

The Music of Africa: Exploring Pulse and Rhythm



In this unit, we will be listening to and playing music from, and inspired by, Africa. This will include traditional African songs, modern African pop music, vocal and drumming ensembles, and film music influenced by Africa incorporating African musicians and rhythmic patterns.

We will learn about African drumming and the role of the **master drummer**, the lead drummer in a drumming ensemble. You will create your own African drumming ensembles which will include call and response, repeated cyclic patterns, and improvisation.

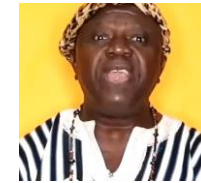
The Djembe Drum



The Djembe (pronounced Jem Bay) is a popular African drum. By playing it in certain ways, you are able to play a range of different sounds. We are going to use Djembes or other suitable drums to practise performing the bass, slap and tone sounds, noting the differences in colour and sound:

- **BASS SOUND** – Hitting the Djembe drum in the middle with slightly cupped hand producing a “hollow” sound - The drum must be tilted.
- **SLAP SOUND** – a sound produced by striking an African drum near the rim with a “cupped” hand.
- **TONE SOUND** – a sound produced by striking an African drum between the middle and the edge producing a “shallower” sound than the bass sound.

Our Listening



Che Che Kule (a traditional Ghanaian Song)



Jalikunda African Drumming Group



Wakanda by Ludwig Göransson feat. Baaba Maal



Inkanyezi Nezazi by Ladysmith Black Mambazo



Yolele by Papa Wemba



Jin-Go La-Ba (Drums of Passion) by Babatunde Olatunji

Other African Instruments



Talking Drum – It has two membranes (skins) and strings which connect both ends. The pitch of the drum can be changed by squeezing on the strings with your arm.



Log Drum – It is tuned and made out of wood. Unlike most drums, it does not have a skin.



Balafon – This is a tuned percussion instrument, similar to the xylophone. They are amplified by use of wooden (or actual) gourds underneath the keys.



Shekere – These were originally gourds (a family of vegetable of which the pumpkin is a member) but are now wooden with a skirt of colourful beads. They are played by a mixture of hitting and shaking.



Kalimba (left) & Mbira (right) – These are tuned instruments. To play these two instruments, you pluck or scrape the keys.

Pulse and Rhythm



Pulse is the heartbeat of the music.



Rhythm is when long and short notes are joined together.

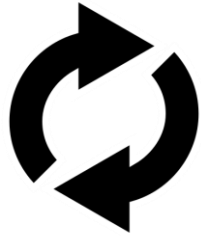
Improvisation

Improvisation is playing music on the spur of the moment without practise or written notation.



Cyclic Patterns

Cyclic patterns are **short, repeated patterns** which can be heard in music. A good example of music to hear a cyclic pattern in is through listening to the drum music of Africa.



Musical Notes - Duration



Crotchet = 1 beat



Crotchet rest = 1 beat of silence



Minim = 2 beats



Semibreve = 4 beats



Dotted Crotchet = 1 ½ beats



1 quaver = ½ beat
2 quavers = 1 full beat



Quaver rest = ½ beat of silence



1 semiquaver = ¼ beat
4 semiquavers = 1 full beat



Dotted Minim = 3 beats

Dynamics



f

Loud



p

Quiet

Ostinato

An ostinato is a **pattern** that **repeats**.

