LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 - 1827)

Symphony No. 5 (1st movement)

Focus of Lesson
- Introduction to the piece
- Recognition and understanding of repeated motif
- Understanding basic rhythmic patterns
- Development of motif through rhythm and melody

Key Vocabulary
- **Tempo**: the speed at which a piece of music is played
- **Motif**: a repeated group of notes
- **Movement**: a ‘chapter’ from a longer piece of music
- **Rhythm**: pattern of different length notes or sounds

Try to introduce the above terms and their meanings to pupils during the lesson.

LESSON

**Introduction**

Many composers throughout history have written symphonies – which are big pieces of music for a whole orchestra to play. Hundreds of years ago, orchestras were smaller, but as time has gone on they have grown. Some symphony orchestras contain more than 100 players. Imagine having a football team with that many players!

In his lifetime, Beethoven wrote nine symphonies, and this piece of music is taken from his fifth symphony. He started to write this symphony in 1804, and it took him four years to write. It is normal for symphonies to have three or four (or more) different movements – like chapters in a book, or episodes in a television series. This is the first movement, out of four movements, and is one of the most famous pieces of music in the world. Ask pupils if they have heard this piece of music before. Do they recognise the first eight notes of the piece?

**Listen** to the opening four notes of the piece. This is called a **motif** (moe-teef), which is a musical term meaning a repeated group of notes. This technique is used a lot in symphonic writing, but this is probably one of the most famous motifs. The motif is heard, on different groups of instruments and using different notes, throughout the first movement, and throughout the entire symphony. It is used as a way of tying the four movements together, making them feel like they all belong. Play the extract of music to the pupils and ask them to raise their hands when they think they can hear the four-note motif being played.

**Explain** the importance of rhythm in this symphony. The notes of the motif change each time you hear it, but the rhythm stays the same. Can the pupils explain the rhythm to you? Are the four notes long notes or short notes, or a mixture of both? After discussion, clarify that the rhythm is made up of three short notes followed by one long note. This is the rhythm that is repeated again and again. Clap the rhythm with the pupils, then play the piece again asking the pupils to listen carefully for these short and long notes.
Create a rhythmic motif of no more than six notes. Pupils can do this either individually or in pairs, and can simply clap, tap or click the rhythm, or use an untuned percussion instrument. The rhythm should consist of a mixture of long and short notes. A simple rhythm is often the most memorable.

Perform these rhythms to the rest of the group, in turn, and ask others to identify how many long notes and how many short notes make up each motif. If this is not clear, encourage pupil/s to demonstrate their rhythmic motif again, focusing hard on the combination of long and short notes.

Extension work
Pupils can expand the compositional aspect of this activity by creating a melody for their motif. This can be very simple (remind them that Beethoven’s motif only contains two different notes). Pupils should identify ways in which their motif can be developed, through using different notes, different speeds, and different instruments. Experimentation is the key here!

Learning Outcomes
- Understanding the structure of a symphonic work
- Understanding the importance of rhythm in any composition or work
- Understanding the significance of a motif, or a repeated group of notes, as a compositional technique
- Being able to recognise and identify a rhythmic motif in context