Minimalist Composition Task
for Distance Learning

Preparatory task: have a listen to the following pieces to get a feel for this style of music.

Steve Reich: Electric Counterpoint https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TKVpUSWCug

Mike Oldfield: Tubular Bells https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXatvzWAzLU

Mike Oldfield playing *Tubular Bells* live

After you have listened to the examples above, watch the following videos to help prepare you for this project.

How to use Sibelius Ultimate: https://youtu.be/rJNu4OVv5kA

An example piece demonstrating each minimalist technique found in this booklet:
https://youtu.be/0JnTFlorUCU

Free Composition Task: Minimalism

Name_____

An excellent way to write a longer piece of music is to write in a **minimalist style.**

The main features of **minimalist** music are:

- Layers of ostinati (lots of repeated melodic cells playing at the same time)

- Constantly repeated patterns that are subjected to gradual changes

- Interlocking repeated phrases and rhythms

- Diatonic harmony

This is quite an advanced challenge so <u>follow the rules to the letter</u> to make sure your piece works.

Open Sibelius and select **two** melody instruments. Insert a time signature of 4 4 then follow the steps below to create a piece of **minimalist** music.

Step 1: (Creating the motif)

Pick <u>one</u> of the scales below and create a simple motif using only the notes provided. The rules are:

- The motif must only use notes of the scale

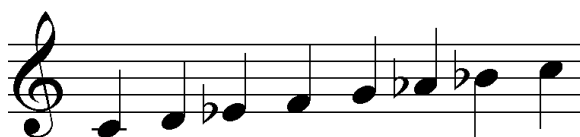- You may only use quavers and be 1 or 2 bars long. The tonic must fall on beat 1.

Scale 1 (Easy)
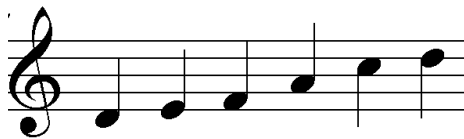
Example motif:

Scale 2 (Easy)

Scale 3 (Harder)

Extension to step 1: If you feel confident with your scales, you may pick any scale of your choice to construct a melody. Just make sure you stick to the rules in step 1! You can also use any rhythm you like if you are happy with this: think of Electric Counterpoint. This uses lots of interesting rhythms!

Remember these key terms from your study of **minimalism** last half term? You will now use them to develop your **motif.**

- Cross rhythm

- Rhythmic displacement

- Note addition

- Note subtraction

- Rhythmic augmentation

- Rhythmic diminution

Step 2a: (Rhythmic displacement)

The rules are:

- Both the original motif and the rhythmically displaced version must play alongside each other

- Take your motif and repeat it for at least 30 bars

- On the second instrument, copy and paste the motif but out of phase by a quaver for about 8 bars

Example:

Step 2b: (More rhythmical displacement)

The rules are:

- Copy and paste your motif onto the second instrument but out of phase by a crotchet. Repeat this process every 8 bars but make sure each 8 bars is out of phase by a different time value e.g. a minim, a dotted minim.
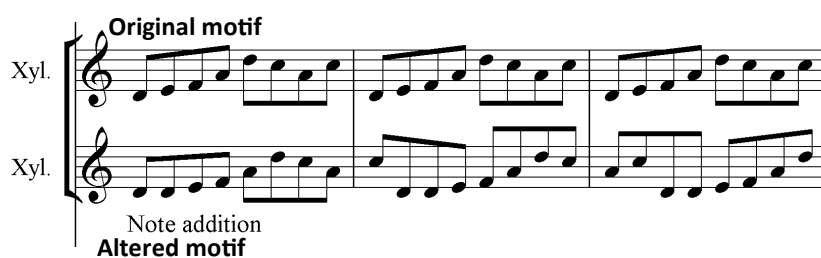
Example:

Example:

Step 3: (Phasing through note addition)

This technique slowly causes the altered motif to get out of phase with the original motif making an unusual 'echoey' effect.

The rules are:

- Both the original motif and the 'added note' version must play alongside each other

- You must add one additional note to the start of your motif and write it below the original motif on the second instrument.

Example:

Step 4: (Rhythmic diminution)

Write your motif out using exactly the same notes as in the original version but this time use half the original note value. For example, quavers in the original become semiquavers in the rhythmically diminished version.

Example:

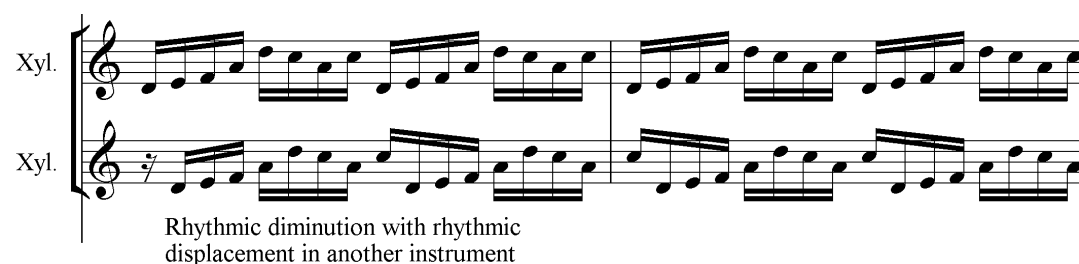## Step 5: (Rhythmic diminution combined with rhythmic displacement)

Now combine the techniques of step 2 and step 4 to create a faster version of your original motif in combination with rhythmic displacement.

The rules are:

- The notes must be the same as the original motif

- Both the rhythmically displaced version and the rhythmically diminished version must play alongside each other

Example:

Step 6: (Cross rhythms)

Now try creating cross rhythms in the second instrument to create a rhythmically complex texture.

The rules are:

- You must use the same notes as your original motif but this time use a triplet note value

- Both the original motif and the new 'cross-rhythm' version must play alongside each other

Extension: you could try combining rhythmical diminution or any other combination of techniques with cross rhythms to make a very complex set of rhythms.

Example:

Uber extension: see how many ways you can combine the techniques explored in this task to create a longer piece.

Checklist	Tick
Have I written a motif according to the rules set out in step 1?	
Have I made use of rhythmic displacement by a number of note values?	
Have I made use of note addition?	
Have I combined rhythmic displacement with rhythmic diminution?	
Have I made use of cross rhythms?	
Uber-extension explored?	

Finished already? Got everything ticked off? Have an extra challenge and ask for the hyper-extension.

Minimalist Composition Task

Task to complete	Achieved?
Have I read the sheet carefully from start to finish before doing anything?	Week 1
Have I written a simple motif that sticks to the rules written in **step 1**? (Only quavers!)	Week 1
Have I done exactly as stated in **step 2** to create a correctly displaced melody? (Remember one instrument should play the original motif whilst a second instrument plays the original motif out of phase by a beat of your choice)	Week 2
Have I demonstrated that I can displace my melody by a variety of beats to show I have an understanding of where each beat falls in a bar?	Week 2
Have I made use of note addition as in **step 3** to show further understanding of this minimalist composition technique?	Week 2
Have I demonstrated that I can rhythmically diminish my motif accurately as in **step 4**?	Week 3
Have I combined rhythmic displacement with rhythmic diminution as in **step 5**?	Week 3
Have I made use of cross rhythms as in **step 6**?	Week 3
Have I checked that my score uses all the required techniques as stated on the sheet?	Week 4
Have I annotated the score accurately to show I am aware of the techniques I have demonstrated?	Week 4

Extension: you could make a very dense texture which combines all the techniques. In addition to this, add a slow moving bass line (long notes) which either ascends of descends by steps.

MIDI keyboard not working?
Sibelius>Preferences>Input>Detect New Devices

Week 5—End of half term performance task

 Option 1) Try to multi-track your minimalist piece using your instrument.

Option 2) Search for a piece online by any composer and see if you can learn it within one week to perform to your family of record to send to us!

You could even learn something by one of the following minimalist composers: Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Michael Nyman.