

December: Christmas

In this lesson, children will explore the Liberian folk song 'African Noel' through listening, singing and instrumental work.

Key Stage 2



A-STAR MUSIC

Activity Guide

Starter

Begin the lesson by asking children to close their eyes and listen to the video performance of African Noel. Can children identify how many parts/voices there are? How do the parts/voices interact? Could they pick out any of the lyrics? Could they identify any patterns at all in the music?

The song they heard was sung in canon by three voices or parts. Canon is where all parts sing the same melody, but with a delayed start. For example, Voice One begins, when they reach the end of the first phrase, Voice Two begins, and so on. We call this singing in a 'round' or in 'canon'.

Teach the children the melody slowly using a 'my turn, your turn' approach – children echoing your singing after each phrase. Then, practise singing the whole song, noticing the relationship between lines one and two (the second line follows the same pattern as the first line, but just a little higher).

If able, explore singing the song in canon in two or three parts. Use the video to help if necessary.

Teacher Notes

For classes who find this difficult, do this with the video on display so they have the visual prompt as well as the audio prompt to scaffold questioning.

If children struggle with pitch matching, use your hand to clearly show the pitch rising and falling as a visual aid. If children use solfa, you could also use Curwen hand signs.

Singing in canon is a skill that can be developed within Key Stage 2. This may take several repetitions to achieve. Designate strong singers amongst the children as leaders for each group to follow.

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Main



Untuned Percussion Accompaniment

Explain to the children that we are going to create an accompaniment to accompany our sung melody (tune). Our accompaniment will be made up of repeated patterns. We call a repeated pattern in music an 'ostinato'.

Teach each ostinato of the untuned accompaniment separately. Then, practise each ostinato with the class singing the melody over the top. There are three possible rhythmic patterns to explore below. Be guided by the ability of your class as to how many you explore and layer.

Drum Ostinato: 'Go, Santa, Go, Santa'

Shaker Ostinato: 'Shaky shaky shaky shaky'

Guiro Ostinato: 'Pass the turkey! Pass the turkey!'

Children could then practise performing in four parts: Sung melody, Drum Ostinato, Shaker Ostinato, Guiro Ostinato.

Extension: Children could compose their own rhythmic ostinato to be used instead of/in addition to the ostinato previously explored.

Teacher Notes

If you don't have instruments, these parts could still be performed using the rhythm mnemonics with body percussion, or vocal percussion to imitate the instrumental sounds.

Differentiate this according to the ability of your class. For younger or less able classes, try just one layer to begin with. With more able classes, stretch them to perform 3 or 4 rhythms simultaneously, composing their own patterns and notating using graphic/stick notation.

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Tuned Percussion Accompaniment

If you have access to chime bars/metallophones/xylophones, you can also choose to explore the melodic ostinato accompaniment below.

Chime Bar Ostinato (to be played by one or two players)



Plenary



Sit children in clear groups/parts. For example:

- A group singing the melody
- A group for each accompanying ostinato

Discuss the role of a conductor and how they direct an ensemble. Using gestures only, model how (as a conductor) you could use appropriate hand gestures to invite a group to begin playing/singing. Model adding other groups to create texture and how you may use hand gestures to signal groups to stop playing. Explore different textures and layers. If appropriate, add hand gestures to show dynamic contrasts (volume).

Invite children to conduct the class ensemble, using clear gestures to show when groups should begin playing or stop playing. Video or audio record your performances for evidence.

Teacher Notes

These can also be sung if instruments are not available.

This activity can also be highly differentiated, with more able students using two beaters to play both parts simultaneously. Less able or younger children could work in pairs on each chime bar using one beater each to play each melodic line independently.

This can be further scaffolded by removing bars that are not needed (DEFB)

This offers a good opportunity for evaluation and appraisal following a performance, asking questions such as:

- Which combinations of layers did you like best? Why?
- Which performance was most effective?
- Why?
- How can we develop a musical idea using structure/texture/dynamics?