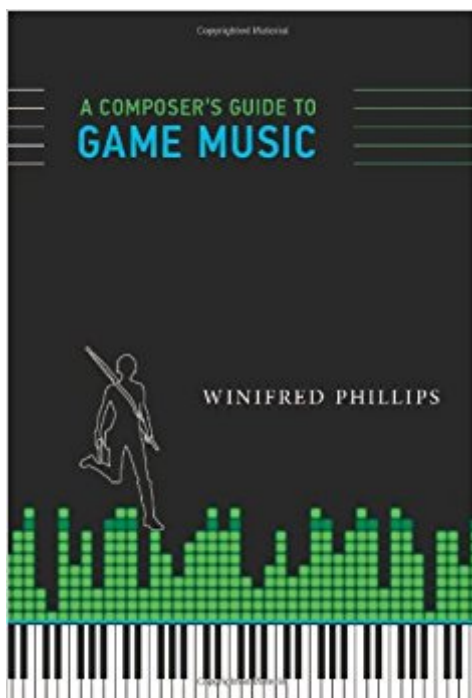


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# A Composer's Guide To Game Music (MIT Press)



## 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

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## Customer Reviews

Phillips provides an excellent introductory look at a complex and evolving artistic field. This is not a music and computer science (CS) degree in 270 pages, but a conversation with a friend who quite logically lays out the field... Anyone connected with gaming will enjoy the result. (Computing Reviews) Already an acclaimed book, Phillips' hands-on insights and advice make this one a keeper. (Music Connection Magazine) You won't find a more comprehensive guide... this book is a welcome delight. (Robert Workman, Retro Videogame Magazine) A Composer's Guide to Game Music, Phillips's 2014 book, offers a level-headed worker's tour of a fantasy-fueled world... Phillips thoroughly covers why music matters... and she calmly guides the reader through new and old world compositional problems... (Phillips's book) simply aims to be transparent and generous, and to offer a sensible, clear, and methodically minded explanation of how work happens in an illusory world. (The Los Angeles Review of Books) Winifred Phillips's passion and understanding of this medium comes to life on the page and is a direct result of her vast experience and accomplishment in composing for video games. This is not just compulsory bedside reading for budding games composers, but a fine achievement in itself. Bravo! (Harry Gregson-Williams, Composer of Shrek, Narnia, Kingdom of Heaven, and the Metal Gear Solid series) An important, deep, and rare exploration of video game music by one of the medium's smartest and most talented voices. You may not know the name Winifred Phillips but if you play games, you absolutely know -- and love -- her creations! (David Jaffe, Director of God of War and the Twisted Metal series) When I began writing for games over 20 years ago, I wish there had been a book like this to guide me through the process, art, and business of scoring for games. Winifred Phillips's book is an excellent combination of practical techniques along with the human touch of a game composer's real-life experiences. (Michael Sweet, Artistic Director, Video Game Scoring, Berklee College of Music) This book accurately illustrates the video game composer's task, which is to create music that perfectly complements an existing artistic vision. While the video game industry has its unique set of processes, for the aspiring composer, musicianship is the key to success. In the same manner, Winifred Phillips has excelled in this genre thanks to her musical talent. (Didier Lord, Head of Music, Ubisoft) Although the text on the inside of the book's dust jacket explains that A Composer's Guide

To Game Music offers "indispensable guidance for musicians and composers", Phillips' book deserves a wider audience. Even with no formal music training and no real interest in video gaming, I found that there is much to enjoy. The content is well-balanced so that those who have an interest in composing music for video games and people who have a more general interest in the use of music in games, film and television can learn a lot from this book. (Reel Music) A Composer's Guide To Game Music is partly educational and partly inspirational...a great introduction to this specialist art. (Sound on Sound)An excellent guide for a musician or composer—this is a very insightful and engaging book and a very solid read especially for aspiring composers looking to break into the industry. (NY Film Music Examiner)The core of the book is a set of chapters that delve into the actual craft of writing game music in a way that few, if any, other books have ever done—tremendously valuable to composers. (Tracksounds) A Composers Guide to Game Music is hands down a must have for everyone interested in game music. (The Audio Spotlight)Between the real life experiences and the step-by-step walkthroughs of how certain things work, this is essential material for budding musicians looking for their first big break -- or perhaps veterans looking for fresh inspiration. (Push Square)Phillips does not simply set out to address how to be a video game composer. Her intent is that her readers will understand what it means to actually create and compose— A Composer's Guide to Game Music is set to become a touchstone academic achievement. (Film Score Monthly)A beautifully organized, intelligently written book about music for games... Gamers as well as composers may be fascinated by her thorough analysis of what music works, and why, in various game genres... The challenges unique to game composers are discussed at length. (The Film Music Society)I devoured the inside information... I have been inspired and informed a great deal... I will be returning to this guide frequently and keeping it close to my workstation to give me a point of reference when in need. (Game Music Online)Award-winning game composer Winifred Phillips has written the definitive book on scoring for video games. A Composer's Guide to Game Music has been published by The MIT Press and is a thoroughly comprehensive guidebook to the concept, practice, art, and technology of providing music for this growing cinematic medium. (BuySoundtrax)(Phillips) may be one of the most dedicated and articulate composers working today, and her latest work -- a book-length intro guide to the highly specialized craft of game music -- is a meticulously written tome in which every stage of her craft is contextualized with historical, philosophical, and personal examples— Rating: Excellent. (KQEK) A Composer's Guide to Game Music, Phillips's 2014 book, offers a level-headed worker's tour of a fantasy-fueled world— Phillips thoroughly covers why music matters— and she calmly guides the reader through new and old world compositional

problems. (Phillips's book) simply aims to be transparent and generous, and to offer a sensible, clear, and methodically minded explanation of how work happens in an illusory world. (Los Angeles Review of Books)

Winifred Phillips is an award-winning game composer. Some of her video game credits include Assassin's Creed Liberation, Total War Battles: KINGDOM, God of War, multiple games in the LittleBigPlanet franchise (including LittleBigPlanet 3), The Da Vinci Code, Speed Racer, Shrek the Third, Spore Hero, and many others. Phillips is also the author of the bestselling book, *A Composer's Guide to Game Music* (The MIT Press 2014), which won the Global Music Award Gold Medal for an exceptional book in the field of music, and was described by The Boston Globe as "the first book designed to help experienced musicians brave the transition to the world of game composing." Phillips has received an Interactive Achievement Award / D.I.C.E. Award from the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences, three Hollywood Music in Media Awards, five Game Audio Network Guild Awards, three Global Music Awards, an IGN Best Score Award, a GameSpot Best Music Award, a GameZone Score of the Year Award, a GameFocus Award, and three Gracie Awards from the Alliance of Women in Media. She has released fifteen albums. Her soundtrack album for the Legend of the Guardians video game was the first video game soundtrack album released by WaterTower Music, the film music record label of Warner Bros. Music Connection Magazine described her as a "superstar of video game music."

I have been a composer and educator for nearly 40 years and am constantly looking for new perspectives on creativity. After signing up for an on-line course in video game music I picked up Winifred's book to set the stage before the course began. I have to say that the her book is extremely well-organized, unveiling new vocabulary and concepts in logical order while citing ample research for further study. In addition to the new vocabulary gained by visiting the authors world, there are are great many examples of how techniques have been applied in prominent games, many from the author's own portfolio. Even if you are not interested in writing for video games Winifred's discussion (again supported by research) of the effect that music has on the listener's emotional state of mind is extremely valuable to any composer. I have read many books on composition, theory and composers. I must say that I learned more about my craft than many!

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.

If you're looking to learn about game music from an insider, this is THE book. All of the other books that are tried-and-true authorities seem to focus on sound design - *Foley Bible*, *Aesthetics of Video Game Sound*, etc., but this is the absolute authority for music. It's a good read, too. Winifred cites music she's worked on, or music that proves a point or illustrates a technique, and it makes sense for everyone from the music scholar to the layman. I was afraid this book would be dry, like many guides are, but it is full of personal anecdotes and stories of past game music composition that really keep things on a personalized kind of level. To put it a different way, if you're looking to join the game industry as a composer, this is the book that will set you on the right path. If you're already in the game industry as a composer but lack vision of how/where to proceed with your career, this book will set you on the right path. If you're in the game industry as another discipline, this will give you serious insight into how much work goes into making music, and how important it is to choose the right candidate. The video game industry is a weird, scary place. Everyone's success story is

different and there is nothing about it that is streamlined - there's no clear way to get into it at all. Hopefully that will change in the future but for now - this book is the best resource you can get.

When I heard this book released (2 weeks ago) I did not know what to expect. However, after finishing my second read through, I am incredibly pleased with the purchase. As a graduate student of music composition, I spend a lot of time writing, but my school is not particularly well funded in the areas of electronic music and has no experience with the gaming industry. Winifred Phillips did a wonderful job in providing a clear manual that can focus my gaming oriented aspirations and provide a path forward, which is a quality of the best of teachers. The book describes many things including vertical layering, the essential nature of the composer, the nature of the gaming industry, and applications of many traditional musical concepts. It does not stop there, but delves into the world of interactive audio and even into the field of getting a job (the aspect oft forgotten). I know I will be buying a second copy to donate to the music library, and I hope anyone else who stops by this page gives the book a chance. I don't believe you will regret the decision.

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