

# COMPOSITION MORTEN HAXHOLM SPECIAL 2024

Contemporary post-modern jazz composition.

*Compositional walkthrough and case study of selected Haxholm tunes, practical examples and diverse hacks to use in your own composition process.*

1)  
SHORT INTRODUCTION of MYSELF: MORTEN HAXHOLM

2)  
STUDENTS – HOW MANY COMPOSE?

3)  
QUICK OVERVIEW of the workshops programme.

outline the 7 parameters of music

*(gonna be a lot of me talking – but I'm going to try so hard to make sure everybody gets "something" they can use themselves in any part of the composition process/ album release)*

4) CASESTUDY of Haxholm's modern jazz compositions compared to the 7 parameters:

a) THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING

b) listen to videos/audio + check out sheets

c) Clap/learn polyrhythms in examples

d) I'm going to upload all the written material to my homepage: [mortenhaholm.com](http://mortenhaholm.com)  
All the Haxholm leadsheet examples are available on my homepage as well.

5) HOW TO REALISE AN ALBUM? Q + A

Money  
Guest stars  
Booking  
Timeline

6) SUPERFAST COMPOSITION CHALLENGE ?

Airdrums and inner voice.

## 7 Parameters of Music:

1. **MELODY** Scales , arpeggios, intervals, motifs, cells. Expressiveness? Phrasing? Climax? System?
2. **HARMONY** (tonal, atonal, bitonal, modal) Key? Modulations. Voicings. Extended or triad based. Open/closed? Voiceleading. Systemic movements? Mediants?
3. **RHYTHM** (time signature. Straight / even) Syncopations. Air Drums. Polyrhythms. Tendencies in starts of phrases? Cross barlines phrases? Long notes? Denseness? Syncopations? Downbeats?
4. **FORM.** (aaba, rondo, circular, ever evolving, through composed, standard solo form? Uneven solo form (random 3 bars repeated ex)
5. **TEMPO / TIME** ( In tempo thoroughout? Rubato? Accelrandos? Poly-pulse/ multi-temporal music? Slow / medium / fast etc? Fermatas? (Good suprise element!)
6. **TEXTURE** (instrumentation / Orchestration / Production / arrangement / extended techniques)
- 7 **DYNAMICS** (think graphic representaions. ) Mix – which instruments are loudest etc.

WHAT is the background for the composition? What do you want to convey?

Does it belong in a certain genre/time? How does it make you feel? What is its purpose?

How would you describe your/the music, to someone who doesnt know anything about music?

### **What do I like? (Ie. What do YOU like)**

Chromatic Harmony – on guitar or piano?

Advanced harmonic structur – and chnages

Organic rhythms: poly / odd meters

*Analyse your own music.* Are you too fond of one parameter? (fmajor? 4/4? t = 180)

practice not judging yourself – ok to be analytic.

### **EXERCISE – Composition.**

Write super fast. Composition. 20 min. Make a super fast plan. Sing to you self. Airdrums.

Write a full/done composition – from a parameter(s) – 4or 6 hours.

## **EXERCISE – IMPRO**

Play solo from a parameter focus. Contrasts. Talk with your bandmates:

Play around with, changing dynamics. Work out how to do decressendos. Up n downs.. etc

## **INVENT YOUR OWN STYLE!**

COMBINE genres and influences. Think unusual instrumentations.

a)

Find a nice Hip Hop beat / the phrasing of the vocals – do a drums. Or phrasing of melody

- do a contracfact of 26-2 on top.
- Played by marimba and distorted ukuele.

B) Another hack: Infant Eyes

Infant Eyes – write a simple penta-ish melody... STRECH it - parse out each note into 1 note pr bar. Then fill in gaps with melody. Reharm it all.

Cantus Firmus - "fixed voice"

C) Sudden changes in tempo

D) Forms

*Sonata Allegro*

Exposition ||: A – THEME 1 (I key) – B Theme 2 ( V key) :||

Development - modulation / roving harmony

Recapitulation ||: A – THEME 1 (I key) – B Theme 2 ( I key) :||

*RONDO*: a – b – a – c- a- d

# HAXHOLMS HACKS - CASESTUDY

## THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING

TURN Off your Phone and Wifi when you're composing

### IT IS A CRAFT

Composing is a craft. Learned a lot of the exercise: write 100 bars in C major – in one octave.

Use Composition as another way to practice – write composition ETUDES based on the meters / scales / harmony you're practicing atm.

### EXPLORING / INVESTIGATING / JAM ?

a) find a parameter of the 7 to explore – make a plan/idea/head jam before picking up the instrument. Or make plan / listen to music → then take a 10/15 min walk without anything in the ears; and just jam with idea in your head.

b) Take an instrument find your idea. Or it might be structurally done already; and you can write down a form graphically before picking up an instrument.

Record yourself doing this process, sometimes the really original idea / phrasing comes along, but gets forgotten/simplified during the distillation process of writing down.

c) Another way to kickstart, is to write on different instruments – or find a sound you like you want to use as main hook: on synth or drum, whatever

d) ARCHEOLOGY! Distill, distill, distill.

How do you make your compositions as clear as possible?

I work through many many versions of the same tune before I feel they are done. Reharmonizing, reworking melody lines, transposing parts of the song. Transposing a solo part. Try to loop 3/5 part period of the song... Try a lot of different ideas! Cut away the fat / filling – only the best should make it. :)

Sing! Is your melody Sense of root/tonal center? Authenticity? Is it “You” or copy?

### COLLECTIVE COMPOSITION (JAM TOGETHER) – OTHER IDEAS

I always have different ideas when other people are in the room. Their personalities color mine. :)

a) Start the regular standard jazz jam session with an unprompted jam. Find a funny groove stick with it for a time – change a few parameters at the time.

b) Collective compositions: play free together in a group – record yourself. Listen back to the record find the “good” places – transcribe them. (often different people find different parts to be the

“best”)

Distill /refine the ideas. Jam on the ideas.

### c) Producer:

Get a second opinion! Doesn't have to be a “recordcompany” producer. :)

Ask a bandmate to go through some songs with you. They will have different approaches, just on basis of playing a different instrument.

Ask a teacher.

Yeah – you had a good idea/composition – but it might not be the ideal version for rest of the world. It might be in a bad key for the horns/singers. It might be unlogical for others.

Everything have to be context based.

## REFERENCES

a) transcribe a lot of music: make leadsheets. Learn the standard of quality of the best music – learn to reach for it. AND borrow and steal the ideas of the best composers in the world.

TOO often I see music that is half done / not distilled enough.

b) Does your songwriting / mix / general quality hold up against your peers / against other albums?

## WRITING AN ALBUM

Make moodboard in your head. Perhaps your main album influences. Or perhaps styles/ideas of classical composers. Write down short words or sentences about what features/ideas/moods you what to have.

The more diverse the influences – the more unique the influence.

RECEIVERS – what kind of people would listen to this music? In what setting?

### COOLNESS

Its gotta be cool! Is your idea really cool – are you excited to the bone? :)

Always have a “suprise” in your songs – a trick or breakdown that will suprise people: “What happened there?”

## END RESULT

Have good sheets – make them beautiful – logical.

Be patient with your performers – they do their best to their abilities. Your music will sound very different w different people.

# PRACTICAL EXAMPLES MUSICAL PARAMETERS

## RHYTHM

### ODDMETERS – polyrhythms and different claves

#### TWISTER 4 over 5

YT video:

<https://youtu.be/S3lBujD29sg>

4 over 5 exercise

Do a pyramid of subdivisions:

2 over 5

5 16<sup>th</sup> note groupings

2-3 16 note groupings

#### ELDRITCH C- Part 3 and 4 over 7

##### How to play this?

CLAP

Reference RHYTHM – alteret 7/4 rhythm as reference rhythm to 4 over 7

Metronome on:

- a) all 7
- b) all 7 + 2 over 7
- c) 2 over 7 only
- d) Halftime metronome
- e) Halftime metromome playing 2 over 7 (full time)

Eldritch album version from 5.40 and out

#### DEEPSEA EXPLORER

Mixed Meters

#### FRAPS

Mixed Meters

#### AVALON

Different 5 clave

## **METASTASIS NANCAROW**

5+2 7/4 clave

## **AIRDRUMS**

Supposedly So

### **Triplets:**

Sleight of Hand

### **NEXT RHYTHMIC I want to work on:**

Meshuga + Tigran

<https://youtu.be/euSki63c-SQ?si=17JoSl-gp1m2pvFJ&t=240>

## **HARMONY**

When doing modern wayne harmony → does your tune still have a sense of root / key... to navigate easier by ear.

### **MAJOR STRUCTURES:**

a) Chromatic Mediants

b) Modal Interchange

c) Harmony derived from diatonic scales

d) Harmony and Chord progressions derived from non-diatonic scales:

Harmonic Minor

Melodic Minor

Diminished

Augmented

Harmonic Major

Messian M3

e) Chord progressions held together with Common notes

## WHAT ARE MEDIANTS?

Olden days normal to transpose to the “V” key. Modernist wanted to check out another transposition → to the place between “I” and “V” : the mediant = the third.

	DIATONIC		CHROMATIC MEDIANTS		
Cmajor	Emin (mediant)		Emaj7	Ebmaj	Ebmin
	Amin (Submediant)		Amaj	Abmaj	Abminor
Aminor	Cmaj (mediant)		Cmin	C#maj	C#min
	Fmaj (submediant)		Fmin	F#maj	F#min

## LEVIATHAN

CHROMATIC MEDIANTS (intro + b + c)

Common note holding spread movements together.

Tranposing a third up (to the mediant)

Playing around with tranposing to the “VI” key in A-parts

## GIACOMETTI

Common note holding spread movements together.

Chromatic mediants B – Eb – Gb

B part start Cmaj7 Dbmaj7 Ebmaj7 – c top common note = radiohead song

## MODAL INTERCHANGE

combining major and minor scales – common root.

I    II    III    IV    V    VI    VII

Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 Am7 Bm7b5

Cm7 Dm7b5 Ebmaj7 Fm7 Gm7 Abmaj7 Bb7



## **AETHER ALBUM**

**Encompassing concept = Modal interchange**

### **VESPER**

A PART = Modal interchange as seen in example above Aminor / Cmajor

B PART = Transposition whole tone down to Bb major – modal interchange  
( really like that Vminor)

ends with transposing back to Cmajor (+ pivotal chord “Gm” Bbmajor V // Cmajor Vminor )

## **OLD FASHION DANCE**

### PEDALS VIBE

## **MELODY**

### **AETHER ALBUM –**

Newest album was written with minimalism and simplicity as a focus.

Using only electric bass + singing melody.

Electric bass = simpler chords than with guitar/piano

is your melody singable... is it playable?

### **SINGABLE**

#### VESPER

#### HILDA

### **SCALEBASED**

#### **Pentatonic**

Occams Razor

#### **Mefisto**

D harmonic minor etude

## **Intervallic based / “ big intervals”**

LEVIATHAN New melody

**Singing a melody – but then make it into bassline**

## **FORM**

### PLANNING ALBUMS

Doing mini Suites – ie “the chalice” → not doing AABA etc; but LONG A part (no repeat) – B part – B part development (Climax) – C part – focus shift / deconstruction

Writing an intro “Hack”:

sometimes you find yourself writing a good A part; but hard to write B part. I try to hack myself by writing an intro to the A part, and find some more material. Deconstructing comp / melodi / rhythm in smaller parts that can lead into the A part.

The too EASY B part hack:

Take the last 2/3 ending intervals. Start a B part with same intervals but mirrored / transposed.

## **TEXTURE**

### ARRANGEMENT / PRODUCE Yourself

A good tune can be ruined by inefficient arrangement and instrumentation.

Have different instruments presenting the melody, dont have everybody playing at the same time etc.

when you write a typical AABA tune – try to mess around with forms and parts. Expand, change around bars, loop uneven periods.

### **Emphermal**

Think as a producer what different sounds can the instruments bring? Extended instrument techniques.

Instrumentation - register

Phrasing