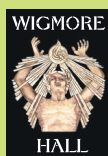


WORLD OF
jazz

SCHOOLS
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WIGMORE HALL
Learning



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A DRONE IN MUSIC REFERS TO A SUSTAINED SOUND WHICH GIVES A TONAL REFERENCE POINT FOR OTHER MUSICAL ELEMENTS TO INTERACT WITH, LIKE A MELODY, RHYTHMS OR EVEN OTHER DRONES. USUALLY THE DRONE WILL BE PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PIECE OF MUSIC.

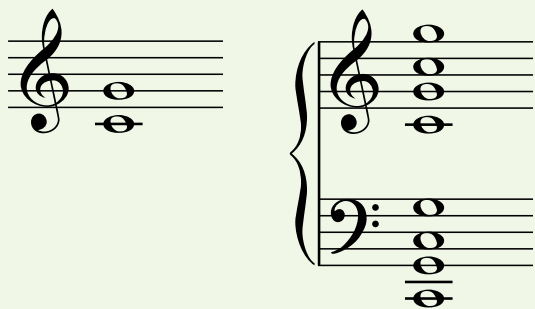
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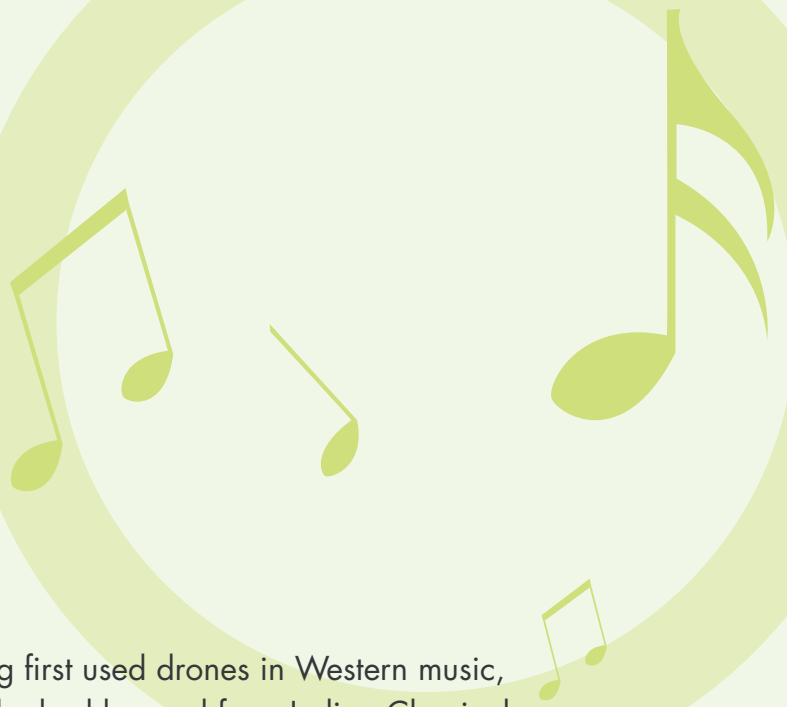
HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS AROUND THE WORLD THAT CREATE DRONES:

- ▶ INDIAN CARNATIC AND HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC:
Tanpuri, Shruti Box, Harmonium
- ▶ AUSTRALIA:
Didgeridoo
- ▶ ENGLISH FOLK:
Hurdy Gurdy
- ▶ SCOTLAND:
Bagpipes

Drones are associated with meditative and hypnotic sounds as their inherent stillness can create a stable and calm sound world with a feeling of strong foundation. Often the root and fifth or fourth are used to create an open and stable sound. If you add a third you then decide if your drone is major or minor. Any combination of notes for a drone are possible though, depending on the kind of piece you want to create.



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SOME OTHER FACTS:

- Minimalist composer Le Monte Young first used drones in Western music, using musical techniques and styles he had learned from Indian Classical Music as well as Japanese Classical Music. Steve Reich and Terry Riley, also minimalist composers followed suit with their music.
- Contemporary composer Nico Muhly has an album called Drones, which feature drones throughout every piece. He wanted his music to be like 'singing along with one's vacuum cleaner, or the subtle but constant humming found in most dwelling-places'.
- There is a subgenre of rock called Drone Music, which has been created and performed by various artists ranging from Kraftwerk, The Velvet Underground, Boards of Canada and Sonic Youth.





HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT YOU OR YOUR PUPILS COULD DO TO EXPLORE MORE ABOUT DRONES:

Drones are all around you! Keep an ear out for as many as you can. Start to think of them as potential elements of musical pieces.

1. EVERYDAY DRONE

Find an everyday drone and turn it into a piece of music

- This could be a bathroom fan, vacuum cleaner, electric toothbrush, wind blowing through a window, washing machine spin cycle; anything with a consistent sustained sound
- You could start by improvising melodies with your voice or an instrument. Once you've found something you like you could record it and write it down so you can play the piece again.
- Try and figure out what note or notes the drone sound is, and you can use that as a starting point for a composition.





2. THREE-WORD SONG

Make a two-note drone of your own design (you can have these as two single notes like a C and a G, or multiples of these notes using different octaves C, G, C, G, C). Write a three-word song with the drone as a foundation.

- You can make the drone in any way you like (repeatedly playing notes on a piano, guitar, electronic sounds), but you might want to record it and use the recording as a starting point to write your song with. There are free Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) programmes like Audacity and Garage Band which are useful for recording ideas. Or just a recording device like your phone is fine too.
- Make sure you stick to just three words, and remember your melody doesn't have to be limited to the number of syllables in the words you choose. You can lengthen some syllables by using more than one note on that syllable (a melisma).

3. SHAPE SHIFTING

- Make a single note drone
- Add two different notes at a time to change the character of the sound.
- You could do this at a piano, guitar, with electronics and a keyboard, or a group of three people singing or playing.
- Keep one note the same and change the other two notes.
- You'll be making chords but don't worry whether you know what the chords are called.

You could then add in the following things:

- Major chord
- Minor chord
- Big gaps between notes
- Little gaps between notes (scrunchy sounding note clusters)

Any note clusters that you like are fine. It doesn't have to be in a key, the drone will hold it all together and provide a stable reference point.





4. RHYTHMIC DRONE

Sometimes drones can be played rhythmically rather than just sustained (the didgeridoo for example). Make a rhythmic piece using the idea of pitches being static but the rhythm changing.



5. FOREGROUND: MIDDLE GROUND: BACKGROUND

You need either three people or three small groups. Make a piece with three different elements:

1. Drone
2. Melody or riff
3. Rhythm

Decide which element you want to be more prominent and which element you want to be in the background. Then you can perform your piece to the rest of the group!





RECOMMENDED LISTENING:

FOLK

OLIVIA CHANEY

The Dark Eyed Sailor

2 FOOT YARD

50 Miles

PENGUIN CAFE ORCHESTRA

Telephone And Rubber Band

POP, HIP HOP & ELECTRONIC

RADIOHEAD

Motion Picture Soundtrack / Treefingers

CAMILLE

Le Fil (album) The whole album has a drone running through it.

HERE WE GO MAGIC

How Do I Know

EMINEM

Lose Yourself

APHEX TWIN

Spots. Tassels

INDIAN CLASSICAL

PADMA SHANKAR

Sounds Of Chennai (YouTube)

RAVI SHANKAR

Spirit Of India (album)

HANUMAN CHALISA

Instrumental (YouTube)

WESTERN CLASSICAL

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The Lark Ascending (first minute or so)

MINIMALISM

TERRY RILEY

In C

LA MONTE YOUNG

Trio For Strings

STEVE REICH

Music For 18 Musicians

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL

NICO MUHLY

Drones (album)

DAVID FENNESSY

The Room Is The Resonator

MICHAEL GORDON

Industry

Musician and composer Jem Finer has created a piece called 'Long Player', which is an installation in Trinity Buoy Wharf Lighthouse, London. The piece is designed to play for 1000 years, and it started playing at 00:00 1 Jan 2000.

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