

The Clave

This lesson will introduce students to the basics of a rhythmic pattern called “clave”, named after the traditional two-stick percussion instrument. There are two basic types of clave: son or rumba clave. Most Afro-Cuban styles of music are built around one version of the clave pattern, which is fixed and repeated throughout the song, and forms the foundation for percussionists, as well as the other musicians in the ensemble.

Watch the video to view how Zili Misik incorporates clave patterns into their music.

Outcomes:

- Students will research and discuss the history of clave and its role in various styles of Afro-Cuban music.
- Students will listen to various recordings of Afro-Cuban compositions based on clave and discuss similarities and differences.
- Students will examine the difference between the 2-3 and 3-2 clave patterns and demonstrate their understanding through individual or group performance.

Materials:

- 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 Clave:

- African Roots of Salsa
- The History of Salsa Music
- Salsa and other Afro Latin Dances
- Clave
- The Cuban Son
- La Clave

Video Afro-Cuban Drumming Parts 1-8:

This video series was created by Cuban jazz drummer and educator Ignacio Berroa. He is recognized as one of the greatest drummers of our times. This excellent video series contains an overview of the evolution of Afro-Cuban music. Part 1 and Part 2 discuss and clearly demonstrate the son and rumba clave patterns.

- Part 1
- Part 2
- Part 3
- Part 4
- Part 5
- Part 6
- Part 7
- Part 8

Listening:

- "Salsa Con Coco"
- "Amor Mio No Te Vayas"
- "Trucuta"

PULSE Connections:

- "Quimbara"
- "Mambo No. 5"
- Rhythm Level 1, 2, and 3

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

Exposition of Material

1. Using the suggested online readings (or other materials selected by the teacher) present the origins and evolution of clave. Define clave.

- a. There are two clave patterns; son and rumba. Both the son clave and rumba clave can follow a 2-3 or 3-2 pattern. In a 2-3 pattern, the first measure contains

two beats of the clave rhythm and the second measure contains three beats of the clave rhythm. 3-2 is the opposite of 2-3. A song will only be based on one version of a clave rhythm. Often times, the clave rhythm is the basis for the rhythmic parts of a song, but is not actually played by itself. In other words, the rhythm is implied, but still drives the “feel” or groove of the song.

b. Name and describe some genres of Cuban music that use clave.

c. If YouTube is available, watch Part 1 and Part 2 of Afro-Cuban Drumming (links found above in Video section). These two videos show master drummer Ignacio Berroa describing and demonstrating the son clave and rumba clave rhythms in detail.

Identifying Key Concepts and Terms

2. Analyze the 2-3 and 3-2 variations of the son and rumba clave.

a. This can be done using body percussion, various classroom percussion instruments, or instruments students have made.

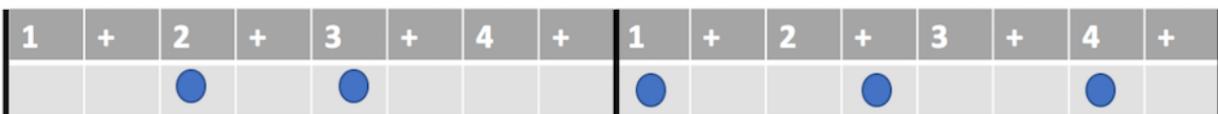
b. Alone, in pairs, or small groups, students can practice the rhythmic patterns along with a recording selected by the teacher, an audio file of the rhythmic patterns (provided below), or some other click, such as a metronome.

Son and Rumba Clave Patterns

Each clave pattern is two measures long, with one measure containing two beats and the other measure containing three. This is often referred to as the 2-side and the 3-side of the clave pattern. The son and the rumba clave can either be 2-3 or 3-2. In either case, the distinguishing difference between the son and the rumba clave is the placement of the last note on the 3-side.

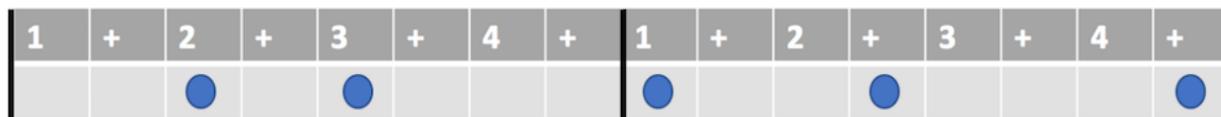
Introduce each pattern separately and have students learn and perform each one separately.

2-3 son clave

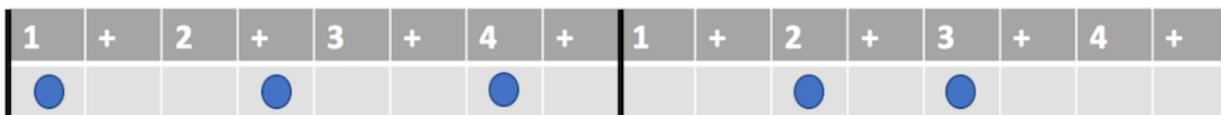




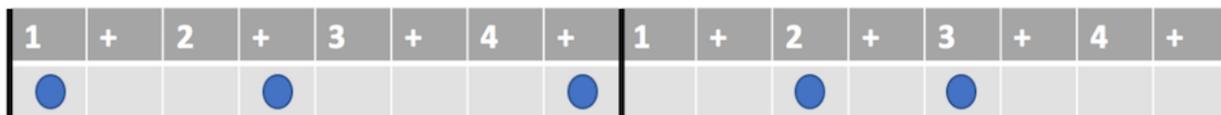
2-3 rumba clave



3-2 son clave



3-2 rumba clave



Activity/Assessment

3. Once students master each rhythmic pattern, put students in groups. Have one half of the group provide a steady pulse while the other half performs the clave patterns. Have students switch parts so that they have the opportunity to play and feel the rhythm of each clave pattern.

4. Have students experiment with the following:

- a. Play the clave patterns at various tempos
 - b. Play the clave patterns on different instruments
 - c. Improvise other rhythmic patterns over the clave patterns
 - d. Add a melody over the clave pattern
 - e. If students have access to a DAW, have them create a composition with one of the clave rhythms
5. Challenge the students to identify the clave pattern in a variety of listening examples. Use the suggested listening examples (or other examples selected by the teacher). After listening, analyze and discuss the following:
- a. Can you identify the clave pattern the song is based on?
 - b. Can you identify what percussion instruments are being played?
 - c. What other instruments are used in the song?
 - d. Describe the melody.
 - e. Clap, tap, or play the clave pattern along with the song.

Lesson Closing

The last lesson in this series will explore other patterns and chord progressions that are commonly used with clave patterns, with the students creating a simple Afro-Cuban groove for composition or performance.