

EAST MEETS WEST-CHINESE TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

LESSON PLAN for 9th -12th Grade

(UNIT 1-lesson 5: Chinese Traditional Instruments in Contemporary Culture, East and West)

Class/Age: 9th-12th Grade

Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Leading Questions: How do traditional Chinese instruments play a role in contemporary Western popular and classical music?
How do traditional instruments play a role in contemporary Chinese music and culture?
How do traditional Chinese instrumental timbres evoke the culture of China in film and other media?

Objective: Students will expand their knowledge and appreciation of how Chinese instrumental timbres are diffused in Eastern and Western music and media to express Chinese culture and enhance artistic aesthetic.

Critical Vocabulary: timbre, tonal color, organology, envelope, 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: Students jot down some examples they can think of the ways Chinese traditional instrumental timbres are diffused into non-Chinese traditional music and on film and television, etc. Students break into small groups to share their examples and discuss how this might have portrayed Chinese culture or enhanced the general artistic aesthetic of the examples under examination. Groups will notate their observations and feedback to share to the class at large.

Lower-order thinking prompts: What are ways that traditional Chinese timbres can combine with other instrumental timbres to produce innovative new timbres?
How do these differing timbres contrast and coalesce in aesthetic terms?

Higher-order thinking prompts:

What might these interpolations of traditional timbres into other musics mean symbolically and how do they express Chinese cultural signification? Does the appropriation of traditional timbres in various media contexts offer mixed cultural messages or set up dualities of perception about culture? If so, how?

Students turn and talk focusing on these prompts. Substantiate your hypotheses with supporting details and back these up with secondary proofs and real-world examples and analogies.

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.

Procedure:

1. Teacher plays video of Liu Tianhua erhu with Western classical instruments, Bright Sheng classical, John Corigliano “Red Violin” excerpt, Cirque du Soleil’s “O” soundtrack excerpt, Hsu-nami, and ChthoniC.
2. Students journal on each sample heard with brief comments in between listenings.
3. Student discussion of the various incursions of Chinese traditional instrumental timbres into other music.
4. Teacher shows excerpt from “The Assassin” and “Kill Bill” vol. 2.
5. Students discuss in small groups other film, television, and music settings that utilize Chinese non-traditional instruments and the impact culturally and aesthetically.

Written Reflection: Write an essay on how Chinese traditional instruments are appropriated in a student-selected film, television, or music example and the cultural and aesthetic impact of this appropriation.

Materials: Videos of Liu Tianhua, Bright Sheng, John Corigliano, Cirque du Soleil’s “O”, Hsu-nami, and ChthoniC, “The Assassin,” and “Kill Bill” vol. 2.