Beethoven – Symphony No. 5 (Movement 1)

Listening

Philharmonia Performance ▶

Score Performance ▶

Context

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German composer who composed during the late Classical and early Romantic periods of music. His music is seen as being transitional – moving from the Classical period to the Romantic period. Beethoven experienced the first symptoms of hearing loss in his late twenties, and was profoundly deaf by the time of his death aged 56.

A symphony is a piece for orchestra that usually has 4 separate movements. This first movement is one of the most famous pieces of music ever written and was composed between 1804-08. In 1977, the Philharmonia's recording of it was sent into space on board the Voyager Space Craft (as part of the Voyager Golden Record). The music is out of this world!

Short 5-minute task: Musical Motifs

The movement opens with a very famous musical idea (sometimes called a musical motif). This has 3 short notes, followed by a longer note, and is repeated a tone lower:

For this short task, play the opening (0:00-0:28) using the video link above. Ask your students to count how many times they can hear this motif. They can use their fingers to count, or can make a tally if they prefer to write things down. By our count it is 14 times in the first 28 seconds!

Stretch and Challenge

– **Are all the times we hear the motif the same? Encourage pupils to look at the score on the score link to see if they can identify the changes – for example, repetition 9 keeps the rhythm the same but adds an extra note, while repetition 10 changes the direction to ascend rather than descend.**

Support and Scaffold

– **Try doing this as a class as a fun initial activity. If needed, shorten the extract up to 0:20 (8 repetitions and easier to count on your fingers!)**

Medium 20-minute task: Art Challenge

This movement lasts just under 8 minutes. Consider playing the piece twice through, asking students to respond to it by creating a picture which depicts what the music makes them think of. There is no right or wrong answer here but the artwork needs to be finished by the time the second performance has finished.

To help with inspiration, the following videos might be useful:

A graphic score of the movement ▶

Line Rider animation of the movement ▶

Fantasia (Disney) animation ▶

If you have time and space, ask students to display their artwork in your school.

Stretch and Challenge

– Encourage pupils to explain what they have drawn and explain how the music inspired their creation

Support and Scaffold

– Allow pupils to work in a medium in which they are confident, and consider using a reduced extract (for example the first 90 seconds) rather than the full 8 minutes.

Longer 45-minute task: Morse Code Alien Communication

Combining the opening 4 note motif and the fact this piece was sent into space, this challenge looks at making a code to communicate with alien life-forms in outer space.

The 3 short 1 long motif translates as the letter V in morse code. This challenge encourages your students to use morse code to create a composition which uses musical motifs to communicate a message to alien life forms.

Step 1: In pairs, try communicating a common word like 'Hey' or 'Cat' using body percussion, blinking or using your voice. Can the other person guess your word?

Step 2: then try to make a melody out of this rhythm using different pitches

Step 3: then add different dynamics and tempo changes to add more complexity

Step 4: try to then do this with a longer phrase to communicate to the aliens

Stretch and Challenge

– Encourage students to compose more complex words or phrases, using dynamics, pitch, texture and tempo changes to make their work increasingly complex.

Support and Scaffold

– Encourage students to spell their name using morse code and body percussion or their voices.
– If pupils are finding the morse code too complex, use the V code/4 note motif as a basis for composition.
– Encourage pupils to use dynamics and/ or changes in pitch to add variety to their composition.

Morse Code Directory:

Listening Guide

Timings based on the video link at the top of this section. This piece is written in a structure called Sonata Form which has 4 main sections – Exposition, Development, Recapitulation and Coda. This structure is used by loads of composers writing pieces like this. If you want to find out more about this important form, the **video here** ▶ gives a useful history.

Timings	Musical features to listen out for
0:00-1:31	This section is called the Exposition. First idea using 4 note motif. Loud dynamics, C minor – serious, angry, passionate. A second melody idea, contrasting to the first, starts from 0:53 in a contrasting major key.
1:31-2:55	The opening section repeats with no changes.
2:56-4:18	This section is called the Development. This section develops the opening motif, with lots of changes in key moving the music away from C minor.
4:19-5:52	This section is called the Recapitulation. A repeat of the opening section in the home key of C minor. A few small changes in the melody to give a contrast in character, including an emotive oboe solo. The second melody idea is repeated in a different major key
5:53-end	This section is called the Coda. This section rounds the movement off, exploring the opening 4 note idea again in different ways.

Links to other subjects

This piece can link well to these other areas of the
school curriculum:

Subject	Links
PSHE	• Discussions around disability (hearing loss) and acceptance of difference, or the potential health impacts of listening to music that is too loud and how this can impact hearing of students (how to manage risk).
History	• The Voyager Programme is a great opportunity to explore more about the exploration of space – the short video **here** ▶ gives some highlights of the programme • This could be linked to learning about the Space Race as a part of the Cold War between the USA and USSR.

This piece is also covered in *BBC Ten Pieces* and
there are lots of different resources on this piece
which can be accessed **here** ▶. This includes
arrangements of the piece for different instruments
and standards if you want to try performing the piece
as a class.