

A Musical Adventure - Lesson 5

Key Stage 2



A-STAR MUSIC

To Understand the Importance of the Clave Rhythm in Cuban Music

Activity Guide

Starter

As the children enter the classroom, why not put on some Cuban music in the background (for example, Josi Csnde y Ola Fresca: El Chacal) and ask children to think about the following questions:

- *How does the music make me feel?*
- *What instruments can I hear?*
- *How could I describe the tempo of the music?*
- *Can I hear the pulse? Which instrument keeps the pulse?*
- *Where do I think this style of music might originate? Why?*

Explain that the music they listened to was from Cuba. Ask children to find Cuba on a map (this could be together as a class on the board or with atlases) and find its capital city (Havana).

Teach the melodic ostinato – “Cuba! Havana” and ask children to sing it with the backing track. Ask children to follow your conducting to experiment singing this with different dynamics and articulation – can they follow your singing? Can they vary their voices? Invite children up to lead in conducting. Discuss the different ways they sung the ostinato – encouraging musical vocabulary such as dynamics, articulation, piano, forte, staccato and legato.

More advanced classes can sing this in harmony – a second part a third higher, or even a third part a third higher than that.

Teacher Notes

Having music on which is key to the learning is a great way of grabbing the student’s attention as soon as they enter a room. Displaying questions to guide thinking while the music is on is a great way to scaffold listening tasks such as this one.

It is really important for children to link learning and knowledge in order to increase cultural capital. Engaging with map work and cultural traditions is a good way to do this.

Use this as an opportunity to recall the dimensions of music and discuss their meaning.

Singing in 3 or 4 parts is something that is suggested in the new Model Music Curriculum (DFE 2021) for Year 5 and 6 in particular. This is something that Year 3 may find more challenging.

A Musical Adventure - Lesson 5

Key Stage 2



To Understand the Importance of the Clave Rhythm in Cuban Music

Activity Guide

Main



Ask children to clap the rhythm of the melodic ostinato as they sing it, eventually, taking out the singing to leave just the rhythm. This is a Clave rhythm, which is a popular feature of Cuban/Latin music. Explain to the children that we're going to use that clave rhythm as the basis of a groove which we will create by layering lots of percussive riffs/ostinati.

Teach the children 2 more rhythmic ostinati, so that you have three in total:

- Cuba! Havana (clave rhythm)
- Tea, Coffee
- Time for us to dance the rumba!

Invite the children to compose two rhythms of their own in small groups to add to the groove. These could be inspired by other Cuban traditions and cultures such as dancing the mambo or the rumba, the fusion of Spanish and African cultures or using the name of the instruments. Children could use this time to research key facts in groups about Cuba to inform their word rhythms. Come together as a class to hear each other's rhythms, try them out as a class and decide on your favourite two. Practise your 5 given rhythms and try them out with the backing track provided.

Now, try these rhythms with instruments, assigning the 'Cuba! Havana' rhythm to claves/ woodblocks/strikers, 'Tea, Coffee' to guiros and scrapers, 'Time for us to dance the rumba' to shakers (maracas and eggs) and the other two rhythms composed to other instruments of the children's choice. Children should practice performing simultaneously to create a cross-rhythm. Children should rotate to practice each of the rhythms on each of the instruments

Teacher Notes

Discuss the importance of the clave rhythm and experiment playing it both ways round (e.g. 'Cuba! Havana and Havana, Cuba!') Can children switch between the two or even play in cross-rhythm with a partner?

This embeds fun facts about culture and traditions in Cuba as well as using words to scaffold syncopated rhythms. Syncopation and its meaning can be discussed with the children.

Try to limit children's compositions to 4 beats so that it fits into the same frame as the original rhythms.

Play a game called 'Switch!' to embed all 5 rhythms. Write all 5 rhythms (in words) on the board. Children begin by clapping rhythm one in unison, and when the teacher shouts switch, children must move onto the next and so on. To make this more challenging, you could split the class in two, and have each group beginning on a different rhythm creating cross-rhythms as well as the 'switch' element.

It is your choice whether you would like to stipulate which instrument takes each rhythm or leave this choice to the students. It then leads to a point of discussion about which instrument is most appropriate for each rhythm.

A Musical Adventure - Lesson 5

To Understand the Importance of the Clave Rhythm in Cuban Music

Key Stage 2



A-STAR MUSIC

Activity Guide

Plenary ▶

Student leaders to be assigned to conduct. They should choose who plays/doesn't play where and when and direct dynamics/tempo/articulation as they wish. Record performances and give opportunities for appraisal. Encourage appraisal to include key musical terminology such as texture, dynamics, rhythm, timbre, tempo, pulse etc.

Teacher Notes