

African Composition

COMPOSE YOUR OWN AFRICAN MUSIC

Decide which instruments you are going to use. Mainly, you want tuned percussion instruments (xylophone, marimba, glockenspiel) but you could also use piano or stringed instruments played only by plucking the strings.

Start by composing a basic pattern using a pentatonic scale (G, A, B, D, E). This pattern should not be too complicated otherwise you will find it difficult to make variations. Your pattern should be between two and four bars long. If it is four bars in length then you might have a 2-bar pattern repeated using different pitches.

Make a variation. You could do this by playing continuously and changing some notes, or by adding some extra notes in some places.

Make a selection of between four and eight of the variations you like best and practise them until you can change fluently from one to another.

Now make the pattern and the variations into a longer piece by playing them in different orders, louder and softer, sometimes returning to the original pattern, and maybe even making up some new variations as you play. Once you have your variations, try adding a timekeeper and different layers of rhythms.