

The Orchestra Rocks with Repetition and Improvisation

Focal Work: Terry Riley's *In C*

AIM: How can we rock with repetition and improvisation?

MATERIALS: LinkUP! student guide; LinkUP! CD; CD player; pencils; chart paper; large index cards or poster-size paper; masking or electrical tape

STANDARDS: US 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; NYC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

SUMMARY: Students will explore pulse and repetition, while learning melodic fragments to perform and improvise at the LinkUP! concert.

VOCABULARY:

Fragment: a small, incomplete musical idea

Grace note: a short sound that is played or sung to add musical decoration, usually to another main note and written in a smaller size compared to regular notes



Improvisation: making up and performing musical ideas that are not written down

Lyrics: words written for a song

Phrase: a musical idea; usually a group of notes

Pulse: the steady part of music that keeps repeating

Quarter note: a musical sound that lasts for one beat

Repetition: doing exactly the same thing over and over

Syllables: vocal sounds to help singers perform music without words

See Appendix B on page 86 for composer information.

Activity 1: Exploring Pulse

- Ask students if they can find their pulse by inviting them to find pressure points on their bodies (such as the wrist or the neck). Explain how a pulse is connected to the heart and heartbeat. Connect this to music by explaining that, just like a heartbeat, it's that steady beating repetition that we call the pulse of the music.
- Play "The Name Game": Form a circle and keep a steady pulsing beat as you go from person to person by snapping fingers, patting knees, or clapping hands. Once the pulse is established, speak your name to fit in with the beat. The class repeats that name before moving on to the next student in the circle.
- Try variations: Speak the names with longer or shorter breaks between syllables, or even elongated syllables—always trying to fit the name into the pulse.

1 | | | |

2 | | | | |

Aud-rey Ste-pha-nie Sue Tom Mar-te

- Try other variations of this game, playing instruments or creating movements that represent each name. Be sure to keep the pulse going with body percussion or instruments.

• Ask students:

- *What was fun about this activity?*
- *What was challenging or easy about this activity?*
- *How did we all stay together?*
- *Why is the pulse important?*

Activity 2: Listening Challenge



Track 6

With students, listen to Terry Riley's *In C*. Have students use SG11 to write about one of the following Listening Challenges:

- Is it easy or difficult to hear the pulse? All the time? Why or why not?
- How do all the other parts of the music fit in with the pulse?

You can share with the students that the pulse is heard on the piano, played on the pitch C, which is why the piece is called *In C*. You can also listen to the pulse from *In C* by itself:



Track 7

Activity 3: Exploring Repetition and Improvisation

- Lead students in a brainstorming of musical sounds they can make, such as snapping, whistling, hand-rubbing, stomping, and humming. Write the types of sounds on the board or on chart paper. Practice the list of sounds as a class.
- From the list, pick six to 10 of these sounds and write each one (or a visual representation of the sound) on large index cards or poster-size paper (one sound per card).
- Clear a wide space in the classroom and create a sound map by putting a long strip of masking or electrical tape (12-feet or more) on the floor. Along one side of the tape, place the cards in any order, spacing them evenly or unevenly from one end to the other. For example:

snapping

whistling

hand-
rubbing

stomping

humming

Start

Finish

- Choose a small group of students (two or three) to perform the piece. The other students can observe attentively.
- Without talking, have the small group of students gather at one end of the taped line (labeled *Start*). As students move along the line towards the end labeled *Finish*, they stop in front of each card and repeatedly make that specific sound.
- Each student may move as slowly or as quickly towards the finish as desired and may spend as much time at each card as they like. There will be lots of overlapping sounds. Encourage students to listen attentively to all of the sounds.

Have the observing students reflect on what they noticed, what they wondered, and how they think the piece could be performed differently.

- Choose another small group of students to perform so that eventually all students participate. Repeat the reflection questions and write down students' thoughts on chart paper to document the interpretations. You can space this activity out over a couple of class sessions.
- Ask students:
 - *Would this sound the same every time?*
 - *What would be a good title for our piece? Why?*
 - *What made you move on to the next sound?*
 - *What are the challenges of concentrating on your own part and hearing everyone else at the same time?*
- Explain that this is how musicians perform in Terry Riley's *In C*. Riley composed several simple phrases that are played along with a constant pulse. At the same time, musicians get to repeat each phrase as many times as they want before moving on to the next sound.

STRING EXTENSION: EXPLORING REPETITION AND IMPROVISATION

- Using the list of extended techniques from the previous String Extension on page 31, have students choose three or four sounds. Complete Activity 3 from the third step, performing the sound map with the sounds students chose from the list.

Exploring Repetition and Improvisation

With my class, I made a sound composition. Our sounds were:



Our sound map looked like this ...

START

FINISH

Activity 4: Learning Phrases from *In C*

- Terry Riley used small melodic fragments to create 53 numbered phrases for *In C*. Your students will learn and rock out with the orchestra by performing the first seven phrases at the LinkUP! concert by either singing, or playing the recorder or the violin. Begin with some stretching and vocal warm-ups so students can sing their best. Look at Appendix A on page 84 or visit *LinkUP! Beginnings* at the Carnegie Hall Online Resource Center for additional ideas.

Learning Seven Phrases from *In C*

The following procedure is recommended for teaching each of the phrases:

1. Look at the written example of the phrase. All of them are on page 37 and on SG13. Lyrics for the phrases are provided. Be sure that students know these lyrics well in preparation for the LinkUP! concert. The phrases may also be played on the recorder (omitting the low Cs if necessary).
2. Listen to the phrase multiple times.



Track 8–21 (See page 37 for tracks and phrases.)

3. Using the Four Step Process, try singing or playing the phrase without the CD. (Play it slowly at first and then gradually speed up.)



4. Try singing or playing the phrase with the CD.
5. When students have learned a phrase, they can repeat it multiple times, either with the recording or on their own.
6. Have students practice singing or playing the phrases on their own with the pulse track.



Track 7

Recorder Note: If your students will be playing the recorder rather than singing this piece at the LinkUP! concert, be sure to review the fingerings and note names for the seven phrases on SG12. In order to play all of the phrases on the recorder, your students need to know:

- low C, low E, F, G, high C

Your students will also need to know the following rhythms:

- grace notes*, whole notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, quarter rests, and eighth rests (See page 37 for details.)

*may be omitted from the first two phrases for students playing the recorder

Vocal and recorder parts to *In C* are below. Bowings for string teachers are also provided below.

1.



Bow the same on repeat

Ba-rang, ba-rang, ba-rang



Track 8 or 9

2.



Bow as it comes on repeat

Ba-rang-a-rang



Track 10 or 11

3.



Bow as it comes on repeat

Gar-rang-a



Track 12 or 13

4.



Bow as it comes on repeat

Rang-a-du



Track 14 or 15

5.



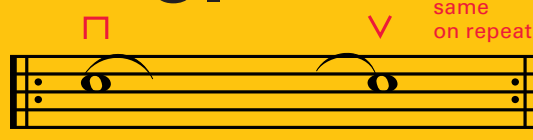
Bow the same on repeat

Du-rang-a



Track 16 or 17

6.



Bow the same on repeat

See,

see



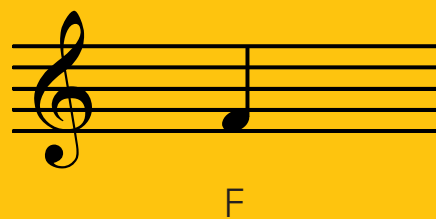
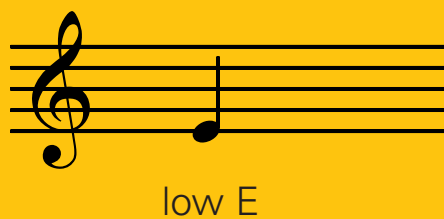
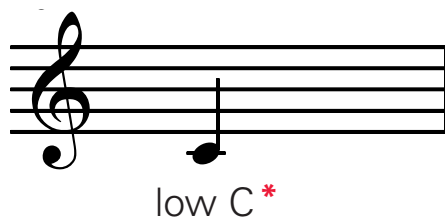
Track 18 or 19

7.



Learning Terry Riley's *In C*

Here are the notes you need to know before playing *In C* on the recorder.



* optional

Your Vocal or Recorder Part to *In C*

1.



Ba-rang, ba-rang, ba-rang

2.



Ba-rang-a-rang

3.



Gar-rang-a

4.



Rang-a-du

5.



Du-rang-a

6.



See,

see

7.



Ba-da-doop

STRING EXTENSION

- Using the notation on SG13, teach your students the seven phrases from *In C* on their violins (also included on page 37).

- Bowings for the individual phrases are as follows:

Phrase 1. Leave out grace notes (to avoid string crossing) and play as it comes, counting in groups of three: down-up-down, down-up-down, down-up-down ...

Phrase 2. Leave out grace notes (to avoid string crossing) and play as it comes, making sure to hold the quarter note longer than the eighth notes: down-up-down, up-down-up ...

Phrase 3. Always start on an up-bow. Stop the bow after you play the third eighth note to prepare for the repeat of the phrase, starting again on an up-bow: up-down-up (stop), up-down-up (stop) ...

Phrase 4. Follow the instructions listed for the third phrase (above).

Phrase 5. Always start on a down-bow. Use the eighth rest to lift and circle the bow in the air to be ready for the next down-bow: down-up-down (circle), down-up-down (circle) ...

Phrase 6. Always start on a down-bow, counting to four on each note: down—, up—, down—, up—

Phrase 7. Always start on a down-bow, circling the bow during the rests; help students count the rests by dividing the phrase into three groups of three counts, counting out loud: down-up-down—(circle), down-up-down—(circle) ...

Example: Phrase 7

□ ▽ □

(circle bow)



Activity 5: Listening Quiz Game

- Number large cards or poster-size paper one through seven (one number per card), including each respective phrase from *In C* (see page 37 or SG13).
- Establish the pulse by either choosing a small group of students to play steady eighth notes or by using the CD track.



Track 7

- Play a memory game with the seven phrases to help students master and identify each phrase by its corresponding number. Hold up each numbered card to prompt students to begin playing the selected musical phrase. Choose from tracks 8–21 to practice. This process will help prepare students for the LinkUP! concert.
- During the concert, we will project the numbers of the phrases on the screen in a similar manner.
- As students improve, ask them to share their strategies with other students:
 - *How would you describe the differences among phrases?*
 - *How do you remember which phrase is which?*

Listening Quiz Game

Now that you know the seven phrases from *In C* by number, play a game with your class. Which phrase do you hear? Write the lyrics to the phrases you hear below.

1.



2.



3.



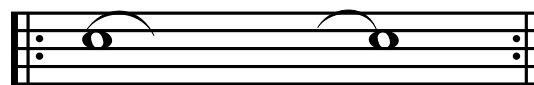
4.



5.



6.



7.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Activity 6: Listening Challenge**Track 6**

Have students listen to the complete version of Terry Riley's *In C*. Lead a discussion based on one or more of the following Listening Challenges. Ask students:

- *What kinds of patterns are you hearing in the music?*
- *Which parts are staying the same and which are changing?*
- *Can you always hear the pulse? Why or why not?*
- *How are the performers playing the phrases you learned?*

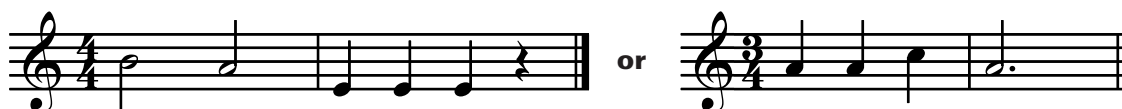
MUSICAL EXTENSION: EXPLORING MINIMALIST CONCEPTS AND REPETITION

- Terry Riley's *In C* is made up of a collection of small melodic fragments or phrases.

Lead students in conversation and demonstration, as necessary. Ask students:

- *How can you create a musical phrase?*
- *What inspires the phrase?*
- *How do you think Terry Riley got his ideas?*

- Lead a brief warm-up on recorders or violins, reviewing the pitches that the students can use in their composition.
- Individually or in small groups, give students one minute to make up a short melodic phrase on their recorders or violins, or with their voices—the shorter, the better. (See below for a String Extension.) If necessary, model an example like:



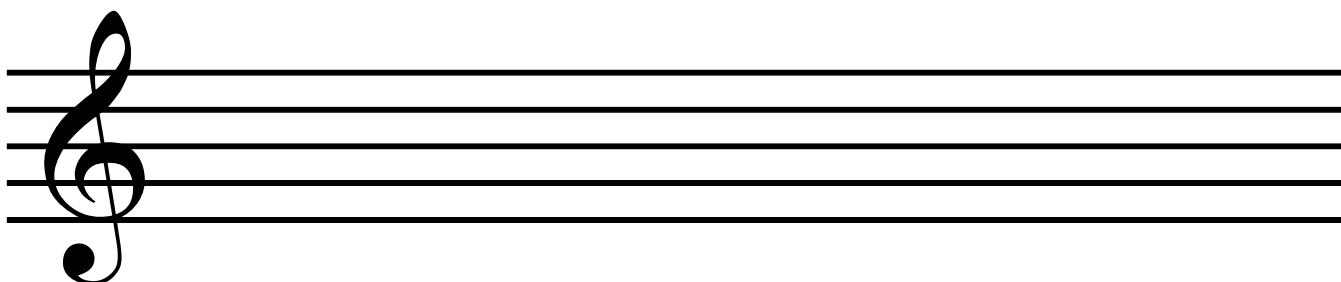
- Instruct students that once they get an idea, they should try repeating it a few times. Have student volunteers share their phrases.
- Write down the students' phrases on a chart paper, and lead the class in practicing and repeating each phrase. Students can also document their phrases in their books on SG15. Spaces for traditional and non-traditional notation are provided. (For students performing on recorders or violins, traditional notation is probably easier to use.)

STRING EXTENSION: CREATING MUSICAL PHRASES

- Have students work in pairs to compose and notate their own phrases in the key of C. You might suggest that they use four to seven notes, at least two strings, and two different rhythms. Practice playing and repeating each phrase. Be sure to keep track of the students' phrases on chart paper. They can also write down the phrases in the back of their books.

My Musical Phrase

I created my own musical phrase. It looks like:



I made up my own way of writing down my musical phrase:

Activity 7: Putting Our Phrases Together

- Terry Riley experimented with making up his own musical rules by using improvisation and chance. In the same spirit, lead your students in making up their own rules for how the class's piece should be performed. Ask students:
 - *Should we put phrases in a particular order, or should everyone come in when they want?*
 - *Does everyone play at once or should we take turns?*
 - *How many times should we repeat each phrase?*
 - *Do we want the piece to feel like it has separate sections or just one constant stream of sound?*
 - *How do we want each section to sound (thick or thin, busy or smooth)?*
 - *How do we know when to start and stop each repetition?*
 - *How will we start and end the piece?*
 - *Should we try it with a conductor?*
 - *Should we add a constant note pulse or percussion pulse?*
- Ask students:
 - *What is it like getting to make up your own rules for performing a piece of music?*
 - *What are the challenges of this type of music making?*
 - *Would our piece sound the same each time we performed it? Why or why not?*

STRING EXTENSION: PUTTING OUR PHRASES TOGETHER

- Revisit the students' composed phrases from the previous String Extension on page 43. Have them decide how the phrases should be put together to make a piece in the spirit of *In C*. See above for suggested questions to facilitate this activity.
- Assign one student to be the pulse-keeper and play steady quarter notes on C throughout. Then, taking the students' original phrases and repeating them, have the other students perform their new composition.
- Revisit the questions above and have students perform their piece a second time, making any changes based on their answers to those questions.
- Photocopy the self-assessment chart on SG27. Have students complete it as they do the activity above. Allow time for students to revise their phrases with their thoughts from completing the chart.

CREATIVE EXTENSION

- Revisit and practice your class ostinato from unit 1, documented on SG7. Just as Terry Riley used a constant pulse for *In C*, now take your ostinato and repeat it over and over as a constant figure throughout the class's composition.
- Now add one or two melodic phrases—either from a previous activity or ones that you have composed—to layer over your ostinato.
- Get your ostinato going, then sing or play your phrases. The phrases may happen in an improvisatory manner, as they do in *In C*, or your fragments may be planned and written out in a more organized way.
- Document your ostinato with phrase layer(s) on SG16.
- **Practice, record, share, and upload.**

Our Ostinato with New Phrases

With my class, I added musical phrases to layer over our ostinato. Together, they look like this:

