

Exploring and Performing Afro-Cuban Rhythms

This next set of PULSE **BANDED** lesson strategies begins by featuring the band Zili Misik. The foundation of their music-making is based on respect and collaboration, and their music is influenced by roots music of the African diaspora. Using their music and spirited performance as a jumping off point, these lessons will provide some historical context and engage students in listening to and playing a variety of rhythmic grooves inspired by music of the African diaspora.

Instructional Activity Objectives:

BANDED Lesson Strategy #4 will introduce students to the history of Afro-Cuban music and one of Cuba's most prominent composers and conga players named Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria. Focusing Santamaria's composition "Afro Blue", students will listen to and compare several recordings, then learn and perform a basic Afro-Cuban rhythmic groove.

Overall Objectives:

- Students will research and discuss the impact player Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria had on the evolution of Afro Cuban music.
- Students will listen to various recordings of "Afro Blue" and discuss similarities and differences in interpretations.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the basic rhythmic groove of Afro Blue through learning and performing common Afro Cuban rhythmic patterns.

Materials and Resources:

- Computer with a browser such as Chrome, Safari or Firefox, to access the Berklee PULSE website
- Projector, PA system
- Percussion instruments, non-pitched and pitched (or preferred instrument)
- Optional: One or a mix of the following: Manuscript paper, Notation software, a DAW
- Suggested online resources:

READING

- Music of the African Diaspora https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_the_African_diaspora
- Cuban Music History http://www.hostedhavana.com/resources/cuban-music-history
- Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria http://www.musicianguide.com/biographies/1608002588/Mongo-Santamaria.html

http://latinousa.org/2011/08/05/ramon-mongo-santamaria/

http://www.blackpast.org/gah/santamaria-mongo-1917-2003

http://www.alexpertout.com/mongosantamaria.htm

http://www.alexpertout.com/lcongastyles1.htm

http://www.npr.org/2009/05/26/104548567/give-the-drummer-some-congatimbal-duos

LISTENING

"Afro Blue", Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria – original recording https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbE7jf Hp5w

"Afro Blue", featuring Erykah Badu https://genius.com/Robert-glasper-afro-blue-lyrics

"Afro Blue", featuring Dianne Reeves https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86KmO3HmZY0&spfreload=10

"Afro Blue" – from Pulse Listening Library

PULSE Connections:

- Rhythm Levels 1, 2, and 3
- PULSE Jam Room Afro Blue, featuring Abbey Lincoln

Classroom/rehearsal room settings:

These activities can be done in a variety of classroom/rehearsal room settings:

- · Students working alone or in pairs
- Students in small groups using classroom instruments
- Students in a variety of ensemble settings (traditional or jazz band; choral; orchestra; string ensemble; modern band guitar, piano, bass, drums; etc.)
- Students working with a private instructor
- Students using a DAW, such as GarageBand, GarageBand iOS, Mixcraft, Soundtrap, Soundation, etc.
- Students using Notation software, such as Noteflight, Sibelius, Finale, etc.

National Coalition for Core Arts Standards

* Ensemble Strand: http://www.nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/2014-Music-Standards-Ensemble-Strand.pdf

Assessment

- Informal assessment through class discussion and participation
- Formal assessment through practice and performance of all rhythmic patterns presented in the lesson

Instructional Activity Ideas:

- 1. Begin by showing the beginning clip of Zili Misik (00:00-01:47) After viewing the clip, analyze and discuss the following:
 - a. What do you notice about the rhythm? Are there repeated patterns? What kinds of rhythms are used most prominently (whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, triplets, etc.)? What instrument(s) drive the rhythmic feel of the song?
 - b. Describe the tempo.
 - c. What instruments are used in the song? Is the song sparse or dense?

- 2. Using the suggested online readings (or other materials selected by the teacher) present an overview of genres of music of the African diaspora and introduce students to the history of Afro-Cuban.
 - a. Name and describe some forms of Cuban music.
 - b. Describe some characteristics of Afro-Cuban music.
- 3. Introduce students to Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria. Using the suggested online readings (or other materials selected by the teacher), the teacher can present or students can research Santamaria's contribution to Afro-Cuban music.
 - a. Where and when was he born?
 - b. How did he develop as a musician?
 - c. What were his most significant musical contributions?
- 4. Introduce students to the original recording of Santamaria's composition "Afro Blue" (link to YouTube recording listed in suggested online listening resources). After listening, analyze and discuss the following:
 - a. What do you notice about the rhythm? Are there repeated patterns? What kinds of rhythms are used most prominently (whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, triplets, etc.)? What instrument(s) drive the rhythmic feel of the song?
 - b. Describe the tempo.
 - c. What instruments are used in the song?
 - d. Describe the melody.
- 5. Listen to other versions of "Afro Blue" (links to additional versions listed in suggested online listening resources). Have students compare to the original Santamaria recording.
- 6. Listen again to the intro of Santamaria's composition "Afro Blue" (0:00-0:26).
 - a. Discuss the time signature of 6/8
 - b. Have students count and tap each beat
- 7. Analyze the various rhythmic patterns in the groove. Introduce each pattern separately and have students learn and perform each one separately.
 - a. This can be done using body percussion, various classroom percussion instruments, or instruments students have made.
 - b. Students can practice the rhythmic patterns along with the Santamaria recording, an audio file of the rhythmic groove (provided below), or a metronome.

Pattern 1



Pattern 2



Pattern 3



Pattern 4



Pattern 5



Pattern 6



- 8. Once students master each rhythmic pattern, put students in groups, assign parts and perform.
- 9. Have students switch parts so that they have the opportunity to play each rhythm in the groove.

Follow-up activities:

- 1. Play the groove at different tempos.
- 2. Play the groove on pitched instruments.
- 3. Have each student in the ensemble improvise over the groove.
- 4. Add an original melody to the groove.
- 5. If students have access to a DAW, have them recreate the groove, then use it as a basis for an original composition.
- 6. Explore other Afro-Cuban rhythmic patterns and grooves.
- 7. Explore other Ramon "Mongo" Santamaria compositions, such as "Watermelon Man".
- 8. Explore other genres of Cuban music.