

Global Music Lesson Plans

Lesson 3: Polyrhythmic Drumming Styles – Japan and Brazil.

For ages 11-14.

Time required:

One 60 minute lesson.

Activity:

Comparing the way in which the context of Taiko and Samba performances has shaped the performing conventions of each.

Aims:

To explore, compare and contrast cyclic patterns in drumming styles.

Pupils will learn:

- how the music of diverse polyrhythmic traditions share common performance procedures.
- how different timbres can be used to add interest.
- the way in which the social context of taiko and samba batucada has shaped the performance conventions of each.
- to maintain a part in an polyrhythmic drumming ensemble.

Weblinks you will need:

- Online [images of Taiko drumming](#).
- Online [video performance of Taiko drumming](#) by the Kagemusha group.
- Online [video performance of Samba Batucada](#) by the Earthshaking Samba band, especially clip 4: 'Baião' (parade).

Other resources:

- The **Taiko and Samba Batucada Comparison Worksheet** (below).
- The **Taiko Drumming Worksheet** (below).

Useful information

Taiko is an ancient drumming style of Japanese origin. Taiko literally means big or fat drum. It has been traditionally played in a variety of contexts e.g. warfare, to intimidate the enemy and communicate on the battlefield; ancient Gagaku ceremonial court music; religious ceremonies (it's rumbling sound has always had associations with the Gods); communication in Japanese villages such as the beginning of a hunt. In post war Japan the vibrant, physical polyrhythmic Taiko style that is popular today was developed. The drums, previously played separately, were brought together as an ensemble and, because each performer was expected to play on several taiko drums the visual, dance like performance evolved as a form of entertainment. For information about Taiko click [here](#).

Samba Batucada is an exuberant, carnival style of polyrhythmic drumming from Brazil that evolved through the blending of native Indian, transported African and imported European elements. Samba is a Latin American dance style, the rhythms of which form the basis of the Samba Batucada. This brash outdoor processional music complements and enhances the visual opulence of carnivals.

Polyrhythmic drumming is central to many cultures around the world. It is essentially cyclic (repeating), and is controlled by ensemble leaders. Modern Taiko and Samba Batucada are both exuberant forms of polyrhythmic drumming essentially for entertainment. Both are visual, dramatically enhanced by the movements of the performers themselves. Both styles rely on aural cues. Samba Batucada uses apito whistle cues and Taiko uses lead drumming cues. This lesson makes these connections explicit, recognising this link between two apparently diverse cultures.

Lesson plan	Polyrhythmic Drumming Styles – Japan and Brazil (Age range 11-14)
Starter	<p>In preparation for a whole class performance of a Japanese Taiko drumming piece, chant the three rhythmic phrases for the main section featured on the Taiko Drumming Worksheet (below). Chant them a) separately and b) together in three separate groups.</p> <p>Show one or two images of Taiko drumming and discuss the types and size of drums, the tools used to strike them (large mallets) and the way that the performers are striking the drums. What might these tell us about the performance of Taiko drums? (Answer = it's an exuberant and visual style of drumming).</p> <p>Explain that, during the lesson, pupils will perform a short Taiko piece and compare it with a performance of Brazilian Samba Batucada.</p>
Main	<p>Teach the Taiko drumming piece from the Taiko Drumming Worksheet.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The introduction is a call and response between the leader (top line) and the rest of the group (line 2). The leader could be the teacher or a confident pupil.2. In the main section, line 1 should be played on high drums, line 2 on medium drums, and line 3 on large drums.3. The break can be played tutti or by low and medium drums, with the high drums playing the semi-quavers at the end of the line on their own.4. The coda should be played tutti.

	<p>5. Suggested performance plan: Intro - main section - break - main section - coda.</p> <p>Give pupils copies of the Taiko and Samba Batucada Comparison Worksheet (below). Ask them to watch an online video performance of Taiko drumming by the Kagemusha group from Exeter. As they watch the video, ask them to write notes for each of the prompts provided on the 'How different' section. Discuss their answers and observations.</p> <p>Next, point out that pupils will compare the video performance of Taiko drumming with a video performance of Samba Batucada by the Earthshaking Samba band from the USA. Complete the same section for this second video. Ask pupils to discuss their answers in pairs, compare the two percussion styles, and agree some similarities between them. Pupils should then feedback to the class. Summarise the similarities and differences between the two styles. Ask pupils how they think that the context of each performance has shaped the music. In particular, point out that the two styles incorporate visual elements appropriate to the context in which the music is performed. They also both rely on aural cues for changes of section.</p> <p>Point out that the video excerpts feature an <i>English</i> Taiko ensemble and an <i>American</i> Samba Batucada band. What does this tell us about Taiko and Samba Batucada? (Answer = they are becoming inter-cultural styles).</p> <p>Can they think of another music style of non-European origin that is becoming, or is already, established in the UK? (Examples might include Latin American dances such as Salsa, or Djembe drumming groups, Reggae bands etc). Why is there an interest in music of other cultures?</p>
Plenary	<p>To reinforce their understanding of Taiko performance practices, perform the Taiko piece again, but this time add some of the visual elements seen in the video e.g. arms in the air during rests, moving between instruments for each new section, jumping in the air at the end of a line etc.</p>

Worksheet: Taiko Drumming

Taiko Drumming

Intro:

Main:

Break:

Coda: