

Composing ideas for a group/single composer by using pentatonic scale

Green melodies

First, here is your raw material to start with: D minor pentatonic scale. Hopefully you are able to use this with your own instrument as well. *)

Musical notation for the D minor pentatonic scale. The scale is written in two staves (treble and bass clef) in 5/4 time. The notes are: D2, E2, F2, G2, A2 in the bass clef; and B1, C2, D2, E2, F2 in the treble clef. The time signature changes to 4/4 at the end of the scale.

1) Come up with an idea of a short melody by using these notes. The idea is **not** the point, but the most important thing is to **keep playing with it**. Keep asking yourself questions "what if..." And the "what if" can be either rhythmic, dynamic or melodic element.

Musical notation for a short melody using the D minor pentatonic scale. The melody is written in two staves (treble and bass clef) in 4/4 time. The melody starts on D2 and moves up stepwise to F2, then down stepwise to D2. The time signature changes to 3/4 at the end of the melody.

Musical notation for a short melody using the D minor pentatonic scale. The melody is written in two staves (treble and bass clef) in 3/4 time. The melody starts on D2 and moves up stepwise to F2, then down stepwise to D2. The time signature changes to 4/4 at the end of the melody.

Musical notation for a short melody using the D minor pentatonic scale. The melody is written in two staves (treble and bass clef) in 4/4 time. The melody starts on D2 and moves up stepwise to F2, then down stepwise to D2.

2) Create a borduna line. First record your melodic idea to play with it. Expand your preferences and try also accepting combinations that would not sound familiar or nice from the first hearing.

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Add some more layers:

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3) After playing enough with your elements you might now brighten their quality. You probably already like some of your ideas more than others and maybe have even accepted new combinations of notes or harmony. Check dynamics and phrasing: how to best express your ideas?

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4) Joker notes: allow yourself or a fellow musician one or two notes out of the pentatonic box. You can first try using it in the 1) harmony 1) or 2) melody. In the next example the given joker note is B \flat . With a group of live players this would be a great exercise for an improvised piece of music: In a band or orchestra some would play the bordunas, some the basic melody and alternately musicians get to play a solo note or a short melody on top of everything else.

1) 2)

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4) The last thing: Form! Why not try out a sonata form idea:

- I Exposition (Show your melody, then transpose it to IV or V key)
- II Development (cut melodies to pieces, use surprising harmony, for example those you didn't like when you first played)
- III Recapitulation (play your first ideas, all in the same key)

Example of "sonata form" pentatonic melody

The musical score is divided into three sections, each with a measure number in the top left corner:

- Section I (Measure 22):** The right hand plays a pentatonic melody starting on G4. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with chords.
- Section II (Measure 26):** The right hand continues the melody, but the left hand introduces more complex and surprising harmonic textures, including dyads and triads.
- Section III (Measure 30):** The right hand returns to the original pentatonic melody. The left hand also returns to the simple harmonic accompaniment from Section I, indicating a recapitulation.

[Here is an example of D minor pentatonic backing track, of which you can play along to get the "pentatonic feeling".](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ua41IVPoILw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ua41IVPoILw>

- *) With B \flat tuned instrument (clarinet, trumpet, tenor sax) this would be written as E minor pentatonic
- With F tuned (french horn) this would be written A minor pentatonic
- With E \flat tuned (alto sax) this would be written B minor pentatonic