



# STUDY GUIDE **COMPOSE YOURSELF!**

with Music Director Otto Tausk  
& the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

GRADES 4 - 7

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# The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1919, the Grammy and Juno-award winning Vancouver Symphony Orchestra is the third largest orchestra in Canada, the largest arts organization in Western Canada, and one of the few orchestras in the world to have its own music school.

Led by Music Director Otto Tausk since 2018, the VSO performs more than 150 concerts throughout Vancouver and the province of British Columbia each year, reaching over 270,000 people. The VSO has toured to the United States, China, Korea and across Canada. The orchestra presents passionate, high-quality performances of classical, popular and culturally diverse music, creating meaningful engagement with audiences of all ages and backgrounds.



Recent guest artists include Daniil Trifonov, Dawn Upshaw, James Ehnes, Adrienne Pieczonka, Gidon Kremer, Renée Fleming, Yefim Bronfman, Itzhak Perlman, Bernadette Peters, Tan Dun, and more. For the 2020-21 season the VSO has created the innovative streaming service **TheConcertHall.ca**, a virtual home for a virtual season, where more than forty performances will be released throughout the year.

## Otto Tausk Conductor & Music Director

Dutch conductor Otto Tausk is the Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, now in his third season. He is also the newly announced Chief Conductor of recently formed Phion Orkest van Gelderland & Overijssel. Until spring 2018, Tausk was Music Director of the Opera Theatre and Tonhalle Sinfonieorchester St. Gallen. He appears as a guest with such orchestras as Concertgebouworkest, Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Philharmonie Südwestfalen, Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orchestre symphonique de Québec, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Mariinsky Orchestra, the orchestras of Perth, Tasmania, Auckland, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales, with whom he made his BBC Proms debut in August 2018. He is a hugely respected musical personality in his native Holland, working with all its major orchestras and composers.

In the 2020/21 season, Tausk continues guesting relationships with orchestras such as Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, Het Gelders Orkest, Norwegian Radio Orchestra and Turku Philharmonic Orchestra.

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In Vancouver, Tausk will lead an innovative reimagined season in response to COVID-19, showcasing the orchestra with a curated series of digital performances.

Born in Utrecht, Otto Tausk initially studied violin and then conducting with Jonas Aleksa. Between 2004 and 2006, Tausk was assistant conductor to Valery Gergiev with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, a period of study that had a profound impact on him. In 2011 Tausk was presented with the 'De Olifant' prize by the City of Haarlem. He received this prestigious award for his contribution to the Arts in the Netherlands, in particular his extensive work with Holland Symfonia serving as Music Director 2007 to 2012. In reflecting on their work together in The Netherlands, Valery Gergiev paid particular tribute to Tausk on this occasion.



# Members of the Orchestra

## First Violin

Nicholas Wright, *Concertmaster*  
Timothy Steeves, *Associate Concertmaster*  
David Lakirovich, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
Jennie Press, *Second Assistant Concertmaster (On Leave)*  
Jae-Won Bang  
Mary Sokol Brown  
Jenny Essers  
Monica Pegis (On Leave)  
Xue Feng Wei  
Rebecca Whitling  
Yi Zhou

## Second Violin

Karen Gerbrecht, *Acting Principal*  
Jeanette Bernal-Singh, *Acting Associate Principal*  
Ashley Plaut, *Acting Assistant Principal*  
Cassandra Bequary  
Adrian Shu-On Chui  
Daniel Norton (On Leave)  
Ann Okagaito  
Carina Vincenti

## Viola

Andrew Brown, *Acting Principal*  
Emilie Grimes, *Acting Associate Principal*  
Katrina Chitty  
Matthew Davies (On Leave)  
Angela Schneider  
Jacob van der Sloot

## Cello

Henry Shapard, *Principal*  
Janet Steinberg, *Associate Principal*  
Zoltan Rozsnyai, *Assistant Principal*  
Olivia Blander  
Natasha Boyko  
Charles Inkman  
Luke Kim  
Cristian Márkos

## Bass

Dylan Palmer, *Principal*  
Evan Hulbert, *Associate Principal*  
Noah Reitman, *Assistant Principal*  
Malcolm Armstrong  
David Brown  
JWarren Long

## Flute

Christie Reside, *Principal*  
Chris James, *Assistant Principal*  
Rosanne Wieringa

## Piccolo

Chris James

## Oboe

Roger Cole, *Principal*  
Beth Orson, *Assistant Principal*  
Karin Walsh

## English Horn

Beth Orson

## Clarinet

Jeanette Jonquil, *Principal*  
Michelle Goddard, *Acting Assistant Principal*

## E-flat Clarinet

Michelle Goddard

## Bass Clarinet

vacant

## Bassoon

Julia Lockhart, *Principal*  
Sophie Dansereau, *Assistant Principal*  
Gwen Seaton

## Contrabassoon

Sophie Dansereau

## French Horn

Oliver de Clercq, *Acting Principal*  
Andrew Mee, *Acting Associate Principal*  
Vacant, *Assistant Principal*  
Vacant  
David Haskins

## Trumpet

Larry Knopp, *Principal*  
Marcus Goddard, *Associate Principal*  
Vincent Vohradsky

## Trombone

Brian Wendel, *Principal*  
Andrew Poirier

## Bass Trombone

Ilan Morgenstern (On Leave)

## Tuba

Peder MacLellan, *Principal*

## Timpani

Aaron McDonald, *Principal*

## Percussion

Vern Griffiths, *Principal*  
Michael Jarrett  
Tony Phillips

## Harp

vacant

## Piano

vacant

Otto Tausk  
*Music Director*

Andrew Crust  
*Associate Conductor*

Bramwell Tovey  
*Music Director Emeritus*

Kazuyoshi Akiyama  
*Conductor Laureate*

## Education Staff

Christin Reardon MacLellan, *Director, Education & Community Programs*

Yvanna Mycyk, *Education Programs Coordinator*

Erica Binder, *Student Education Assistant*

Emily Richardson, *Student Education Assistant & VSO SoM Assistant*

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## Andrew Crust

### VSO Assistant Conductor

Andrew Crust has developed a versatile international career as a conductor of orchestral, opera, ballet and pops programs. Currently serving as the Assistant Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in Canada, Andrew conducts a large number of subscription, pops, educational and contemporary concerts with the VSO each season. In the 19/20 season Andrew will debut with the Bozeman and Lima Symphonies as a Music Director finalist and begin a relationship with the San Diego Symphony as Cover Conductor. Recent engagements include performances with the Winnipeg Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Hartford Symphony, and l'Orchestre de la Francophonie in Québec. Andrew is equally at ease in the pit, having conducted ballet with Ballet Memphis and the New Ballet Ensemble, and opera with Opera McGill, College Light Opera Company, Boulder Opera Company, and others. As a Pops conductor, Andrew has collaborated with such artists as Rufus Wainwright, Steven Page, Michael Bolton, Cirque de la Symphonie, and the United States Jazz Ambassadors, and will make his film debut conducting Casablanca with the Vancouver Symphony in the 19/20 season.

Andrew served as Assistant Conductor of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra from 2017-2019 where he conducted around forty concerts each season. He stepped in last minute for a successful subscription performance featuring Bernstein's Serenade with violinist Charles Yang. Andrew also served as Conductor of the Memphis Youth Symphony Program. As the Assistant Conductor of the Portland Symphony Orchestra in Maine from 2016-2018, he conducted a variety of concert series, helped coordinate the orchestra's extensive educational programs, and helped lead a program for concertgoers under 40 called "Symphony and Spirits".

Crust was the Assistant Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of the USA (NYO-USA) in the summers of 2017 and 2018, assisting Michael Tilson Thomas on an Asian tour, as well as Giancarlo Guerrero, Marin Alsop and James Ross at Carnegie Hall and in a side-by-side performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has also served as Cover Conductor of the Kansas City Symphony and Nashville Symphony, Assistant/Cover Conductor of the Boulder Philharmonic and Assistant Conductor of Opera McGill.

Abroad, he has led concerts with the Orchestra Giovanile Italiana in Italy, Hamburger Symphoniker at the Mendelssohn Festival in Germany, the Moravian Philharmonic in the Czech Republic, the Filharmonia "Mihail Jora" of Bacau, Romania, and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Chile in Santiago. In 2017 he was awarded first prize at the Accademia Chigiana by Daniele Gatti, receiving a scholarship and an invitation to guest conduct the Orchestra di Sanremo in Italy. He was a semi-finalist for the Nestlé/Salzburg Festival's Young Conductors Award competition and was selected by members of the Vienna Philharmonic as a winner of the Ansbacher Fellowship, with full access to all rehearsals and performances of the Salzburg Festival. Andrew is dedicated to exploring new ways of bringing the classical music experience into the 21st century through innovative programming and marketing, creating community-oriented and socially-sensitive concert experiences, and utilizing social media and unique venues. Andrew lives in Vancouver and enjoys making and consuming visual art during study breaks.



# String Family

The four major instruments in the string family, the violin, the viola, the cello and the double bass, are built the same way. The instruments are made of many pieces of wood which are glued together. The body of the instrument is hollow, thus becoming a resonating box for the sound. Four strings made of animal gut, nylon, or steel are wrapped around pegs at one end of the instrument and attached to a tailpiece at the other. They are stretched tightly across a bridge to produce their assigned pitches.

The **violin** is the soprano voice in the string family. It is held under the chin, resting on the shoulder. The violin has a lovely tone that can be soft and expressive or exciting and brilliant.



The **viola** is the alto voice in the string family. Like the violin, it is held under the chin, resting on the shoulder. Unlike the violin, the viola is slightly larger and is tuned five notes lower. It has a richer and warmer tone quality than the violin but is not as brilliant.



The **cello** is the tenor voice in the string family. While shaped like a violin, the cello is much larger and is held between the player's knees. Because it can produce beautiful sounds from its lowest to its highest notes, it is a popular instrument.



The **double bass** is the largest and lowest instrument of the string family. The double bass has sloping shoulders, instead of rounded shoulders like the other string instruments. This allows the player to have more room to move his or her arms, hands, and fingers in front of the instrument. Because of its size, the player stands or sits on a high stool to play the double bass.



# Woodwind Family

The three branches of the woodwind family have different sources of sound. Vibrations begin when air is blown across the top of an instrument, across a single reed, or across two reeds. Reeds are small pieces of cane. A single reed is clamped to a mouthpiece at the top of the instrument and vibrates against the mouthpiece when air is blown between the reed and the mouthpiece. Two reeds together are commonly known as a double reed. The double reed fits into a tube at the top of the instrument and vibrates when air is forced between the two reeds.

Originally made of wood, the **flute** is now made from silver or gold and is about 2 feet in length. It looks like a narrow tube with a row of holes covered by keys along one side. The player blows air across the small hole in the mouthpiece to produce a sound that can be either soft and delicate or bright and piercing.

The **oboe** is similar to the clarinet in many ways. Both are made from wood and have metal keys that can produce many notes rapidly. Unlike the clarinet, the oboe does not have a mouthpiece, but has two reeds tied together. By placing them between one's lips and blowing air through them, the reeds vibrate and produce a sound.

Made from wood, the **clarinet** produces a fluid sound when air is blown between a single reed and the mouthpiece. By pressing metal keys with the fingers of both hands, the player has the ability to play many different notes very quickly.

The **bassoon** is a large double reed instrument with a lower sound than the other woodwind instruments. Its double reed is attached to a small curved tube called a bocal which fits into the bassoon. When the player blows air between the reeds, the vibrating column of air inside the instrument travels over nine feet to the bottom of the instrument, then up to the top where the sound comes out.



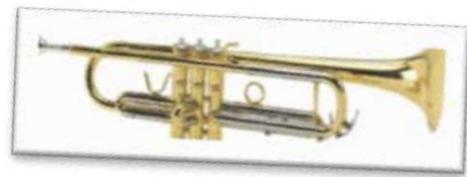
# Brass Family

Brass family instruments produce their unique sound by the player buzzing his/her lips while blowing air through a cup- or funnel-shaped mouthpiece. To produce higher or lower pitches, the player adjusts the opening between his/her lips. The mouthpiece connects to a length of brass tubing ending in a bell. The shorter the tubing length, the smaller the instrument, and the higher the sound; the longer the tubing length, the larger the instrument, and the lower the sound. The brass family can trace its ancestry back to herald trumpets, hunting horns, and military bugles. The main instruments of the brass family include the trumpet, horn, trombone, and tuba.

The **french horn** consists of about 12 feet of narrow tubing wound into a circle. The player obtains different notes on the horn with a clear mellow sound by pressing valves with the left hand and by moving the right hand inside of the bell.



The **trumpet** is the highest sounding member of the brass family. The brilliant tone of the trumpet travels through about 6½ feet of tubing bent into an oblong shape. The player presses the three valves in various combinations with the fingers of the right hand to obtain various pitches.



The mouthpiece of the **trombone** is larger than that of the trumpet and gives the instrument a more mellow sound. Instead of valves, the trombone has a slide which changes the length of its approximately 9 feet of tubing to reach different pitches.



Made of about 16 feet of tubing, the **tuba** is the lowest sounding member of the brass family. The tuba has three to five valves and is held upright in the player's lap.



# Percussion Family

Percussion instruments are the loud instruments in the back of the orchestra that produce sound when they are struck with another object, usually a drumstick or mallet. There are two types of percussion instruments: definite-pitch instruments make pitches just like the other instruments of the orchestra, while indefinite-pitch instruments make neutral rhythmic sounds.

The **bass drum**, snare drum, and triangle are indefinite-pitch instruments that are hit with a drumstick or a beater.



The **marimba** and xylophone are definite-pitch instruments that are played with yarn-covered or rubber mallets.



The **timpani** are the most visible instruments in the percussion family, because they are placed on a platform at the back of the stage, in the centre. Timpani are usually played in sets of four, with each drum a different size and pitch. The player uses a pedal to tighten or loosen the skin on the top of the drum to change the pitch.

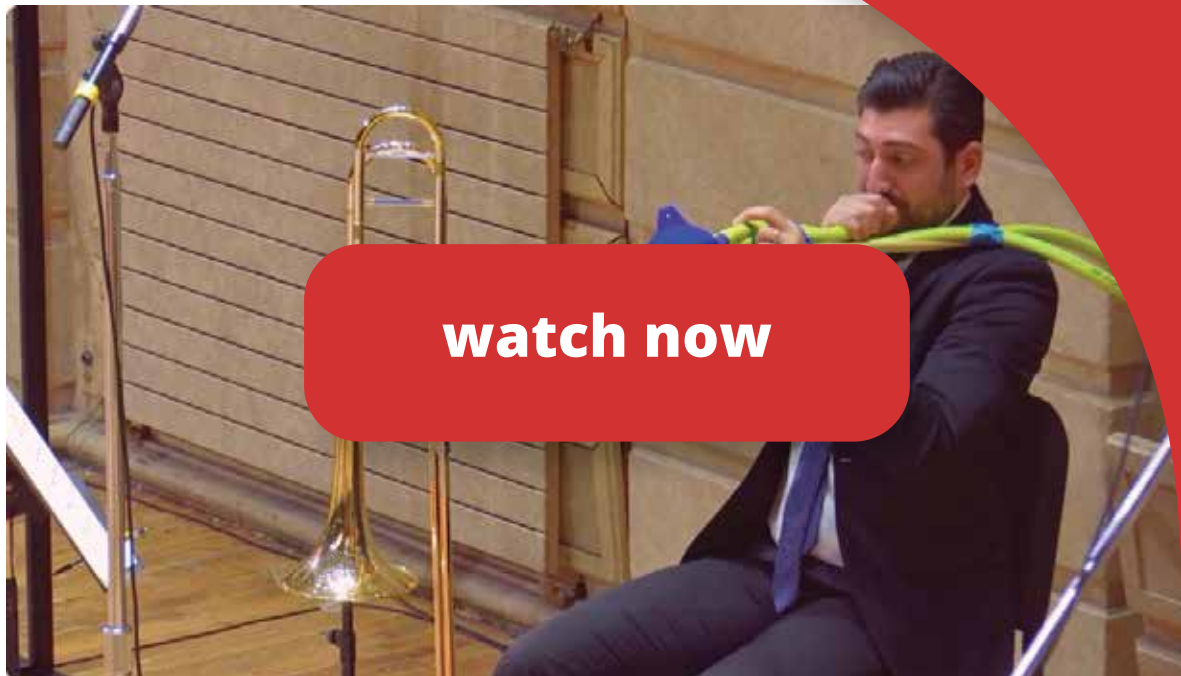


The tambourine and **cymbals** are also indefinite-pitch instruments, but they do not require a beater to play. The tambourine is struck with the player's right hand, while the cymbals are crashed together.





# Teacher Tool Kit



**watch now**

## About Compose Yourself!

The activities and resources in this guide are intended to accompany a viewing of the complete 45-minute performance of “Compose Yourself!”, available on **TheConcertHall.ca**. Note that these activities are intended to be completed after watching the concert.

Leading American orchestras, instrumentalists and wind ensembles around the world have performed the music of Chicago-based composer James M. Stephenson, both to critical acclaim and the delight of audiences. The composer is largely self-taught, making his voice truly individual and his life’s work all the more remarkable.

Jim Stephenson’s popular work “Compose Yourself!” (aka Once upon a Symphony) was composed in 2002 for the Naples Philharmonic. It is a 50-minute showcase for symphony orchestra, designed to introduce young audiences to the wonders of the orchestra. Additionally, and uniquely, it engages the audience in the compositional process, resulting in a unique world premiere created each and every performance.

The interactive, educational and entertaining show is designed to introduce the musical instruments and families to children of all ages. It has been performed over 350 times nationally and internationally. Original music that incorporates bottles, hoses, and just plain fun has resulted in thousands of young people laughing and loving the experience of hearing an orchestra, sometimes for the first time.

# Activity 1

## Become a Conductor!

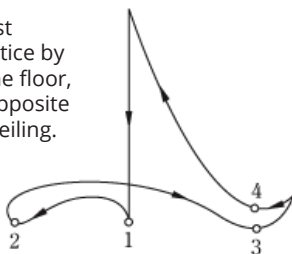
**Orchestral conductors** stand on a podium with a baton (which looks a bit like a magic wand) in front of the orchestra, constantly communicating directions to the whole orchestra during a performance. The primary responsibilities of the conductor are to set the tempo, indicate beats (particularly first or “down” beats) and to listen carefully and critically to the ensemble. Communicating changes that need to be made within the ensemble - such as showing the violins you want them to play louder to balance the sound - requires highly trained listening skills. There are no strict rules for conducting, and you will notice that different conductors have very different styles. However, the very basics of beat indication do follow a set pattern that you can see below.

### Activity

1) Ask students what they think the role of the conductor is in an orchestra. Explain that while conductors can show many things with the way they move their hands and bodies, they must begin with showing the beat. Practice the three different patterns below, in time and as a class. Try with one and both hands - remembering to mirror with your opposite hand! Once students have mastered the pattern, work through steps 2A or 2B as a class.

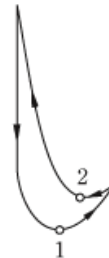
#### 4/4 Time

This is the most common! Practice by gesturing to the floor, the wall, the opposite wall, and the ceiling.



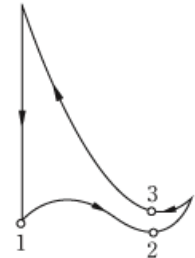
#### 2/4 Time

This one is the simplest! Try it with fast pieces.



#### 3/4 Time

This is commonly used in waltzes.



#### 2A

I. Mozart's famous melody, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" is in 4/4 time. Try singing and beating along to this as a class.

II. After practicing this a few times, explore how the way one conducts can indicate different things about the music besides tempo. For example, smaller gestures can indicate that the music should be softer; larger gestures can indicate that the music should be louder. Appoint a few student conductors to lead a class choir in "Twinkle, Twinkle", using gestures to change different elements of the music.

#### 2B

I. Find a recording of "Dance Monkey" by *Tones & I* and "September" by *Earth, Wind & Fire*. Both of these songs are in 4/4, but can be conducted in 4 or in 2 (alternatively, ask students to choose a song, or use a recording of a song that you are working on in music class).

II. Listen to one or both songs as a class. Practice conducting to the music using the 4 and 2-beat patterns, experimenting with switching between the 'big' beats and the smaller quicker pulse.

Discuss: How many different ways can you find to conduct the same piece?

3) Now, re-watch the final part of "Compose Yourself!" [44:58]. Notice how the conductor is showing the beat. Try to conduct along!

# Activity 2

## Analyzing Music and Musical Terms

### Overview

Students will engage with concepts introduced in “Compose Yourself!” to analyze instrumental music.

### Activity

1) Consider the elements of music we have learned about in this concert: melody, harmony, and rhythm. Discuss: how do each of these elements work together? How does each affect the music? Ask the class to select one or two pieces (either from the list below or of your own choosing) to analyze.

- **Fiddle Faddle, Anderson**
- **Waltz of the Flowers, Tchaikovsky**
- **Duet for Cello and Double Bass, Rossini**
- **‘Mars’ from The Planets, Holst**

Listen to the piece(s) as a class, then:

- Discuss: How do the musicians use the elements of harmony, tempo, and rhythm?
- Engage with these elements as we do in “Compose Yourself!”. Do the harmonies sound major, minor, or dissonant? Is the tempo fast or slow? Does the rhythm remind you of a march, a waltz, a tango, or something else?

2) Consider the other musical terms used in this concert (see term bank). How many of these are familiar, and how many are new? Ask students if they can recall the definitions before reviewing.

### Term Bank

**Arco:** ‘With the bow’. A marking that tells string players to use their bow.

**Pluck:** A technique for playing a string instrument.

**Vibrate/Vibration:** When played, musical instruments vibrate at different frequencies. These vibrations create soundwaves, which are the music that you hear.

**Pizzicato:** A marking that tells string players to pluck the strings with their fingers.

**Scale:** a stepwise sequence of notes (either ascending or descending)

**Glissando:** A continuous slide between two notes.

**Mouthpiece:** A part of a brass or woodwind instrument that the player blows or buzzes into.

**Ligature:** A metal piece that holds the reed onto a clarinet or saxophone mouthpiece.

**Reed:** A thin blade of cane, bamboo, metal or plastic that vibrates, creating soundwaves.

**Beat:** The pulse in a piece of music.

3) Consider the piece you chose to discuss earlier in this lesson. Do the musicians use any of the techniques from the term bank to perform the piece?

### Extension

After your discussion, ask students to journal using the following prompt:

- In the piece you chose, which musical element or term is the most important? Is there more than one?

# Activity 3

## Compose Your Own Piece!

### Materials and Links

- Individual/ group access to a laptop, tablet, or phone
- [Chrome Music Lab: Song Maker](#)

### Overview

Now, it's YOUR turn to be a composer! Considering the elements of music that we learned about in this concert, students will create a unique composition and share it with a friend.

### Activity

1) Lead a discussion on the building blocks of music. We know about harmony, melody, and rhythm - what else can a composer use to create different sounds? Suggested examples:

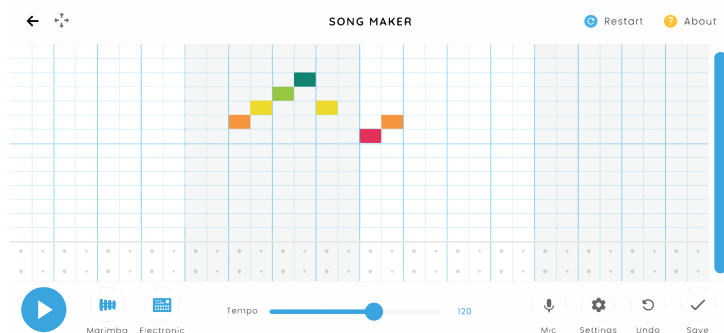
- Instruments or combinations of instruments
- Dynamics (relative volume)
- Tempo (speed)
- Texture (density of sound; number of instruments playing at once)
- Repetition

2) Have students access <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/> in their browser. Before they create their own compositions, ask students to experiment with the Song Maker, to figure out how to create not only a melody, but also harmony and rhythm. (Harmony can be achieved by layering notes - start with 1 or 2.)

3) Debrief their findings as a class. Note the shading on the page, which outlines groups of 4 beats. Using the bottom 2 rows on the page (the rhythm section), students try to write a rhythm that feels like a 4-beat pattern. Share rhythms as a class: Does it feel like a groove, or does it feel random?

4) Now, they can create their own short compositions! Explore the different instruments that can be used; examine how different melodies, harmonies, and rhythms can be combined to create an interesting and cohesive piece. Older students may wish to manipulate the meter, range, and mode (found when you click on 'Settings').

As students share their compositions with the class, the composer and classmates may share what they noticed and liked about the melody, harmony, or rhythm in the piece.



### Extension

Challenge students to use what they're learned to create a piece that achieves a particular effect. Can they create something cheerful and exciting? Something spooky and strange? Something you can dance to?



# Thank you!

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