

# Knowledge Organiser: Minimalism

## Topic Background

Minimalism is a form of art, music, dance or design based on one simple, singular idea that is then developed. In minimalist music we can consider this singular idea as a 'cell'. This idea or 'cell' can then be changed, adapted or developed and because the piece has evolved from one, singular musical idea or 'cell' it is minimalist.

The main features of minimalist music include repetitive patterns or pulses, steady drones, consonant harmony, and repetition of musical phrases.

## Musical Knowledge

rhythm grid

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
▲	▲		▲		▲	▲	

pitch notation



## minimalist techniques

- **rhythmic and melodic displacement:** when the cell is moved along one or more beats
- **addition:** adding one beat to the cell
- **subtraction:** removing one beat from the cell
- **retrograde:** when a phrase or pattern is played backwards

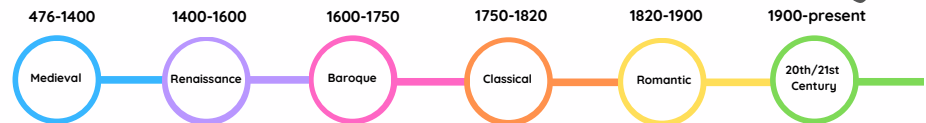


rhythm notation

- 4 beats semibreve
- ♪ 2 beats minim
- ♪ 1 beat crotchet
- ♪♪ two ½ beat paired quavers
- ♪ 1 beat crotchet rest

## Listening Pieces

- Clapping Music, Steve Reich, 1972
- Tubular Bells, Mike Oldfield, 1973
- You're So Cool, Hans Zimmer, 1993
- In C, Terry Riley, 1964
- Six Marimbas, Steve Reich, 1973
- Short Ride in a Fast Machine, John Adams, 1986
- Sangkala, Gamelan Degung, 2011



## Key Vocabulary

- bass:** the lowest part
- cell:** one, singular musical idea
- harmony:** when two or more pitches are performed together at the same time
- melody:** the tune of the music made up of high and low pitches
- minimalism:** a form of music based on one simple, singular idea that is then developed
- motif:** a short musical idea that occurs often in a piece of music
- ostinato:** a musical phrase or rhythm which is repeated
- polyphony:** layering two or more melodies
- polyrhythm:** layering two or more rhythms
- structure:** how a piece is organised
- technique:** method used to create music
- texture:** combining different layers of music to give an overall effect