



sydney symphony orchestra

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Bite-Sized Music Lessons

**A series of F-10 music lessons for
implementation in the classroom**

Conditions of use

These Materials are freely available for download and educational use.

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Jamaican Rumba (1938)

Arthur Benjamin

Duration: approximately 2:10 minutes

Year levels: Foundation–2 (Stage 1)

Written in the language of the Australian Curriculum in the Arts these resources include activities in each of the music learning areas: performing, composing and listening and identify the key competencies reinforced in each activity.

Lesson	Page	Focus Activity
1	4	Singing and dancing
2	5	Listening, moving and reading
3	6	Composing
4	7	Performing
5	8	Moving and composing

Lesson Index

- Lesson 1:** Students learn to sing the song upon which the Jamaican Rumba is based and learn a dance which demonstrated the structure of the piece.
- Lesson 2:** Students will complete a series of rhythm activities exploring and experimenting with beat and accent and learning how to play an ostinati accompaniment to the piece.
- Lesson 3:** This series of listening activities will help students understand the form or structure of the music and reinforce the ostinati accompaniment pattern learnt in lesson 2. They will then invent their own ostinati accompaniment to perform with the song.
- Lesson 4:** Students will perform a number of different percussion accompaniment patterns together based upon ideas from the song Mango Walk.
- Lesson 5:** This activity is based upon a Latin American stomping dance which can be performed to the Jamaican Rumba and then allows the students to notate (write) their own percussion score and perform from it.

Composer biography: Arthur Benjamin (1893–1960)

Arthur Benjamin was born in Sydney in 1893 and died in London in 1960. At the age of 18 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music, London where he studied composition. He remained at the college until the outbreak of war in 1914.

During World War I he served in the infantry and later the air force. After the war he taught piano for a short time at the Sydney Conservatorium. In 1921 he returned to London where he taught composition at the Royal College of Music. He lived the rest of his life teaching and composing in London. Benjamin wrote a wide range of works including chamber music, operas, songs, orchestral works, and he was active as a writer of music for films.

Jamaican Rumba

A visit to the West Indies in 1937 provided the inspiration for *Jamaican Rumba*, which was arranged from a popular folk song. It was originally composed for two pianos and later arranged for orchestra. The work was so popular it reached the New York Hit Parade. Over 250,000 copies of the recording were sold in its first season.

Key musical concepts contained in this work

- Performing: singing *Mango Walk* and playing percussion score, movement activities while singing.
- Composing: creating a percussion accompaniment.
- Aural skills: ostinati, syncopation.
- Listening: identifying beat and familiar tunes and rhythm patterns, recognising a 2 part structure.

At the conclusion of the activities students should be able to:

- demonstrate syncopated rhythmic patterns.
- perform the song *Mango Walk* with percussion accompaniment.
- perform a simple dance to *Mango Walk*.
- identify the two main themes of *Jamaican Rumba*.
- recognise the use of the chorus and verse melodies in *Jamaican Rumba*.
- compose and perform accompanying rhythms to suit a rumba.
- identify the melodic and accompanying roles of the instruments in the piece.

Audio and related resources

From the album *Hi-Fi a la Espanola*

Eastman-Rochester Pops Orchestra, conducted by Frederick Fennell:

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/track/75CB8g1zaHPgV0EgcjvUJH>

Rumba dance steps: <http://www.learntodance.com/online-ballroom-dance-lessons/rumba-dance-lessons-online/>

Clave rhythm demonstration: <https://safeshare.tv/submit?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DdxVeiPQ1juo>

Material required for teaching these activities:

Percussion instruments for Lessons 4 and 5.

Listening Guide

The structure of *Jamaican Rumba* is: Introduction, A, B, A, B, C Coda.

A coda is a short section intended to finish off the music. It is an Italian word for tail.

Chorus Melody (Section A) – flute part



Verse Melody (Section B) – clarinet part



See the [resources](#) for a link to hear *Jamaican Rumba* performed.

Audio Cue	Section	Features
0:00–0:15	Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano and strings set the rumba rhythm • Brass chords and maraca rhythm added • This accompaniment continues throughout most of the piece
0:16–0:42	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oboe and bassoon play the chorus melody • Violins play the melody with fragments of the verse melody from woodwind at the same time. • Short piano motif leads into the next section.
0:43–1:00	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarinet and bassoon play the verse melody with brass and woodwind accompaniment. • This section ends with a repeated rhythmic idea and prominent piano section under sustained strings, similar to the introduction.
1:01–1:27	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return of chorus melody played by flute and glockenspiel. • Maraca playing the rumba rhythm becomes prominent. • Bridge passage leads to return of Section B.
1:28–1:40	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verse melody played by violins in lower register. • Rumba rhythm in woodwind.
1:41–1:52	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melodies combined. Flute and glockenspiel play chorus melody while the violins repeat verse melody.
1:53–2:08	Coda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ends with descending fragments based upon the jaunty rumba rhythm. • Question and answer between pitched instruments and maracas.

Sequential Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: Singing and dancing

1. Teach the song *Mango Walk*.

Mango Walk

My ma ma deed a tell me that you go man go walk, you go man go walk, you
 go man go walk, My ma ma deed a tell me that you go man go walk, and steal all the num ber
 'lev en V.1 I tell you Sue, I tell you for true, I tell you for true I tell you, that
 I don't go on no man no walk and steal all the num ber 'lev en V.2

2. Divide the class into two groups. This song is a partner song, which means that each section, though different, can be performed at the same time. One group sings the chorus against the other group singing the verse.
3. Try dancing a simplified version of the rumba while singing *Mango Walk*. This version is a 'box step' over four beats.

Beat 1	Step forward with your left foot
Beat 2	Sidestep to the right with your right foot
Beat 3	Move your left foot forward to your right foot
Beat 4	Pause

In the next four beats perform:

Beat 1	Step back with your right foot
Beat 2	Sidestep to the left with your left foot
Beat 3	Move your right foot to your left foot
Beat 4	Pause

Keep repeating this pattern while singing the song. The dance can be performed in pairs with partners beginning on opposite feet.

Learn/watch some rumba dance steps and extend your dance. See the [resources](#) for a video link.

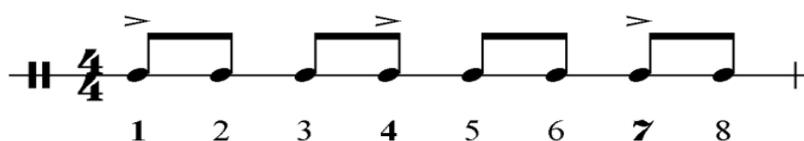
Lesson 2: Listening, moving and reading

1. In a circle, with the students facing clockwise and standing still, lightly clap the 4 beats in a bar while listening to *Jamaican Rumba* (see [resources](#)).
 - a) Once students have a sense of the pulse, have them count the beats aloud (1, 2, 3, 4).
 - b) Then have them count in their heads while listening to the music and just saying the first beat aloud.
 - c) Now have them step on the first beat of the bar.
 - d) Then vary the steps to beat 1 and 3, or beats 1, 2 and 3, or all 4 beats.

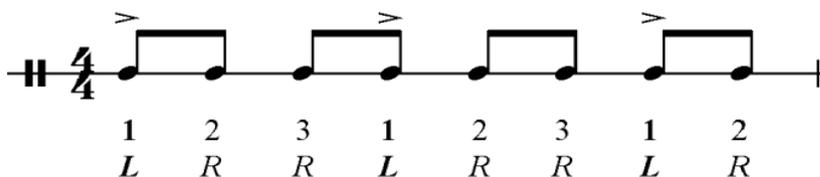
To add a challenge to this activity you can change the movement patterns they do on each beat, e.g.:

Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3	Beat 4
step	step	step	hop
clap	step	step	step

2. A rumba is a Cuban dance in 8 quavers that is characterised by 3+3+2 rhythmic groupings. Learn the rumba as a class.



- a) Have the students count each of the 8 quaver pulses aloud and accent the ones marked with a '>' whilst practicing the pattern. (It is probably easiest to count 123, 123, 12 using 2 hands and having 1 in the left hand and the 2 and 3 in the right – see below.)



- b) Now count the beats aloud but clap the accented notes only. The clapped rhythm would look like:



- c) Have a small group of students perform 4a and 4b as accompaniment ostinati (an accompaniment of repeated patterns) on classroom percussion instruments whilst another keeps the beat on a drum and the rest of the class sing *Mango Walk*.
- d) Perform the patterns while listening to the performance.

Lesson 4: Performing

Jamaican Rumba is based on the traditional Jamaican folksong *Mango Walk* from activity 1.

1. Teach the accompaniment to *Mango Walk* using the following speech patterns:

maracas

claves

drum

(Play on 1)

- a) Transfer the speech patterns to body percussion, then to percussion instruments.
 - b) Perform the accompaniment with the chorus of *Mango Walk*. Now play it twice through as an introduction before the voices enter and once at the end as a coda or finishing off section.
2. Now have students work in small groups to invent a contrasting accompaniment for the verse.
 - a) Groups practise their accompaniment.
 - b) Each group performs their accompaniment while the rest of the class sings the verse.
 3. Divide the class into groups and allocate parts (see table below). Prepare and perform and then have the groups swap parts.

Group 1	Plays introduction/accompaniment for chorus/coda
Group 2	Plays their accompaniment for Verse 1 (see Lesson 3)
Group 3	Plays their accompaniment for Verse 2 (see Lesson 3)
Group 4	Sings the song (see Lesson 1)

Lesson 5: Moving and composing

Mento is a musical style from Jamaica which also influenced Benjamin. It has the following musical features:

- A strong accent on the last beat of a four beat bar.
- Group participation and improvisation from a soloist.
- Performed at a slower tempo than the Latin American rumba.
- Often played by an ensemble of 4 to 10 players.
- The melody is often played by instruments such as the flute, fiddle, harmonica, penny whistle, accordion, clarinet and trumpet.
- The harmony is played on guitars, banjos, bass fiddle and rumba boxes with drums, claves, maracas, tambourines, rattles and a grater stroked with a nail or metal object

1. The example below shows a typical mento percussion accompaniment with the fourth beat of the bar accented.
 - a) Learn the mento pattern counting four aloud and clapping of beats one and four, with four accented.
 - b) Perform *Mango Walk* with this percussion accompaniment. The chorus with the accompaniment has been given below as an example. Apply the mento rhythm to the whole song
 - c) In groups make up a stomping dance based upon the mento rhythm.
 - d) Perform your stomping dance along with *Jamaican Rumba*.
2. Use the grid below to create your own percussion score for two or three instruments and a mento beat. We have divided the beat into the pulse of 8 half beats of quavers so the eight should be counted quickly.

Count	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Instrument								
Instrument								
Instrument								
Mento	X						X	

The patterns will repeat over and over and over so the students have created an ostinati percussion accompaniment. Rehearse this percussion accompaniment score as a class slowly at first and gradually increase the tempo, then perform it with the recording.