

MUSIC · Y3–Y6

World Music Traditions

Knowledge Organiser — Y3–Y6

Key traditions

1

African drumming (West Africa)

Percussion-centred music using djembe, talking drum, and balafon. Polyrhythmic (multiple different rhythms playing simultaneously). Community and ceremonial function.

Example: Djembe patterns use three tones: bass, tone, slap

2

Samba (Brazil)

Brazilian percussion-based music associated with Carnival. Call-and-response structure. Instruments: surdo (bass drum), repinique, tamborim, agogô (bell), chocalho (shaker).

3

Gamelan (Indonesia)

An ensemble of percussion instruments — metallophones, gongs, drums, and flute. From Java and Bali. Music is based on interlocking patterns rather than melody-and-harmony.

4

Indian classical music

Based on raga (a set of notes with specific rules for use) and tala (rhythmic cycle).

Improvised within a structure. Instruments: sitar, tabla, sarod, bansuri (bamboo flute).

5

Polyrhythm

Multiple different rhythms played at the same time. Central to African and Brazilian music.

Example: A 3-beat pattern and a 4-beat pattern played simultaneously

6

Call and response

A musical dialogue where one phrase (call) is answered by another (response). Found in many world music traditions.

Example: Samba bateria; blues and gospel



Guide — what to notice

Questions to ask when listening to

- INSTRUMENTS: what are they made of? Wood, skin, metal, string? How are they played?
- RHYTHM: is the beat simple or complex? Can you hear more than one rhythm at once?
- STRUCTURE: is there call and response? Repetition? Improvisation? A clear beginning, middle and end?
- FUNCTION: is this music for dancing, ceremony, storytelling, entertainment, or prayer?
- CULTURE: what does this music tell you about the people and places it comes from?
- INSTRUMENTS TO LEARN ABOUT: djembe (West Africa), sitar (India), gamelan (Indonesia), kora (West Africa), didgeridoo (Australia), balalaika (Russia)

