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BEING CREATIVE
with
CLASSROOM COMPOSING

Spring 2011

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PLAN for this SESSION

- Introduction
- Warm-ups
- Musical Concepts and Musical Development
- Classroom Composing
- Composing Activity for Junior Cycle students
- Minimalism Skills Set (including Rhythm Task)
- Composing Activity for Senior Cycle students
- Learning Outcomes and Transferability

MUSICAL CONCEPTS

We can compose music in a ***worthwhile*** and ***original*** way

… when we use these musical concepts and our imagination.

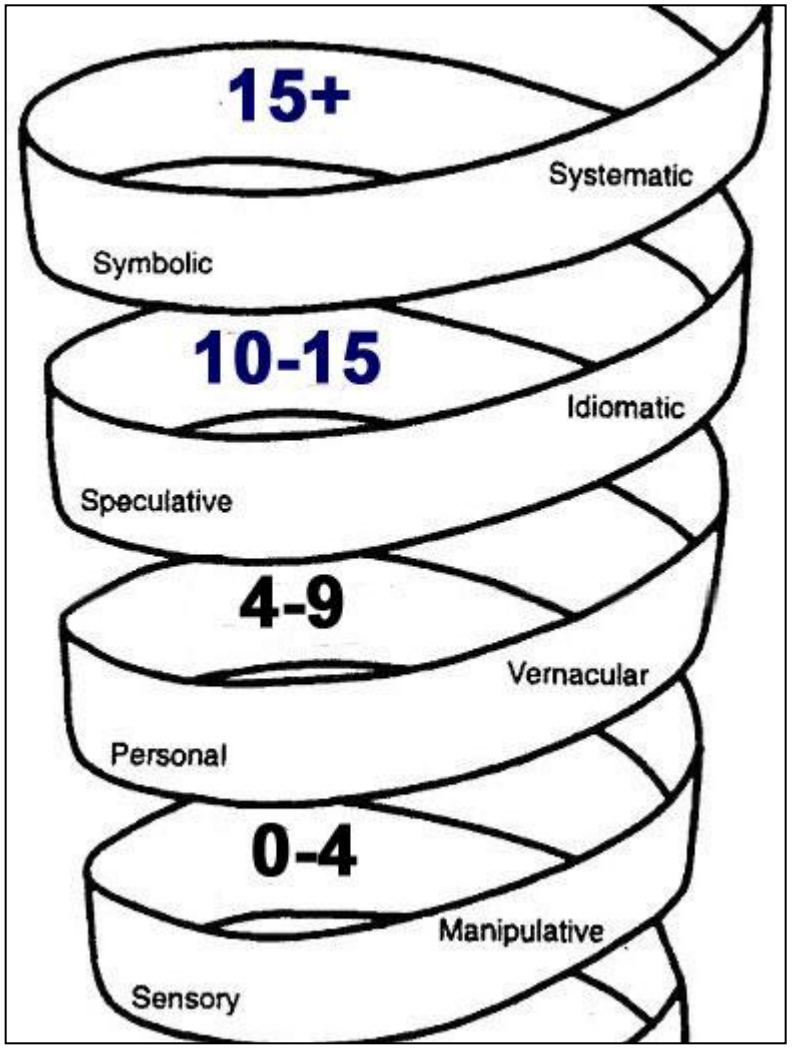
MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

15+ **Value**

10-15 **Form**

4-9 Expression

0-4 Materials



(Swanwick & Tillman, 1986)

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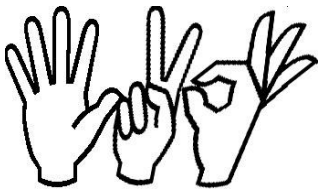
CLASSROOM COMPOSING

- Composing and ‘classroom composing’
- Learning
- Tools
- Body percussion
- Graphical scores

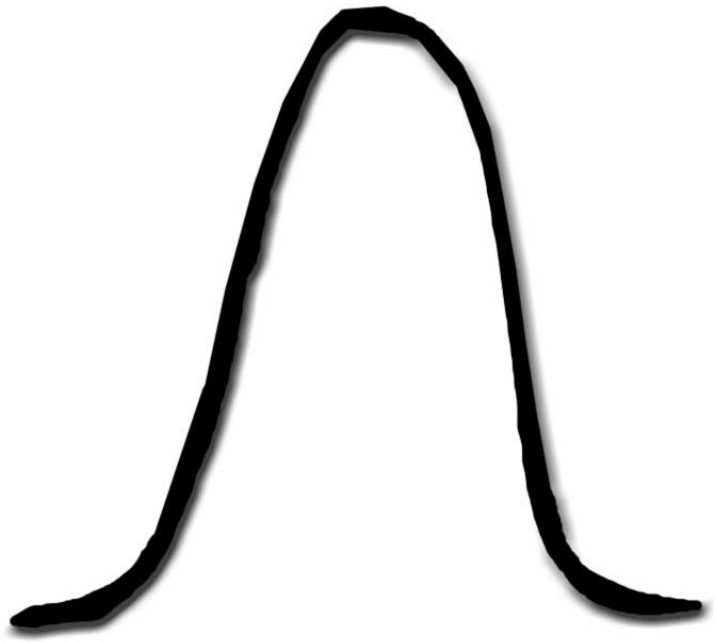


SCORE READING and WRITING

UNLIMITED

"Play a sound with the certainty that you have an infinite amount of time and space."

(Stockhausen, 1968)



(for ensemble)

BODY PERCUSSION: VIDEO

(Perpetuum Jazzile: *Toto in Africa* – YouTube)

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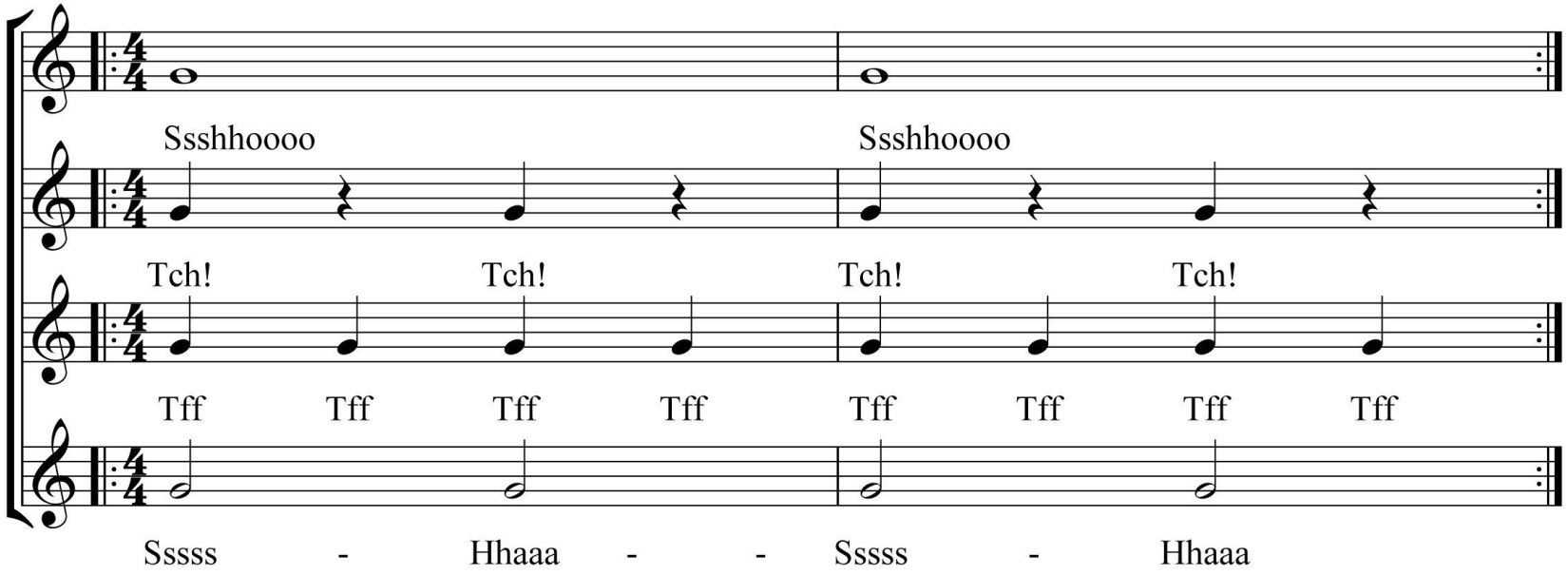
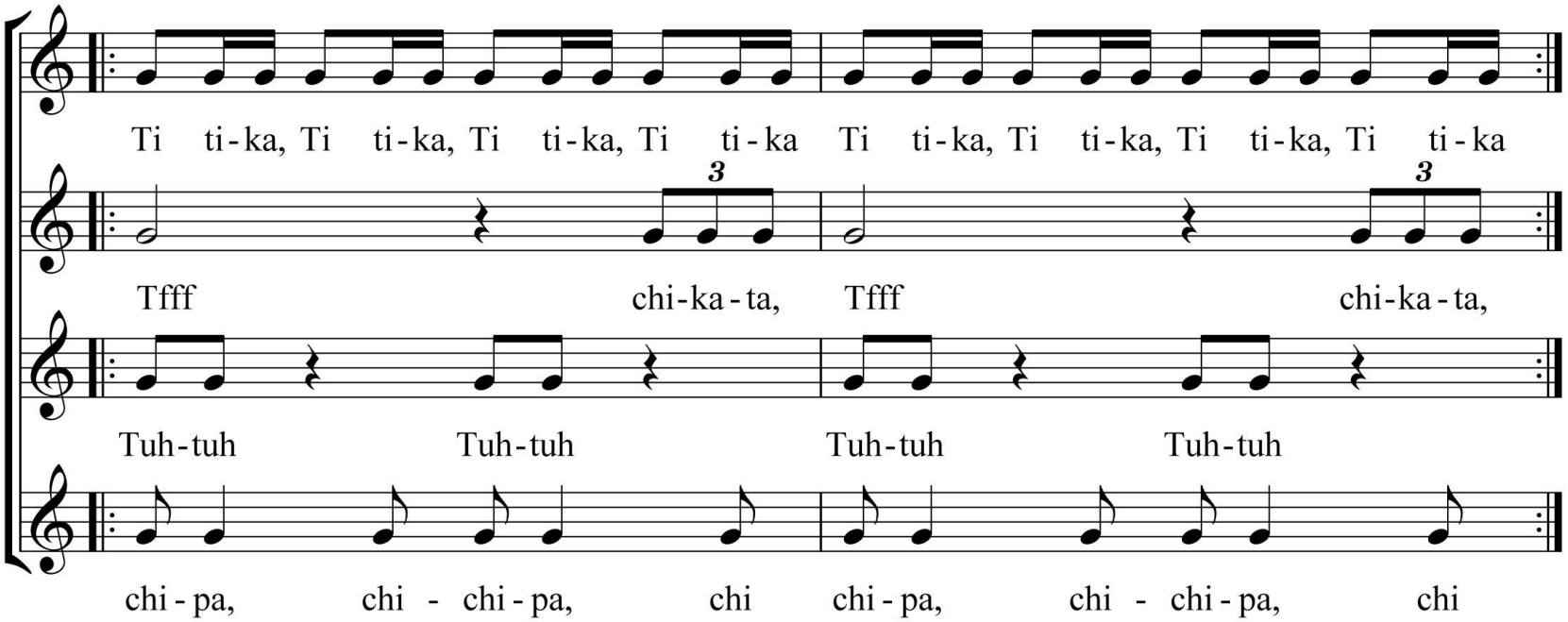
VOCAL SOUNDS: TRAIN (1)

(*'Voiceworks'* - Peter Hunt)

Start slow - gradually increase tempo



VOCAL SOUNDS: TRAIN (2)



SOUND and STRUCTURE

Stimuli for classroom composing include

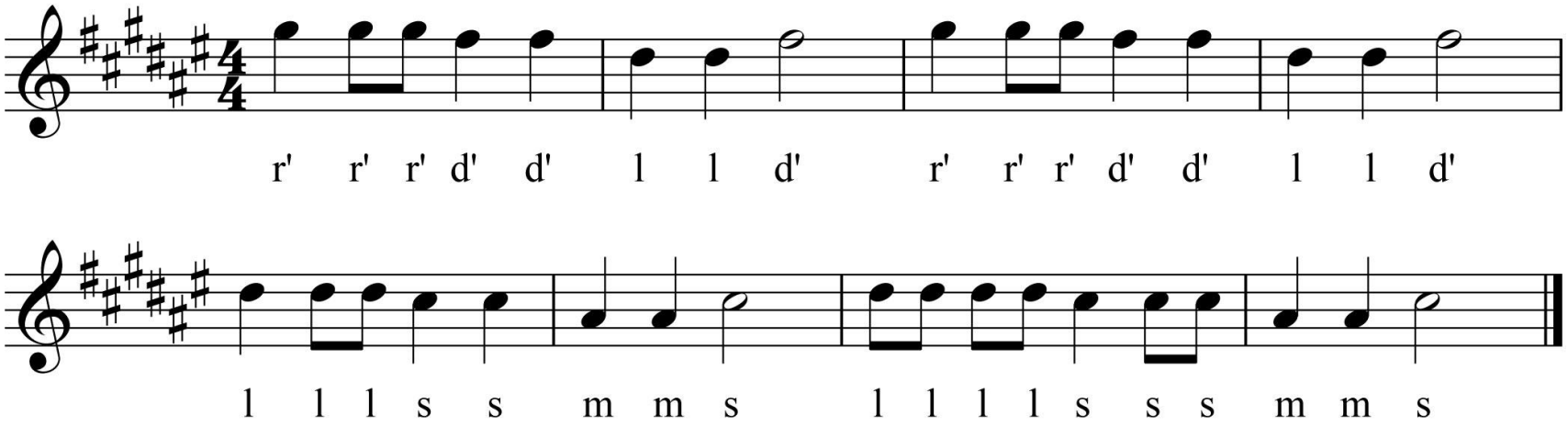
- Story
- Mood
- Form
- Motif
- Timbres
- Still Images or Video
- Sounds (e.g. scale, note row, chords)

PENTATONIC SCALE: VIDEO

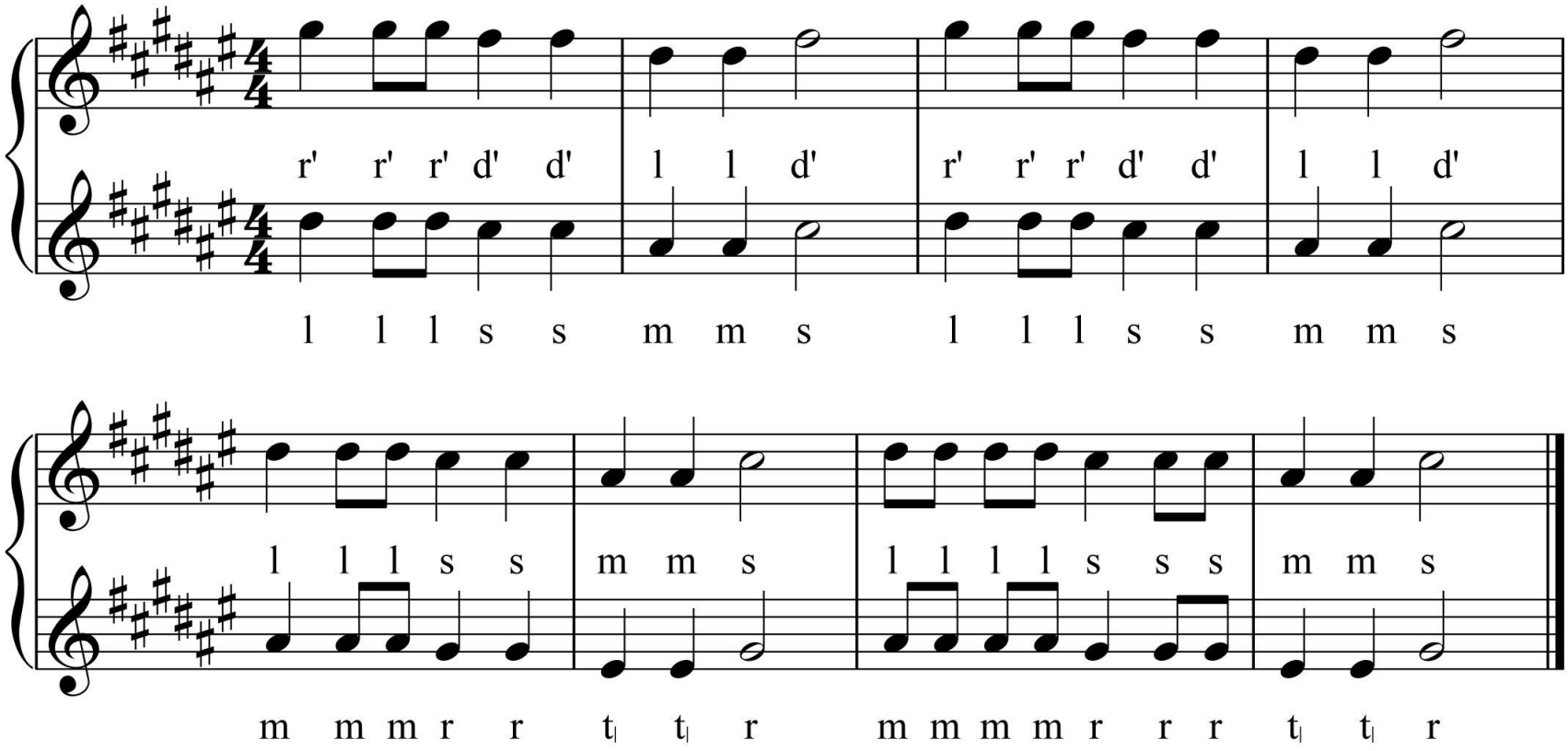
(Bobby McFerrin – www.WorldScienceFestival.com – YouTube)

PENTATONIC FIGURE

‘black notes’



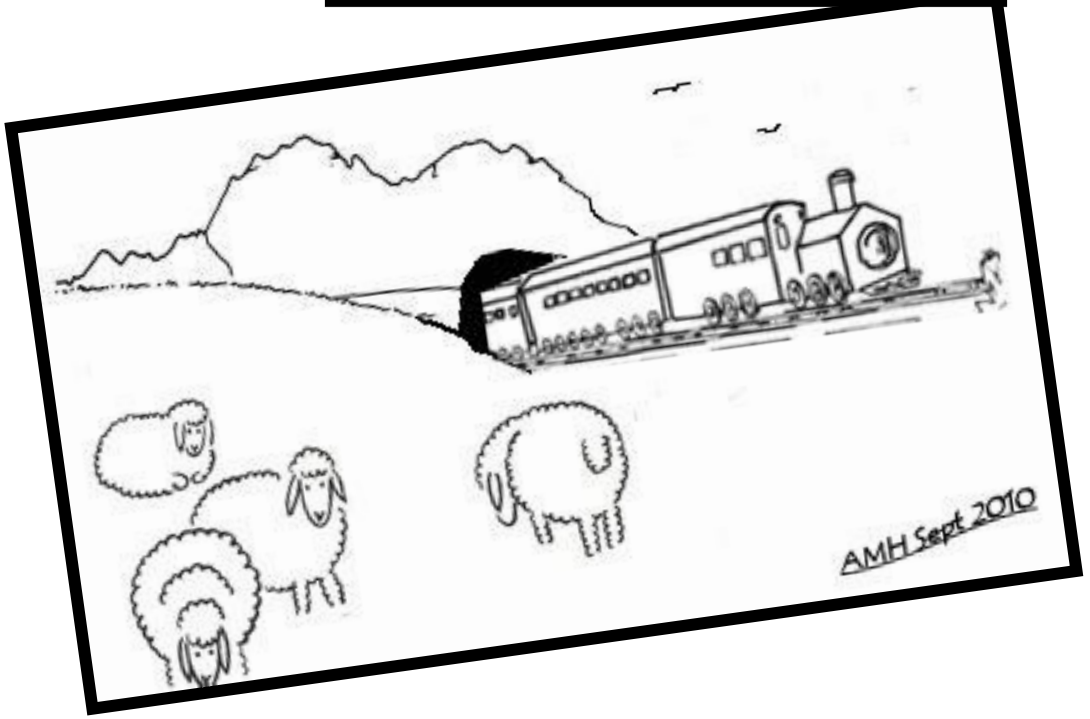
PENTATONIC FIGURE with HARMONY



COMPOSING ACTIVITY at JUNIOR CYCLE

- Rhythms
- Timbres
- Tempo
- Dynamics
- Texture
- Structure
- Pentatonic Scale
- Graphic Score

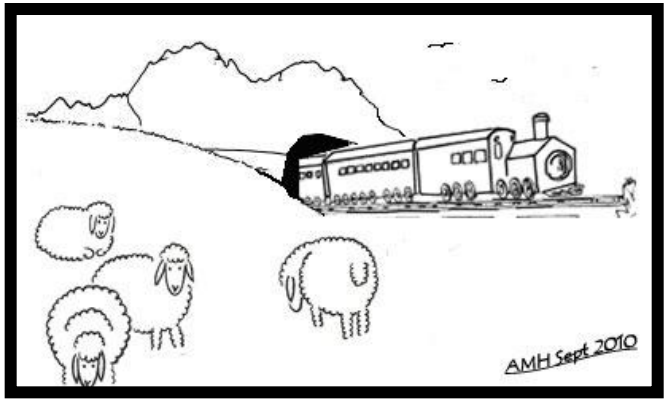
Train journey in China

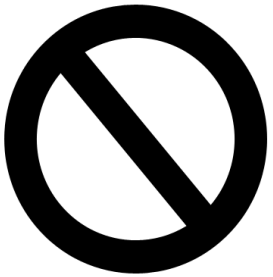


(The score is on the CD)

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Listen to ***Little Train of the Caipira*** by Villa-Lobos





Invent notation for complex rhythms and unusual timbral effects. Use a **KEY** to explain the symbols.

TOOLS for JUNIOR COMPOSING

1. Use unifying devices such as a rhythmic ostinato, a drone or a recurring melodic motif.
2. Include silence and a climax.
3. Make a slide show or silent video and compose an accompanying sound score, using musical connections.
4. A wooden agogo can depict time.
5. Lower notes and chords on the piano can create a mood of foreboding.

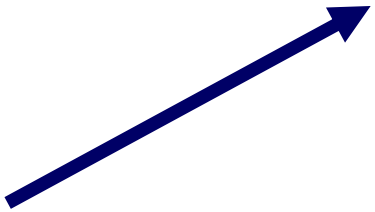
- *Haunted House*
- *Shipwreck*
- *Foxhunt*
- *Balloon trip*
- *Noah and the Ark*
- *Night and Day*
- *The Storm*
- *ABA*

MINIMALIST MUSIC: VIDEO

(Steve Reich: *Music for 18 Musicians* - YouTube)

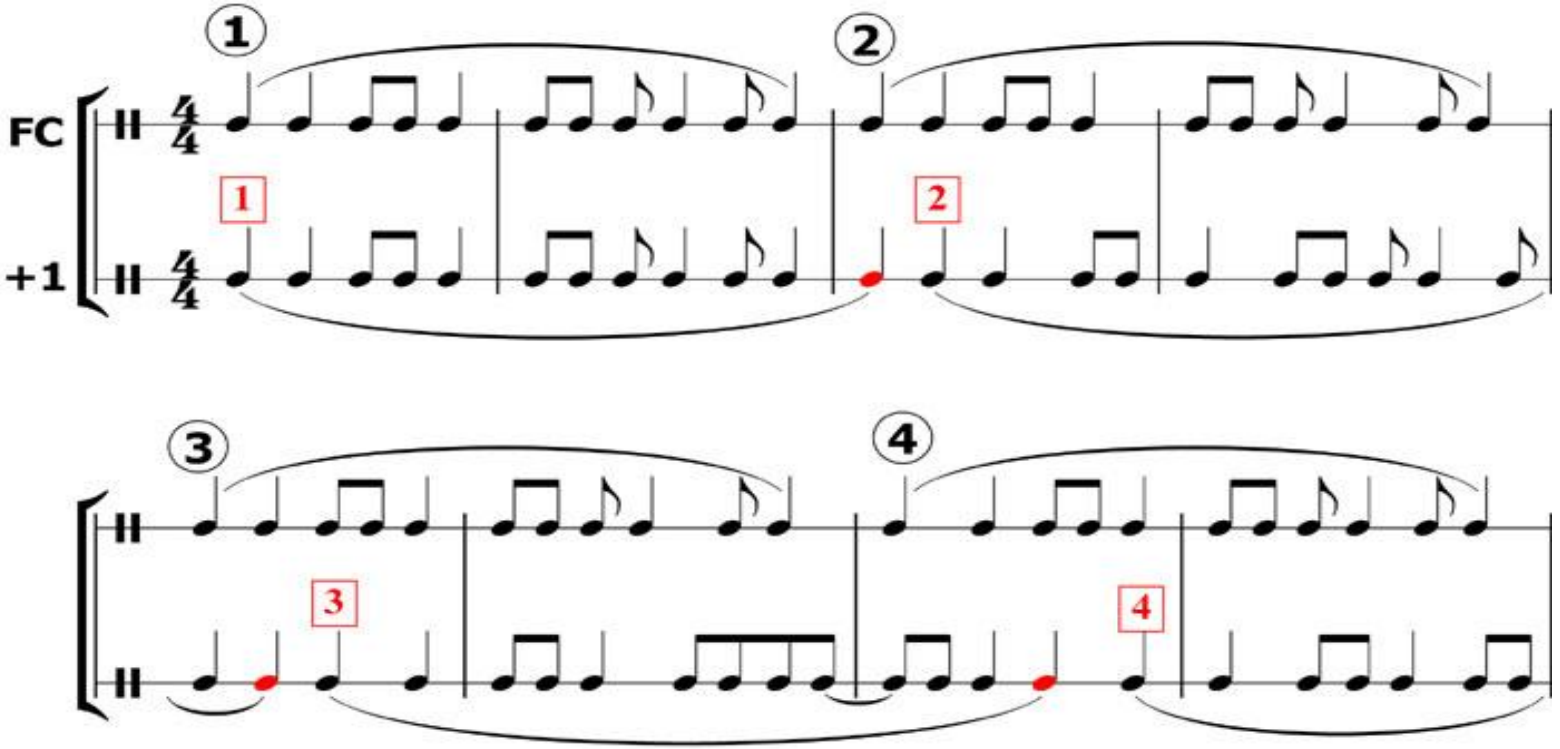
MINIMALIST SKILL SET

- Augmentation
- Diminution
- Addition
- Subtraction
- Ostinato
- Gradual transformation
- Rhythmic displacement



bars
cars
cart
mart
malt
mall
ball
bell
belt
bent
lent
lint
line
lone
tone
tune

RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT TASK



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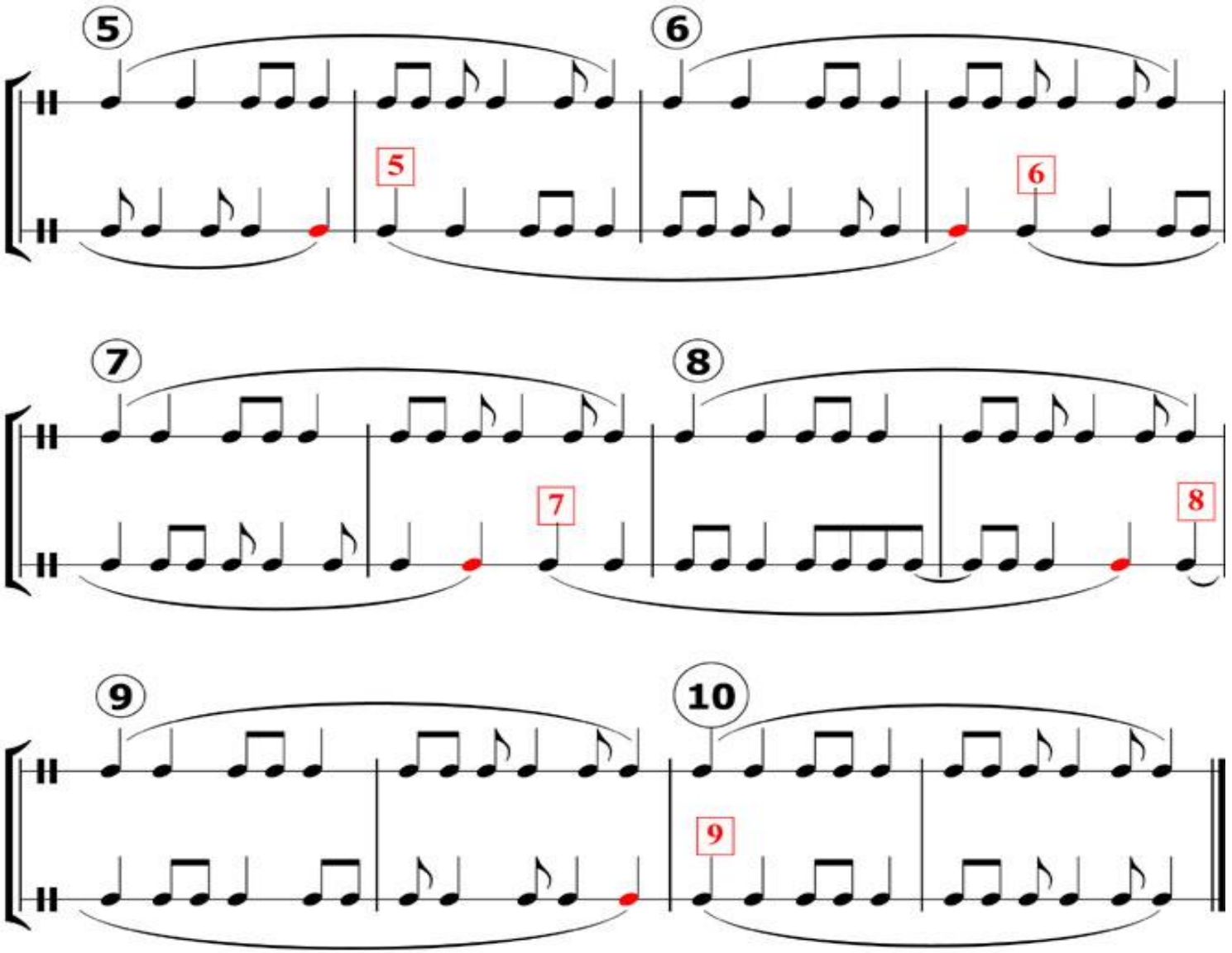
RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT (contd.)



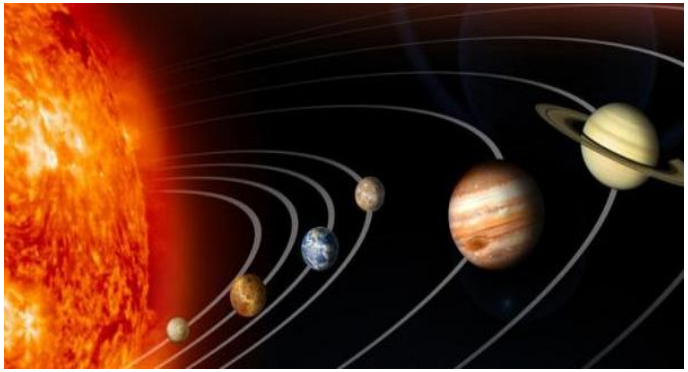
COMPOSING ACTIVITY at SENIOR CYCLE

Rondo form: ABACADA…

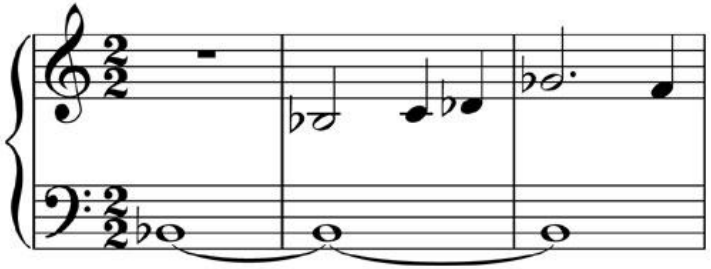
A: *Spaceship*

B: *The Planet of Mirrors*
C: *The Planet of War*
D: *The Planet of Gradual Change*
E: *The Planet of Water*
F: *The Planet of Doom*
G: *The Planet of Voices*
H: *The Planet of Extremes*

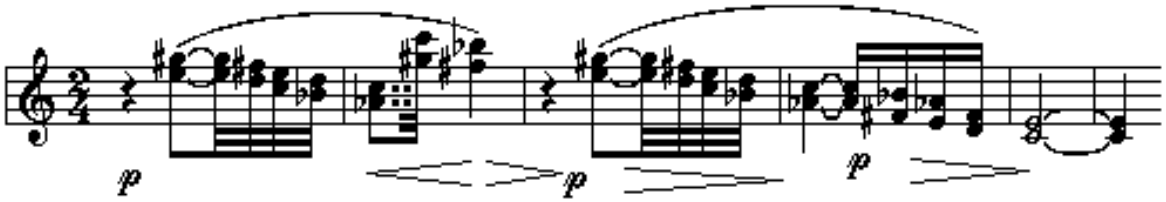
Journey in Space



CREATING MOODS: AUDIO EXAMPLES



Elfman – *Batman Returns* (Pedal/Dynamics/Texture /Pace /Timbres)



Debussy – *Voiles* (Whole-tone scale)

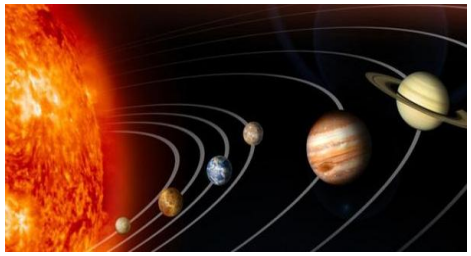
TOOLS for SENIOR COMPOSING

- Retrograde
- Whole-tone scale e.g. C D E F# G# A# B#
- Ascending and Descending Glissandi
- Rhythmic, Melodic and Harmonic Ostinati
- Parallel diminished 7th chords
- Antiphonal Rhythmic Dialogue
- Tinkly and Military Timbres
- Moods (e.g. Suspense, Gloom)
- Improvisation (over a set of chords)
- Note rows

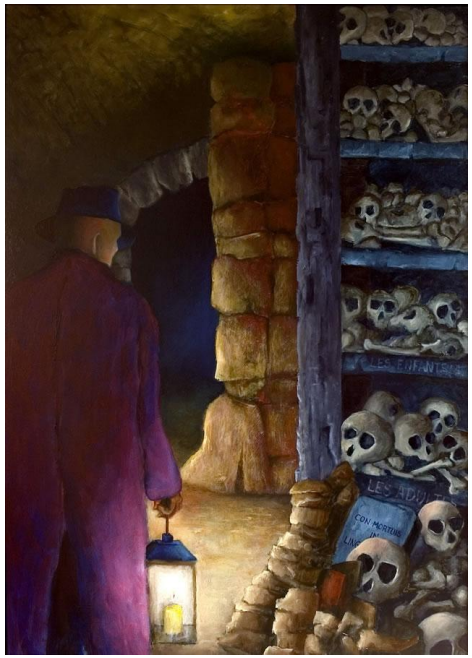
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

(More images on CD)

Listen to Holst's ***Planets***



Adapt the Rondo idea to different scenarios



Use Mussorgsky's ***Pictures at an Exhibition*** as a stimulus

LEARNING OUTCOMES & TRANSFERABILITY

- Listening, Performing and Composing
- Music as organised sound
- Musical concepts
- Links to set works and general listening
- Contemporary composers
- Group work and decision-making
- Inclusion, integration, differentiation
- Score reading and writing
- The Composing Elective at LC
- **NB! MUSICAL LEARNING**

HAPPY CLASSROOM COMPOSING!

Explore the resources on the accompanying CD

PDST Professional Development Service for Teachers

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