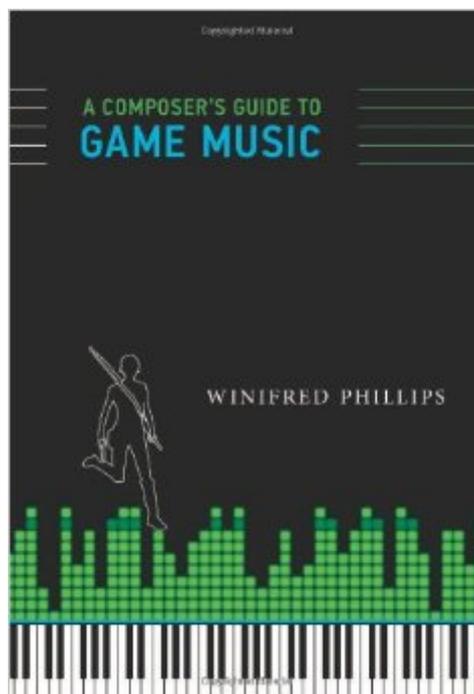


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# A Composer's Guide To Game Music (MIT Press)



## Synopsis

Winner of the Global Music Award Gold Medal for an exceptional book in the field of music  
Winner of the National Indie Excellence Book Award  
Winner of the Nonfiction Book Award (Gold Winner)  
Winner of the Annual Game Music Award (Best Publication)

Music in video games is often a sophisticated, complex composition that serves to engage the player, set the pace of play, and aid interactivity. Composers of video game music must master an array of specialized skills not taught in the conservatory, including the creation of linear loops, music chunks for horizontal resequencing, and compositional fragments for use within a generative framework. In *A Composer's Guide to Game Music*, Winifred Phillips -- herself an award-winning composer of video game music -- provides a comprehensive, practical guide that leads an aspiring video game composer from acquiring the necessary creative skills to understanding the function of music in games to finding work in the field. Musicians and composers may be drawn to game music composition because the game industry is a multibillion-dollar, employment-generating economic powerhouse, but, Phillips writes, the most important qualification for a musician who wants to become a game music composer is a love of video games. Phillips offers detailed coverage of essential topics, including musicianship and composition experience; immersion; musical themes; music and game genres; workflow; working with a development team; linear music; interactive music, both rendered and generative; audio technology, from mixers and preamps to software; and running a business. *A Composer's Guide to Game Music* offers indispensable guidance for musicians and composers who want to deploy their creativity in a dynamic and growing industry, protect their musical identities while working in a highly technical field, and create great music within the constraints of a new medium.

## Book Information

Series: MIT Press

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: The MIT Press (February 14, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0262026643

ISBN-13: 978-0262026642

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars  
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Best Sellers Rank: #98,001 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Theory, Composition & Performance > Composition #128 in Books > Computers & Technology > Games & Strategy Guides > Strategy Guides #184 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Theory, Composition & Performance > Theory

## Customer Reviews

I just purchased this book at Game Developer's Conference 2014 a few days ago. I have to say, I'm thoroughly impressed with the content. There are a few other game audio related books out there that are also good reads, but none of them approach the subject from this particular angle, and with the level of academic finesse that Phillips has. From the beginning, it's clear that the author draws from a variety of academic disciplines to explain aspects of game audio that are below the surface. I especially appreciate the number of psychological references and studies that she brings into the discussion of music cognition, and how a composer can use those modes of understanding in writing our music. It should be said that the voice of this book assumes a proficient understanding of composition, music theory, and musical styles, but there are still many valuable insights for those who are beginning as composers as well. Overall, the main premise of the book could be summed up by encouraging composers to think and be purposeful. Everything from the types of musical styles that we write, to the types of gamers we write for can have purpose and intent beyond throwing a few notes into a sequencer that sound "epic." The author takes quite a few chapters explaining, quite eloquently, that being a composer for games is a unique art form which asks us to be in service of the story, while maintaining our individual voice.

I highly recommend this book to any video game composers who have no clue how to even start their careers. The book goes into the video game business, video game composition techniques, and gear among other helpful topics. I am a composer who originally wanted to write for TV and film, but recently decided video game music was the way to go instead. I randomly heard of this book and I just bought it since I wasn't too familiar with the business or as it turns out, the writing process and needs of music in video games. It turns out to be a great investment. So in conclusion, take it from my review and the other positive reviews, and put this in your cart right now!

Winifred has written an excellent book that outlines several concepts necessary to utilize in order to succeed as a modern game composer. The introductory tone of the book is analytical and scientific (which I genuinely appreciate) and it outlines in meticulous detail an overview of what to expect from

the craft; as well as what may be expected of the song writer. This book is applicable to any composer, though it is absolutely catered to the game composer. Several scientific studies and papers are discussed in order to educate and inform, but NEVER to dictate creative choices, which the author goes out of her way a number of times to point out. As a nerd, I really appreciated the in depth discussions of how modern science can contribute to the process but I never once felt like she was suggesting that this should trump the creative instinct of the writer; a perspective that I think would serve modern musicians well. I've worked with musicians in the past that really have a problem with utilizing this informed approach (it's all feeling maaann), which I don't think I'll ever understand, as there are countless examples of beautiful art that came out of this technique. A number of concepts introduced are totally fascinating: Aleatoric music, Shepard Tones, The Idee Fixe. These topics provided endless inspiration and I'll be rereading them again in the future as often as necessary. The author utilizes the visualization technique (discussed extensively in the book "Flow", which you should read right now) to demonstrate the concept of the "linear loop"; by imagining a scenic forest that one walks through on a pleasant day and never realizes is just a loop that repeats endlessly as new stimuli is cleverly introduced. The book offers a great deal more than what I've mentioned and I'm certain that anyone interested in working as a game composer would do well to read it; it will be within arms reach in my studio for a very long time.

A while back, I wrote my first impressions on Winifred Phillips' soundtrack to Assassin's Creed: Liberation. I was completely enamored with the music, and wondered who was behind such beautiful scoring. Soon after continuing my education I came across her book "A Composer's Guide To Game Music," and I knew I had to read it. I wasn't disappointed. Phillips' research delves into the concepts that many aspiring game composers wish to partake, but also shines light on topics of subsequent importance such as managing workflow, being a member of a development team, and even offering her personal opinions on the purpose and place of the art form within the art form. "As game composers, we have the responsibility to aspire to an ever more meaningful level of artistry in our music. The more ambition and fearless we are in our craft, the more we can help video games reach that level of emotional resonance that defines the nature of true art." Truer words could not be said. I highly recommend this book to those who wish to pursue a serious career in game music composition. This body of work more than easily shows how to get the job done. Thank you, Winifred, for a fantastic reading experience!

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