



A practical introduction to concepts of contemporary, minimalist dance music, using music technology. This project will take 8-10 lessons. Prior to this unit of work, pupils will need to have become familiar with the use of the sequencing package (e.g. Cakewalk Home Studio) and will need to have gained an understanding of how to form and use basic major and minor triads.

Before teaching this topic, the teacher will need to prepare the following using Cakewalk Home Studio:

- A small selection of appropriate dance-style drum loops and fills. These can be taken from the pre-existing selection of audio loops that comes with Cakewalk Home Studio. Alternatively, you can custom-create your own loops and fills using Fruityloops and use these in Cakewalk Home Studio.
- A selection of bass and chord loops, again taken from the selection available with Cakewalk Home Studio

This project covers the following National Curriculum targets from the Key Stage 3 programme of study:

- 2a) improvise, explore and develop musical ideas when performing
- 2b) produce, develop and extend musical ideas, selecting and combining resources within musical structures and a given genre
- 3a) analyse, compare and evaluate pieces of music
- 3c) adapt their own musical ideas and refine and improve their own work
- 4c) identify the resources, conventions, processes and procedures, including the use of ICT, in the dance music genre
- 4d) identify the contextual influences that affect the way music is created, performed and heard
- 5a) integrate performing, composing and appraising
- 5b) respond to a musical starting point
- 5c) work individually and in groups
- 5d) use ICT to create, manipulate and refine sounds
- 5e) listen to a range of recorded music in the dance music genre, from different periods of the C20th.

Teaching Activities:

- Discuss the pupils' own experiences of dance culture and music. Encourage pupils to bring in examples of dance music from their own CD collection. Play some examples of dance music from earlier in the C20th and discuss how and why styles of dance music have changed - venue, dance styles, use of technology etc.
- Based on the listening, encourage groups of pupils to make a list of the expected features of dance music- drum rhythms and fills, bass, chords and pads, riffs and hooks, technology and effects (e.g. panning, vocoders etc.), vocal lines etc. Discuss the findings of the groups and add and explain features that have been missed.
- Show the pupils the pre-prepared Cakewalk Home Studio audio loops of drum rhythms, fills, chords and bass riffs. Play each loop to the pupils in turn. Demonstrate to the children how to arrange the separate elements onto different tracks to create a short minimalist dance style piece with drums, chords and bass, and drum fills added appropriately. Cakewalk Home Studio will automatically alter the tempo of the loops to fit with the project tempo without the pitch being altered.
- Pupils carry out this task in groups, re-arranging the on-screen elements to create a 32-bar composition. Experiment with changing the tempo to create different effects.
- Introduce (or revise) the concept of chord sequences, noting the importance of the 'home' chord in giving a sequence cohesion and occasional minor chords in giving a sequence variety.
- Each individual pupil should create an 8-bar chord sequence selecting from C, G and F major, and A,D and E minor.
- In pairs, pupils experiment with their chord sequences on keyboards, trying different ways of playing their chords, e.g. sustained, arpeggiated etc.



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- Show pupils how to add a simple bass line to their chord sequence using the root note of each chord played to an appropriate rhythm. Pupils experiment with this on keyboards in pairs.
- In groups, pupils go back to the computer and use their own chord sequences, added to the pre-prepared drum audio loops, to create an extended piece of minimalist dance music containing bass, chords and percussion. Groups should be encouraged to experiment with contrasting chord styles, appropriate tempo and instrument sounds. Cakewalk Home Studios on-board software synths can be used to give a greater range of available sounds. Some pupils may wish to create their own drum loops and fills using Fruityloops and use these instead of the pre-prepared ones.
- When each group is happy with the basic piece, extra features such as brass hits and instrumental hooks can be added, and groups can experiment with using Cakewalk Home Studio to add effects such as reverb.
- Play every finished composition to the rest of the class. Discuss which makes the most effective use of the elements to create a minimalist dance music composition which balances the repetition necessary to the style, while still retaining some variety and interest