

This unit introduces pupils to samba, which is a kind of music and dance from Brazil that is performed in street carnival celebrations. It is recognised as a symbol of Brazil and has its roots in African religious traditions, particularly of the Congo. Samba music uses percussion instruments in particular rhythms which create a musical conversation between a leader and other players, by way of imitation and call and response (responding to a rhythmic 'call' with a different 'response'). Rhythms (patterns in sound) are layered over a steady beat/pulse (the regular heartbeat of the music). There are special percussion instruments used by samba bands: the surdo drum is a large bass drum, the tamborim is a small drum, the ganzá is a shaker, and the agogô is a bell. The music can have different sections, like the different parts of a story. These are sometimes indicated in samba music by the band leader blowing a whistle called an 'apito'.

Pupils explore samba music by listening to the piece 'Fanfarra' written by Sérgio Mendes and Carlinhos Brown. Sérgio Mendes (born in 1941) is a Brazilian pianist, composer, arranger and bandleader and is recognized as one of the most influential Brazilian musicians of his time. 'Fanfarra' is typical of music performed before a carnival parade by a samba school (a group of people that can be of any age who get together to practice and perform samba). Samba schools can contain up to 300 costumed percussionists as well as many more dancers/marchers. The recording of 'Fanfarra' which the children listen to features 100 percussionists and singers from samba schools in Rio de Janeiro and was recorded in a car park.

Lesson Sequencing

Lesson 1 introduces the children to samba music. They listen to 'Fanfarra' and through this discover that it is a kind of music and dance from Brazil that is performed in street carnival celebrations on percussion instruments (an instrument which you tap or strike to make a sound). From listening to the music, they identify that they can hear different groups of drums playing, almost as if in a conversation. As a class, they then imitate the teacher clapping different rhythms over a steady pulse. A child who is confident at clapping the rhythms can then act as a leader to clap the rhythms which the rest of the children imitate.

In lesson 2 the children build on their knowledge that samba music often uses rhythms in conversation between a leader and a group and that the leader sometimes uses a whistle to indicate to the group what they should do next. They explore how this can be used by devising dance steps to 'Fanfarra'. Whilst practicing the dance steps with the music the teacher will indicate a change of step by blowing a whistle. They learn that rhythms (patterns in sound) in samba can be imitated or used in call and response. They then repeat the exercise from the lesson 1 where the children imitate rhythms clapped by the teacher and then change the activity so that instead of imitating the teacher's rhythmic phrases respond with a rhythmic phrase which is different to the 'call'.



In lesson 3 the children investigate the different percussion instruments that are used to make samba by watching a video which shows the instruments being played. They learn that percussion instruments are instruments which are tapped/struck to make a sound. The children then use percussion instruments in groups to repeat the imitative/call and response rhythms which they used in lessons 1 and 2. In doing so they investigate how to create different sounds using a variety of percussion instruments.

In lesson 4 the children start to investigate how they can create special samba rhythms in layers over a steady pulse. At first, they learn the rhythms by chanting particular words over a pulse. They then omit the words and just clap the rhythms. Finally, they use percussion instruments to create the rhythms, as a class playing the different rhythms at the same time, in layers over a steady pulse.

In lesson 5 the children focus on how the music is split up into different sections, almost like different parts of a story, at first investigating how this is done in 'Fanfarra'. They then put their own samba piece together, following an A, B, A structure, using samba rhythms developed in lesson 4, and rhythm patterns using imitation and call and response as developed in lessons 2 and 3. They explore how the teacher can be the band leader, indicating to the class what to do by blowing a whistle.

In lesson 6 the children practise, perform and evaluate the samba piece which they developed in lesson 5, learning that we can evaluate a performance to make it better next time. By practising the piece so it is ready for performance they develop their skills in playing together in an ensemble, following the directions of the teacher who acts as the leader of the band.

Musical Focus

Pulse/Beat and Rhythm

- Finding the beat/pulse
- Rhythm as pattern
- Rhythm in imitation, call and response, in layers over a pulse
- Responding to music with dance
- Percussion instruments can be to create rhythms

Texture/Structure and Form

- Layering different rhythmic patterns over a beat/pulse
- Different sections in music, like the parts of a story

Links to Prior/Following Units

Year 1

Autumn A— Marching Music (What is a beat/pulse, music to move to, difference between rhythm and pulse)

Spring B—Ostinato I (Finding a beat/pulse, rhythm - pattern, imitation, call and response)

Spring B - Ostinato I (Finding the beat/pulse, rhythmic ostinato, layering different rhythmic patterns)

Year 2

Autumn A - Ostinato II (Rhythmic ostinato)

Summer B—Emotion in Sound (Rhythmic ostinato)

Links to other PKC subjects

This unit links to the Geography curriculum, where in Summer A of year 1 the children learn about the seven continents, including South America.

Outcomes

Over the course of 6 lessons children compose and perform music in an A, B, A structure on untuned percussion instruments using rhythmic imitation, call and response and layering samba rhythms over a steady pulse.

Key Learning Points

- Samba is a kind of music and dancing from Brazil performed in street carnival celebrations which uses percussion instruments
- A percussion instrument is an instrument which you tap or strike to make a sound
- Beat/pulse is like the steady heartbeat of music
- Rhythm is like a pattern in sound
- Samba music uses special rhythms in a musical conversation, using imitation, call and response and layering rhythms over a steady beat/pulse.
- Music can have different sections, like the different parts of a story. These are sometimes indicated in samba music by the band leader blowing a whistle.

Progression: Technical, Constructive, Expressive

Singing

Children learn and sing call and response and action songs, to warm up at the beginning of each lesson. This develops their technical singing skills which include posture hold, breath control, singing with a pulse, imitating rhythms, varying speed, holding a particular pitch and singing together in an ensemble. Practising songs over the course of six lessons ensures familiarity and increasing sophistication of musical expression.

Listening

Children practise 'active' listening, developing their technical skills of feeling, clapping and moving to the beat and different rhythmic patterns. By listening to samba music they begin to have conscious understanding of how music is constructed, focussing on the dimensions of pulse, rhythm, texture, structure and form. By studying samba they begin develop an increasing an understanding of the expressive qualities of music from a different culture/genre.

Composing/Practising

Composing and practising a piece which makes use of clapping and playing rhythms on untuned percussion instruments over a pulse develops technical motor skills. This, and creating a piece in three parts (A B A) in layers over a pulse develops knowledge of handling pulse, rhythm, texture and form/structure as component dimensions of composition. Building the composition gradually over the course of six lessons, requiring repeated practise ensures increasing confidence and sophistication in the expressive quality of musical outcomes.

Performing

Working towards performance of a samba composition over the course of six lessons ensures increased technical accuracy, confidence, fluency, expression and the ability to play securely in an ensemble, following a leader.