

A Round of Rhythms

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Overview
Background
Rationale
Objectives
Strategies
Classroom Activities
Annotated Bibliography
Resources
Appendix
Content Standards

Overview

The purpose of this unit is to build students' musical skills, to transmit to them a musical heritage that is rightfully theirs, and to strengthen their leadership skills by guiding them ultimately to facilitate a drum circle. Even without formal musical training, high school students will latch on to the notion of making music together, and they will see success quickly within the framework of a drum circle activity. Students want to earn credits toward a high school diploma, but they also want inspiration, fulfillment, and space to grow in their talent. This unit will provide performance tasks that yield course credit for elective or cross-curricular classes. The students will discover their creative voice, spend time internalizing the Cuban, Caribbean, and Latin sounds that they will want to perform, synthesizing those sounds and those from their own experience into something of their own creation. They will follow their curiosity into related disciplines, and appreciate the artistic community around them.

When a particular school is too small or underfunded to offer an array of elective courses in the arts, then there is an especial need for cross-curricular units of study in order to round out students' education. I am a Spanish teacher. I am not certified to teach music, art, or history, but I find that our best incentives for learning new languages have everything to do with the related arts. Given the friendly climate and scarce resources in the building, a drum circle will be an ideal activity for musicians of all levels, and unit in which students will be happy to earn credits.

The school where I teach is a small high school that offers humanities, math, science, and Spanish, along with elective courses in graphic arts, activism, and physical

education. Twice a year—for one week in February and one week in June—the entire school departs from the regular schedule and devotes the entire week to one of a dozen cross-curricular projects. Each teacher chooses an area of study and supports students in designing their own projects and goals within that field. Students can earn credit for their work.

Using the drum circle as our focus activity, I have produced a Design Week plan that gives students a new “playground” for discovery, design, and delivery of new competencies. I want the week to be inviting, flattering, and fulfilling to the youngsters. Our point of departure will be the sounds we hear in contemporary Latin American music. In addition, students will also be competent to teach rhythms and to lead drum circle activities when the week is over.

So that students will acquire skills and internalize music, beyond those required to complete the assignments, lesson plans will alternate direct instruction with plenty of opportunities for students to lead small groups and plenary drum circles. Music is already an integral part of a teenager’s life, but part of the “takeaway” of ensemble work is ownership of the art. Students can know themselves as musicians for life.

In order to offer an experience that is well organized and far reaching, I have arranged to have informal permission to teach outside my area of certification; to include students in logistical work-around planning; to fundraise well in advance; to seek out engaging speakers; and to schedule field trips that build upon and extend my expertise and resources. To that end, I have assembled materials that a teacher of any discipline might use to teach a music unit.

Background

At The U School, one of the high schools in the Innovation Network of the School District of Philadelphia, three parts to the program make for an innovative model: asynchronous learning, grouping by degree of autonomy, and restorative discipline. Learning is closely tied with technology. All students receive Chromebooks which they may take home, and all lessons are posted on Google Classroom.

U School students learn asynchronously; they complete tasks at their own pace, and quite often autonomously. As part of the School District of Philadelphia’s Innovation Network, The U School draws students from all over Philadelphia, not just the local neighborhood, however it is not a special admission school, or “magnet school.” Eighty percent of the students in the school year 2016-2017 are African-American. Nearly 13% are Latino, and the remainder are White, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and other ethnicities.¹

Great care is given to the forming of the U School culture. At times the model looks chaotic, and not every lesson results in a beatific moment, but the overall tenor of the school is gentle. Because students have considerable latitude to exercise their own agency, this curricular unit offers opportunity for cross-curricular exploration and encouragement for wide-ranging improvisation. Given the unique model of The U School, and considering the curriculum limits and budget constraints, I want to design a unit of study that: gives students a hands-on experience; relates to their own lives, and in many cases relates to their own heritage; satisfies curricular requirements, preferably tying in with language study; and fleshes out their education with content that is not yet offered elsewhere.

This curricular unit could be integrated into a Spanish language curriculum, or it could be expanded and scheduled as a stand-alone elective course in music, dance, or other related arts. The curriculum is intended for students in grades 9 through 12; high school students in any grade at The U School would be eligible to take an elective, provided they are on track to graduate on time. The unit would be equally suited for inclusion into history (the history of European conquest, the transatlantic slave trade, the Great Migration, or the Mariel boatlift), or literature curricula, or even a technology course in video editing and digital media.

Rationale

World language teachers must include units on elements of world cultures along with language lessons. In order for the content of culture units in a Spanish curriculum to be relatable to high school students, students need to see some relevance of the material to their own lives. Sometimes that means that they can see a use for language skills in their prospective careers. Other times the young people can recognize an immediate application in their social lives or neighborhood contexts. Few of my students dream of visiting Spain, but nevertheless, bits of old world culture do wend their way into our lives here in Philadelphia. Music can be a vehicle for broadening students' horizons, and a means for transmitting a culture that for many students is really already their own heritage.

We hear blends, fusions, and musical hybrids around us all the time. With this unit of study, we will pay attention to particular genres as they appear in Hispanic cultures and trace the path of rhythms—and even the very percussion instruments—from Spain and Africa to Latin America. Just as African influence has been essential to the evolution of North American popular music, it is no great leap to say that virtually all Caribbean music is Afro-Caribbean music, and thereby connected to other Latin American musical genres. So with this unit students will encounter content that is both relevant to their own heritage and to neighboring cultures.

Finally, the study of this music will lead toward a means to inclusivity. As students are developing a descriptive command of their individual and cultural identity, the classroom must be a safe space where they all belong, and where they can learn to extend the welcome to others. And while there is a great deal of conversation about authenticity in certain forms of music, which is interesting in terms of musicology or music history, it is important to steer clear of any exclusionary judgments. The approach will begin with words of invitation, and from there we will foster a sense of community, delight, and belonging.

Objectives

This unit is intended for a mixed group of fifteen to twenty high school students in grades nine through twelve. Twice a year, the school's regular class schedule is set aside, and a "Design Week" block is put in place. Students devote five days to the exploration and completion of one week-long project. They design their own goals, plot a course toward realizing their goals, and on Friday of that week, students deliver a finished product, mini-lesson, or demonstration.

The objectives for students in this curricular unit will be:

- (1) to learn rhythms and music specific to Latin American regions, especially Afro-Caribbean forms and their offshoots;
- (2) to recognize music, rhythms, and musical instruments specific to Andalusia, North Africa, and West Africa, and to trace their migration to the Americas;
- (3) to correlate historical movements, including conquest, immigration, and enslavement, with the rise of the musical trends, including jazz, protest songs, and novel genres;
- (4) to practice playing the claves and other small percussion instruments, and the djembe, conga, and larger hand drums;
- (5) to move quickly from practice to ensemble work, and then to performance;
- (6) to improvise with small groups of percussionists;
- (7) to gain additional leadership experience by facilitating a drum circle;
- (8) to nurture the already distinct sense of community at The U School.

Strategies

Even before the first day of class, a good bit of leg work will be required to outfit this group with percussion instruments, and I have made some decisions about what I am willing to buy just to get started, and which instruments can be sourced elsewhere. Maracas and shakers can be made from plastic egg shells and rice/beans. Claves I plan to make in class on the first day using materials from the hardware store. I anticipate that students may have instruments at home, and teachers may be happy to donate instruments

or materials. A set of fiber glass djembes would be versatile, portable, and durable for student use, and the most economical of the larger instruments.

In time, if students are interested in reading music, it would be exciting to acquire a set of steel drums for the school. But in the meantime perhaps a couple of hand pans or RAV drums. For the larger, nicer instruments, a local source is Musicopia, a non-profit organization in Philadelphia that assists local students with instruments and instruction. And finally, I hope to connect with music teachers in the city who may have instruments to lend, particularly boxes of hand percussion instruments stashed away when schools were closed in recent years.

Students may arrive on the first day of class already able to read music, but really there is no music prerequisite for this class, and the reading and writing of musical notation will be optional. All students will acquire a descriptive command of the music they are creating, beginning with the names and histories of the instruments they use, and including the terms for musical rhythms and genres. But the lasting rewards of this curricular unit will be an increased level of comfort and confidence with their own musical expression, the joy of collaboration and ensemble work, and the ability to facilitate other groups on their own.

Ideally the class will move as soon as possible from talking about music to actually forming a drum circle and playing music, and class time will be increasingly dominated with music internalization, innovation, and performance. Homework assignments, conversely, will begin with listening experiences and move increasingly toward reflection and composition.

From the start it is important to give a broad definition of music literacy. Some students will already know how to read music. Other students may have an extensive singing repertoire. Still others will have experience with digital sound production, but all young people have various kinds of musical knowledge already embedded in their experience. We will want to affirm and build upon all of these abilities equally, since there is a whole array of musical knowledge that opens up students' access to further musical education, and open doors into new musical circles.

Tangential interests will naturally spin off from this unit of study. Students will have the flexibility, within the assigned performance tasks, to demonstrate the skills they acquire along any number of lines. Their lines of inquiry will be affirmed and the students will be encouraged to develop a final presentation that demonstrates their grasp of their findings. I expect their topics to cover a broad range:

Students will make their own instruments by hand, testing them and refining them, and finally demonstrating the variety of sounds that can be produced with different constructions.

Students will recognize Latin influences in the new music they will hear. They will be able to analyze why the particular style was employed and what is being conveyed by that crafting of sounds.

Students may create multi-media productions of their music, including covers and original compositions, karaoke tracks, music videos, or sound tracks for other artists' visual art.

Students may trace the path of actual musical instruments from West Africa, or other regions, to the Americas, looking back on the history of instruments and musical forms along lines of conquest, immigration, and enslavement. Students may then make inferences about the sound of music ages ago.

Students may look forward to jazz, a uniquely American art, with its Latin and African origins, and consider the future of jazz. Some say that jazz has come and gone; others say jazz has only opened up kaleidoscopic possibilities.

Students may experiment with music improvisation, first emulating others, and then finding their own voice.

Students may make a study of ethnicity and the interplay of racial, national, and cultural identity. They will encounter and evaluate both prescriptive and descriptive approaches to regarding identity.

Students may examine the currents that influenced a particular musician or movement. Or alternatively they may extrapolate the implications of that musical moment for the future.

Classroom Activities

Session 1: Beginning to Bring Community into Sharper Focus

Carousel – Dispelling Preconceptions, Blurred Lines? (20 minutes)

The goal is to recognize that musical preferences are a part of our identity as members of a culture or subculture, and our preferences influence both the way we self-identify and the way we are perceived by others. Students will consider the role of music in identity and culture, and begin to form a class culture.

First, have students self select groups of four or five at a table. It is important that they be permitted to choose their own groups and sit with friends. Each student will then

write a list of their three favorite songs anonymously on a sticky note. Collect the sticky notes. Next, survey the class to see what types of music are currently popular among their peers. Write the names of several genres of popular music at the tops of separate pieces of chart paper. Then, with the help of two or three student volunteers, sort the sticky notes by genre and stick them on the chart paper that most closely corresponds to the list on each sticky note.

Then, starting from one chart paper, each group will make inferences about the varieties of music, all the while with the awareness that these are a means of expression for actual people in the room. Groups will move clockwise to the next paper, and try to characterize the similarities. Without discussion, they quickly write impressions directly on the chart paper. The ideas eventually extend into mind maps or idea webs, and make a basis for inferences. The groups move clockwise to the next list every two minutes until each group has visited each chart paper. Ideally, each group will have had time to visit every paper. After each paper has been marked up, discuss the findings of the class. Expect divergent opinions. Discuss the ways the categories overlap each other. Discuss the ways that student interests will extend to their culture, subculture, peer group, and perhaps the music of their parents' generation. And still other students may have completely unique favorites.

The teacher facilitates a discussion with the students, focusing on their impressions of the activity, differences in their opinions or inferences of the lists. Finally, the teacher elicits from students a thoughtful conjecture about the trends they see in some of the choices. Students will be guided to recognize and avoid value judgments.

Students will then form new groups by standing near their own lists. While they may be standing near classmates who share similar musical tastes, they may be surprised to find themselves in a new grouping. Students share with one another their opinions of the validity of assumptions, inferences, and categorizing. Teacher will facilitate discussion, emphasizing overlap, crossovers, cultural blends, and musical hybrids, and then wrap-up and transition.

Activating Prior Knowledge (15 minutes)

The goal is for students to recognize Latin music generally, and to analyze the elements that define a piece as "Latin." Students will be able to identify percussion instruments and replicate rhythms that are common in Latin music. This requires careful, repeated practice with select musical excerpts, beginning with the Cuban son, before moving on to the fun part – improvisation!

Some students may require scaffolding to describe what they hear. Scaffolding may be provided by other group members, or by the teacher, depending upon students'

success or level of frustration. Students may find it easier to mimic the rhythms and sounds they hear before they have the vocabulary to describe their experience. It is important to honor the embedded literacy that students carry with them, but even so, this new venture will require a great deal of practice.

Before giving direct instruction on the rhythms, let students know what to expect. Talk about the shaping of sound with tempo and dynamics. Demonstrate signals that cue the start and finish. These may be played or vocalized, but once larger drums are introduced, it will be difficult to hear a voice. Instead, plan to end a round with several seconds of freeform sound, a roll or flutter of sound without a beat. Practice just that, having students drum on desks or clap their hands.

Begin rhythm instruction using a pattern of call and response. Start with short, familiar, formulaic rhythms and move toward longer, more complex phrases. Shift into innovation as soon as students are ready. Look for the first chance to hand over leadership to a student.

The teacher uses students' responses to draw their attention to the quintessential rhythm of son, usually played on the clave or cowbell. Students tap the rhythm by itself, one group at a time, and then repeat as a listening example is playing.

Identify the instrument as the claves. Demonstrate claves.

Preparing to Make Music (5 minutes)

Without a generous budget, it may be best to make some of the percussion instruments for the course. The clave is essential, and claves can be made cheaply enough that each student can have a set.

The instructor reviews the unit plan, explaining how each activity leads to the next (Google Chart, large paper graphic, or some other means to have the plan visible and available. This is important so that the teacher can clearly review or anticipate activities as needed, and ensure student safety with frequent reminders.

Constructing the First Instruments: Claves (30 minutes)

Describe claves in detail. The simplest claves are two thick hardwood sticks. Sometimes a set of claves has one larger, hollowed piece and one smaller striker. Model their construction, and use direct instruction to teach the use and safety measures for using the required tools. Provide visual instructions for each step.

Students work in groups, with at least one hand saw per group, and two types of sandpaper for each student. A printed ruler on the instructions may be used in lieu of

physical rulers, if desired. Students must cooperate as a community in their groups to share the saws, help one another to hold materials while cutting.

Hardwood dowels are available at hardware stores in poplar and oak. The finished claves should be at least 1" thick and 8" long. Dowels typically come in 48" lengths, so the math is easy. But you might want to buy thicker dowels or make longer claves, just to experiment with pitch and timbre. Oak is only a little more expensive, but it is harder than poplar, making a better sound, but also making the job of sawing a little more difficult. Ideally each group has a hand saw, and each student has a quarter sheet of coarse sandpaper for shaping the dowel ends, and another quarter sheet of finer sandpaper for smoothing the wood.

Playing the claves (20 minutes)

The two claves can be identical, but if they are not, the clave held in the non-dominant hand will be by design of a size and shape that makes a desired sound. Maybe it is larger or hollowed. The striker will be a plain segment of a hardwood dowel.

Have students cup one clave across the non-dominant hand with the fingers about halfway down the side. This keeps the fingers out of the way of the striker, and a little hollow forms in the palm of that hand, making a resonant cavity. The other hand holds the striker, which could be about the same size as the first clave. Have students experiment with the sound, striking the claves and turning and turning them to find the "sweet spot." The first five minutes of YouTube user Dance Papi's tutorial² is a good introduction to the playing of claves.

The son, or Cuban son, is the basis of much Afro-Caribbean music. The son is a convention of Latin music. Presumably that means that it is a staple, a mainstay, and that it never changes. But the son is imminently prone to innovation, and to the improvisation that makes Latin music charming and beguiling. If any rule were truly meant to be broken, it is the Cuban son.

Teach the son clave by the rule. The son is comprised of a two-measure ostinato. In the first measure, play beats 1, the "and" of 2, and 4. In the second measure, play beats 2 and 3. Repeat. (Music for dance will be to the count of eight. In that case, play 1, the "and" of 2, 4, 6, and 7).

:	♪	7	♪	}	♪		}	♪	♪	}	:
1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4			
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8			

Use the video tutorial if you wish. Dance Papi’s tutorial is long, but he gives background on the claves as well as a good lesson on the son at about the 5:30 mark.

Connections and Wrap-up (10 minutes)

Elicit students’ questions, insights, surprises.

Classwork/Homework: View a video performance of Steve Reich’s composition, *Music for Pieces of Wood*.³ Then view the midi visualization of the same composition.⁴ In a Google document, write two paragraphs. In one paragraph, describe the different varieties of claves. Analyze the instruments and the sounds they made. In the second paragraph, discuss the rhythms and the musicians’ ensemble work. Tell whether (and how) the midi visualization clarifies what is being performed. Does it encode or decode the music?

Session 2 - Making Music

Anticipatory Set (5 minutes)

Review with students a video clip of *Music for Pieces of Wood*, perhaps by another group. Share insights on the foundation rhythm or ostinato, point out that each player plays one rhythm for a number of measures, and then modifies it as others in the group also begin to listen to one another and improvise. Note that the time signature also changes more than once in the piece.

Making the Instruments Their Own (20 minutes)

Students finish their claves to their satisfaction. This may include using a rough sandpaper to shape the ends, using a finer grit sandpaper to achieve a smoother surface, shaping the primary clave (as opposed to the striker) by making the middle a slightly smaller diameter, or removing a small amount of it to achieve a higher-pitched sound. Students modify the appearance of the clave by painting, oiling, decorating, carving, or using markers. This activity may require that the instruments be left to cure or dry for a while.

Brainstorming Additional Percussion Instruments for Group Music (5 minutes)

In groups, students brainstorm percussion instruments they could make from easily available objects and materials. The purpose of the additional instruments is to develop their own agency and community culture as they work toward their final project.

Cooperative Music (40 minutes)

Teacher refers back to the video from the anticipatory set. Using that as a loosely defined goal to reach by the end of the class, each group in turn reviews the son clave rhythm together (in unison). Then, groups self-organize their first drum circle activity. The instructor may suggest they all start with the basic rhythm, and then one by one vary to his or her own repeated pattern. This foundational work is in preparation for percussion games to be played within the plenary drum circle with a broader array of instruments.

Classwork/Homework: Connect with Angie Thomas' novel *The Hate U Give*. Starr and Chris share an obsession with the television series "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air." Part of the "glue" that repairs the couple's disagreements is rapping the theme song of the show, "Yo, Home to Bel Air," (as written and performed by Will Smith, using his stage name The Fresh Prince). Why would the author *choose* to have the characters share a love for this television show and song? Who watches the show, or listens to Will Smith? What is the intended audience for this show? Does it matter? Does Chris seem to know other musicians and civil rights figures that are important in Starr's family, such as Malcolm X, the Black Panthers Ten-Point Program, Tupac Shakur ("Thug Life"), or even how to dance the Wobble or Cupid Shuffle? How does this "glue" work?

Session 3: Case Study - A Listening History of Afro-Cuban Jazz

Cuban Music (60 minutes)

There is no longer Caribbean music that is not Afro-Caribbean music, and no Cuban music that is not Afro-Cuban. This was already true before the jazz era, and again in the twentieth century as African-American and Afro-Cuban forces remixed to conceive a novel sound. While music historians can only theorize what pre-Columbian and pre-Colonial music sounded like, the actual instruments still extant 500 years hence attest to the palette available to those musicians.

The tune, "Tanga," composed in 1943 by Mario Bauzá before a performance by Machito's orchestra, is often cited as the first instance of Afro-Cuban Jazz.⁵ Bauzá was a member of the Cuban-American band, Machito and his Afro-Cubans. One evening before a performance of the band, Bauzá heard the Machito's pianist repeatedly playing the introductory section of the Cuban song "El Botellero." Then in rehearsal, Bauzá requested that each section of the band play different parts on top of the pianist's

repetition of the “El Botellero” passage. Then the saxophonist Gene Johnson played an improvised solo in the midst of the new song. Almost by chance, during a “jam session” before the concert, Bauzá had invented Afro-Cuban Jazz, and he named his composition “Tanga.”

First listen to “El Botellero,” from which “Tanga” was derived.⁶ Then listen to the “Tanga” performance.⁷ Discuss instrumentation, improvisation, and the foregrounding of the solo line.

The first jazz standard to use the clave for its fundamental rhythm was “Manteca,” composed in 1947 by Dizzy Gillespie, Chano Pozo, and Gil Fuller. The original composition was a result of collaboration and cooperative revision by the three composers. Pozo, a strictly Cuban-style musician and percussionist, created a Cuban-style percussion segment, and then played it for Gillespie. Pozo wanted to use the percussion part in a full jazz-band composition. Gillespie improvised two trumpet parts that became bridges within the finished song. Walter “Gill” Fuller wrote the brass and woodwind parts.

Gillespie, Pozo, and Fuller brought a rich musical diversity to the composition. Pozo was a musician that had recently arrived from Cuba, and an expert in the strict and complicated Cuban rhythms. He knew the repertoire of Cuban folk and popular songs, but he was unfamiliar with jazz, and the loose swing rhythms of jazz that are “felt,” rather than played as written. Gillespie was an established jazz artist and innovator. He and saxophonist Charlie Parker were beginning to develop a new, complex form of jazz that would later be called “be-bop.” He had heard Cuban music, having recently visited the island, but was not an expert in the rhythms and music of the country. Fuller was a trained musician, composer, and arranger. Although skilled at developing full compositions from the short musical ideas that band members played for him, he was not familiar with the rhythms and musical traditions of Cuba. Therefore, his arrangement of “Tanga,” for example, had to accommodate both the strict, complex Cuban rhythms and the looser, swing rhythms of jazz. The three musicians formed a small community, trading ideas, modifying each other’s work on the piece, revising and cooperating to create a brand new sound and an Afro-Cuban jazz hit.

View “Dizzy Gillespie on Manteca,” a short documentary of Gillespie’s description of how the song was created, followed by the earliest recording of “Manteca” in 1947.⁸

Dizzy Gillespie was the first American-born musician to be invited to play in Cuba after the Cuban Revolution. He also was invited to meet Fidel Castro in Castro’s private office, an honor not always extended even to world leaders. What’s more, Gillespie was invited back to Cuba a number of times.

Following the release of “Manteca,” Afro-Cuban jazz became very popular, resulting in many new compositions, performed and recorded well into the 1980s. Afro-Cuban jazz also influenced many other genres of music, such as classical compositions, Broadway musicals, and popular music.

One traditional Cuban dance called the danzón was also a subject for innovation. Mexican composer Arturo Márquez combines characteristics of classical music with the feel of traditional Cuban danzón in “Danzón No. 2,” composed in 1994. This piece, scored for symphony orchestra, retains the musical and dance style of the Afro-Cuban tradition.

View “Danzón No. 2” by Arturo Márquez.⁹ Notice the clear, straightforward use of the Cuban son on the claves.

Even the writers of the 1950 Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*, set in New York, could not resist an excursion to Cuba. Composer Frank Loesser’s “Havana” also opens with the unmistakable Cuban son rhythm played on the claves. Listen to “Havana.”¹⁰ Play a segment of the ten-minute recording, and then restart it, inviting students to play along.

Waves of Cuban immigrants to the US made for a rich blend of new sounds, starting in Miami. Continue to trace the path of Afro-Cuban music on to New York well into the 1970s with a look at any of Tito Puente’s Mambo compositions, or an excursion into CuBop. Salsa came into its own during this time. Consider the work of Arturo Sandoval, Desi Arnaz, Chucho Valdés, Mongo Santamaría, Paquito D’Rivera, Chico O’Farrill, Stan Kenton (a prolific experimenter), and others.

Classwork/Homework: A Reggaeton crossover, “Despacito” rose quickly in the charts in the first few months after its release in January, 2017, in part due to a flurry of covers and remixes that extended the song’s popularity to ever broader audiences. Perform a web search for covers of “Despacito.” List and cite the 5 most interesting videos in a Google document. Below the list, write a 200 word essay on your findings. Tell about the instrumentation, genre bending, improvisation, etc., that you find. Identify your favorite version(s) and tell why they stand out.

Subsequent Sessions

Spanish traditional music can be traced back to Andalusia, and further to North Africa, with sounds that include acoustic guitar and the Muslim call to prayer. Introduce other beats, including Samba, which stems from West Africa, and formulated in Brazil. Highlight “The Girl from Ipanema,” which at its height was a great hit. Introduce Bossa Nova as an offshoot of Samba. Teach the rhythm for Merengue. If you wish, use The

Salsa Beat Machine.¹¹ Continue to introduce rhythms distinctive to particular regions, and give background and examples.

Configure seating chart into a circle of chairs. Leave aisles for traffic flow. Show the first minute of the video, “The Drum Circle – Facilitation”¹² to introduce the community aspect. Early and often, teach the importance of hearing protection. Scaffold instrumental practice and build repertoire as well as instrumentation. Increase the number of drums, if possible, to one third drums, and two thirds other percussion.¹³ Add more cues in the form of drum calls to communicate “attention,” “tempo attention,” “volume attention,” “call and response,” “rumble,” “stop cut,” and “call to groove.” Nellie Hill and Arthur Hull’s little volume, *Drum Circle Facilitator’s Handbook* is a detailed resource for these skills.¹⁴ Practice all of the cues intentionally. “Attention,” “call and response,” and “stop cut” are essential, but really they are all important.

Develop the length and intricacy of call and response exercises. Scaffold from simple call and response between the leader and the group, and build to drum circle ensemble work with improvisation. Remind students of the importance of internalizing the beat and listening to each other. As they develop confidence, they will be able to look up from their instruments. When they lift their heads, they will enjoy closer cooperation. They will really just enjoy playing more.

Included in *Drum Circle Facilitator’s Handbook* are two games borrowed from Arthur Hull’s *Rhythmic Alchemy Playshop, Volume 1, Drum Circle Games*. Play “Groove by the Numbers, Beginner Version” and “Layering in a Rhythm.”¹⁵ The games are laid out in their entirety in the *Facilitator’s Handbook*.

Gradually, but as early as possible, give over leadership to student leaders. In break-out sessions, have students facilitate the games in small groups. If additional instruction is needed, especially to support student leaders, use a video with a simple rhythm as a model. This short demonstration by The Messenger is clear and helpful.¹⁶

For more intermediate skill practice, this documentary on Afro-Cuban percussion, given in English with Spanish subtitles, provides a detailed compilation of rhythms.¹⁷ Once students are confident with the son clave, teach the rumba clave. The difference is in the last beat of the first measure; in the rumba clave, the down beat is an eighth rest, and an eighth note is played on the up beat. Ignacio Berroa gives a comparison of son clave and rumba clave at about the 4:15 mark. Have students clap or play each rhythm separately. Take time with this.

Son clave:



Rumba clave:



It is fascinating to hear Ignacio Berroa describe how musicians in Cuba argue over the use of the two rhythms. For more further instruction, divide the interview into clips and plan mini-lessons for each rhythm and set of instruments.

Activities

As the class repertoire grows, continue to build and layer skills, all the while increasing the length of each playing session as well as the time for student-led activities. Time will be blocked out for development culminating projects.

In one unit there may be time for only one or two field trips, but outings could be scheduled for a club or extra-curricular activity that derives from this curricular unit. Field trips may include outings to: an event at Al Bustan Seeds of Culture; a trip to the Martin Guitar Factory, to which admission is free, in Nazareth, Pa.; a trip to Taller Puertorriqueño to study the interplay of related arts; an activity with Artistas y Músicos Latino Americanos for workshops in Roots of Puerto Rican Music, Roots of Latin Jazz, Roots of Afro-Brazilian Music; or an exchange or collaboration with another school group. In addition, a good learning experience will be to participate in local drum circles. There are informal get-togethers in Clark Park and scheduled events throughout the city.¹⁸

Assigned readings may include excerpts from “Of Roots and Race: Discourses of Body and Place in Japanese Taiko Drumming,” *The Hate U Give*, “An Exploratory Study into African Drumming as an Intervention in Diversity Training,” “Facilitating African Identity Development: Critical Literacy Books for African College Students,” and “Singing Out of Pain: Protest Songs and Social Mobilization” found in the bibliography. Student interests will continue to diverge even as the focus of the course is sharpened.

Culminating Activities

The culminating activity for this curricular unit will be a performance task which may be assigned to groups or to individuals. In a performance task, students will demonstrate competency and earn credit either by presenting and performing music, or by presenting and teaching skills they have learned. The possibilities are endless.

Students may produce a karaoke track for a popular song. Team with others and create a karaoke event complete with snacks.

Students may apply a Latin rhythm to a popular song from a completely different genre; produce a music video of it; upload it to the school blog. (Take for example this Brian Safdie cover of Uptown Funk,¹⁹ a Salsa version of Mark Ronson Bruno Mars’ UpTown Funk.)

Students may design a mini-lesson to teach to a small group of students from outside this class; invite them in; hand them percussion instruments; teach them one musical piece; add variations.

Students may choose a popular song track. Using Garage Band, Audacity, or other software, students add an original Latin percussion track, and then demonstrate to the class the basic steps for a dance, for example, salsa. Students will invite participation and teach the steps.

Students may produce an original percussion soundtrack to accompany a video pastiche of visual art from Taller Puertorriqueño or artwork from classmates, then schedule and host a showing.

Students may design a mini-lesson to facilitate a drum circle of their classmates; build and layer skills; balance enjoyment with challenge; and then record the lesson.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

For Teachers

Bender, Shawn. "Of Roots and Race: Discourses of Body and Place in Japanese "Taiko" Drumming." *Social Science Japan Journal* 8, no. 2 (2005): 197-212.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30209764>.

This article centers around drumming as an aspect of culture, in this case, Japanese culture. Portions of the text might be used for cultural comparisons.

Brittin, Ruth V. "Preservice and Experienced Teachers' Lesson Plans for Beginning Instrumentalists." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 53, no. 1 (2005): 26-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3345604>.

This is a resource for managing music activities and assignments, especially useful to teachers not familiar with music instruction.

Dunscomb, J. Richard and Hill, Willie (2002). *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide*. Miami, Warner Brothers.

This book is a rich resource both for teaching jazz and for teaching about jazz. Portions are even searchable on Google Books.

Thomas, Angela (2017). *The Hate U Give*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

This book was well received when it came out earlier this year, and our school has adopted it as the one book our students will read next year. In my class and elsewhere in the school building, students will be making clear cross-curricular connections to this novel.

Govender, Praneschen, and Shaun Ruggunan. "An Exploratory Study into African Drumming as an Intervention in Diversity Training." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 44, no. 1 (2013): 149-68.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41955496>.

This article engages topics of diversity head-on, and gives strategies for diversity training.

Hill, Nellie. *Drum Circle Facilitators' Handbook*. Santa Cruz: Village Music Circles, 2014.

This spiral bound book is indispensable not only for facilitating a drum circle, but for coordinating a rhythm-based event. The author prize an intentional shift from facilitator management to participant control.

Keyes, Cheryl L. "Sound, Voice, and Spirit: Teaching in the Black Music Vernacular." *Black Music Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (2009): 11-24.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20640669>.

This article gives the vocabulary to affirm musical literacy in its many forms.

Myrick, Cecilia J. "Facilitating African Identity Development: Critical Literacy Books for African College Students." *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 4 (2002): 375-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180881>.

This article provides multiple resources for teachers, and potentially for students, to start a nuanced discussion about cultural and individual Blackness.

Payerhin, Marek. "Singing Out of Pain: Protest Songs and Social Mobilization." *The Polish Review* 57, no. 1 (2012): 5-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41557949>.

This article was important to me mainly as a resource for the discussion of artistic expression borne of suffering, this time in the context of another country.

Ruskin, Jesse. "Talking Drums in Los Angeles: Brokering Culture in an American Metropolis." *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 1 (2011): 85-103. doi:10.5406/blacmusiresej.31.1.0085.

This article gives insight into drumming in contexts farther afield. It can be helpful to understand how people view cultural differences in other cities. I found the article to be inspiring reading.

Seighman, Gary B. "Exploring the Science of Ensemble Gestures, Emotion, and Collaboration in Choral Music Making." *The Choral Journal* 55, no. 9 (2015): 8-16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24335980>.

This article is helpful for understanding how to form ensemble work, giving concrete examples for facilitating a group music session.

Turner, Mark E. "Child-Centered Learning and Music Programs." *Music Educators Journal* 86, no. 1 (1999): 30-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3399574>.

This article is helpful for moving quickly and intentionally from direct instruction to student-focused activity – and keeping it there.

Yoon, Paul Jong-Chul. "She's Really Become Japanese Now!: Taiko Drumming and Asian American Identifications." *American Music* 19, no. 4 (2001): 417-38. doi:10.2307/3052419.

This article is helpful for talking about the place of cross-cultural learning and expression. It can also give insight for students interested in exploring yet another culture.

A Resource List for Teachers and Students

http://www.dicciani.com/materials/afro_cuban_intro_and_basics.pdf

This .pdf lists the basic Latin rhythms and gives the notation for each. This could be used as a handout or simply projected on the wall for instruction.

<http://www.albustanseeds.org>

Al Bustan Seeds of Culture is an organization dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding. Check out the concert schedule!

<https://www.germantownfriends.org/academics/upper-school/curriculum/music/world-percussion>

The U School connected with Tabadul and the Al Bustan Seeds of Culture this past spring along with students from Germantown Friends. They have a percussion group! More opportunities for exchange with Germantown students, and others, can only enrich the experience and strengthen the greater community.

<http://www.amla.org>

Artistas y Músicos Latino Americanos offers “Roots of Latin Music Workshops” designed for young people in Philadelphia.

<http://www.salsabeatmachine.org/>

The Salsa Beat Machine is a handy tool for teaching salsa and merengue rhythms, and it is a detailed resource for the student. Instruction can be more student-focused when students have such a powerful resource as this at their fingertips. The Salsa Beat Machine is also available as an iPhone/iPad and Android app.

<https://scholarworks.bridgeport.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1269/Cuban%20Music%20Unit%20Salguero.pdf?sequence=3>

This graduate paper is a source for lesson ideas specifically on Cuba. Students can mine for project ideas on Cuban music or model an original project on the music of another region.

<http://tallerpr.org/visit/>

Taller Puertorriqueño, located on the #47 bus line in Philadelphia, offers educational tours and workshops in visual arts on weekdays.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZDqgEJ5ghU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P8KeFV8HhA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSwQ1icECNg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9LrEXF3USs>

These are covers of “Despacito” on YouTube. Portions of any of them may be used to introduce the homework assignment for the second day. In addition, I would use the karaoke version for a play-along session early in the course and have students innovate upon it in their own groups.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv_8UaP_QRI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy2kyRrXm2g>

The first video is of a live performance of Steve Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood*. The second is a midi visualization of the same piece.

<https://youtu.be/IzvVpzkbdwg>

In this video, Dizzy Gillespie describes the formulation of the jazz standard "Manteca."

<https://youtu.be/gpsHUUHZb9w>

This is a video of a performance of "Danzón No. 2" by Arturo Márquez. Gustavo Dudamel conducts the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela in a live performance at the 2007 BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London.

https://youtu.be/Po5qnn_hBmQ

This performance of composer Frank Loesser's "Havana" is from the First Complete Recording of the score from the Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*. John Owen Edwards conducts the National Symphony Orchestra in the 1995 recording by Jay Records.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIV4MHb4CT0>

This is a studio version of "Tanga" by Machito and his Afro-Cubans.

<https://youtu.be/bFeGalf4Dfo>

This is a recording of "El Botellero" by the Cuban singer Bola de Nieve under the Vintage Music label.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO-t01mdZog>

This brief video describes the important process of shifting from practice to ensemble in a drum circle.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ON9Mr3gv10>

This lengthy interview, in English with Spanish subtitles, is rich with rhythm demonstrations with an Afro-Cuban drum set.

Appendix

Vocabulary - Running list of useful terms

Music terms

- rhythm
- ostinato
- timbre
- tempo
-
-
-

Instruments – What does it look/sound like? Where did it come from?

- claves
- djembe
- conga
- tambora
- bongo
- maraca
- timbale
- cajón
-
-

Musical genres – Where did these originate?

- son
- salsa
- merengue
- Tejano
- reggaeton
- Latin ballad
- bachata
- bossa nova
- rumba
- samba
- tango
- plena
- bolero
- cumbia

List of Materials for Classroom Use

a computer, projector, and speakers

hearing protection

Hearos brand earplugs come in many varieties of silicone and foam.

20 chairs or stools

for claves, 48” wooden dowels, one for every four students

sand paper, two sheets per group, one coarse, one fine, quartered

small wood saws, one or more per group

Sharpie markers or wood stain, depending on how you want to finish the claves

plastic egg shells for shakers (or even rice-filled water bottles to shake or strike)

dry rice or beans; pebbles

tape or hot glue

for sand paper blocks, lengths of 2x4 lumber, cut to 2x4x4”

sand paper, cut to 4x6”

staple gun

for makeshift cow bells, empty cans of various sizes

any smooth metal striker, perhaps a spoon

any other hand percussion instruments, whether they be store-bought, hand-made, or toys: bongo drums, cabasa, castanets, cajón, claves, conga, cowbell, djembe, güiro, maracas, pandeiro, repique, tambora, tamborim, tan-tan, timbales, etc.

any other recyclable materials to repurpose for constructing instruments to strike, shake, or scrape

Content Standards

The following World Language standards from the Standards Aligned System (SAS), developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, may be addressed in this unit:

Standard - 12.1.1.S1.F

Discuss with classmates and the teacher how the target language has influenced other areas of the school curriculum.

Standard - 12.1.1.S4.E

Select a specific historical event that occurred in the target language/culture and the English/American culture. Demonstrate comparisons and/or contrasts of how target language vocabulary is used in describing the bicultural event.

Standard - 12.1.S1.F

Know how the target language has influenced other school curriculum areas.

Standard - 12.1.S4.E

Describe the influence of historical events in the target culture/language that have an impact on the English language and culture.

Standard - 12.3.1.S1.D

List and relate content subject words used in English that have origins in the target language.

¹ https://webapps1.philasd.org/school_profile/view/5620

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCv1Zu9Iocw>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv_8UaP_QRI

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy2kyRrXm2g>

⁵ Dunscomb and Hill, 77.

⁶ <https://youtu.be/bFeGalf4Dfo>

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIV4MHb4CT0>

⁸ <https://youtu.be/IzvVpzkbdwg>

⁹ <https://youtu.be/gpsHUUHZb9w>

¹⁰ https://youtu.be/Po5qnn_hBmQ

¹¹ <http://www.salsabearmachine.org/>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LO-t01mdZog>

¹³ Hill, 18ff.

¹⁴ Hill, 26-27.

¹⁵ Hill, 30-31.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI4gByE-RFc>

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ON9Mr3gv10>

¹⁸ <https://phillylovesdrums.blogspot.com>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLxv1RhI4m8&feature=youtu.be>