

Christmas Break Musical Scavenger Hunt

1. **Primary triads: I, IV, and V**— in any key, the triads built on the first, fourth and fifth notes of the scale are called the “primary triads.” They are foundational building blocks in much of pop and classical music. In C Major, these chords would be CM, FM, and GM. Pick a piece you played this past semester or find a Christmas carol in a hymnal or online. Find primary triads in your piece of choice.
2. **Motive**— a motive is a small musical pattern used throughout a piece to help unify the composition. A motive could be a short pitch pattern (e.g. repeated note three times, then down a third), or it could be a rhythmic pattern. The motive could be repeated exactly the way it was first presented; or it could be moved higher or lower, it could appear in the opposite hand, it could be transposed to another key, it could even be presented upside down or backwards. Find a motive in one of your pieces or make a short motive of your own and find a few different ways to use your motive.
3. **Learn about a composer**— choose a composer whose music you have played or one you are just curious about and find out when they lived, what types of music they wrote (e.g. lots of opera and a few symphonies), and something about them that you find interesting. If you are having trouble thinking of a composer, try Tchaikovsky or Handel and figure out which major works they wrote that are performed regularly during the Christmas season.
4. **Listen actively outside your box**—if you don’t listen to classical music regularly, listen to something classical. If you do regularly listen to classical, try some jazz or another genre you are less familiar with, or just an era of classical music you are less familiar with. Ever listened to Renaissance choral music? Check out Josquin des Prez. Make three musical observations about whatever you listen to. What instruments are being used? What mood is being conveyed? Can you figure out how this mood is created? Can you identify a motive used throughout the piece? Is there a structure with repeated sections? How are dynamics and phrasing used?
5. **Perform**—play something you know well for someone you think would enjoy it. Maybe Christmas carols for your family, or your recital pieces for grandparents who weren’t able to make it to the recital.
6. **By ear**— figure out something by ear. Pick something that will challenge you a little bit. If you never do this, try just figuring out part of a familiar Christmas melody. If you are able to figure out melodies easily, try listening to a song you like and finding the bass line.
7. **Create**— anything! Find a little pattern you like and a few different ways you could manipulate it. Take a lead sheet or chord chart and make up an accompaniment to a Christmas carol or pop song. Make a melody or a catchy hook. Take a chord progression and try new rhythms. Explore your instrument and find something you like. Take a video or recording, or notate it so that you can remember it.