

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

MINIMALISM

YEAR 8, UNIT 1



ABOUT THIS UNIT

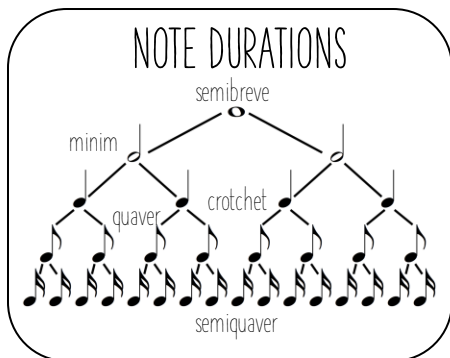
Theme: Minimalism

Facts/info:

- Minimalism is a style of music which emerged in the late-twentieth century.
- It is characterised by simple repetitive patterns (ostinati) which gradually change and transform over time.
- Texture and layering is very important aspect of this musical style.

Wider Listening:

- Clapping Music by Steve Reich
- Akhnaten by Philip Glass
- In C by Terry Riley



KEY WORDS

motif, repetition,
ostinato, canon, texture,
transformation,
transposition, extension,
polyphony, addition,
subtraction,
ornamentation, drone

'MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS' (excerpt) BY STEVE REICH

Steve Reich's music strips away long, unfolding melodies and complex harmonies and focuses instead on a very few, or minimal, parts: beats, rhythms and pulses, and slowly changing and repeating patterns. Reich had already explored musical patterns by clapping hands, striking bits of wood and playing two pianos but, in 1970, Music for 18 Musicians was his biggest experiment so far. The result is a shimmering, rippling musical tapestry, with instruments, including voices, keyboards, tuned percussion and maracas, creating layers of sound. Listening to Steve Reich's work can be an intense and hypnotic experience!

Listen out for: different instruments and rhythms rising to the surface as the musical landscape gradually shifts.

'SHORT RIDE IN A FAST MACHINE' BY JOHN ADAMS

John Adams is an American composer and conductor. Short Ride in a Fast Machine was composed for the opening of an American music festival called 'Great Woods' in 1986. It's written for large orchestra and is described as a fanfare. A fanfare is normally a loud flourish played on brass instruments that introduces someone or something and grabs your attention. Listen out for: The steady beat on the wood block.

