

## **COVID WORK – YEAR 10**

### **African Music**

**PART 1 - Watch video 'OCR GCSE AoS3 African drumming revision' by Hayes Music Dept <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA-ekR9SK8I>**

**PART 2 - Getting to know the musical techniques and styles - read p 101 - 105 of the Study Guide on African Drumming (SEE BELOW)**

**PART 3 - Visit the BBC Bitesize pages**

**<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z2xbgk7/revision/1> and read the information and watch the 7 videos that are all very short**

**PART 3 - Answer the Quiz on SMHK on 'QUIZ - African Music'**

### Cross rhythms

A cross rhythm is a complex type of polyrhythm, which uses different 'conflicting' rhythms.

Often, the rhythms do not follow the same pulse, as shown in the example below.

This is known as a **two against three** cross rhythm. Part 1 is playing groups of three notes on each beat, but Part 2 is playing groups of two notes on each beat. Try performing it by assigning one part to each hand and tapping a drum or a table.

Saying the phrase, 'nice cup of tea' in rhythm might help:

This is just a simple example of a cross rhythm. African music makes extensive use of these.

### Gahu: an interactive drumming example

Find a website called [thisworldmusic.com](http://thisworldmusic.com) and within the 'Interactive audio' section find 'Great grooves #1: Gahu'. This web page features a recording of a Gahu, a traditional dance from Ghana.

At the bottom of the web page is a mixer, allowing you to change the volume of each part and mute tracks.

Start by clicking the solo button for the Sogo part; you will find that each individual part is quite simple (you can probably clap all the parts quite easily), but by combining lots of layers and using polyrhythms, the overall effect is complex.

You might want to pick out two (or more) rhythms and perform them in class, using suitable percussion instruments.



## Call and response

The idea behind call and response is very simple. One person shouts, or plays, a 'call', and the rest of the performers (or audience) respond.

Call and response is used in many additional ways in African music:

- A caller might start a rhythm, and pass it to another drummer.
- In a vocal performance, call-and-response singing is very common.
- A caller controls the **tempo** of the piece, as well as when it starts and ends.

Many African pieces are controlled by a **master drummer**, a **virtuosic** musician who acts as the 'caller' during a performance. As well as controlling the piece the master drummer often plays a core rhythm, around which the other rhythms fit. A master drummer may even improvise rhythms based on the core rhythm, as a kind of solo, and then fit seamlessly back into the overall texture.

### TALKING DRUM: FACT FILE

The **talking drum** is a very special instrument in African culture. The drum is played with a hooked stick, and contains string that can be tightened and loosened to change the pitch of the drum. Through specific pitches and rhythms, a master drummer can replicate the sound of human speech and communicate messages using the drum. Historically, this language was understood both within and between tribes.

Master drummer Ayan Bisi Adeleke demonstrates the talking drum on YouTube. Search for him on YouTube to find the video.



**KEY**

- = muted
- = open
- = strike drum with palm

**Performing African music**

Here are some examples of common West African rhythms:

**Gahu**

The Gahu is a popular dance among the Ewe people of South Ghana, Togo and Benin:

Agogô (bell)

Axatse (shaker)

Kaganu (small drum)

Kidi (medium drum)

Sogo (large drum)

play open w/sticks

w/sticks unless stated

w/sticks unless stated

**Akom**

The fast Akom is a religious dance from West Africa:

Dawuro (bells)

Dawuro (bells)

Agyegyewa (small high-pitched drum)

Apentemma (medium-pitched hand drum)

Play w/hands

Play w/hands

**When performing these pieces:**

- Use instruments that are the closest you can get to the traditional instruments.
- Start slow and get faster.
- Try adding parts one by one, dropping out and rejoining once you have got going. A master drummer could help by signalling when to do this.
- Simplify or double-up parts if you need to.
- Try varying the rhythms slightly once you are confident - try short improvisations before returning to your rhythm.



## Doudoumba

This rhythm is known as 'the dance of the strong men':

The musical score for Doudoumba is written in 6/8 time and consists of two measures. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Bell:** A melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4.
- Djembe 1:** Slaps (s) and tones (t): s, s, s, t, t.
- Djembe 2:** Tones (t) and basses (b): t, t, b, b.
- Djembe 3:** Slaps (s) and tones (t): s, t, s, s, t, s.
- Dundun:** Muted (M) and open (O) tones: M, O, O, O.
- Clave:** A simple two-beat pattern: x, x.

Note: The djembes are labelled **s** (slap), **t** (tone), or **b** (bass). 'M' and 'O' refer to 'muted' and 'open', as before.



Here is a summary of the main features of African drumming:

### Melody

- Call-and-response singing.
- The majority of musicians play percussion.
- Melodies are often short and contain just a few different pitches.

### Tonality

- Percussion based – little harmony or tonality.

### Structure

- The master drummer controls the structure.
- Instruments start and stop, as instructed by the master drummer.
- Short improvisations are developed around set patterns.
- There may be a central vocal melody that keeps returning.

### Instruments (and timbre)

- Several different drums are used.
- Several different sounds can be produced on a single instrument.
- Bells, rattles and shakers are used.

### Texture

- The music consists of several layers of drums and other percussion instruments.
- Drums combine in complex layers – polyrhythm.

### Tempo, metre and rhythm

- There is a strong pulse, which is usually divided into groups of three or four.
- Rhythms are 'cyclic' – short repeated patterns.
- Polyrhythms – contrasting rhythms are played simultaneously.
- Triplet rhythms are often used.
- Cross rhythms are often used.

### Other things to consider

- Music (and dancing) is performed at weddings, funerals, festivals and other public and private ceremonies.
- No sheet music is used – musicians are taught by listening, copying and remembering.

