

# FINDING YOUR INNER COMPOSER

by: Ed Lettner



While interpreting the music created by others is an art form of the highest order, even accomplished musicians tend to overlook the joy and personal satisfaction that comes from finding your inner composer.

Whether or not you are a trained musician, the wonderful world of music composition awaits you. It provides you with an outlet for your creativity and emotions which is rewarding and cathartic. If you have learned the fundamentals of an instrument and possess a basic understanding of music theory, you are ready to give it a try.

The piano and guitar are often used for composition because they combine melody and harmony, but almost any instrument, including your voice, will allow you to compose your own melody.

Begin with a melodic idea or motif in a key and musical style that you are comfortable with. Using simple rhythms, create a four bar musical phrase with four beats in each bar. Then develop melodic and rhythmic variations based on your motif for another four bars.

As your melody takes shape, you may add three-note chords or triads to your creation. Begin with one of the most common chord progressions in Western music -- the I-IV-V-I progression with I being the chord built on the first note or root of the scale or key of your melody. The notes of these chords in the key of C Major are: I – C, E, G; IV – F, A, C; V – G, B, D. If you are composing a song, you may wish to add lyrics to your melody which generally means one note for each syllable of lyric.

Editing is an important part of the creative process. Once you have composed your initial ideas, listen to them with a critical ear. You may practice your skills by composing a new melody over the chords of an existing piece of music or by writing a new lyric for an existing melody.

Remember that there are many lessons to be learned by listening to your favourite recordings. It is also worth considering the following quote: "A writer writes, always."

Try this month's contest question: What is the name of the movie that the above quote is taken from? The first person to contact Ed at The Music Studio with the correct answer will receive a deluxe tote bag. Hint: The star of this 1987 movie is a comedy actor who has appeared in many popular movies as well as a one-man show on Broadway. Good luck!

*Ed Lettner owns The Music Studio in Etobicoke which has offered music instruction since 1990. He is an honours graduate of the Humber College Institute of Technology music program and enjoys finding his inner composer. Ed is thrilled that vocal students from The Music Studio will be performing the national anthem at Toronto Lynx and Lady Lynx soccer games beginning May 23. For information about the programs at The Music Studio, please call 416-234-9268, email: [ed@themusicstudio.ca](mailto:ed@themusicstudio.ca) or visit [www.themusicstudio.ca](http://www.themusicstudio.ca).*