

River Publishers Series in Document Engineering

ENGINEERING OF MUSIC FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Creativity in Musical Composition

Jeff Ewing
Steve Simske



River Publishers

**Engineering of Music for the
Digital Age**
Creativity in Musical Composition

RIVER PUBLISHERS SERIES IN DOCUMENT ENGINEERING

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USA

Document engineering is an interdisciplinary set of processes and systems concerned with the analysis, design, development, evaluation, implementation, management, and/or use of documents and document corpora in order to improve their value to their users. In the era of the Internet, the millennia-old concept of a document is rapidly evolving due to the ease of document aggregation, editing, re-purposing, and reuse. In this series of books, we aim to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the tools, technologies, and talents required to engineer modern documents.

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Published 2024 by River Publishers
River Publishers
Alsbjergvej 10, 9260 Gistrup, Denmark
www.riverpublishers.com

Distributed exclusively by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Engineering of Music for the Digital Age / by Jeff Ewing, Steve Simske.

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Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

ISBN 978-87-7004-107-2 (hardback)
ISBN 978-87-7004-250-5 (paperback)
ISBN 978-87-7004-252-9 (online)
ISBN 978-87-7004-251-2 (master ebook)

While every effort is made to provide dependable information, the publisher, authors, and editors cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.

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Preface

“Engineering of Music for the Digital Age – Creativity in Musical Composition”

Musical scores – like literature, poetry, and technical manuals – are documents. The central thesis of this book is that musical composition in the digital age is a form of document engineering. Music, in essence, shares with other forms of creative content generation – from poetry to prose, and from science to science fiction – the needs for structure, flow, and sources for creativity. Musical composition can be thought of as the creative process of engineering documents with regards to its arrangement, form, texture, and instrumentation, etc. This document then instructs a performance or the creation of an alternative document, such as a recording. In this book, the arrangement of phrases, patterns, and structures seen in music will be illustrated to give new composers a starting point to begin planning and making decisions about their own compositions. The book will also guide those who need assistance in completing a piece. While this is a book about musical composition *per se*, it is not a manual on music theory. Instead, the book keeps its focus on the structural elements of a composition. Its aim is to give the audience a structural road map for composing; whether they are starting a piece from the first note, having a melody in mind already, or need help overcoming a creative hurdle. The book examines compositions that clearly define a form or technique. Targeted examples cover all stages of writing a piece, helping to build the reader’s composition from the first note into a complete work without promoting a style or harmonic practice. Each chapter contains a sidebar addressing helping the composer to add creative sources for the music making process. Finally, the book concludes with a chapter on creativity in terms of how composed music can affect our lives and even our fairy tales.



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Acknowledgement

Thank you to Steve (and Tess, Kieran, and Dallen) for many great musical years and friendship. Steve, thank you for planting the seed and suggesting that we should write this book. It was a rewarding journey, and I look forward to more in the future.

Thank you to Nicki Dennis for providing a framework in which to include this book in a larger series of books about content creation; Junko Nakajima for patience, assiduousness, and encouragement in the publishing process; and River Publishers for giving us the opportunity to include this book as part of the Document Engineering Series.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Morton J. Achter, Dr. Craig R. Johnson, Dr. Lyle T. Barkhymer, Dr. Michael Haberkorn, and Dr. Jack D. Jenny from my time at Otterbein University. Hopefully, this book will serve new musicians in a way that lives up to the map of the musical world that they provided me with and that I continue to explore.

Thank you to Mrs. Eleanor Popper (“Boss”), Dirk Kraus, Penny Popper, Kevin Wines, and Bill Van Sickle; all who have had a tremendous impact on me with opportunities and guidance from the beginning of my professional teaching career and beyond.

Thank you to the many students and their families whom I’ve been able to work with through the years. Through them, I’ve visited the entire globe from within my teaching studio.

And finally, to my wonderful wife, Bethany, and our amazing kids, Sam and Amélie, thank you for the support and patience through this whole process. Here’s to it, and to it again. . .

Jeff Ewing

Wow, was this book fun to put together! Thanks to Jeff, who patiently guided me through all of the musical elements of the book, and also patiently wait for me to unsplit infinitives, tuck in the odd Oxford comma, and otherwise fuss and fret over every text element in a book that is, instead, on music. What follows is a good picture of how the book came together. Steve:

“We could really use an example of a major work that has no accidentals, but surely there is no such thing.” Jeff: “How ‘bout Scriabin, Op. 11, No. 15?” Steve: “You clearly just made that up.” Steve looks it up, taking 100 times as long to find it online as Jeff found it in his head. Yes, that’s how it went. In addition, a huge thanks to my now long-standing publisher and editor, Nicki Dennis, at River Publishers for her tireless energy, perpetual encouragement, and ability to work through difficulties (hopefully not augmented by Jeff and myself). Thanks to Douglas Heins and Ellis Gayles for their continual support as knowledgeable friends. Thanks to my Thursday morning Zoom buddies, Paul Ellingstad, Mick Keyes, Gary Moloney, and Margie Sherlock, for always listening to the latest chapter plan. Thanks to many other friends who’ve put up with my sharing of ideas. Finally, thanks most of all to Tess, Kieran, and Dallen, who as always have supported me throughout the effort.

Steve Simske

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