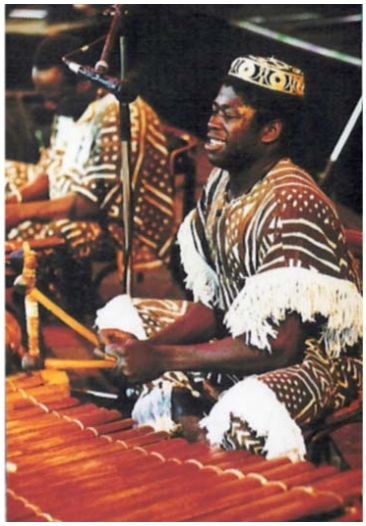
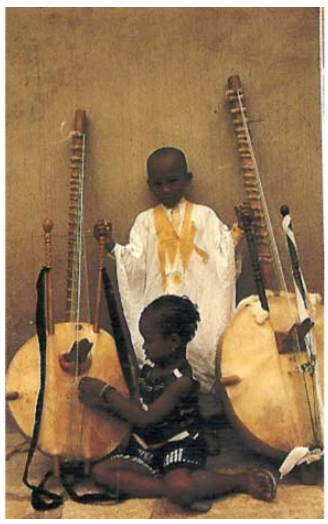
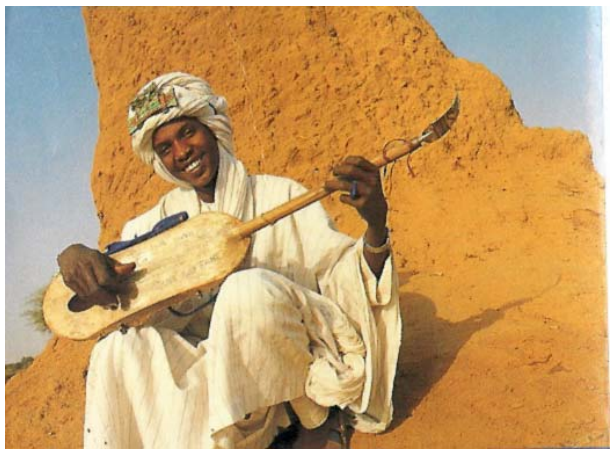


The Sounds of Africa

Paul Hazelgrove-Spurin





The Sounds of Africa

Teachers Notes

The projects in this pack relate directly to the National Curriculum objectives for Performing and composing and, in addition, encourage the development of listening skills. The first three projects on pages 4, 5, 6 and 7 are designed to introduce pupils to the many rhythmical patterns used in African music and develop their own creativity and extend their rhythmical awareness through the use of 6/8 time, polyrhythms and syncopation.

Pages 8 and 9 feature 3 African songs. *Owe nsawila* is a simple song where the call and response are a repetition of the opening line. In *Byowa ee* the chorus answer with a different phrase and *Na ya la mu* introduces simple responses in harmony. As an extension project, pupils can add any of the 6/8 rhythms they have performed or created to the songs.

The concept of interlocking melodies and rhythms is introduced in pages 10, 11 and 12. *Nhemamusasa* and *Dza vadzimu* can be performed on Xylophones or keyboards.

Most of the music featured in this pack centre around the percussive rhythms of Ghana and the melodic tones of Zimbabwe. As a contrast, page 13 introduces a more Middle Eastern flavour allowing pupils to explore their melodic awareness using the North African scale featured in Rai music.

Page 14, Activity 1, allows pupils to create their own call and response rhythms, and page 16, activity 3, melodies based on the pentatonic scale. This project is intended to introduce the black notes on the keyboards, developing further their knowledge and use of

ICT. Activity 2 and 4 on page 15 and 17, allows pupils to evaluate their creative and performing skills.

Page 18, Activity 5, seeks to develop the pupils listening skills encouraging them to recognise all the elements of African music, which they may have already created and performed.

The final section in the pack provides a background to African musical life in view of instrumentation and how music is used in African society.

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African Rhythm Patterns (1)

= Strong stroke = Weak stroke

Master Drummer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Sang si sang sang si sang si

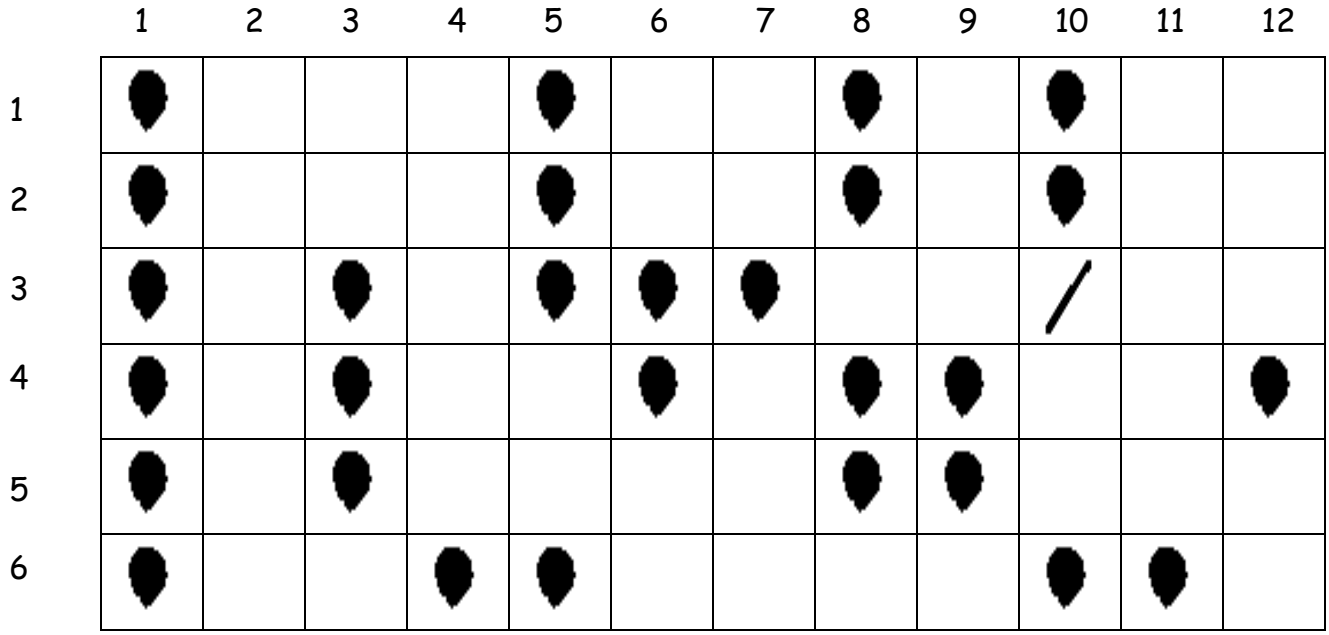
Rhythm 1

Rhythm 2

Rhythm 3

African Rhythm Patterns (2)

Rhythm Grid



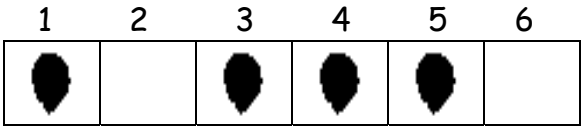
Create your own rhythm grid

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												

African Rhythm Patterns (3)

How to perform African Cross-Rhythm

Try clapping or drumming the following pattern in a repeating sequence



Now try this two against three cross rhythm slowly

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Right hand	●		●		●	
Left Hand	●			●		

Once you have succeeded in clapping the rhythm try and speed up gradually

In groups of six try this small exercise. Always remember to come in on 1

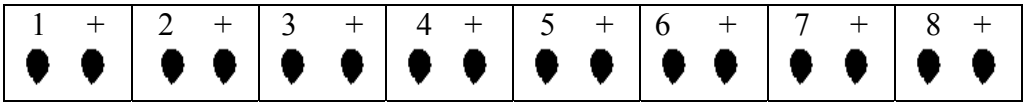
First pair - Count 1 2 and clap on 1
Second pair - Count 1 2 3 and clap on 1
Third pair - Count 1 2 3 4 5 and clap on 1

African Rhythm Patterns (4)

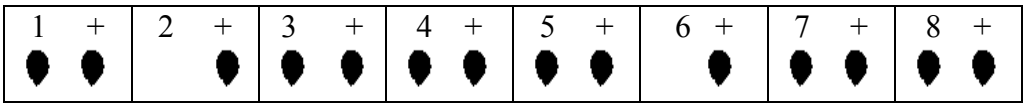
In most European music, the music falls right on the beats: 1 2 3 4 as in Example 1

Syncopation is simply the shifting of the beat to where it's not "supposed" to be, in between the beats. Playing off the beat, syncopating, is what gives the music the drive and excitement, as in example 2 and 3

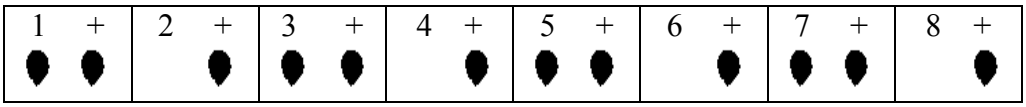
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



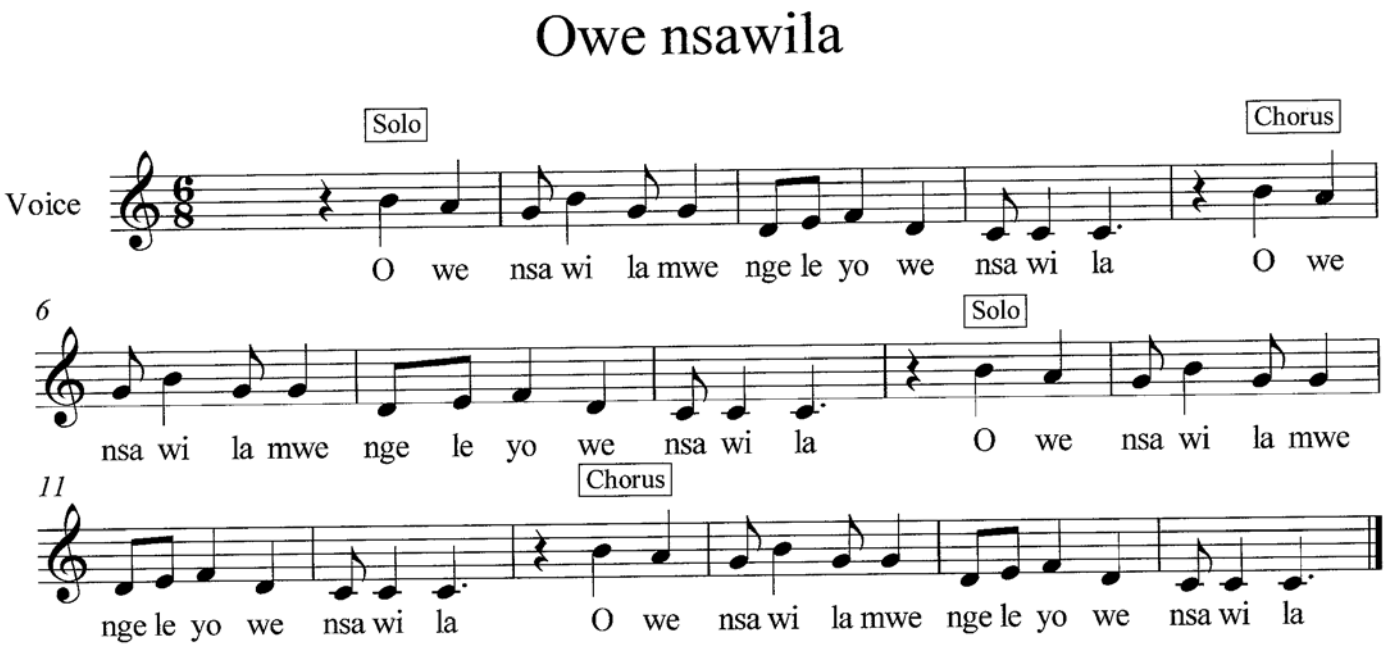
Now try and compose your own syncopated rhythm in the Grid

1 +	2 +	3 +	4 +	5 +	6 +	7 +	8 +	9 +	10 +	11 +	12 +

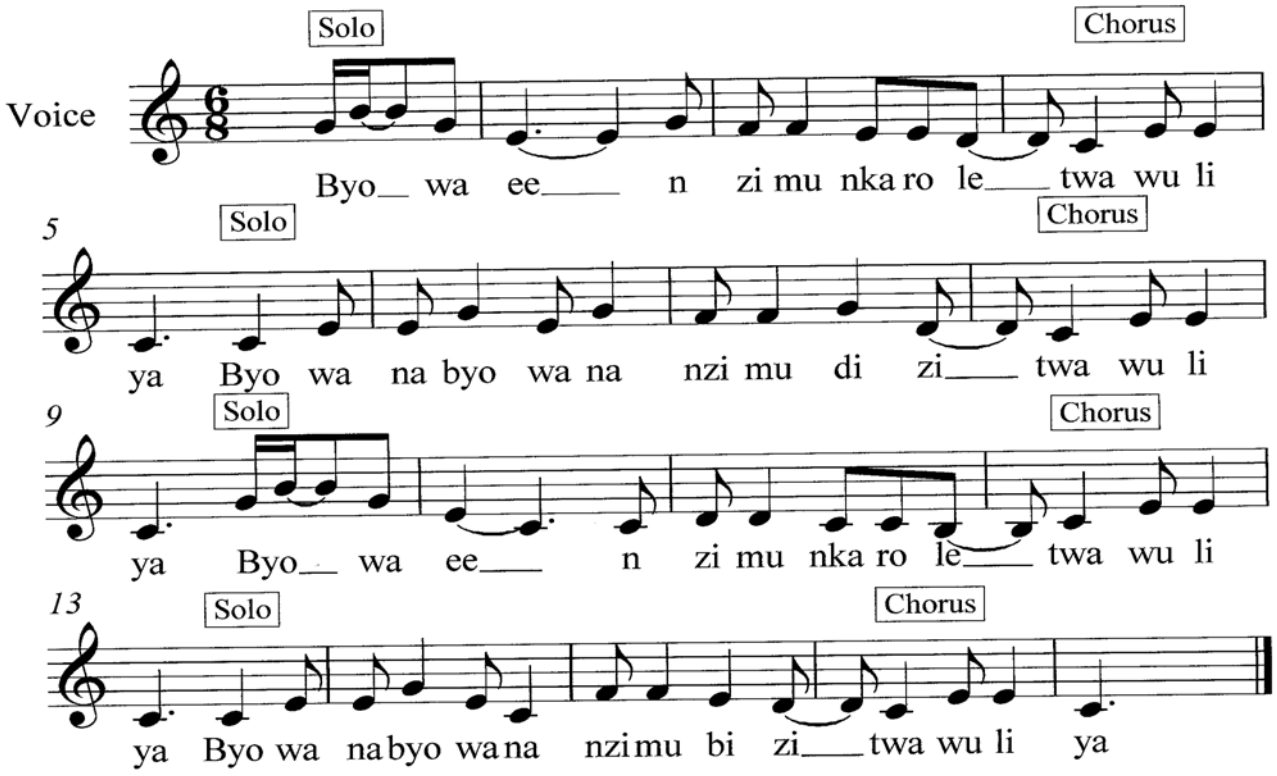
African Call and Response (1)

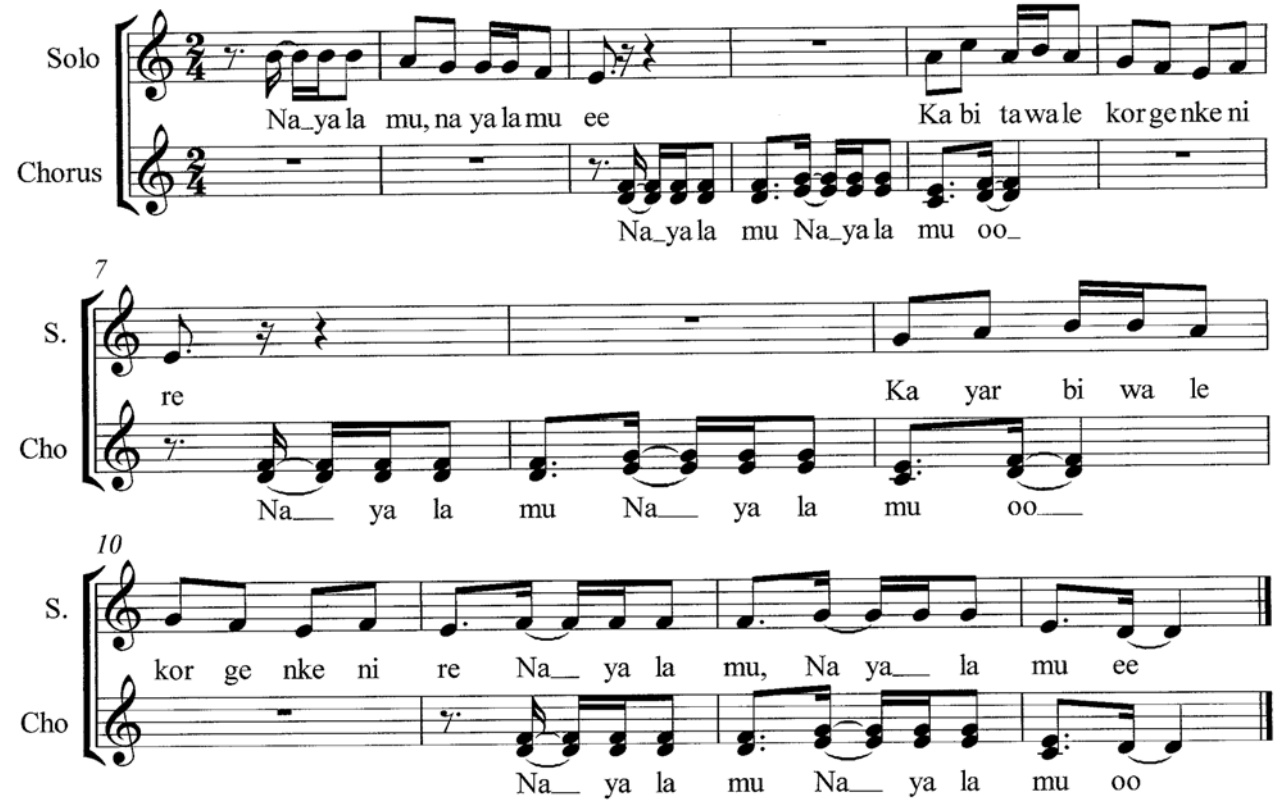
Call and response is an important part of African music and became an important element of African-American music

Call and response is also crucial because it also involves the audience. Everyone participates in African music.

Try these 3 short African songs

African Call and Response (2)

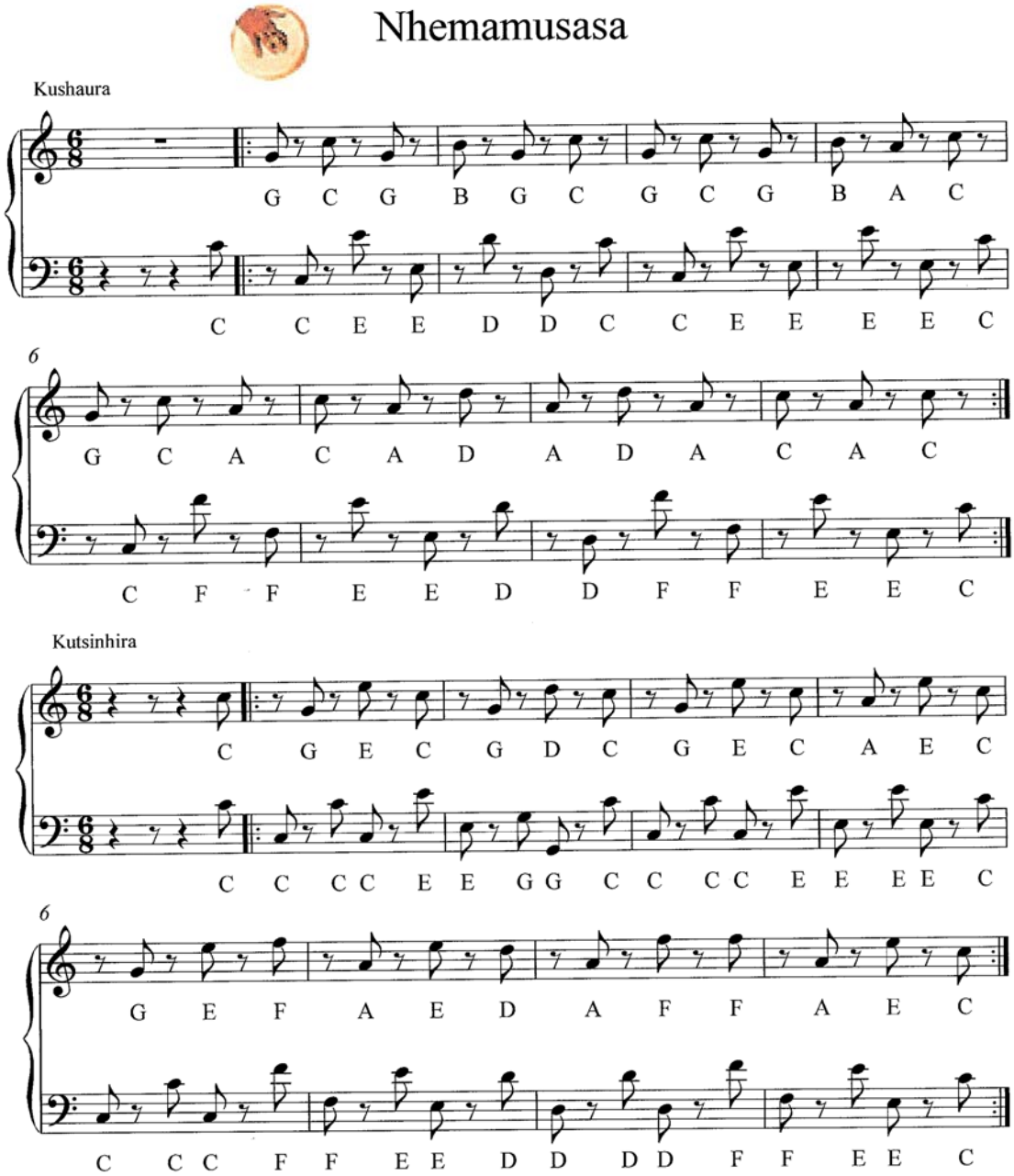
Byowa ee

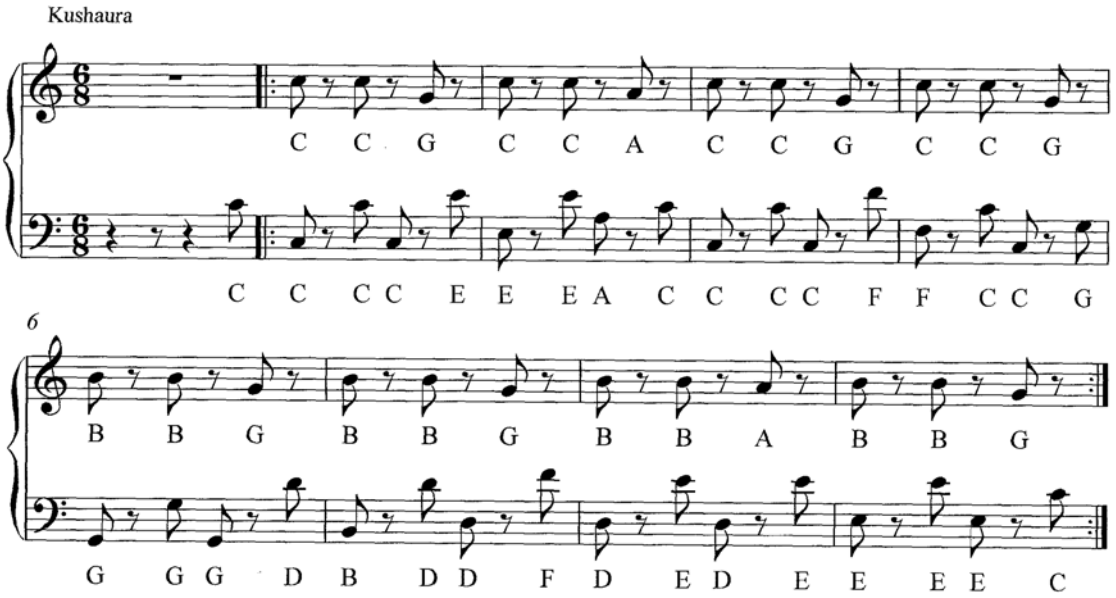
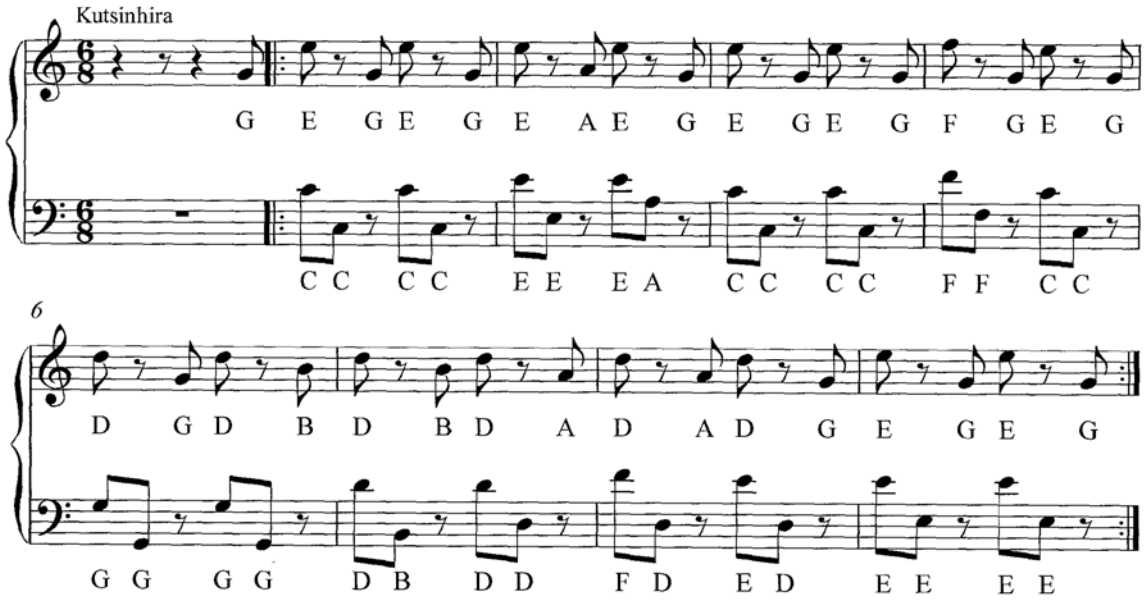


Na ya la mu

African Resultant melody and rhythms (1)

The piece of music below is played on the mbira. Each mbira player has a different part to play. The first part is called the kushaura and the second is called the kutsinhira. Each part has its own melody and rhythm, which, when played together, produce a new melody and rhythm. This is known as **resultant melody** and **resultant rhythm**

Performance

Divide into groups and try playing the upper and lower parts of the kushaura and kutsinhira. Take it slowly at first until you can play each part at the correct speed. Next you have to fit both parts together.

African Resultant Melody and rhythms (2)

Dza vadzimu

Dza vadzimu

Now try adding this percussion resultant rhythm to the melodies

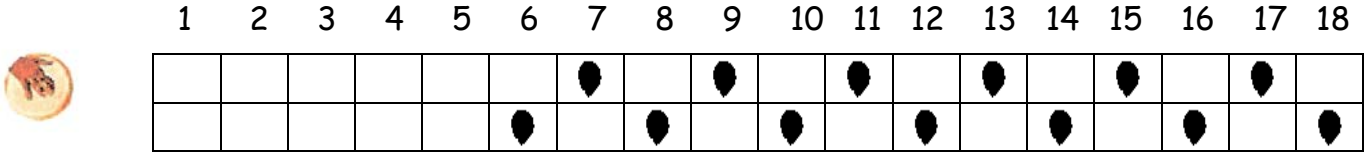
Example A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
					●	●		●	●		●	●		●	●		●
						●	●		●	●		●	●		●	●	

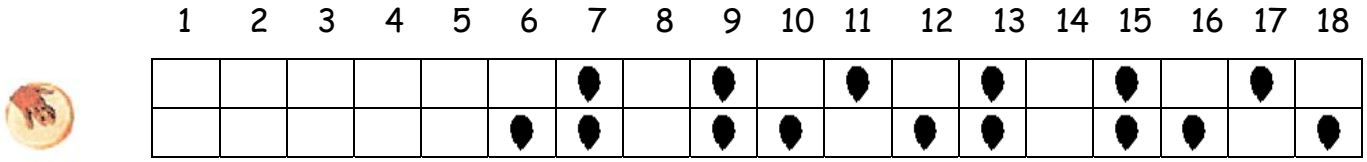
More African mbira resultant rhythms (1)

Top line – right hand Bottom Line – Left hand

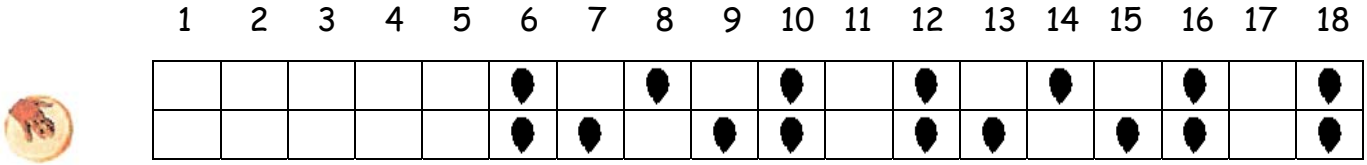
Example B



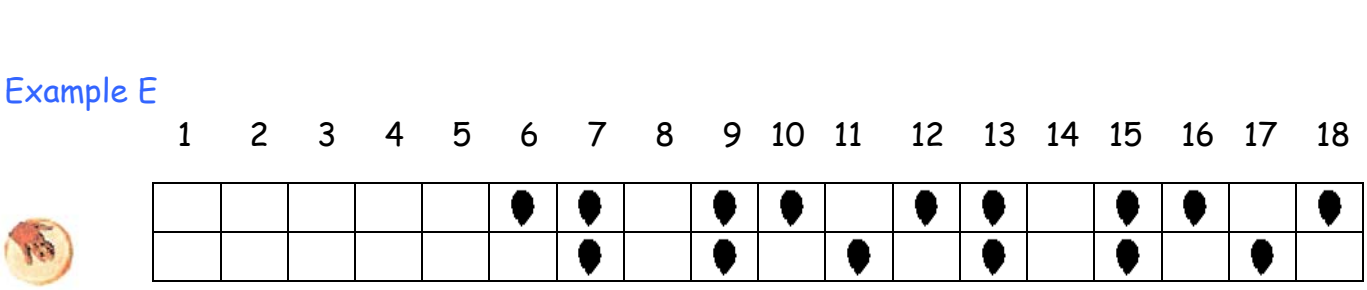
Example C



Example D

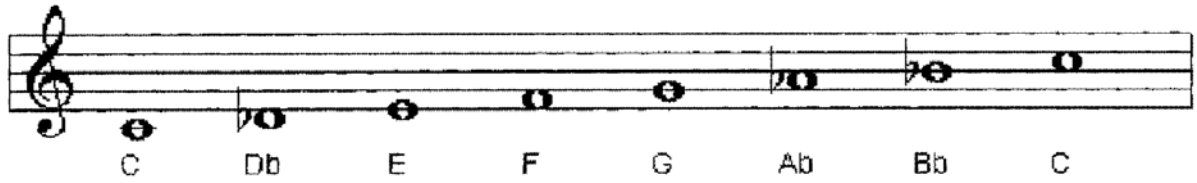


Example E



Rai music of North Africa

Look at the notes of the common North African scale used in Rai music



1. Play the North African scale in different octaves and get used to the sound of it.

2. Play a drone on C (sustained) and take it in turns to make up a short tune using the scale. This section should contain lots of *rubato* and not much rhythm.

3. Start a rhythm and make up an ostinato using the scale and using the drone as an accompaniment.

4. End your music with the *rubato* section.

Word Box

Drone	An accompaniment using two notes, usually C and G
Sustained	A long, held on note
Rai	The pop music of North Africa, particularly Egypt
Rubato	No strict time. The music speeds up and slows down

Call and Response Composition Task

Activity 1

You are going to make up your own call and response rhythms. You can use the grid below to write them down. Each box lasts for one beat. Your call and response rhythms will last for 8 beats each. If you want to have a note on any beat draw a crotchet in the box under the right number. If you want two notes on a beat draw two quavers in the box.

Call

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Response

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Performing your rhythms

Practice clapping the two rhythms you have created.

Teach the response to the other people in your group.

Practice it all together.

Learn to clap everybody else's rhythms, and then mix them up to make a call and response piece.

Try adding some dynamics (loud and quiet) to make the piece more interesting.

Once you have learnt the rhythms you can try them out on percussion instruments.

Call and Response Composition Task

Activity 2

An evaluation is your opinion of something. Answer the questions below to make an evaluation of your group piece.

- Who wrote the most interesting rhythm? _____
- Why was it the best? _____
- Why were the others not so good? _____

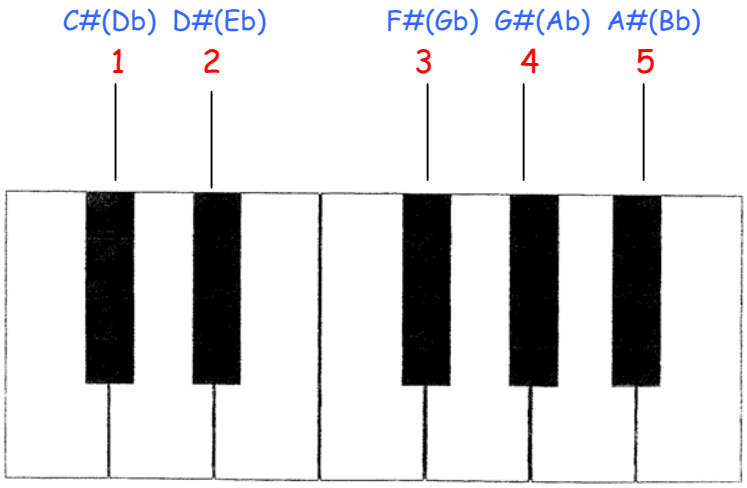
- Were any of the rhythms difficult to perform? _____
- If some were difficult, why were they difficult? _____

- Did your group perform successfully? _____
- How could the group's performance have been improved? _____

Call and Response Composition Task

Activity 3

Many cultures do not use notation, but use a number system instead. We are going to use a pentatonic scale to create ostinato patterns and melodies, which uses only the black notes of the keyboard.



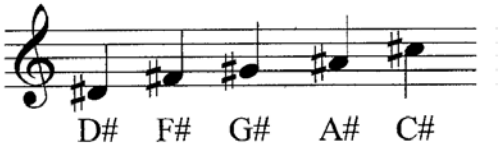
You are going to make up your own call and response melody using the numbers above. You can use the grid below to write them down. Each box lasts for one beat. Your call and response melodies will last for 8 beats each. Once you have done this, create an ostinato pattern to accompany your call and response using the numbers above.

Call

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Response

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Pentatonic Scale

Call and Response Composition Task

Activity 4

An evaluation is your opinion of something. Answer the questions below to make an evaluation of your group piece.

- Who wrote the most interesting melody? _____
- Why was it the best? _____
- Why were the others not so good? _____

- Were any of the melodies difficult to perform? _____
- If some were difficult, why were they difficult? _____

- Did your group perform successfully? _____
- How could the group's performance have been improved? _____

Listening quiz

Activity 5

Jina Lako Linuliwe performed by The Tanzanian New Life Band.

Listen to the following piece of African music. Answer the following questions.

1. Which two percussion instruments can you hear?

   _____

2. Does a man or a woman sing the call?

   _____

3. What other instruments can you hear?

   _____

4. Does men, women or a mixture of the both sing the response?

   _____

5. Does the music get faster, get slower or stay the same speed?

   _____

African knowledge quiz

Fill in the missing words in the passage from the list below

Africa
African
African
Call
Call and response
Celebrations
Drums
Religious
Response
Rhythmical
Rhythms
Voice

Music is very important to life in _____. It is used for_____ occasions and _____ as well as in everyday life.

It is very _____ and can be very exciting to listen to.

It often uses _____ and simple wind instruments. There are many _____ songs as the human _____ is an instrument that anybody can use.

One common style of _____ music is called _____. One person begins by singing or playing a phrase (the _____) and the others reply with the _____.

Another type uses many _____ played at the same time.

Percussion instruments of Africa

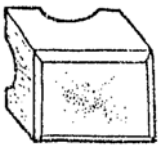
African Drums

Drumming is an important part of life in Africa. Social drumming takes place whenever people are gathered together. Traditional drumming is for specific ceremonies and rituals, for example, religious occasions, the enthroning of a chief, the celebration of a harvest, a healing ceremony.

Atumpani Drums

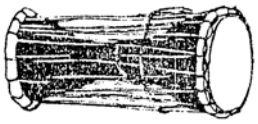
These are the talking drums of the Ashanti people. The 'female' drum is tuned to a higher sound than the other 'male' drum. Pitch and rhythm patterns played on the drums copy the rise and fall of Ashanti speech, and this is how messages are sent.

Gome Drums



This is used for social drumming and dancing. The drum is laid on its side. The player sits on top of it, playing it with his hands, and using his feet to alter the tension of the skin to change the sound.

Donno Drum



It has a head at each end, and is used for social and traditional drumming. The drummer holds it under his arm and strikes one end with a curved stick. He can change the sound by squeezing the drum.

Playing the drums

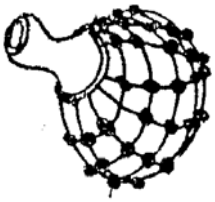
There are two main sound produced on the drums – open and closed. An open sound is produced by hitting the drum with the flat palm of the hand or with a stick, and letting the drum skin vibrate. A closed sound is produced by a) keeping the hand on the drum skin once it has struck so that the vibrations are dampened; b) holding one hand against the drum skin while it is struck with the other hand, or a stick; c) using a stick to strike the drum skin and to remain on the skin pressing firmly against it, rather than bouncing off again.

Other African Instruments

Gankogui (Gong-Gong)

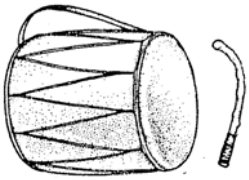
This instrument with its metallic sound, is used to play the regular beat and keep everyone together. It is held in one hand and struck with a beater, and it produces two sounds, one higher and one lower.

Axatse (Shaker)



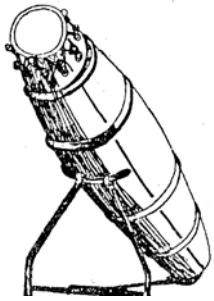
This is made out of a dried gourd and covered with a net on which beads or seeds are threaded. It is shaken or struck against the hand or knees.

Brekfte



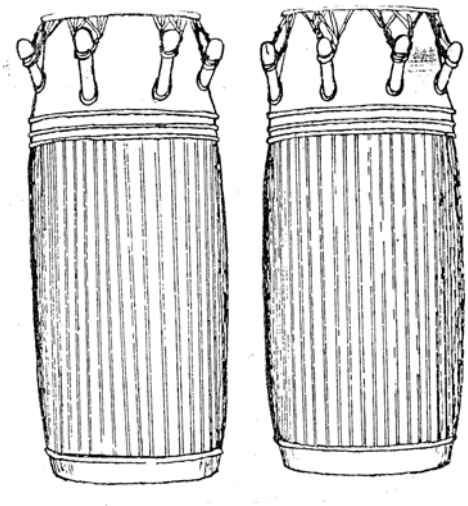
One of the most popular and widely used drums in Africa is this double-headed drum. The frame is hollowed out of one piece of wood, and has a head on each end. It is held under the arm and struck with a curved stick.

Atsimevu



The atsimevu is a master drum played mainly by the Ewe speaking people of Ghana. It is about five feet high and it is placed on a stand before playing.

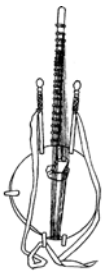
Fontomfrom Drums



These are the pride of the Akan people of Ghana. They are huge heavy drums, carried on the heads of bearers during the creremonial processions, while the drummers walk behind and play with sticks which have an acute angle bend in them. The drums are used not only for dancing but also to sound the praises of chiefs. They produce a very deep and penetrating sound.

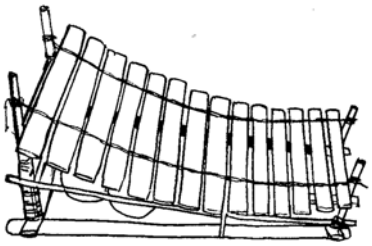
Pitched Instruments

Kora



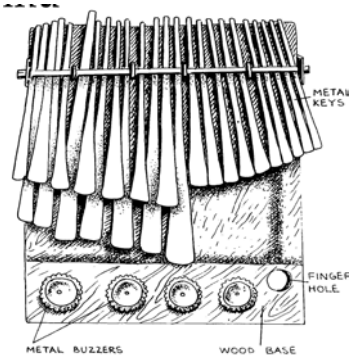
The kora is only played by a special group of male musicians of the Manding people in Gambia. The kora is made from a very large gourd which has been cut in half, with an animal skin stretched tightly across it. It sounds similar to the harp.

Balafon (xylophone)



Wooden bars are placed on top of gourds which are covered with spiders egg-cases making them buzz less than larger instruments.

Mbira (Hand piano)



Mbiras are found all over Africa and come in many shapes and sizes. It has 24 metal keys arranged in 3 rows, which are played with the thumbs and the right index finger. The keys are mounted on a wooden base with metal rings, or bottle tops, that vibrate or buzz when played.

Mouth Bow

Five String Zither

Music in Community Life

The continent of Africa is a very large area of land with a considerable variation of climate, and many different peoples living there. Within each African country, there are many languages spoken – sometimes over 100. Most African people can speak 3 or 4 different languages.

Family life is important to people in Africa and provides a focus for community activities. If people have a gift for music they will be able to learn quickly and easily and will become skilled players. Traditional music, dancing and singing is an important part of family life.

People who live in rural communities tend to get up at sunrise, and return home for the evening meal when it gets dark. After they have eaten they may sit and talk, or sometimes they may play instruments and sing.

Young children often copy music they have heard others play. Sometimes a parent will sit a child on their knees guiding their hands to play an instrument. Groups of drummers practise, on drums made out of old cans or something similar. Through watching and listening, youngsters learn to play their instruments

On important occasions such as funerals, religious festivals, or at harvest time

there is plenty of music and dancing, which everyone joins in. Much of the music of Africa is for dancing, in fact, many of the languages use the same word to describe music and dancing –the two cannot be separated.

Recordings

Track 1 –	Two against Three rhythm	Page 6
Track 2 –	Nhemamusasa – Kushaura	Page 10
Track 3 -	Nhemamusasa – Kutsinhira	
Track 4 -	Nhemamusasa – Two parts together	
Track 5 -	Nhemamusasa – Normal speed	
Track 6 -	Dza vadzimu – Kushaura	Page 11
Track 7 -	Dza vadzimu – Kutsinhira	
Track 8 -	Dza vadzimu – Two parts together	
Track 9 -	Dza vadzimu – Normal speed	
Track 10 –	Mbira Resultant rhythm – Example A	Page 11
Track 11 -	Mbira Resultant rhythm – Example B	Page 12
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