

EAST MEETS WEST-CHINESE TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS
LESSON PLAN for 9th -12th Grade
(UNIT 1-lesson 4: Instrumental Ensembles in China

Class/Age: 9th-12th Grade
Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Leading Questions: What are standard groupings of Chinese instruments?
What are the instruments for Chinese traditional opera forms and how are they deployed to express dramatic narrative?
How do traditional Chinese instrumental timbres color non-Chinese Western musics and ensembles?

Objective: Students will expand their knowledge and appreciation of how Chinese instruments function in ensemble, both in Chinese and non-Chinese, and in traditional and popular/contemporary repertoires.

Critical Vocabulary: timbre, tonal color, organology, envelope, choir, orchestra, Peking Opera, chamber music, chordophone, membranophone, metallophone, aerophone, Hornbostel-Sachs index.

Content Standard:

- New York State Standard #1. Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts. Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the art
- National Standard #2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
- National Standard #5. Reading and notating music.
- National Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- National Standard #7: Evaluating music and music performances

ELA Standards:

- Standard RL: Craft instruction; determine meanings through figurative use of language.
- Standard L: Use of knowledge of language and conventions.

National Standards for Music: 2. Performing with voice, instrument, alone or with others, a varied repertoire of music.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing and describing music.
9. Students will improvise with instruments and voice.

Do Now: Without previous prompts or information, students will match Chinese traditional and non Chinese instruments to the corresponding instrumental categories online with <http://www.philmultic.com/> site. They will then compare their conclusions with a partner, justifying their response and explaining on what grounds they drew these conclusions.

Lower-order thinking prompts: How can we sort musical instruments and what are defining features for musical instruments?
In what ways can musical instruments straddle and defy these categorizations?
How do these categories serve in organizing music and musical structures/

Higher-order thinking prompts:

How do certain timbres combine and contrast to form more complex and variegated tonal colors? How is timbral pairing used to develop expression in Chinese traditional orchestras/opera/chamber music?

Students turn and talk focusing on these prompts. Substantiate your hypotheses with supporting details and back these up with secondary proofs and speak to the various elements, which constitute timbre when considering these timbral pairings..

Procedure:

1. Teacher introduces a generic Chinese opera ensemble format.
2. Students furnish information regarding Western operatic ensemble and compare and contrast.
3. Teacher plays samples of Beijing, Suzhou, and Cantonese opera types with focus on instrumental accompaniment.
4. Small group discussion and self-selected sharebacks to class at large.
5. Class chooses a narrative currently under study and brainstorms their ideal Chinese operatic ensemble for setting (accompanying) this to music.

Ongoing Assessment in Instruction:

Methods: Teacher modeling, and student-led modeling, participation with peer-peer and self evaluation, small groups, and group ensemble, if appropriate video assessments.

Ongoing Peer-to-Peer and Self Assessment in Instruction:

In pairs, students will evaluate the success of their own and their partners' matching of timbres to instrumental categories.

Self-selected students share their homework designs for class and based on teacher assessment of individual work.

Ongoing Peer-to-Peer and Self Assessment in Instruction:

Class reflection on impact of timbre in music and especially as germane to Chinese traditional repertoires.

Homework: Draw a visual design of your own operatic ensemble for a story you have written, considering placement of instruments, sufficient dramatic support, number of instruments, and juxtaposition of timbres. If you so desire, incorporate a few Western instruments into your design. Write a short justification and rationale for your design.

Materials: Opera video samples (links in Powerpoint), <http://www.philmultic.com/> website, cutouts of traditional Chinese instruments.