

# BANDED

## 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](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-conga-timbal-duos>

### **LISTENING**

“Afro Blue”, Ramon “Mongo” Santamaria – original recording  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbE7jf\\_Hp5w](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?



#### 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.