

Knowledge Organiser: Ancient China



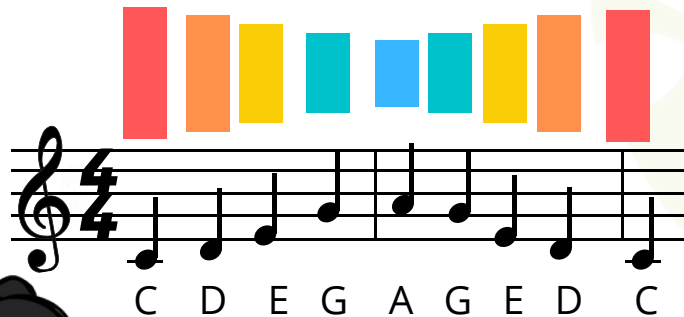
Topic Background

It is impossible to know exactly what the music of Ancient China actually sounded like as there are no recordings for us to listen to. However, historical evidence has been left behind for us to gain a picture of what music might have sounded like. Archaeological finds from a dig in central China in 1979 accidentally found a tomb when foundations were being dug for the building of a factory. What was unearthed was a huge collection of metal bells that were capable of producing 12 tones of music. Also found were a whole arrangement of other sophisticated pitched instruments from flutes to stringed instruments.

There is a dominance of pitched instruments in the archaeological dig which leads us to conclude that melodic and harmonic music was more important than strongly percussive rhythmic music in ancient times.

Musical Knowledge

pentatonic scale



The pentatonic scale is a scale with five notes. In this unit, we use the notes C, D, E, G, A.

note values



harmonious accompaniment



clashing accompaniment



Listening Pieces

- Playing musical instruments while walking along the street.
Ancient Chinese Music: Wild Geese Descending On a Sandy Beach. Cao Jinguo.

Chinese Instruments



flute
made of bamboo



ocarina
a pitched instrument made of clay



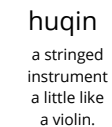
metal bells
capable of producing 12 tones of music



pipa
a Chinese stringed instrument, played like a guitar



zither
a stringed instrument plucked from above.



huqin
a stringed instrument a little like a violin.

Key Vocabulary

- accompany:** provides rhythmic or harmonic support to the melody
- clashing:** not pleasant sounding
- duration:** how long or short a sound or silence is
- dynamics:** how loud or quiet a sound is
- harmonious:** the sound of two or more notes that are pleasing to listen to
- improvise:** creating music on the spot
- melody:** the tune of the music made up of high and low pitches
- notation:** a way of writing down music so that anyone can play it
- pentatonic scale:** a series of five notes e.g. C, D, E, G, A
- pitch:** how high or low a sound is
- solo:** a section of music played or sung alone by one performer
- stave:** the five lines that notes are placed on to indicate pitch
- tempo:** how fast or slow the music is
- texture:** how the different layers of the music combine to give an overall effect