

Minimalism Lesson

Charlottetown Rural High School

Grade Level: Music 621 or 521

Outcomes: Throughout this lesson students will:

- Be introduced to minimalism, its composition, techniques and composers.
- Refine their skills in critical listening
- Refine their creative intensions
- Improve their ability to work in small groups
- Refine their musicianship
- Gain a greater awareness of other types of music

Materials:

- Laptop
 - o Knee 3 – Philip Glass
 - o Piano Phase – Steve Reich
 - o Building - Philip Glass
 - Pictures of Minimalist art
 - Techno Music
 - o Move – Pete Namlook
 - *I Recommend*
-

Procedure:

5 Minutes: Personal Warm-up

15 Minutes: Playing and warm up

10 Minutes: Minimalist Art

15 Minutes: Activity

10 Minutes: Phase Music

10 Minutes: Contemporary Minimalism

5 Minutes: What do you think about...

20 Minutes: Closing activity

- Warm up and play
 - o Warm-up with Bb Major scale in whole notes
 - Eighths
 - Sixteeths
 - Quintuplets
 - Sextuplets
 - Septuplets

- Round – Bb
 - Chorale
- Ask: Has anyone ever heard of minimalism?
 - If so: what do you know about it?
- Minimalism was a movement in art where artists would use minimal techniques like basic colors and shapes to make a statement.
 - Show examples of minimalist art.
 - This movement existed in music as well.
 - Explain: Minimalism in music is like when you say a word over and over again until it loses meaning or sounds funny. I'm sure you have had this happen.
 - Using a minimal amount of notes, composers of minimalism, repeat over and over again a series of notes until gradually. To the listener, the riff begins to change. It sounds different after hearing it many times even though it is exactly the same over and over. It also creates a hypnotic effect.
- Activity:
 - Ask them to get out a piece of paper and a pencil
 - Play them *Knee 3* by Philip Glass
 - Explain: Nonsense words are words that are made up essentially. I want you to write down, to the best of your ability, all of the nonsense words that you hear in this piece of music.
 - Play the music
 - What are some words that we have heard
 - Go around the classroom and take volunteers.
 - Does anyone know what they are actually saying?
 - Tell them it is 123 and 1234 alternating sometimes
 - Listen to the recording again
 - Ask: did you hear it this time
 - You are still a good person if you did not.
 - What do we think of this type of music so far?
- Here is another example of minimalism called Phase Music
 - Ask: who in this room drives a car?
 - Ask: ever notice how your signal light sometimes lines up with the signal light of the person in front of you? Most of the time it doesn't at all. This is what phase music is.
 - This piece that I am going to play you is called *Piano Phase* by Steve Reich
 - It starts with one piano idea that is repeated over and over. You will notice a second piano come in doing the same riff only it is offset slightly from the original, eventually it keeps getting more and more offset until it lines up perfectly again.
 - Listen carefully.
- Can anyone think of a type of minimalism in contemporary society in music?

- Take answers and write them on the board
 - Ask: in your opinion would this next piece be considered minimalist? Explain.
 - Play them *Move* by Pete Namlook
 - They can get up and dance if they feel the urge.
- Is there anywhere else recently that you heard minimalism?
- This could also be considered minimalist
 - Play them EQUUS
 - What about this?
 - Play them *For the New Day Arisen*
- Activity
 - Composing their own minimalist piece
 - Get into groups of four or 5 and compose a piece of minimalist music using these guidelines.
 - Compose a short riff no longer than a measure.
 - When adding instruments do not make any drastic changes, they must be very subtle ones.
 - The piece must be between 2 and 3 minutes long.
 - You must pick a key and stick with it.
 - You may use your own instruments or some percussion instruments that I will provide.
 - They will be given 15 minutes to compose a piece of music to perform in front of the class.









