

# Scope & Sequence

## The Four-Year Composition Program

A week-by-week map of the curriculum – what is taught, in what order, and what the student produces – across four years of study in music theory and composition.

**Subject** Fine Arts — Music Theory & Composition

**Structure** 4 years · ~30 weeks/year · 5 days/week

**Provider** Gradus · gradusmusic.com

## 1 How the Curriculum Is Organized

The program spans **four years**, each year roughly **30 weeks** of material (Year 1 runs 33 weeks; about 123 weeks in all). Each week is built from **five practice days**, and each day is a single focused activity drawn from eight recurring types – Lesson, Ear Training, Writing, Listening, Score Study, Orchestration, Notation, and Review. The content is strictly sequential: every week assumes the skills of the weeks before it.

Underneath the weekly schedule, the curriculum is organized into **twelve stages of study**. The first ten carry the student from a single melodic line to the full harmonic language of the twentieth century (Years 1–3); the final two are Year 4 – a year of intensive masterwork study and an original capstone composition.

### Skill strands developed continuously

Nine strands run through all four years, each deepening as the student advances:

- **Ear Training & Aural Skills** – intervals, chords, cadences, dictation, singing
- **Composition / Writing** – original work in every lesson
- **Notation & Theory** – reading and writing standard notation
- **Counterpoint** – the five species, then free counterpoint and fugue
- **Harmony** – diatonic through chromatic and post-tonal
- **Musical Form** – phrase, period, binary/ternary, sonata, fugue
- **Score Study / Analysis** – real masterworks, era by era
- **Orchestration** – instruments and ensembles, introduced gradually
- **Music History** – concepts taught in the order they were discovered
- **Aesthetic principles** – balance, contrast, tension and release

## 2 The Twelve Stages

Stage	Title	Steps	Focus
I	The Single Voice	1–7	The harmonic series, intervals, scales, rhythm, and staff notation
II	Two Voices	8–13	Cantus firmus and Fux counterpoint through all five species
III	Harmony	14–16	The third voice, diatonic chords, cadences, the minor mode
IV	Inversions & Figured Bass	17–18	Chord inversions, the cadential 6/4, reading and realizing figured bass
V	Fugue	19–20	Subject and answer, exposition, episodes, stretto, the complete fugue
VI	The Classical Style	21–25	Seventh chords, secondary dominants, modulation, non-chord tones, form
VII	Romantic Harmony	26–30	Chromatic voice leading, augmented sixths, enharmonic modulation
VIII	Impressionist Harmony	31–33	Modal color, parallel motion, atmosphere and added-tone harmony
IX	The 20th Century	34–36	Expanded tonality, atonality and serialism, new sound worlds
X	The Composer's Ear	37–39	Neo-Riemannian transformation, advanced tonalities, emotion and harmony
XI	Masterworks	40–45	A year of intensive score study — one complete masterwork at a time, Bach through Holst
XII	The Composer's Voice	46–49	The capstone — an original composition, orchestrated and revised into a finished portfolio

Stages I–X build the complete theory and craft (Years 1–3); Stages XI–XII are Year 4 – the masterworks intensive and the capstone composition.

## YEAR ONE

### Foundations — Stages I–IV · from a single voice to figured bass

By the end of Year 1 the student can read and write standard notation, recognize and sing the core intervals and triad qualities, write two-voice counterpoint in all five species, build and connect simple chords, realize a figured bass, and has composed several original pieces including a year-end composition project.

Week	Focus	What the student does that week
1	Course overview & first sounds	Welcome to the method; first guided listening (Beethoven 5); the language of notation; ear training — the perfect fifth; first sketch
2	The harmonic series & the perfect fifth	Foundations of sound; fifth recognition; note values; listening (Beethoven 5); sketch on C & G
3	The third note + the orchestra at a glance	Major third & sixth; ear training; orchestra overview; Britten, <i>Young Person's Guide</i> ; sketch on C–E–G–A
4	The minor color — same notes, different feeling	The minor third; major vs. minor by ear; write four bars major / four minor; Bach, <i>Air on the G String</i>
5	The pentatonic scale	The pentatonic scale; interval ear training; ledger lines & bass clef; Debussy; an 8-bar pentatonic melody
6	Half-step pulls — F and B	The downward pull & the leading tone; minor 2nd / major 7th; sharps, flats & key signatures; Bach Prelude in C; melody using F and B
7	The full major scale + the string section	The major scale; pulse and meter; the strings; Prokofiev, <i>Classical Symphony</i> ; an 8-bar melody for solo violin
8	Rhythm in full — simple & compound meter	Note values, rests, simple & compound meter; rhythmic dictation; notation quiz; Holst "Mars"; a rhythm-first flute melody
9	First species counterpoint — introduction	Counterpoint foundations; perfect-interval ID; counterpoint workshop; Bach, Invention No. 1; intro to score study
10	First species — mastery	Reading first-species examples; perfect-interval drill; write first species for violin + cello; Bach, Crab Canon; WTC Prelude No. 1
11	Second species — half notes	Second species; thirds & sixths by ear; write second species for flute + cello; Handel, <i>Messiah</i> ; Bach, Invention No. 2
12	Second species in depth + the woodwinds	Approach to the cadence; minor intervals; full second species for violin + viola; the woodwind section; Mozart, K. 375

Week	Focus	What the student does that week
13	Third species — quarter notes	Third species; all diatonic intervals; write third species for violin + cello; Bach, Invention No. 4; add third species to your own cantus
14	Third species in depth + the brass	Ornamental motion; the tritone; a 10-bar third species for oboe + viola; the brass section; Bach, Three-Part Invention No. 1
15	Fourth species — suspensions, introduction	Suspensions; tension and resolution by ear; write fourth species for violin + cello; Purcell, <i>Dido's Lament</i> ; Bach, Chaconne
16	Suspensions in depth + percussion & harp	The 9–8 and suspension chains; chains by ear; extended fourth species; percussion & harp; Bach, Gigue
17	Rhythm in depth	Dotted rhythms, sixteenths, compound meter, syncopation; dictation in three meters; eight bars in 6/8; Beethoven 9 Scherzo
18	Fifth species — florid counterpoint	Florid counterpoint; all twelve intervals; write fifth species for violin + cello; Palestrina, <i>Missa Papae Marcelli</i>
19	Fifth species extended + counterpoint as composition	Compositional principles; two-voice dictation; extended fifth species for any two instruments; Bach, WTC Fugue No. 2
20	Bridge — the third voice appears	The harmonic series inside the note; triad quality by ear; add a third voice; Bach, "Jesu, Joy"; three voices & the diatonic chords
21	V→I and harmonic function	The joint resolution & circle of fifths; cadence recognition + Boulanger sing-and-play; Voice-a-Chord; Handel, "Hallelujah"; chorale Roman-numeral analysis
22	Voice spacing, SATB & cadences	SATB ranges & spacing; cadence ID by ear; chord-voicing exercises; Haydn, "Surprise"; intro to chorale harmonization
23	Cadences and the shape of a phrase	Cadence types, phrase shape, suspensions; identify the cadence; write a period (8 bars); Mozart, K. 545; cadences from memory
24	The minor mode	The leading tone & Phrygian pull; harmonic vs. melodic minor; quality by ear; Schubert, <i>Erlkönig</i> ; an 8-bar minor melody
25	Inversions + the string quartet	Root, first & second inversion; inversion ID; SATB on strings; Haydn, "Emperor" Quartet; a string-quartet exercise
26	The cadential 6/4 + figured bass, introduction	The cadential 6/4 & reading figures; ID by ear; first figured-bass realizations; Mozart, PC No. 21; mark inversions in a chorale

Week	Focus	What the student does that week
27	Figured bass — tendency-tone notation	Tendency tones & the realization process; figured-bass intervals by ear; Vidal exercises; Bach, BWV 82; realize a bass from scratch
28	The thirteen essential progressions	Core progressions & pre-dominants; Roman-numeral ID by ear; Vidal — sevenths; Bach, Partita No. 2; full chorale analysis
29	Strings + woodwinds together; SATB mastery	Combining families; timbre ID; orchestration assignment — chorale to quartet + flute; Mozart, K. 388; Bach, Brandenburg No. 2
30	Reading an orchestral score	How to read a full score; texture-layer ID; arrange an 8-bar melody for quartet; Beethoven 5 score reading & analysis
31	Year 1 review — the composer's first voice	Single → two → three voices; comprehensive ear training; a two-voice composition; recap listening; a full analytical write-up
32	Year 1 project — brief & development	Project brief; draft the cantus skeleton; develop into florid counterpoint; first tutor critique; revisit a favorite score
33	Year 1 project — finalize & reflect	Revise; add instrument-specific detail; final submission & tutor critique; year-end reflection; preview of Year 2

## YEAR TWO

### Counterpoint Mastery & the Classical Style — Stages V–VI · fugue, harmony, and form

By the end of Year 2 the student can write a complete fugal exposition, use seventh chords and secondary dominants, modulate by several techniques, handle the full range of non-chord tones, analyze and sketch in sonata form, and has written a four-voice chorale and a sonata-form exposition. Each week: a lesson, ear training (with daily sight-singing), a writing task, guided listening, and score study.

Week	Topic	Steps	Listening anchor
1	Fugue: choosing a subject & the tonal answer	19.1–19.2	Bach, WTC Fugue in C, Bk I
2	Fugue: countersubject + the Baroque orchestra	19.3–19.4	Bach, D-minor fugue, WTC I
3	Fugue: the four-voice exposition	19.5–19.6	Bach, WTC Fugue in C minor, Bk I
4	Fugue: canon & the two-part invention	19.7–19.8	Bach, <i>Musical Offering</i> — canon cancrizans
5	Fugue: episodes & middle entries	20.1–20.2	Bach, WTC Fugue in G minor, Bk I
6	Fugue: stretto & pedal point	20.3–20.4	Bach, WTC Fugue in E minor, Bk I
7	Fugue: double fugues, ground bass & completion	20.5–20.8	Purcell, <i>Dido's Lament</i>
8	Fugue score study (analysis week)	—	Bach, WTC Bk I selections
9	Seventh chords: the dominant seventh + Classical orchestra	21.1–21.3	Haydn, Sym. 100 "Military," ii
10	Seventh chords: diatonic & voice leading	21.4–21.6	Mozart, Sonata K. 331, i
11	Secondary dominants: $V^7/V$ & the chain	22.1–22.2	Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 23, i
12	Secondary-dominant chains & voice leading	22.3–22.5	Haydn, Sym. 104 "London," i
13	Modulation: pivot-chord & diatonic	22.6–22.9	Beethoven, Sonata Op. 14 No. 2, i
14	Modulation: direct, sequential & enharmonic preview	22.10–22.11	Beethoven, Quartet Op. 18 No. 4, i
15	Non-chord tones I: passing, neighbor, cambiata	23.1–23.3	Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 21, ii
16	Non-chord tones II: suspensions & retardation	23.4–23.5	Haydn, "Prussian" Quartet Op. 51 No. 2, ii

Week	Topic	Steps	Listening anchor
17	Non-chord tones III: appoggiatura, escape, pedal	23.6–23.8	Beethoven, Sonata Op. 13 "Pathétique," ii
18	Ornaments, character & surface motion	23.9–23.12	Mozart, K. 331, iii "Turkish March"
19	Musical form: period, sentence, binary	24.1–24.3	Haydn, Sym. 94 "Surprise," ii
20	Ternary, minuet/trio & theme and variations	24.4–24.5	Mozart, K. 331, ii
21	Sonata form: exposition + the full Classical orchestra	24.6	Mozart, Sym. 41 "Jupiter," i
22	Sonata form: development techniques	24.7	Beethoven, Sym. 5, i
23	Borrowed chords & the Neapolitan	25.1–25.3	Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 20, i
24	Bridge to Romanticism: the augmented sixth (preview)	25.4–25.5	Beethoven, "Razumovsky" Op. 59 No. 1, i
25	SATB writing mastery + comprehensive review	—	Bach, Mass in B minor — "Crucifixus"
26	Score study: Mozart "Jupiter" (analysis week)	—	Mozart, Sym. 41 — complete
27	Score study: Beethoven Symphony 5 (analysis week)	—	Beethoven, Sym. 5 — complete
28	Year 2 project: a four-voice chorale	—	Bach Chorale, "O Haupt voll Blut"
29	Year 2 project: a sonata-exposition sketch	—	Beethoven, Quartet Op. 18 No. 1
30	Year 2 reflection + Year 3 preview	—	Chopin, Prelude in C# minor, Op. 45

## YEAR THREE

### The Full Harmonic Spectrum — Stages VII–X · Romantic, Impressionist & Modern

By the end of Year 3 the student commands the chromatic harmony of the Romantic era, the modal color of Impressionism, and the principal techniques of twentieth-century music – from expanded tonality through serialism – and can compose idiomatically in each. Same weekly rhythm as Year 2.

Week	Topic	Steps	Listening anchor
1	Chromatic voice leading: bass descents & the Omnibus	26.1–26.2	Chopin, Prelude Op. 28 No. 4
2	Chromatic mediant & the common-tone diminished 7th	26.3–26.4	Schumann, <i>Kinderszenen</i> Op. 15
3	Chromatic sequences & voice-leading logic	26.5–26.6	Beethoven, "Eroica," i (development)
4	The augmented sixth: origin & three voicings	27.1–27.2	Beethoven, "Tempest" Sonata, i
5	Ger+6 / V <sup>7</sup> equivalence & voice leading	27.3–27.4	Brahms, Sym. 4, iv
6	Enharmonic modulation	28.1–28.3	Beethoven, "Moonlight" Sonata, i
7	Altered dominants & the altered scale	29.1–29.3	Liszt, <i>Liebesträume</i> No. 3
8	V <sup>7</sup> #5 & extended dominant language	29.4–29.5	Chopin, Nocturne Op. 27 No. 2
9	When movement does not arrive: Tristan & Wagner	30.1–30.4	Wagner, <i>Tristan</i> Prelude
10	Score study: Brahms Symphony No. 4 (analysis week)	—	Brahms, Sym. 4 — complete
11	Modal color: Mixolydian, Dorian, Phrygian	31.1–31.3	Debussy, <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>
12	Modal color: Lydian, pentatonic, hemiola	31.4–31.6	Ravel, <i>Ma Mère l'Oye</i> — "Pavane"
13	Parallel motion as color: Debussy & Ravel	32.1–32.4	Debussy, "Clair de lune"
14	Color & atmosphere: added tones + Impressionist orchestration	33.1–33.3	Ravel, <i>Rapsodie espagnole</i>
15	Whole-tone, Satie & Ravel "the watchmaker"	33.4–33.6	Satie, <i>Gymnopédie</i> No. 1
16	Score study: Debussy <i>Faun</i> + Ravel <i>Boléro</i> (analysis week)	—	Debussy & Ravel

Week	Topic	Steps	Listening anchor
17	Expanded tonality: polytonality & the tension continuum	34.1–34.2	Stravinsky, <i>Petrushka</i> (bitonal scene)
18	New scale systems: octatonic, acoustic, hexatonic	34.3–34.6	Stravinsky, <i>Firebird</i> – "Infernal Dance"
19	Bartók's axis system & pandiatonicism	34.7–34.10	Bartók, <i>Mikrokosmos</i> 101/109/110
20	Atonality to serialism: Schoenberg & the row	35.1–35.2	Schoenberg, Suite Op. 25 – Prelude
21	Twelve-tone structure & analysis	35.3	Schoenberg, Chamber Symphony Op. 9, i
22	New sound worlds: tone color, texture, process	36.1–36.3	Penderecki, <i>Threnody</i>
23	Neo-Riemannian transformations	37.1–37.2	Wagner, <i>Parsifal</i> Prelude
24	Pivoting between harmonic languages	38.1–38.2	Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra – "Elegia"
25	Emotion & harmony	39.1–39.2	Shostakovich, Sym. 5, i
26	Score study: Stravinsky <i>Rite of Spring</i> (analysis week)	—	<i>Rite of Spring</i> , Part I
27	Score study: Bartók Concerto for Orchestra (analysis week)	—	Concerto for Orchestra – complete
28	Year 3 review: the full harmonic spectrum	—	Selections, Years 2 & 3
29	Capstone brief preview + Year 4 orientation	46.1	Mahler, Sym. 5 – complete
30	Year 3 reflection + intensive score-study preview	—	Beethoven, Sym. 9, iv

## YEAR FOUR

### Intensive Score Study & the Capstone — Stages XI–XII · masterworks and an original work

Year 4 has two halves. **Weeks 1–16** are a deep study of one complete masterwork per week – historical & formal analysis, harmonic analysis, orchestration study, full listening, and a written response. **Weeks 17–30** are the capstone: planning, writing, revising, and orchestrating an original composition, culminating in a finished portfolio and the certificate of completion.

#### Part A — Masterworks Intensive (Weeks 1–16)

Week	Work studied	Analytical focus
1	Bach — <i>WTC</i> Book I, Preludes & Fugues 1–6	Baroque counterpoint & harmonic language
2	Bach — Brandenburg Concerto No. 5	Baroque concerto form & continuo texture
3	Handel — <i>Messiah</i> (Overture + Part I)	Baroque choral writing & voice leading at scale
4	Haydn — Symphony No. 94 "Surprise"	Classical form & orchestration economy
5	Mozart — Symphony No. 41 "Jupiter"	Classical culmination: fugue + sonata in one work
6	Beethoven — Symphony No. 5	Motivic development at the limit
7	Beethoven — Symphony No. 9, i	Late-Beethoven harmonic expansion
8	Schubert — Symphony No. 8 "Unfinished" + <i>Erlkönig</i>	Early-Romantic lyric form + chromatic harmony
9	Brahms — Symphony No. 4	Late-Romantic passacaglia + chromatic harmony
10	Wagner — <i>Tristan</i> Prelude & Isolde's Death	Chromatic non-resolution; suspension of cadence at scale
11	Debussy — <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>	Impressionist orchestration + modal harmony
12	Ravel — <i>Boléro</i>	Orchestration as the composition; color as argument
13	Stravinsky — <i>The Rite of Spring</i> , Part I	Rhythm + polytonality + orchestration as revolution
14	Bartók — Concerto for Orchestra	20th-century synthesis: all techniques in one work
15	Mahler — Symphony No. 5, i + iv (Adagietto)	Late-Romantic bridge to modernity
16	Holst — <i>The Planets</i> (excerpts)	Orchestration as program; the final reflection

## Part B – The Capstone Composition (Weeks 17–30)

Week	Phase of the capstone
17	The brief – scope, instrumentation, and harmonic language
18	Planning – formal plan, key/mode, duration, influences
19	Writing, week 1 – first draft + first tutor critique
20	Writing, week 2 – develop the material + second tutor critique
21	Writing, week 3 – complete the draft + third tutor critique
22	The complete orchestral palette (orchestration study)
23	Orchestration project, week 1 – arrange the capstone for full ensemble (8+ instruments)
24	Orchestration project, week 2 – complete & revise the arrangement
25	Integration – one work from each historical era (cross-era written analysis)
26	Integration – how the sixteen studied works informed the capstone
27	Capstone submission – final score, optional recording, program note
28	Capstone evaluation – self-evaluation + full tutor critique
29	Final reflection – the composer you are now (Week-1 sketch vs. the capstone)
30	What comes next – paths forward in study, composition, performance, and teaching

**Provider:** Gradus – School of Music Composition · [gradusmusic.com](http://gradusmusic.com) · [maestro@gradusmusic.com](mailto:maestro@gradusmusic.com). This scope & sequence accompanies the Gradus course syllabus and a complete sample lesson, available on request for ESA, scholarship, and home-education record-keeping. Listening and score-study works are representative of the curriculum and may be refined as the program is updated.