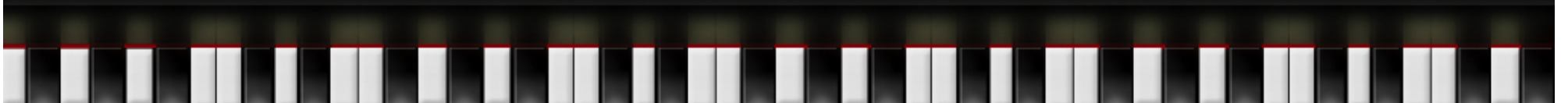


World Music

Music of Africa: choral and popular music



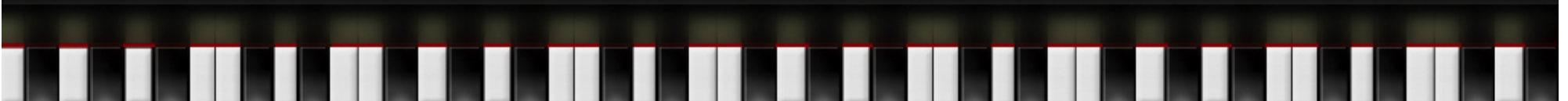
Music in Africa

- # Africa is a vast continent with many different regions and nations, each with its own traditions and identity.
- # Music plays an important part in African society. It has religious, ritual and ceremonial functions, as well as being used at social gatherings.
- # African music has its roots in legends, mythology and folklore, and is used to communicate feelings and emotions that express the way the society in which it is produced views the world.



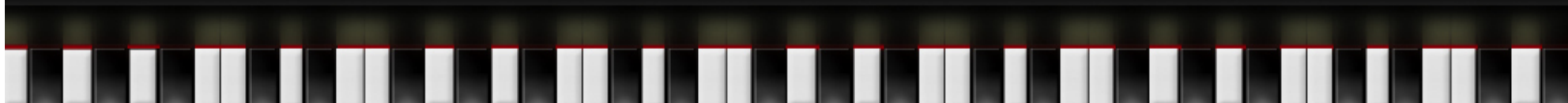
Music in Africa

- # Music is often combined with dance; in fact, in some African languages they are both described by one word.
- # Traditional African music is an **oral tradition**, and was never written down.
- # Despite Africa's diverse and different cultures, there are some musical features, such as rhythm patterns, structures, textures and the use of improvisation, that unite the music of various groups and areas.



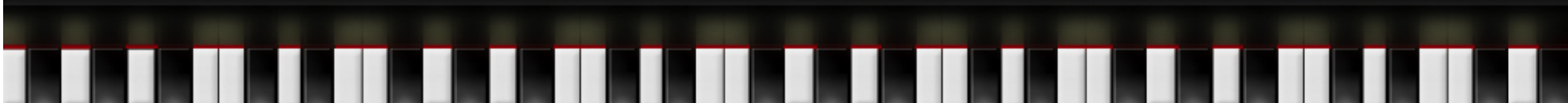
African choral music

- # There is a close connection between speech and singing.
- # Many African languages are **tonal languages**, which means that the pitch level at which a word is spoken often determines its meaning.
- # This affects the way melodic and rhythmic patterns in vocal music are created; the unique pitches and *intonation* (tuning) of African music make it difficult to relate to Western notation.
- # Most African melodies are based on four, five, six or seven-note scales.
- # African vocal melodies are usually short and simple, often being extended by repetition and improvisation.



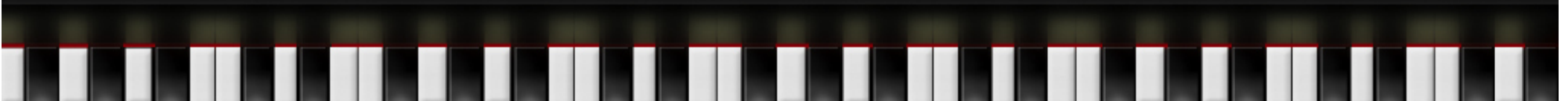
African choral music

- # A common way of structuring a choral piece is by using **call and response**.
- # The solo singer starts with a melody, and this is responded to (answered) by the other singers.
- # During a performance it is common for different melodies to be improvised at the same time, producing a rich **polyphonic/contrapuntal** texture.
- # At other times, a **harmonic/homophonic** texture may be used.
- # In African music this is often created by singing in thirds, fourths or fifths.
- # Unison and **parallel** octave textures are also common.



Activity

- # See if you can find some songs from Africa in the music department.
- # Some of them may be in harmony, so try singing them as a group.
- # Try composing and performing your own call and response song, making up your own words about some aspect of school life.



Popular music

- # African music has been a major influence on the development of popular music, contributing rhythms, structures, melodic features and the use of improvisation to such styles as blues and jazz brought over to America by slaves.
- # More recently, African music has once again been the focus of American popular musicians, contributing its unique vocal and instrumental styles to such albums as Paul Simon's *Graceland*.



Listening Activity

- # Listen to 'Uma Ilanga Liyo' by the Soweto Gospel Choir.
- # What features of traditional African music do you hear, and how has the piece been influenced by other popular music styles?



Key Words

- # **Parallel motion** – two voices moving up or down in pitch, but always keeping the same interval (pitch-distance) between the two notes.
- # The most common examples of this are parallel octaves and parallel fifths.

