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 Stern, Samantha

Question 2 Complete 10.00 points out of 10.00 **Flag question** **Edit question**

Exam 3, part I, question 2:

Instructions for this type of question: This question requires a **paragraph-length** answer (so it should be somewhere in the neighborhood of a half-page of typed writing—to receive full credit, you will need to provide multiple fully-fleshed out sentences). For your musical characteristics, make sure to be detailed and specific. Again, you may use your notes, textbook, and course lecture materials. The answer will be graded on accuracy, content, and writing style.

2.

One of the most important stylistic developments of the 1960s was the emergence of minimalism. Turning to one early minimalist work we covered in class, Steve Reich's "Come Out" (1966): please explain how this work was put together. What are some musical characteristics of "Come Out"? How are those characteristics similar to or different from broad definitions of minimalism?

Finally, some people have claimed that minimalism is “aloof from politics and commerce and above personal feeling,” while others have argued that minimalist art in the 1960s directly engaged with social and political issues. How is Steve Reich’s work “Come Out” obviously connected with political and social events of the 1960s? Why is it important to bring awareness of the context to our understanding of this work (as opposed to strictly focusing on musical style)?

Minimalism is interesting because it doesn't have any one single unifying feature that defines it as a style. Minimalism came about as a blending of styles from around the world and across time that focused on the arrangement of sound itself. Composers like Steve Reich grew up in a world where recordings and other electronic means of making music were readily available to them, so it only makes sense that people would start exploring and questioning what it means to make music. Steve Reich's piece "Come Out" was made using his phasing technique, in which he took 2 tape loops of the same material and played them side by side until they gradually got out of sync with one another. This technique took the idea of "pattern and process music" and ran with it because it was literally focusing on one set of sounds, from one point in time, and using technology to manipulate it. Come Out uses a recording of an interview with Daniel Hamm, so Reich used the natural rhythm and intonation of his speaking voice as the base for the piece. The original phasing tape loop is manipulated and doubled several times as the piece goes on, so that the compressed tracks form a multi voice canon that eventually dissolves into its component sounds and the words "come out and show them" are no longer audible. Although minimalism separated itself from conveying emotions and ideas through music, it couldn't do the same with politics. No form of music can ever truly be separated from the political and social contexts in which it was made because every single person involved in the process was being affected by them the entire time. Come Out isn't just connected to the Civil Rights movement, it's literally a part of the Civil Rights movement. Daniel Hamm was brutally beaten by police and wrongfully accused of and imprisoned for murder along with five other Black teens who came to be known as the Harlem Six. Hamm's voice can be heard describing the mistreatment and brutality that he had experienced at the hands of the police, and how they were denying him medical attention unless he could prove he was injured, which is where the phrase "come out to show them" was used when he had to open a wound to show authorities that he was bleeding. Reich created Come Out when he was asked to make a tape piece for a benefit to raise money for The Harlem Six, and ended up becoming extremely well known because of it. In reality Reich was more of an "arranger" in this situation, as he spliced the recordings and merged the tracks that ended up creating the piece, but Daniel Hamm is the "performer" since it's his voice and his story being heard. The context of this work is almost more important than the piece itself because it shows how a white composer gained fame and accreditation for his contribution to minimalist music using a recording of a victim of a systematically racist society. The context is important because it's not made clear whether Reich's intentions were to bring awareness to the Civil Rights movement and elevate and share the story of Daniel Hamm and the Harlem Six, or to try out his new technique and make himself famous. People argue over the interpretations of Come Out, but the only way to get to the truth is to tell the whole story of how and when it was made.

