



CMP Teaching Plan
Elementary General Music
Patricia Trump
June, 2007

<i>Fun wa ni alaafia</i>	Yoruba Welcome Song	Spotlight on Music	Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (2006)
<i>Allunde Alluia</i>	Nigerian Harvest Song	Spotlight on Music	Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (2006)
<i>Allunde Alluya</i>	arr. by Salli Terri	#LG52245	Alfred Archive Edition
<i>Sansa Kroma</i>	Akan Game Song	Spotlight on Music	Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (2006)
<i>Sansa Kroma</i>	arr. by Michael Scott	#SVM00090	Warner Bros. Publications

Analysis

Broad Description:

Three African folk songs for children's choir or upper elementary/middle school classroom.

Type/Genre:

West African folk songs

Background Information:

Fun wa ni alaafia is a welcome song of the Yoruba people, the major tribal group in Nigeria. *Alaafia* is a common greeting in West Africa. The song is sometimes described as a prayer for peace. The translation is, "Give us peace. Amen, Amen."

The Yoruba language is spoken by over 18 million people, mainly in Nigeria, Togo and Benin. Because of the slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, there is a vibrant Yoruba community in Cuba and in Brazil. The language is also spoken by immigrant groups in the United States and Great Britain. Nigeria is frequently in the news because of its economic woes and the disastrous accidents associated with its oil pipeline.

Music is an integral part of religious festivals, royal celebrations and entertainment in Nigeria. Drums and singing are the main elements. The double headed bata is the sacred drum of the Yoruba usually associated with the legendary 4th king who was deified as the god of fire and lightening. The omele drum described in *The Singing Man*, is one of three types of bata drums. Bata drums tend to be used as solo instruments rather than as accompaniment for singing.

African drums are sometimes referred to as talking drums. Since the Yoruba language is pitched, the various tones produced by the drums do indeed resemble speech. Metal bells (agogo) and flutes are sometimes added. Drummers generally come from extended lineages, taught from an early age by family members.

The melody of *Allunde, Alluia* is the same as the Nigerian harvest song, *Odunde*, which was introduced to American audiences by the late Nigerian drummer and educator Babatunde Olatunji. If it is indeed a harvest song, it may very well be associated with the yam festival mentioned in *The Singing Man*.

Other sources identify the song as a lullaby and the words as Swahili, but I'm unable to confirm that. The rocking motion of the 6/4 meter certainly suggests a lullaby. The pervasive influence of other tribal languages and cultures on Nigeria make the exact history of this song nearly impossible to trace. The word *alluia* (*alluya*) suggests English/Christian influences. In the octavo version by Sally Terri, she provides a translation of the Swahili which I give below. However, my effort to do a word-for-word translation doesn't support her version and she lists no sources.

*O, God of the sunrise, protect this child.
Help the infant to grow and become a worthy member of our tribe.*

Sansa Kroma is an Akan call-response song. The Akan tribe is found mostly in Ghana and Ivory Coast. The tune is familiar to most West African children and sung to accompany games like stone-passing. The short text describes an

orphaned hawk searching for chickens to snatch up and eat. Parents teach the song to their children to remind them that unlike the little hawk, they have a family to care for them and protect them.

Sansa: proper name

Kroma: hawk

wo: orphan

ne nay wo: you are orphaned

kye, ker: to snatch up

nko nko mba: chicks

Additional Choral/Instrumental Information:

The basic melodies are accessible to all ages. More sophisticated vocal arrangements and complex instrumental parts can be added for the upper grades. Performed together they make an excellent unit of study or short program.

The most appropriate accompaniment for West African music is non-pitched percussion, specifically drums, shakers and bells. Piano accompaniment, such as the one written for *Sansa Kroma*, is the least authentic.

Orff instruments are used in *Allunde*, *Alluia* and *Fun wa ni alaafi*. Xylophones, though probably Asian in origin, have been part of traditional African music for hundreds of years. In fact the word *marimba* comes from the Niger-Congo area of Africa.

In my research I found many versions of these songs. While we should strive to be accurate, it's impossible to agree on the definitive version. Folk music, by its very nature, is always changing and evolving. These songs have all been influenced by the mixing of tribal traditions, the scattering of West Africans by the slave trade, European colonization, the growth of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa, and the overwhelming impact of western popular music. Still, they are wonderful melodies that provide unique learning experiences for our students.

Elements of Music

Form

Fun wa ni alaafia and *Sansa Kroma* are simple folk tunes, each consisting of one 16 beat parallel period (antecedent phrase and consequent phrase). All three songs are call-response songs.

The version of *Allunde Alluia* from *Spotlight on Music* is in ABABA form with coda. A is the refrain, B has two verses. The A section may be sung in canon. Sally Terri's octavo version is only slightly different (ABBA coda). The A section has two 4-measure phrases (aa'). The B section has three phrases (abb'). The coda is simply a repeated fragment of the A melody.

In Michael Scott's arrangement of *Sansa Kroma* the form is ABABCAB. The introduction is a 4-measure countermelody that's repeated. The A section consists of the melody sung twice with the countermelody from the introduction continuing in the alto part. The B section is a variation on the main melody, sung once in unison and then in harmony. The A section returns, this time in English, followed by the B section. The C section is an interlude of call-response clapping.

Rhythm

Fun wa ni alaafia and *Sansa Kroma* are in simple duple meter notated as 4/4. They both have syncopated rhythms. In *Sansa Kroma* the highly syncopated rhythm and dotted rhythm at the beginning of the phrase contrast with the even rhythm at the end.

Allunde, *Alluia* is in simple compound meter (6/4). The macro beat creates a slow rocking feel that supports the notion that this is a lullaby. The underlying quarter note subdivision is more in keeping with the driving rhythm of a song for the harvest celebration. The prominent rhythmic motive is a quarter note followed by a half note. This motive gives the music a graceful accent and contrasts with the half note/quarter note rhythm in the drums. Rhythmic interest is enhanced by the use of layered patterns in the instrumental accompaniment. The appoggiatura figure in the B section is the only syncopation and the most interesting rhythmic event.

Melody

African songs are generally based on 4, 5, 6 or 7 note scales. *Fun wa ni alaafia* and *Allunde, Alluia* are pentatonic. *Sansa Kroma* is diatonic. The range is fairly wide; *Fun wa ni alaafia* is an octave and *Allunde, Alluia* an octave and a 4th. Teachers can accommodate younger voices by asking students to perform only the call or response. For example, the opening call of *Sansa Kroma* (do do mi so) or the response in *Fun wa ni alaafia* (mi-so mi-so/mi-mi re do) is narrow enough for inexperienced singers.

Fun wa ni alaafia has two phrases. Both open with the same fanfare-like call (*do' do' so la so*). It sounds as if the leader is announcing the coming of an honored guest. The simple responses, *mi-so mi-so* and *mi-mi-re-do*, encourage the whole ensemble to add their welcome.

The main motive in the A section of *Allunde, Alluia* (*mi so so, mi so so*) gives that portion of the song a festive tone. The slight variation in the second phrase takes the melody up to high *do*, increasing the energy and excitement. The B section is more step-wise. Its first phrase is a simple declamatory melody of only three pitches. The second phrase begins with 4 repeated notes and moves up and down in a graceful melisma. The third phrase answers the 2nd in contrary motion, ending in a charming appoggiatura. The overall effect is lilting, playful, and joyful, exactly what you would expect in a song associated with celebration.

Harmony

Traditional West African music is usually sung in unison or in octaves with an occasional open 5th. The underlying harmony in Michael Scott's arrangement of *Sansa Kroma* is I-IV-I-V-I. It sounds very western, especially when the piano accompaniment is used.

The others, being pentatonic, have little or no harmonic motion and are best sung with non-pitched percussion or with a single chord/drone accompaniment. Even metalophones and xylophones in the Orff arrangement for *Allunde, Alluia* are employed primarily to add color.

Timbre

The basic colors are unchanged voices and non-pitched percussion, specifically drums, shakers, and metal bells.

Texture

The vocal texture of all three songs is very simple. They should be viewed as themes upon which students and teachers are free to improvise a variety of textures.

Fun wa ni alaafia is in unison. The Orff instruments play an ostinato based on the open 5th (C and G). The A section of *Allunde, Alluia* is in canon, the B section in unison. The A section is accompanied by Orff instruments playing layers of short ostinatos. The B section is a lighter texture, accompanied only by the unpitched rhythm instruments. In his arrangement of *Sansa Kroma*, Michael Scott creates a nice countermelody to accompany the main tune. The B section, which divides briefly into two parts, could also be sung as a countermelody.

Expression

Expression marks are minimal. *Allunde, Alluia* contains accents, slurred notes, and an appoggiatura. The coda is marked with a decrescendo and fades to nothing at the end.

Dynamic changes in *Sansa Kroma* are created by adding and deleting additional vocal lines. Though not marked, the echo-clapping section could be extended with dynamic variations. It would also be appropriate to improvise additional rhythmic patterns.

We like to perform *Fun wa ni alaafia* in ABA form. After the exuberant A section, we add a spoken B section to create contrast in both dynamics and color. Other contrasting sections could be improvised by voices or instruments.

Additional Considerations/Reasons to Perform This Composition

These short, simple songs are easily accessible to children of all ages, yet they have enough of an exotic quality to capture their imagination. The graceful *Allunde Alluia* provides a welcome contrast to the typical syncopated rhythms of many traditional African songs.

There are opportunities for solo singing, call and response, singing in canon, and simple vocal ostinatos or countermelodies. The instrumental parts range from simple to complex, allowing the teacher to differentiate instruction while creating an overall texture that is interesting.

The texts are repetitive and can be learned quickly while still giving students experience in singing a foreign language. The pentatonic songs are conducive to teaching sight-singing skills. The rhythm is attractive and provides just the right level of reading challenge for upper unit classes. In keeping with the traditions of this genre, there are opportunities to learn the music aurally and to improvise

The Heart Statement

The heart of this music is the beat. It is the beat that drives the dance, the game, the singing, the playing, the improvisation, the story telling. It is the beat that welcomes, that celebrates, that comforts, that entertains, and that stirs the memory.

Introducing the Piece (a strategy):

Introduce the unit by first learning the easily accessible and joyful *Fun wa ni alaafia*. Encourage students to make connections between a distant culture and their own by telling the story of *The Singing Man* (adapted from a West African folktale by Angela Shelf Medearis; Holiday House, Inc.; New York; c. 1994).

Skill Outcome

Students will accurately perform instrumental ostinatos.

Strategies

Speak on rhythm syllables (speak and do, whisper and do, think and do)
Sing ostinatos
Xylophone chart (bell board)
Use body percussion (choose your favorite)
Movement/Dance
Play pitched and non-pitched instruments (by rote and by independent reading)
Student conductors
Follow score notation
Stone passing game

Assessment

The teacher will evaluate students using a 5 point rubric as they perform an ostinato to accompany a song.

Student plays with a steady pulse and no rhythmic errors. Tone and technique are excellent.

- ✓ Student plays with a steady pulse and very few rhythmic errors. Tone and technique are acceptable.
- ✓ Student occasionally rushes or lags behind the beat, there are some rhythmic errors. Tone and technique need improvement.
- ✓ Student has difficulty maintaining the pulse and makes many rhythmic errors. Tone and technique are poor.
- ✓ Student does not play.

Knowledge Outcome

Students will identify the meter of a song and determine whether the beat is subdivided into 2's (simple meter) or 3's (compound meter).

Strategies

Discussion/Questioning (verbal and non-verbal responses)
Body percussion
Tennis balls/chop sticks
Performing beat and subdivision in two teams
Walking the beat, clapping the subdivision.
Sentence strip note values
Word wall
Unifix cubes
Fill in the blank at the blackboard

Assessment

Students will use non-verbal signals (thumbs up/thumbs down) to identify the meter.

Students will complete a written test requiring them determine how the beat is grouped (2's, 3's or 4's) and how it is subdivided (2's or 3's).

Affective Outcome

Students will appreciate that people in other times and places have used music to welcome, to remember, to play, to celebrate, and to comfort.

Strategies

Read aloud: *The Singing Man*

Discussion/List ways people use music on chart paper

Reflection cards

World map

Homework assignment

Questioning: thumbs up/down response

Reviewing and discussing songs from our textbook

Share reading list of related books about Nigeria

Video *Gifts of Mother Africa*

Assessment

Students will reflect verbally and in writing on the ways people use music.

Students will identify songs they have learned from other cultures and historic periods that have similar purposes.

Students will seek out information from other people about how they use music.

Students will read independently about West African music and culture.

Music Selection

Teaching opportunities abound in these pieces. They provide a perfect vehicle for discussing the connection between music making and culture. Students are introduced to a style of music which at first glance seems very alien, but in fact has had a profound impact on the music they listen to every day. Art, geography, and history can be integrated into the lessons, yet the songs can also be used to teach traditional music skills and concepts.

These songs are frequently included in textbook series to fulfill some sort of multicultural requirement. It's tempting to overlook them. We worry that students will perceive them as odd. We think they're too short to perform in a concert, or find the language intimidating. On the contrary, they are charming pieces that my students enjoy thoroughly. With a little thought (adding movement, instruments, story telling, etc) they inspire joyful music making in the classroom as well as being excellent concert pieces.