Year 10 Twentieth Century Music

Minimalism

Minimalism was a concept art form, which began in America during the 1960's. Minimalist composers sought to reduce their art form to total simplicity. This was done by breaking music down into its simplest ideas. These are called 'cells'. The process of minimalist music is the simple repetition and changing of these cells through the piece of music. This produces an effect known as 'phasing', which is the gradual merging and separation of these cells through repetition.

Composers and listening examples

Serialism – atonal music

In 1922, Schoenberg fully established the '12-tone method' in which the organisation, particularly of pitch, is based on a particular ordering (or series) of the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale. Webern took this method further by serializing other elements, such as dynamics, rhythm, texture and timbre. The term *serial* is now often restricted to music in which parameters other than pitch are also serialized. The particular series has four principal forms:

The note row/series

The inversion of the original form (produced by inverting the intervals separating the original note row)

The retrograde of the original form

The retrograde of the inversion.

Note Row/Series

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Retrograde

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Composers and listening examples of serialism

Experimental music

As the name suggests, this is music that breaks away from standard convention. Most experimental music uses non-standard notation and aims to push the boundaries of what is capable on an instrument or voice.

Composers and listening examples

Electronic music

This is the use of digital computers for the creation of music. It includes, but is not limited to the creation of sounds, sound structures, compositions and analysis. Pitch and tuning took on an expanded definition, since the computer is not required to use fixed pitches, and may include glissandi, notes at unusual frequencies, 'unpitched' sounds, 'out-of-tune' sounds and bending pitches. The computer has almost limitless capabilities to allow different speeds, lengths of sounds, variety and evolution of sound, dynamics, attacks, and decays.

Composers and listening examples