**Minimalism**

**Minimalism** involves a general reduction of materials with an emphasis on repetition and stasis as well as gradual change. Early minimalist works contained a steady pulse, short melodic patterns (recurring ostinati) that were gradually extended, contracted, or modified in some way, phrase relationships that were based on gradual nonsynchronization, and a tonal bias. Minimalist music is a type of compositional process. Some of the early minimalists were Terry Riley, Lamonte Young, and Steve Reich. Philip Glass extended the minimalist’s procedures into the world of music theater.

**Types of minimalistic music:**

1. **Tape loops** - Recurring ostinati. Sounds were recorded on magnetic recording tape. The tape was then spliced and taped back together to form a loop. This created an infinite number of repetitions of the sound when the tape loop was played back. See *Come Out* by Steve Reich.

2. **Live performance** - Reich often composed pieces for two or more of the same instrument. *Piano Phase* was written for two pianos. *Four Organs* involves the gradual increasing of durations of individual tones within a single chord.

3. **Nonpulsed minimalism** - No pulse, and limits are placed on a certain music parameter or parameters creating a sense of a fluctuating stasis. There is generally a more precise notation employed. Ligeti's *Atmosphères* uses sound masses that gradually ebb and flow. Arnold Schoenberg's op. 16, no. 3 involves a single chord which is filtered through various colors.

Four basic compositional techniques employed by minimalist composers:

1. **Additive Melody** - Extends or reduces a repetitive melodic pattern by increments of the smallest rhythmic value.

2. **Rotation** - Successive statements of a melodic or rhythmic pattern begin at different points within the pattern.

3. **Texture Construction** - An ostinato fabric of multiple voices may gradually grow more or less complex as individual members enter or leave the texture during repetitions.

4. **Isorhythmic Overlap** - Ostinati of various lengths are stated simultaneously.