

The Creative Process of Musical Composition “Sebatas Mimpi” Through the Exploration of Melodic Variations

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Article Details	ABSTRACT
Article History Received November 17, 2025 Revised July 6, 2026 Accepted mm dd, yyyy	The song titled “The Composition of ‘Sebatas Mimpi’ Through the Exploration of Melodic Variations” tells the story of a person’s heartfelt emotions as they accept with an open heart the reality that the one they love does not love them in return. The purpose of this work is to serve as a new reference for other composers regarding orchestration techniques in programmatic music, particularly songs themed around disappointment and sadness; to serve as a reference for creating similar works; and to offer a musical composition that can be performed in concerts as a contribution to the development of music in the present and future. The result of this composition is a piece totaling 98 measures in the key of A. It features various sections, including choruses, verses, and others, and incorporates modulations throughout. It is performed in a chamber music format, with a double quartet augmented by piano and double bass. The compositional technique employed in this piece utilizes homophonic texture, in which a single main melodic line is supported by one or more additional melodic lines that provide harmony. During the creation of this piece, the researcher drew significant inspiration and ideas from Yovie Widianto.
Keywords Just a Dream Composition Sad Song Chamber Music	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Music is an art form that serves as both an expressive language and a medium for communicating emotions, transcending the boundaries of space and culture. At its most fundamental level, music can be understood as the art of arranging sounds—comprising rhythm, melody, harmony, structure, and expression—that come together in a specific compositional format. Music theory approaches assert that music is not merely a sequence of sounds but involves the ordered temporal relationship between sound and silence, thereby creating an aesthetic and emotional experience for both the composer and the listener (Campbell, 2001). Music combines sound and silence in an ordered pattern to express ideas, feelings, and moods—not merely as entertainment but as a universal language that conveys inner expression. It emphasizes that music is a work of art consisting of sound and composition that reveals the creator’s thoughts and feelings through the fundamental elements of music—rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and expression—as a unified whole (Suci, 2023). This approach is important because it helps us understand music as a medium that is not merely aesthetic but also cognitive and emotional (Jamalus, 1988). An anthropological perspective also shows that music, as a cultural phenomenon, is always linked to the social system in which it develops, thereby reflecting the society's cultural and social values (Somala & Subhi, 2020).

The role of music as a medium for self-expression is highly relevant to the experience of music creators. The book **The Anthropology of Music** (Merriam, 1987) explains that one of music's most important functions is to express human emotions, in which musical sounds and structures reflect the emotional experiences the creator wishes to convey. Music helps an artist or composer to consider not only musical structure but also how those deepest emotions can be transmitted to listeners and fellow musicians. Furthermore, research in music studies shows that musical composition—particularly within the Western classical and contemporary traditions—facilitates emotional expression; thus, when someone listens to or creates music, they experience a profound affective resonance. Music is not merely a beautiful sound, but a medium of emotional communication deliberately designed by composers to “touch” listeners, which aligns with the view that musical composition functions as a form of affective communication (Simonton, 2010).

Against this backdrop, researchers in music production, composition, and arrangement perceive a connection between music theory and everyday creative practice. Interest in the creative process of composition arises not merely from a technical desire to play with notes or rhythms, but also because this process serves as a medium for expressing various life phenomena—both personally experienced and universally shared—such as unrequited love, as expressed in the song titled “Sebatas Mimpi.” This song is not merely a melodic composition; it unites the composer's emotional experience with a musical structure that reflects the journey of human emotions as they accept the bitter reality of an unrequited relationship. The expression of emotions through music aligns with the definition of composition as a creative process that shapes inner experiences into an aesthetic form that can be shared with others (Knust, 2025). In the practice of musical composition, artistic studies position the creator (composer) as a researcher who investigates their own creative process to produce a work of art. Tonika (n.d.) argues that artistic research is a mode of knowledge production based on the assumption that artists/practitioners are researchers who delve into the creative processes they experience to produce works of art. This reinforces the researcher's position as both the subject and object of research in the context of music creation.

In line with this, chamber music emerges as an ideal musical format for expressing interpersonal relationships, given the limitations of space and instruments. Chamber music, which has been known since the Renaissance period and flourished through the Classical and Romantic eras, was originally intended for performances in small venues such as palaces, noble residences, or private rooms—rather than in large orchestras. The structure of chamber music typically involves a small number of performers whose instruments interact dialogically, so that each voice plays a significant role in the overall musical texture (Radice, 2012). This format often involves a combination of vocals and instruments—such as the piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass—which allows composers to explore the depth of emotional expression and musical dynamics with great intensity. (Radice, 2012) demonstrates how chamber music evolved from merely social music into a serious musical form with great interpretive richness through the use of small yet expressive instruments.

In the vision of contemporary composers such as Yovie Widiyanto—who served as an inspiration for the composition **Sebatas Mimpi**—chamber music offers opportunities to expand musical and emotional idioms within the context of vocal or instrumental works rich in melodic and harmonic variations. In this regard, the researcher plans to compose and perform chamber music for 1 piano, 2 first violins, 2 second violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, and 1 double bass, creating an intimate and expressive musical atmosphere. This instrumental structure is intended not only for aesthetic purposes but also to maximize the emotional expression the composer seeks to articulate through programmatic music—music designed to depict a mood or narrative beyond the musical structure itself. This composition is expected to make a significant contribution to musical knowledge and compositional practice, particularly because programmatic music allows powerful emotional messages to be translated into notation and performance. This aligns with music's dual function as both a form of personal expression and interpersonal communication, capturing the complexity of human experience. Works of this kind are not only of artistic but also of scientific value, as they expand our understanding of orchestration and composition in relation to thematic concepts such as disappointment and sadness, which have broad cultural and emotional resonance.

2. METHOD

Some of the methods I used to create this work include applying several relevant theories in musical composition.

Composition

Musical composition is essentially a creative process of arranging various musical elements to create a cohesive, meaningful work. This activity is not merely a matter of arranging notes at random, but involves consideration of structure, the relationships between elements, and the expressive goals the composer seeks to achieve. Banoe (2003, p. 426) explains in *his Music Dictionary* that the formal elements in musical composition include phrases, periods, one-part song forms, single two-part forms, single three-part forms, compound two-part forms, rondo, theme and variations, and sonata form. This explanation demonstrates that musical composition has a clear and systematic structural foundation, meaning that the creation of a work relies not only on intuition but also on a theoretical understanding of musical form and organization. This is reinforced in a study (Mahendra et al., 2025), which states that the songwriting process requires technical mastery of musical notation to document and realize musical ideas in a structured manner. In line with this view, Syafiq (2003, p. 165) in the book **Encyclopedia of Classical Music** asserts that composition is a musical arrangement, whether instrumental or vocal. In line with this view, Syafiq (2003, p. 165) in the book **Encyclopedia of Classical Music** asserts that composition is a musical work—whether instrumental or vocal—which involves planning, developing musical ideas, and integrating musical elements into a cohesive, expressive whole. Thus, composition can be understood as both an artistic and intellectual activity, as it involves technical skill, aesthetic sensitivity, and conceptual awareness of the meaning intended to be conveyed through music. In this context, the composer serves not only as a creator of sound but also as the architect of a work's emotional and narrative structure.

The work **Sebatas Mimpi** was designed using a compositional approach focused on developing melody as the primary element for conveying meaning. The melody used in this work is of the “accompanied melody” type, meaning the main melody stands as the focal point and is supported by harmonic accompaniment and chords. This approach was chosen because melody has the greatest direct power to convey emotion and meaning, particularly in vocal works that rely on the relationship between text and melody. According to Benward and Saker (2009), melody functions as a “carrier of musical meaning” because it is the element most easily recognized and remembered by listeners, and it also serves as the primary medium for conveying musical expression (Helm, 2012). In this piece, the main melody is performed by the vocals, representing the character's inner voice and emotions. Meanwhile, harmony and chords serve as emotional and structural supports that reinforce the melody's character. The harmonic accompaniment not only serves as a backdrop but also shapes the mood, tension, and musical resolution, in harmony with the lyrics' content. The harmonic accompaniment not only serves as a backdrop but also shapes the mood, tension, and musical resolution, in harmony with the lyrics' content. This is consistent with the research by Suwahyono et al. (2023): Mahendra, Marda Putra, Dhani Kristiandri, Vivi Ervina Dewi, Moh Sarjoko, and Agus Suwahyono. 2025. “Training in Music Notation through the Creation of Children's Songs for Preschool Teachers in the Tandes Subdistrict of Surabaya.”

Suwahyono, Agus, Moch. Sarjoko, D. K., Joko Winarko, & Vivi E. Dewi. (2023). “An Arrangement Approach to Improve Musical Creativity in Keroncong at a Vocational School.” Pp. 1662–67 in *Proceedings of the International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities 2022 (IJCAH 2022)*. Vol. 724, *Advances in Social Science, Education, and Humanities Research*, edited by S. Setiawan, W. P. Saroinsong, M. N. Ashar, C. Boonrongrut, R. N. B. Aji, Y. Lestari, L. Mulya, G. W. Pradana, R. Riyadi, A. M. Tayeb, L. P. Hartanti, and H. R. Ayu. Paris: Atlantis Press SARL. (Mahendra et al. 2025), which states that through the appropriate arrangement and processing of chord progressions, a composer can enhance their musical creativity, thereby creating a deeper emotional atmosphere. Meanwhile, instruments such as the piano and string ensemble (violin, viola, cello, and double bass) are used to build a rich timbre and expand the spectrum of musical expression. Meanwhile, instruments such as the piano and the string section (violin, viola, cello, and double bass) are used to create a rich timbre and broaden the spectrum of musical expression. This approach aligns with the view that harmony and orchestration play a crucial role in reinforcing the direction of melodic expression and shaping the emotional character of a composition (Useche, n.d.).

Chamber Music

Chamber music can be understood as a form of musical performance that has flourished since the Renaissance, when musical practice shifted from large public spaces to more intimate settings. During this

period, music no longer served merely as accompaniment for rituals or celebrations but also as a medium for personal expression and musical dialogue among performers. (Retoridka, 2016) states that chamber music consists of combinations of instruments, such as voice and piano, violin and cello, clarinet and cello, and other instrumental pairings, performed in a small ensemble. The defining characteristic of chamber music lies in the balance of roles among the instruments, where each part makes an equal and complementary musical contribution, making musical communication among the performers a crucial element of its performance. Over time, chamber music has not only evolved within Western music but also been adapted in the context of classical music in Indonesia (Radice, 2012). In Indonesia, chamber music often serves as a more minimalist, flexible, and contextually relevant alternative for presenting classical music, both in academic settings and in performances. This format allows composers and performers to explore musical depth without relying on large-scale orchestration, while also providing greater scope for interpretive expression. In the context of composition, chamber music serves as an effective medium for conveying musical ideas with greater focus, as each layer of sound can be heard clearly and is not obscured by the density of the musical texture (Reicha, n.d)

Based on this theoretical foundation, the researcher plans to present the work in a chamber music format consisting of a modified double quartet, with the addition of a double bass and a piano. The quartet format used comprises first violin, second violin, viola, and cello. The choice of this format was not made by chance but was based on musical and structural considerations. (Retoridka, 2016) asserts that a quartet is a composition for four voices—whether vocal or instrumental—which is musically considered the most balanced form of arrangement (Dover, 2021). In the quartet format, harmonic relationships, chord structures, and the movement of voices can be heard clearly and in their entirety, thereby enabling the conveyance of more structured and profound musical ideas.

Harmony

Harmony can be defined as a musical phenomenon arising from the combination of two or more notes sounded simultaneously. This understanding positions harmony as a crucial foundation for a sound musical structure. Jamalus (1998, p. 30) asserts that harmony is the combination of two or more distinct notes sounded simultaneously, thereby producing a unified whole. This view aligns with Kodijat (1986, p. 32), who states that harmony is the simultaneous equivalence of sounds. Both perspectives emphasize that harmony is not only about the number of notes played but also about the relationships and harmonies among sounds within a single musical moment. In addition to being understood as a phenomenon of simultaneous sound, harmony can also be interpreted as knowledge of the relationships between notes within a chord and the connections between one chord and another. In this context, a chord is a combination of notes played simultaneously and is one of the primary foundations of harmony. It is these relationships between chords that enable the creation of musical dynamics in the form of tension and resolution, which play a crucial role in shaping the direction and emotional meaning of a musical work. Research in the field of musical cognition shows that harmonic progressions have a direct influence on listeners' emotional perceptions, particularly in creating a sense of stability, tension, and release within the musical flow (Martínez-Castilla et al., 2011)

Harmony plays a strategic role in the process of creating musical works, not only as a structural foundation but also as a source of depth and richness in musical expression. Consciously designed harmony can enrich a melody and expand a work's emotional dimensions (Peretz, 2006). In its application in the piece titled **Sebatas Mimpi**, harmony supports the character of the vocal melody while simultaneously building a musical atmosphere that aligns with the song's emotional message, ensuring that all musical elements function in a unified and communicative manner.

Homophonic Texture

The most common texture in Western music is the homophonic texture, which consists of a melody and an accompaniment. The accompaniment provides rhythmic and harmonic support for the melody. This composition employs this texture. The following is an example of how this texture is applied in the composition.



Figure 1. Homophonic Texture
Personal Documentation

Chamber Music

Chamber music is a form of musical performance that developed during the *Renaissance*. According to Retoridka (2016), chamber music is a combination of instruments such as vocals and piano, violin and *cello*, clarinet and cello, and so on. As times have changed, chamber music in Indonesia has become an alternative form of classical music performance with a minimalist concept. Based on the theory outlined above, I plan to present this work in a chamber music format—specifically, a modified double quartet—with the addition of a double bass and piano. The quartet itself consists of *first violin, second violin, viola, and cello*. The researcher chose this format because, with a quartet, the musical composition will be more complete. According to Retoridka (2016), a quartet is a composition for four voices, whether vocal or instrumental. A quartet is a musical form with a perfect structure, where all chord progressions can be heard clearly and completely. Therefore, I hope that with this format, the resulting composition will be more complete and perfect.

Structure.

According to Jamalus (1988: 35–36), the form or structure of a song is the arrangement and relationships among its musical elements, resulting in a meaningful composition. The basis for forming a song includes repeating a section (repetition), repeating with various changes (variations or sequences), or adding a new, different, or contrasting section (contrast), while always maintaining a balance between repetition and variation.

One such song form is called the binary form (two sections), denoted by the symbol AB. This binary form can be extended to become AAB, ABB, or AABB. Another form is the simple ternary form (three sections), denoted by the symbol ABA. This ternary form can also be extended to AABA or AABABA. Based on this theory, I will create the song structure for my future work using four processed patterns, each developed with variations.

A cadence is an important structural element in music that serves as a marker for the end of a phrase or musical section. Cadences help create a sense of completion, pause, or continuation in the musical flow. Generally, cadences can be distinguished based on their harmonic quality, such as authentic, plagal, and awkward cadences, each of which has a different character of resolution (Sears et al., 2014). The presence of cadences allows listeners to recognize the internal structure of a piece while reinforcing the overall musical direction. In the piece **Sebatas Mimpi**, the concept of cadence is used as a reference to define phrase boundaries and clarify the musical structure. In addition to cadences, dynamics play a crucial role in conveying musical expression and emotion (Bigo et al., n.d.). Dynamics regulate the loudness and softness of sound as well as changes in intensity within a phrase or musical section. Dynamic variations, such as crescendo and decrescendo, make the music feel more alive and communicative (Martínez-Castilla et al., 2011). The use of playing techniques such as legato, staccato, and pizzicato further enriches the timbre and clarifies the musical character, thereby effectively conveying the work's emotional message to the listener.

The development of motifs is a key strategy in melodic composition. As the smallest musical unit, a motif can be developed through various techniques such as repetition, sequencing, augmentation, diminution, and inversion. These techniques allow the melody to develop naturally without losing its fundamental identity. By utilizing various patterns of motif development, it is hoped that melodic richness can be created, thereby supporting a deeper musical expression (Stolzenburg, 2015). The entire compositional process is inseparable from creativity, understood as the ability to process and combine existing ideas into new, meaningful forms. Creativity in music composition is influenced by the composer's experiences, knowledge, and environment, resulting in works that are personal and contextual. In terms of musical style, the work **Sebatas Mimpi** adopts a popular music approach with classical elements (Fatmawiyanti, 2018). The popular music style was chosen for its communicative nature, its broad appeal to

listeners, and its effectiveness as a medium for conveying emotional messages—all of which align with the musical character intended for this work.

3. RESULT

Description of the Work

In this work, the intro chord progression is I=A, followed by D. In the verse, the progression is 1=A, 6=F#m, 4=D, 5=E. In the pre-chorus section, it is 3=C#m, 6=F#m, 2=Bm, 5=E. In the first chorus, the progression is 1=A, 4=D, 2=Bm, 5=E. In the second chorus: 1=A, 4=D, 2=Bm, 4=D, 5=E. In the first interlude: 4=D, 1=A, 4=D, 3=C#. The second interlude is the same as the chorus. The compositional technique emphasizes parallel melodies. This piece maintains a consistent theme of sadness throughout all sections. It is not divided into separate parts but forms a single, cohesive whole. The piece features modulations, or shifts in key. The score contains many long notes, 1/16 notes, and 1/8 notes. It features 4 beats, 2 beats, and half beats, using 4/4 time. The key is A. The tempo for this composition is 85. The composition uses major chords throughout, yet conveys a sad atmosphere. Here is a more detailed explanation:

In this piece, the compositional texture is homophonic. The first intro begins in bar 2 on first violin with a long legato note, followed harmonically by the string section, from second violin down to the double bass. After that, in bar 10, the string section stops, and the piano and vocals take over as a solo. In bar 18, the pre-chorus begins with the viola, cello, and double bass entering. Then, as a transition to the chorus, a chromatic passage is introduced in bar 21 by Violin 1 and Violin 2. In Chorus 1 and Chorus 2, the string section plays in harmony with the piano, serving as the foundation of this composition. Here is the score.

Melodic Variations in the Work “Sebatas Mimpi”

Intro

The intro section in the second measure opens with the piano, followed by Violin 1 entering on the third beat with a high note. Violin 1 is played with a dynamic legato technique, rising and falling, which adds a calm nuance to the beginning of the song. The piano serves as a gentle opener, while Violin 1 functions as the main melody, reinforcing that calm character. Entering the 5th measure, the cello takes over with a firm legato technique, building dynamics from soft to loud. This section serves as a prelude to the entry of the entire string section in the 6th measure. In the 6th measure, the string section begins to play with long legato phrases, where Violin 2 is divided into two parts (divisions) to create a richer sound texture. The presence of the string section at this point lends the song a deeper nuance, though it is maintained with relatively calm dynamics. This string section continues through measure 9 and concludes with a tremolo technique. However, the tremolo is played only by Violin 1, Violin 2, and the Viola, while the cello and double bass continue to play sustained notes without tremolo. This technical distinction is intentionally designed to create a bridge to the opening verse, with a smooth, unexpected transition for the listener.

Figure 2. Intro
Personal Archive.

VERSE 2

The musical motif that appears in the first verse is repeated in the second verse, but with slight variations. The only difference is in the ending, which is adjusted to lead into the following pre-chorus. This repetition and slight variation are intended to help listeners become more quickly familiar with the song's melody, while keeping them engaged with the main theme.

Figure 3. Verse 2
Personal Documentation.

Pre-Chorus

In the pre-chorus section at bar 18, the viola, cello, and double bass come in to create a sense of rising tension in the song. These three instruments are played in legato with sustained notes, maintaining a calm dynamic as a gradually rising tension builds toward the climax. Instrumentally, the arrangement remains the same; the second violin features a long, sustained note. Staccato is used in the lower register, such as on the cello and viola. In the *higher register*, the playing style changes.

Pre Chorus

Bi la la ngit men de ngar

Figure 4. Pre-Chorus
Personal Archive.

Chorus 2

The second chorus begins on the 30th measure, building upon the first chorus. Although it remains rooted in the original theme, the development is made more intense—both in terms of melody and chords—thereby creating a sense of progression without losing its identity.

Chorus 2

me e mang tak a kan per nah mung kin Kau me mi

Figure 5. Chorus 2
Personal Documentation

CODA

Entering the coda section of the second chorus, the string section employs the tremolo technique on First Violin, Second Violin, and Viola. This use of tremolo serves as a transition to the pause at measure 38. The tremolo is played with very pronounced dynamics, creating a sharp contrast: from the previous atmosphere of strong dynamics to a quieter pause that drops dramatically.



Figure 6. Coda
Personal Documentation

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that this work is a programmatic piece titled “Sebatas Mimpi,” performed in a double quartet format with the addition of vocals and double bass. The song represents the difficulty a person faces in expressing their innermost feelings to the one they love, as well as coming to terms with that person being with someone else. The performance features Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, Piano, vocals, and Double Bass. In this piece, I sought to develop the melody through various approaches and explorations, presenting it as pop music with classical elements. I have dedicated my utmost effort, prayers, and hard work to this piece, and I hope it will serve as the culmination of my academic work and a stepping stone for my future career in the music industry. This piece not only applies various musical theories and techniques but also conveys a message intended for the audience. In other words, it is meant for anyone who can relate—whether that is me or someone else—and conveys something difficult to express in words.

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Dimas Ilham Wibisono  <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0009-0009-2637-9227> A student in the Music Study Program focusing on the creation of a final project (musical composition) titled “Just a Dream,” with a focus on melodic composition.