition.
- Form follows function! => In film scoring, the film determines the form. Also, an exciting story embraces an arc, character development, and contrast.
- The smallest little stimulus can turn into great inspiration, and you can see creation in the slightest little things (for example, watch two ants fight, and become an observer). Why don't you score that fight and turn it into a great story? :D



A Practical Blueprint for Long Compositions

From a macro perspective:

- The longer a composition needs to be, the more the focus shifts toward the gathering. It's almost proportional. Gather a lot!
- Follow-up question: How much gathering is enough? - Here's my rule of thumb: You see it in the sketch:

This is your sketch, split it into two parts.

First 50%	Second 50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to make the first half of your sketch as unique as possible.• Introduce several new ideas and let the repetition of your main motif connect the sections (that's the story's main character; this also connects to forms like AABA).• The first half of the sketch introduces the characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most of what you should do in the second half is reference ideas from the first half (in variations).• Please think of this second half as the character development.• You'll get through this part significantly faster because of how you set up the first 50%.

If the overall sketch is really long (like 30 min. or more), you should introduce something new in the second half, like a 2-3 min. section that is totally unique.

Now, let's zoom into each part of the sketch and see what we can do from a micro perspective.



The first half of the sketch (from a micro perspective):

- Gather (at least) a handful of different motives or themes you can work with.
- Apply various techniques to derive more materials from these themes.
- Adjust the motives so they work simultaneously => this could turn into a middle section where those themes are being played very slowly but as pure line-writing, almost like an atmospheric part (guideline: no 13s).
- Out of these elements, you can develop 8-16 bar segments that you can place in the sketch later (those building blocks also connect to form).
- After you've put some of these blocks into your sketch, you'll start seeing where you need contrast (especially when you repeat the main motives); make each repeat still sound unique via changes in the orchestration or register.
- Do these things quickly because it will sound repetitive to you if you spend too much time listening to these similar sections in your sketch; maybe even revisit the first half of the sketch the next day.

If you still feel that your first half sounds too repetitive, insert some empty bars that we'll fill with a musical seed of something that will show up in the second half for the first time.

The second half of the sketch (from a micro perspective):

- Work on the second half and leave the bars you added to the first half empty.
- Create something unique in the second half and surround it with familiar sections.
- Look at the new elements and reduce them to their cores; take any of those cores and use them as seeds in the empty spots in the first half; this can be a fraction of the melody, a pattern, a motor, etc.; this elegantly hints at the later section.
- Plant those seeds after the fact and do it in reverse; that's way simpler.

