

Popular music of the 20th and 21st centuries

Hip-hop and music theatre



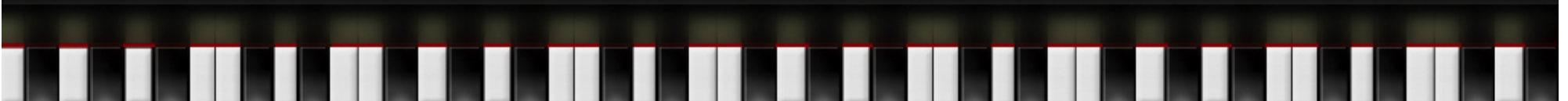
Hip-hop

- # Hip-hop is a genre of music which emerged in New York during the 1970s when **DJs** began to **loop** percussion breaks taken from **funk** or rock songs to create a powerful rhythmic 'beat' for their audiences to dance to.
- # In hip-hop terms, the beat is everything but the vocals.
- # It is often built up in layers, including the basic audio loop of a drum track or midi drum patterns, a bass line, supporting orchestration such as a synthesiser and a variety of sound samples.
- # The shortest beats are usually 8 bars long, but can be looped to produce beats of any length.



Hip-hop

- # One feature of the music is the 'break', where the drum (or electronic/computer-generated sound) plays a short solo.
- # This was later accompanied by **rapping**, where the performer, often the DJ, speaks rhythmically and in rhyme to the beat.
- # loops were originally created on tape, but developments in technology have enabled musicians to create and modify loops digitally, even in live performance, while also being able to add other electronic effects by using **samplers** and **synthesisers**.



Hip-hop

- # A sampler is a device that stores recordings of many different sounds (samples) as digital information, which can then be played and modified in many different ways.
- # Hip-hop musicians have experimented by using different genres of music to create new and exciting beats, and to develop different styles of hip-hop.
- # Rhythm 'n' Bass is one of those styles, where there is an emphasis on projecting a strong bass line in the music.



Listening Quiz

Listen to 'Good Life' by Kanye West. Notice how the beat is built up using different sound loops, including a synthesiser and electronic drum and rhythm effects. Over this there is rapping with the voices electronically changed in places.

a) What term best describes the synthesiser melody heard at the start of the piece?

b) What term best describes the tonality of this song?

major

minor

modal

pentatonic



Research study

Hip-hop culture

Hip-hop is a whole culture, involving dancing, fashions, art and a varied music scene. Find out more about hip-hop either through magazine articles or by using the internet.



Music theatre

- # Music theatre works are generally referred to as **musicals**.
- # Like opera, a musical is a play which uses music to express emotion.
- # Like a play, it has characters, scenery and costumes and tells a story.
- # However, like opera it makes use of **solo songs**, duets, **ensembles** and **choruses** to express the emotion of the words, and is accompanied by instruments, usually and orchestra.



Music theatre

- # There are some differences between musicals and opera.
- # Spoken dialogue is used more frequently in musicals than in opera, as well as dancing.
- # Musical are often influenced by popular music styles such as rock, blues or jazz, and use electronic guitars, keyboards and amplifiers to boost the volume of the singers and instruments.
- # An opera is usually sung in the language in which it was composed, by professionally trained singers.



Music theatre

- # However, a musical is more often sung in the language of its audience, and the singers are actors first, rather than professionally trained singers, which is one reason why amateur performances of musicals are so common.
- # Music theatre is big business.
- # Theatres in major cities, such as London and New York, offer a wide choice of musicals, ranging from established classics such as *The Phantom of the Opera* (Andrew Lloyd Webber) and *Les Misérables* (Claude-Michel Schönberg) to productions of brand new musicals.



Activity

- # Ask people you know to tell you about any musicals they have been to see, and what they enjoyed about them.
- # Perhaps your school is producing or has produced a musical.
- # Find out more about who wrote it and what popular style of music it is based on.
- # Perhaps you could interview one of the singers about their role and the music they sang.



Listening Quiz

Listen to 'Bring him home' from the musical *Les Misérables*. This song is sung by the character Valjean. Although it is sung by a **tenor** voice, much of the music is written higher than the singer's vocal range, so that he has to sing **falsetto**.

- a) What effect does this have on the music?
- b) Why do you think the vocal part has been written this way?
- c) Which plan best represents the structure of this excerpt?

ABA ABC ABB AAB

- a) What is the tonality of this excerpt?
- b) What is the interval between the first two notes sung by Valjean?

fourth fifth sixth octave



Key terms

- # **Loop** – a sample of sound, or a short section of recorded music that is repeated continuously
- # **Funk** – a style of music developed from soul, rhythm ‘n’ blues and jazz. It is raw and exciting, with an emphasis on the bass line and rhythm. In funk, the bass guitar creates a distinctive, slapping the strings. Strong bass and drum rhythms combine with the other instruments to give a strong **polyrhythmic** feel to the music.

