

Mambo from Symphonic Dances from West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein

SECONDARY CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN MULTI-LAYERED CLASS COMPOSITION

For:

- Key Stage 3 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Third and Fourth Level, S1-S3 in Scotland

Written by John Kelleher

Learning outcomes

- To encourage pupils to create and perform a multi-layered percussive Latin composition with whatever instruments are available
- To introduce notion of call and response
- To introduce relevant vocabulary including ostinato and riff

Curriculum checklist

The following aspects of the KS3 and 3rd Level music curriculum (for England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland) are encountered in this project:

- Listen and evaluate/appraise
- Performing/playing/rehearsing and reviewing
- Composing/improvising
- Singing
- Technology
- How music is created (i.e. pitch, tempo, timbre etc.)
- Notation (staff or other relevant notations)
- Identifying musical devices and concepts
- Aural skills (imitating, understanding pitch)

Required kit/space

- computer, projector, audio playback
- large classroom
- variety of unpitched percussion instruments (furniture can be used if necessary)

Time needed

Three to six lessons

1. Listen and discuss

As a starting point, students should listen to Bernstein's *Mambo* and watch the clip from the Ten Pieces film introduced by singer Pixie Lott (.mp3 and film available at bbc.co.uk/tenpieces).

Pupils can then respond to the following questions:

QUESTIONS

1. Which continent would you most associate this music with?

- a. Europe
- b. Asia
- c. Australia
- d. North America

e. South America

2. What do you think the purpose of this type of music is?

- a. Background music
- b. Royal events

c. Dancing

- d. Military occasions
- e. Weddings

3. At various points in the piece, the musicians shout 'Mambo'. How would you describe the relationship between the instruments and the voice at these points?

- a. Polyphonic

b. Call and response

- c. Dovetailed
- d. Unrelated
- e. Multitasked

4. What ensemble is playing this piece of music?

Orchestra

5. In which century was this piece of music composed?

20th Century

2. Learn the 'Ten Piece Mambo'

Lead the class in learning each of the rhythms on the Ten Piece Mambo (below) – the emphasis should be on aural learning rather than written notation.

The musical score for 'Ten Piece Mambo' is written for ten percussion instruments in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 188 BPM. The instruments and their rhythmic patterns are as follows:

- Snare Drum:** A steady pattern of quarter notes.
- Bass Drum:** A pattern of quarter notes, with a half note in the second measure of the second system.
- Claves:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Cowbell:** A pattern of quarter notes, with a half note in the second measure of the second system.
- Guiro:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Maracas:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Wood Block:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Triangle:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Cabasa:** A pattern of quarter notes.
- Ganza:** A pattern of quarter notes.

Once the pupils are secure in performing each rhythm, lead the class in gradually layering each rhythm on top of the others to bring a sense of structure to the piece.

Leading the class could be delegated to a pupil.

The steps above can also be completed as independent tasks using sequencing software.

3. Develop call and response

The class develops its own set of call and response cues. For example:

- 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, hey' leads to four crotchets
- 'Oh, yeah, what you say?' leads to crotchet, crotchet, quaver, quaver, crotchet
- 'Mambo time, ev'ry time' leads to quaver, quaver, crotchet, quaver, quaver, crotchet

Ensure that the pupils are given the opportunity to develop their own rhythms and cues.

It would be a relatively straightforward task for pupils to add pitched parts on top of this. For example:

- The cue calls could be sung rather than shouted
- A pianist or guitarist could compose a chord progression to go on top of the mambo rhythms
- Pupils could come up with a simple melody to go on top of the mambo rhythms

Some of the rhythms could be transferred to pitched percussion instruments.

(Developing calls and appropriate responses can be set as a homework activity.)

4. Combine the Ten Piece Mambo with the call and response

Using a combination of the provided Ten Pieces Mambo and pupils' new call and response cues, lead the class in a performance which might have a form similar to this:

||:Ten Piece Mambo:||

||:Call - response:||

||:Ten Piece Mambo:||

||:Call - response:||

More able pupils can assume the teacher's role of conducting the ensemble and leading the cues.

5. Applying this approach to other music

Any piece that can be broken down into layers of ostinati can be delivered using this approach:

- teacher leads the learning of each ostinato
- pupils layer up each ostinato

The use of call and response cues can be incorporated where appropriate.

6. Further listening and Key Vocabulary

German Villareal: Chango ta Beni

Poncho Sanchez: Tito in the City

Tito Puente: What Are You Doing, Honey?

Key vocabulary

Ostinato

Riff

Mambo

Samba

Syncopation

Call and response

Crescendo

Diminuendo