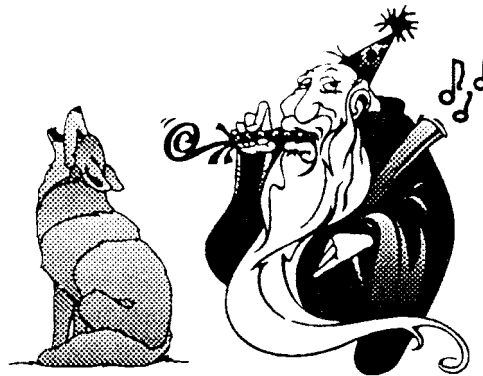


# Music Lesson

by Dr. Kirk Kassner

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**Lesson Name:** Mbira Jam

**For Grades:** 3-8

**National Standard Goals:**

2b: perform easy rhythmic, melodic, and chordal patterns accurately and independently on classroom instruments.

2f: perform independent instrumental parts while other students play contrasting parts.

**Materials Needed:**

tape of Mbira Jam, visuals, a variety of large, medium, and small barred instruments & mallets

**Procedure:**

**Quadrant 1: Why?**

1. Listen to this recording and try to guess what part of the world it is from, what instruments are being played, and how many different parts are being played [play recording].

**Quadrant 2: What?**

2. Where is this music from? [Caribbean] What instruments are played? [xylophones] How many parts? [three repeating parts + improvisations]
3. This song is called Mbira Jam. Can you pronounce it? Mbira is an instrument commonly found in Africa. Why would a song from the Caribbean have an African name--what is the connection? [Much of the music of black people in the Americas has African roots]. Jam is not something you put on your toast--it has a special meaning to musicians . . . [improvise].
4. Captain of each group choose one instrument for your group. Second captain choose a second instrument for your group. Captain, assign two people to play on each instrument and make sure they each have two mallets designed for the instruments [soft crocheted mallets play on large wood and metal instruments, hard rubber play on small and medium wood instruments and on medium metals, hard wood mallets play on small metals]
5. Everyone keep mallets in "stuffed" position unless it is your turn to play [arms crossed with mallets extending straight up to shoulders]. Part 1 is played by small instruments. First, say the letters with me in rhythm [practice saying them several times until this skill is automatic]. Say and play. Part 1 players: your turn to make sound is over for a while. Put your mallets on the floor and practice your part silently by touching the bars with the fat part of your fingerprints.
6. Part 2 is played on medium size instruments [pedagogy similar to part 1]; Part 3 is played on the largest instruments.
7. Put all three parts together. Review as necessary.

### **Quadrant 3: How?**

8. Practice all three parts together several times until students are comfortable and they can stay together.

### **Quadrant 4: What if?**

9. Listen to the recording again. The musicians on the recording are doing one thing differently from us . . . [improvising over the repeating patterns]. What if we had someone in here who would improvise? Who would make something up when I point to him/her? [select 3 or 4 volunteers and instruct them to play the pattern until I point to them, then switch to improvising, then switch back to the pattern when I give them the big "C" gesture that means "cut off" or stop. [play with improvisers, then reflect on performance]
10. Play again with different improvisers and reflect.
11. If there are students in the room who did not get a chance to play an instrument yet, they may change places with whomever they want in their group is has already had a turn to play. [repeat the process with new players and the former players acting as coaches]

**Method of Evaluation:** teacher continuously assesses students' understanding and ability to play the patterns alone and together. Improvisations are reflected upon by those who played them, the teacher, and other students.