

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Listen to a variety of rhythmic music from different parts of the world and encourage the children to clap and move to the pulse. Include music such as a *Brandenburg concerto*, Bach, heavy rock (taking care to select music with words appropriate to this age range), Indian and African drumming music.

Tell the class that this unit will explore how rhythms can be used repeatedly in cycles, that is, a fixed number of beats repeated continuously with no fixed end point within which rhythms can be repeated, improvised and developed, and how these rhythms can be made more interesting by adding different dynamics, durations and timbres. Help the children to understand that in much western music, including most popular music, the listener is taken on a musical journey from the beginning to the end. In this way it has a linear progression. Other music, including music from Africa and India, does not progress in this way, but instead uses cyclic patterns that are repeated constantly. The effect is of stepping out of time. The constant repetition allows the listener to concentrate on their own feelings with greater intensity. (A bit like the loops used in Lady Gaga's Music).

Make different sounds on various percussion instruments for the class and ask children to describe them. Use as many Indian, African and other percussion instruments as possible. Wherever possible use the names of the instruments.

Discuss differences in timbre (open and closed), duration (long and short), dynamics (loud and quiet). Talk about the way these sounds are made.

Listen to the recording of drumming from India, Africa and other parts of the world. Identify Open and Closed Sounds - Open sounds are when the sound is bright and resonates, eg a *suspended triangle played with a metal beater*. Close sounds are when the sound is dull and short, eg a *triangle held by the hand to stop the sound resonating*.

Place children in groups, each group with an instrument, and ask them to try and make new sounds eg by playing on different parts of the instrument, with different parts of the hand, different fingers, two sounds together, Ask them, in particular, to explore open and closed sounds on the same instrument. Ask them to pass the instrument around the group, each child making a different sound. They could try to alternate open sounds with closed sounds.

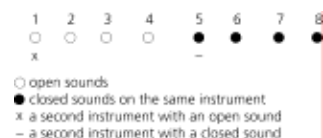
Talk about how the pitch of some kinds of drum can be made higher or lower.

Discuss patterns which are repeated and help the class to recognise how smaller patterns can fit within longer patterns, eg *hours in days, seasons in a year*.

Divide the class into two groups. One half keeps the pulse going. The other half, at a signal from the teacher, clap at half the speed or twice as fast. Keep the tempo steady and the clapping quiet. Encourage the children to look carefully at the way the parts fit together.

Listen to recordings of drumming. Focus on the rhythmic features. Can you identify repeated sounds, rhythmic patterns? Can you identify any instruments? Are all the sounds of the same volume? which sounds contrast with each other? Encourage the children to have a go at improvising rhythmic patterns. For those few who may have less confidence encourage them to use word rhythms - these can be any words and do not need to make sense.

Teach the class the structure of a particular cyclic pattern, eg Kaherva (8 beats long). Help the class to explore and control the different timbres on the drums and to use different dynamics.



Encourage the class to invent words to describe the different sounds eg *ba, ba, ba, ba; tick, tick, tick, tick*.

Ask some children to improvise rhythmic patterns over the Kaherva.

Divide the children into groups with one instrument to each groups. Ask each group to invent a rhythmic pattern while the rest of the class plays the Kaherva.

Now begin to think about the timbre and duration of the instrumental sounds used to play the rhythmic patterns. *What instrument and what sound are best suited to the playing of a steady pulse, a fast rhythmic pulse, a single note played at the beginning of the cycle? How can you make your rhythmic patterns more interesting, eg making greater use of the different timbres (open and closed sounds) available on each instrument?* Lead discussions on why one drum pattern may sound more interesting than another, and how tastes may differ from person to person.

Let's start looking at looping cyclic patterns. Teach the students the classic 2 against 3 - Hemiola.

Teach the students these cyclic patterns. Each one repeats immediately. The asterisk represents a beat rest. Two words together are quavers.

GO * GO * GOGO * GO * GO * GO

zi * * zi * * zi * * zi * *

* GO zi GO GO zi GO * zi * GO

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Ask each group to see how many new patterns they can create from their given pattern by either changing around the rhythmic material, or repeating one part of the pattern, making it twice as long. Using their variations and developments, ask the students to create their own cyclic work. The only rule is that one person must perform the original cyclic pattern in its' original form from the start to the end of the piece.

Perform and discuss the best features.

Play 'Metre mix': This is a fun cyclic game. On flash cards, write the cyclic patterns below. You can add as many as you like but make sure that there are a variety of duplicates. For eg. you might have one copy of number 1, 3 copies of number 2, 5 copies of number 3, etc. . Issue a different card to each student. They have to memorise their card and be able to clap it whilst walking around the room. All they need to do is find anyone with the same pattern as them.

Once all pattern groupings have been separated, work out a whole class composition. You can get creative and replace each of the X's with little hands if wish.

Card 1 X - X - X - X -

Card 2 X - -X--X - -X - -

Card 3 X - - X- X- - X

Card 4 X-X -X--XX--X-

Card 5 ----XX----XX--XX