

## Composing

Your Composition 2 can be based on this Area of Study if you wish. Here are three very different ideas to help you get started.

1. Compose a minuet (or other baroque dance of your choice) to be used as the accompaniment for a formal dance in an 18th-century play. The dance should be in binary form with two eight-bar sections. If you are not too sure about using harmony you could use the following adaptation of the chord pattern used by Handel in his D-major minuet from the *Firework's Music*, in this way:

: I I I I I V I V :: I IV V I♭ IV V V I :

Reread the points at the foot of page 58 to remind yourself of the important features of a baroque dance.

2. Compose a waltz using some of the techniques discussed in this chapter. Remember that there is usually one chord per bar and the harmony is often simple. For example, the first waltz in *The Blue Danube* starts with this basic 16-bar chord pattern:

I I I I V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I I I I

Waltzes or polkas tend to be in several sections, each one characterised by a new melody. The opening theme usually comes back at some stage so that the structure might be a rondo (ABACA), ternary form with an extended middle section (ABCDA), or a more complex 'patchwork quilt', as described on page 61.

Some dance styles are more suitable than others for composing at GCSE. Garage and trance, for example, require skilled vocal and deck performers to achieve a convincing result so unless you have a talented crew to help it might be safer to opt for something purely instrumental/synthesised, or which you can assemble using samples (but remember to include details about the way you obtained them).

It is often best to begin with the chords. Arrange them into the *um-cha-cha* style of a waltz accompaniment and then compose a melody to fit. Once you are happy with your 16 bars, try extending the piece by adding a contrasting section in a different key. End by bringing back part or all of the opening section in the original key.

3. Compose a piece in one of the following styles:
  - ◆ **Techno.** Base your piece on synthesised timbres and/or sampled material (perhaps vocal). Techno offers an opportunity to show your skill at looping, cutting and pasting and remixing ideas. Some techno groups use samples extensively, for example Prodigy, while others prefer to programme timbres and loop ostinati, for example Orbital.
  - ◆ **Drum'n'bass.** Try to make use of the techniques described on page 66. Aim for interesting drum patterns: the bass drum part in drum'n'bass tends to be rhythmically complex.
  - ◆ **Ambient.** 'Chill out' music – an opportunity to blend timbres and create a dreamy musical landscape using 'synth pads' and sampled choral effects.

Today's club music is often composed almost entirely on a computer using MIDI timbres and sampled sounds. Familiarise yourself with cutting and pasting techniques, editing and looping patterns, and mixing the tracks on screen. Don't just use patterns straight off a drum machine and don't just download material by other composers. Demonstrate that you are able to cut and trim your own samples and match them with original material in your composition.

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