

**SECONDARY  
10 PIECES PLUS!**

**MAMBO**  
**from**  
**WEST SIDE STORY**  
**by**  
**LEONARD**  
**BERNSTEIN**

**TEACHER PAGES**

# MAMBO FROM WEST SIDE STORY by LEONARD BERNSTEIN

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3scL8v6zh11NbPqRdTZYW00/mambo-from-symphonic-dances-from-west-side-story>

## CONTEXT

The Mambo is a dance which originated in Cuba and means a 'conversation with the Gods'. It can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the influence of English, Spanish, French and African country dances. This dance music was subsequently developed and modified by musicians from Puerto Rico, becoming very lively and rhythmical. The musical characteristics of the style are riffs in the brass and woodwind sections and very percussive, rhythmical accompaniment punctuated by vocal shouts. The underlying 2:3 or 3:2 'son clave' patterns links with the Cuban Salsa - hot and spicy!

The dance became really popular and when recordings of the music arrived in America in the 1950's, a real Mambo craze erupted in New York. When Leonard Bernstein decided to write **West Side Story**, the musical based on *Romeo and Juliet*, he chose New York for the setting at a time when the popularity of the Mambo was at its height.

In the story the two rival gangs, the 'Jets' and 'Sharks' (Montagues and Capulets) meet at a school dance, organised to encourage the social integration of the two ethnic groups. The circle dance gradually changes into a wild, aggressive and provocative mambo – an escalating competition between rival dancers as they flaunt increasingly extravagant steps. It is during this dance that Tony and Maria (Romeo and Juliet) first set eyes on each other.

## MUSICAL INGREDIENTS

### Timbre

- Dominant percussion section
- Strong brass section with high screaming trumpet part
- Final repetition of arpeggio figure emphasised by the addition of timpani and full percussion section
- Virtuoso instrumental passages
- Vocal interjections 'Mambo'!

### Melody

- Repetition of material and riffs
- The intervallic relationships link to other songs from the musical, particularly the use of the #7 [*Somewhere*]

### Rhythm

- Syncopation
- Use of cross rhythms

### Harmony

- Use of jazz harmony #7 in Am arpeggio figure
- Use of dissonance to create the mood

### Structure

- Intro A – B – A
- Sudden ending

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

- Listening Challenge 1: Riffs, instruments and effects  
Listening Challenge 2: Comparison of Mambo by Perez Prado and Bernstein  
Performing Challenge: Mini Mimbo  
Composing Challenge 1: Compose a piece of dance music  
Composing Challenge 2: Compose a piece of music or a song about troubles between rival gangs in London, or elsewhere

## KEY LEARNING

- Knowledge of musical dimensions: duration, rhythm, timbre, texture  
Skills development: composing and performing syncopated rhythms

## RELATED LISTENING EXAMPLES:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0Kee6pI9sU>  
<http://www.westsidestory.com>  
Clip from the film  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kokbJvSEMUY>  
Links with Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/zxxg9qt/resources/1>  
Mambo recordings by Perez Prado [ King of Mambo]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wd5qtPxyFB8>  
Minion Mambo – Pharrell Williams What makes a Mambo?

## KS3 CURRICULUM LINKS

Example links:

- Latin American dance music
- West African music
- The dance music tradition

## SUGGESTED LINKS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS:

- Dance: Street Dance
- English: Romeo and Juliet
- PSHE: Citizenship

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES – TEACHER NOTES

### LISTENING CHALLENGE 1: SING AND PLAY THE RIFFS FROM MAMBO

#### Pupil resources found in the pack

- Listening Challenge Sheet 1: Riffs, instruments and effects

#### Task

- Perform, identify riffs, instruments and effects in **Mambo**

#### Suggested approach

- Explain the context of the Mambo in the musical **West Side Story**
- Teach the rhythms of the riffs printed on the pupil worksheet
- Listen to the recording of **Mambo**
- Organise pupils into pairs or small groups, set the task of identifying how these fragments are used to create the mood of the **Mambo** within the story
- Give pointers to guide listening:
  - How many times is each riff heard?
  - In which order do they appear?
  - Which instrument/s play/plays each riff the first time it is heard?
  - What mood is Bernstein trying to create in this piece and why?

### LISTENING CHALLENGE 2: COMPARE 'MAMBO JAMBO' BY PEREZ PRADO TO 'MAMBO' BY BERNSTEIN

#### Pupil resources found in the pack

- Listening Challenge sheet: Comparison of Mambo by Perez Prado and Bernstein

#### Other required resources

- YouTube recording of Mambo by Perez Prado: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSTQ0hD-7kc>

#### Task

- Comparing two Mambo compositions by different composers

#### Suggested approach

- Listen to the **Mambo** by Bernstein or watch the YouTube clip of the dance in the gym <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kokbJvSEMUY>
- Listen to Mambo Jambo' by Perez Prado <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8NFPqFbsTk>
- Compare the interrelated dimensions of music in each one
- Model some answers for each piece
- Students working in pairs fill in their observations

## PERFORMING CHALLENGE: MINI MIMBO

### Teacher resource

- Mini Mimbo full score
- Midi file: Bernstein – Mini Mimbo (optional backing track)

### Pupil resources found in the pack

- Pupil pages of instrumental parts

### Other required resources

- Drums or Latin percussion instruments

### Suggested approach

- Teach each part in turn (a) by singing and (b) by playing (**NB:** these parts can be taught quickly either by rote or by reading the notation)
- Demonstrate playing techniques to pupils who require support
- Layer each riff part and rehearse: play through the first page and then the second
- Perform the whole piece with repeats
- Consider using the rhythm patterns from the *BBC Ten Pieces Secondary* resources as an excellent backing to this short piece

### Extension

- Play the piano intervals on page 2.
- Demonstrate the major 7<sup>th</sup> interval. Play an Amin arpeggio against the arpeggio figure in the piece.
- What effect does the clash of the semi-tone have on the music?

## COMPOSING CHALLENGE 1: COMPOSE A PIECE OF DANCE MUSIC

### Pupil resource found in the pack:

- West Side Story information sheet

### Other required resources:

- Percussion, computer software, iPads apps, Latin percussion, Latin loops

### Task

- Compose a piece of dance music using the 3:2 song clave pattern

### Suggested approach

- Teach 3:2 son pattern
- Clap this pattern while listening to the **Mambo**
- Lead some call and response clapping
- Use the son clave pattern as a rhythmic accompaniment. Lead simple call and response (improvisation) over Amin#7 chord using the A min scale: change to Emin#7 chord over E min scale
- Teach the two chords: Amin#7 and Emin#7 and explain how to add the #7
- Ask pupils to explore other chords with #7
- Explore Latin loops on computer or iPad – demonstrate how to edit the piano roll drum patterns
- Demonstrate the structures A B A, using simple chords
- Organise pupils into pairs or small groups – offer a range of resources to assist them to complete the challenge

## **COMPOSING CHALLENGE 2: COMPOSE A PIECE OF MUSIC OR A SONG ABOUT TROUBLES BETWEEN RIVAL GANGS IN LONDON OR ELSEWHERE.**

### **Pupil resource found in the pack**

- Composing Challenge 2: Compose a piece of music or a song about troubles between rival gangs in London or elsewhere
- West Side Story information sheet

### **Other required resources:**

- Computer software
- iPads apps
- Latin percussion
- Latin loops

### **Task**

- Compose a piece of music or a song about troubles between rival gangs in London or elsewhere

### **Suggested approach:**

- This is an open-ended task: the information sheet is available to help pupils plan their response.
- Listen to the **Mambo** again: discuss the plot and analyse the musical features.
- Remembering that the **Mambo** was the 50's craze, discuss which current craze might provide a suitable style in which pupils could create a new piece to promote the peaceful coexistence of rival gangs ... perhaps in London, or locally.
- Encourage students to work in pairs or small groups to compose an alternative song or piece.
- Can they add lyrics, rap or singing?
- Can they choreograph dance moves to complement the performance?

# MINI MIMBO FULL SCORE

Arranged by HM

Flute /recorder

Bb instruments

Bongos / Conga drums

Agogo bell

Glockenspiel

Xylophone

Guitar

Bass guitar

Violin

Piano

5

Fl. /rec

Bb inst

Bongo / Conga

Agogo

Glock.

Xyl.

Guit.

Bass Guit.

Vln.

Pno.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for measures 5 through 9. The score is written for a large ensemble. At the top left, the number '5' is written above the first staff. The instruments and their parts are as follows: Fl. /rec (Flute/Recorder) and Bb inst (B-flat instrument) both play a melodic line of eighth notes, with the flute/Recorder part starting on a higher pitch than the B-flat instrument. Bongo / Conga plays a steady eighth-note pattern. Agogo plays a sparse pattern of eighth notes. Glock. (Glockenspiel) plays a simple line of quarter notes. Xyl. (Xylophone) plays a melodic line of eighth notes, similar to the flute but lower in pitch. Guit. (Guitar) plays a melodic line with a sharp sign (#) on the second staff, featuring eighth notes and rests. Bass Guit. (Bass Guitar) plays a rhythmic line of eighth notes in the bass clef. Vln. (Violin) plays a melodic line of eighth notes. Pno. (Piano) plays a complex accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 9.

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# LISTENING CHALLENGE 1– RIFFS INSTRUMENTS AND EFFECTS

- Sing or play these short extracts
- Listen to the recording of **Mambo** – how many times do each of these patterns appear? Can you sequence their appearance?
- Identify which instruments are playing each of the patterns - it may be more than one instrument!
- Describe how the music makes you feel. What mood is Bernstein trying to create with this piece?

EXTENSION: How does this musical reflect the social climate of New York in the 1950's?



10      **B B A B A F# F# E F# G G**

How many times does this motif appear? .....

How is the last bar of this motif different? .....

.....



**A C E G# A C E G# F#**

Which instrument/s play/plays this motif? .....

The A minor arpeggio would normally be the notes A C E A. Try singing or playing this arpeggio.

Why do you think Bernstein replaces A with G#, and what effect does this have on the 'feel' of the music?

.....

.....



16      **E E A A E E A A**

This riff is very simple. Describe the rest of the musical 'action' which happens simultaneously against this riff. Listen for instruments, dynamics, texture, pitch.

## LISTENING CHALLENGE 2: COMPARISON OF MAMBO BY PEREZ PRADO AND BERNSTEIN

Musical Elements	Tempo	Timbre (Instruments and/or voices)	Texture	Pitch (Harmonies)	Dynamics	Duration (Rhythms)	Structure
<p><b>Mambo by Bernstein</b> From West side Story</p>							
<p><b>Mambo by Perez Prado</b> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSTQ0hD-7kc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSTQ0hD-7kc</a></p>							

# PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE: MINI MIMBO

Flute / recorder

E E A E E A E A E A E A A A G

Bb instruments (trumpet plays an octave lower)

F#F# B F#F# B F#B F#B F#B F#B B B A

Glockenspiel

E A E A E A E A E A E A E A E

Xylophone

A E A E A E A E E A E A E A E A E A

Violin (pizzicato)

E E A E E A E A E A

6  
E A E A E A E A E A A A

Guitar

Am Am Am Am A G#A A B A A G#A A B A A A

Bass guitar

A E A E A E A E E A E

6 E A E E A E E E E E

Bongos or conga drums

5

Agogo bells

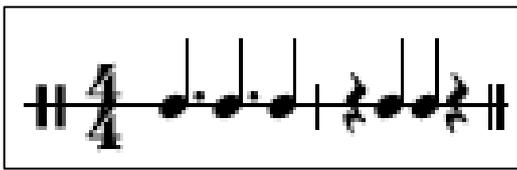
Piano / keyboard

E E A E E A A C E G# A C E

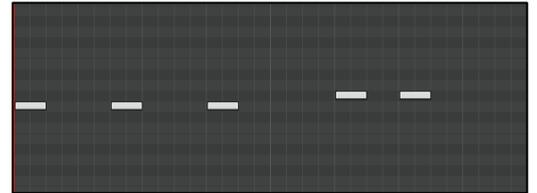
6 G# F# A C E G# A C E G# F# A A G

# COMPOSING CHALLENGE 1: COMPOSE A PIECE OF DANCE MUSIC

Use the son clave 3:2 pattern as a basis for your piece



3:2 Son clave rhythm



Create a rhythmic backing for your piece using the son clave pattern as the basis.

Your piece needs to be happy, frenetic, full of passion and danger, and represent the two gangs or rivals, as in the musical's storyline.

The music should include some of the following features:

- Drum/percussion riffs or loops
- Simple vocal shouts
- Simple chord sequence
- Keyboard or guitar chords e.g. Am E (use of jazz chords)
- Melody instruments
- A simple bass line
- A simple structure e.g. A B A : A B A C; or A B A C A

Try these scales and chords:

A minor scale [Dorian mode]:



E minor scale [Dorian mode]



Amin#7 chord:



Emin7 chord:



Compose a piece of music or a song using the Mambo as a starting point.

## COMPOSING CHALLENGE 2:

### COMPOSE A PIECE OF MUSIC OR A SONG ABOUT TROUBLES BETWEEN RIVAL GANGS IN LONDON, OR ELSEWHERE

Pixie Lott describes the music 'Mambo' as frenetic, full of passion and danger. The dance is a 'moment of happiness' in the battleground of the street gangs the 'Sharks' and the 'Jets'. The music has fast rhythms and melodic lines.

Explain your choices:

<b>Style</b>	
<b>Tempo</b>	
<b>Instruments/voice</b>	
<b>Textures</b>	
<b>Dynamics</b>	
<b>Pitch (Chords/Harmony)</b>	
<b>Rhythm</b>	
<b>Structure</b>	
<b>Lyrics</b>	

# WEST SIDE STORY

## The story:

- Based on the play 'Romeo and Juliet' by William Shakespeare
- Set in Manhattan in New York in the 1950's
- Puerto Ricans have been moving to New York to start a 'better life'
- The 'Jets' are from Manhattan and have ruled their 'gangland' for years.
- The 'Sharks' are from Puerto Rica and are looking to create their own 'gangland'.

## The characters:

- Riff, leader of the 'Jets'
- Bernardo, leader of the 'Sharks'
- Maria, Bernardo's little sister
- Chino, a member of the 'Sharks' and friend of Bernardo
- Tony, a founder of the Jets
- Doc, owner of Doc's store/Tony's boss
- Anita, Bernardo's girlfriend
- Ice, one of the toughest Jets
- Lt. Shrank, police officer
- Officer Krupke, police officer

## The plot:

- Maria has come from Puerto Rica to marry Chino
- Riff vows that the 'Sharks' have to find their own territory elsewhere; he asks Tony to help him
- Maria and Tony meet at the dance in the gym (Mambo): they fall in love instantly
- The gangs plan a fight and choose their weapons while Tony is visiting Maria, pledging his love for her
- Next day Tony meets Maria at a wedding shop where she works: Maria asks Tony to stop the fight
- The gangs meet to fight and Tony intervenes, persuading them that the best answer is a fair fight between their two best fighters. He explains that he is doing this for Maria, whom he loves
- Bernardo is enraged: he pulls out a knife and kills Riff
- In confusion, Tony stabs and kills Bernardo
- Maria is waiting for Tony when Chino bursts in to tell her he is going to kill Tony in revenge for Bernardo's murder
- Tony and Maria plan to escape from all this prejudice
- Maria persuades Anita to go to Doc's to warn Tony that Chino is looking for him and that he has a gun
- Anita is harassed by the 'Jets' and instead she tells them that Chino has shot Maria
- Doc tells Tony the story: he goes looking for Chino
- Tony finds Maria alive but Chino shoots and kills him
- The gangs are drawn together by the tragedy and carry Tony's body away