

Fiesta Aquí, Fiesta Allá: Exploring Music and Dance in Puerto Rico, its Diaspora, and the Caribbean

A Smithsonian Folkways Learning Pathway for
students in Grades 9–12.



Teacher's Guide

Lesson 6:

Santiago Apóstol de Loíza: Bomba and Community

Lesson Overview

The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza (St. James the Apóstol Festival) is celebrated annually in Loíza, Puerto Rico. The tale of Santiago Apóstol (“Matamoros”/“Moorslayer” as he is nicknamed) represents the saint as a miraculous figure who helped Spanish Christians to conquer Muslim Moors in 9th century Spain. The people of Loíza honor and celebrate their patron saint with a *fiesta* at the intersection of religion, race, and community. Through this form of cultural expression, the people in the community reconnect to their traditions each year by way of prayer, costumes, food, and music. The Fiesta of Santiago Apóstol is also a space that allows the Loíza community to reconnect with its African roots and traditions, through the performance of *bomba*, and other styles of music, such as *danza*, *calypso*, *plena* and *merengue*.

This lesson explores the history and development of *bomba* music in Puerto Rico within the context of the *Santiago Apóstol Fiesta* in Loíza—cultivating an understanding of the social significance of this event at regional, national, and international levels. *Santiago Apóstol de Loíza: Bomba and Community* also explores *bomba* music’s sonic and cultural elements, including instrumentation and dance, and pays attention to social issues surrounding this form of expression (e.g., identity, race, and gender). Students will listen to a variety of audio examples, watch video footage, and will even have an opportunity to actively participate in a classroom bomba jam!

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Lesson Components and Student Objectives*



1. What is the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza? (20+ minutes)

- Explain the history and influences of *bomba* music.
- Explain the origins of the *Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza* and describe its social, historical, and cultural significance.



2. What is Bomba Music? (30+ minutes)







- Identify musical instruments commonly associated with *bomba*.
- Identify (and in some cases demonstrate) the important stylistic features of *bomba*, including rhythmic patterns, improvisation, structure, singing and dance.



3. Fiesta and Bomba: Identity on Display (20+ minutes)

- Describe the cultural significance of *fiesta* (and *bomba*) at local, national, and international levels.
- Identify important cultural symbols on display at the *Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza*.
- Identify cultural and musical similarities and differences between *bomba* and *danza*.

*Note: The learning icons used above signify the type of learning used in each Component. Keep in mind that these Components are not intended to be sequential; rather, teachers or students may choose which Components they'd like to use from each Lesson. The time estimate given for each component indicates "in class" time. The + indicates there are optional extension activities and/or a suggested homework assignment.

While all learning types ( History and Culture,  Music Listening,  Music Making and Creation, and  Creative Connections) fulfill 2014 National Music Standards, non-music teachers will be able to use  History and Culture and  Creative Connections Components without specific musical knowledge.

Teaching Plan

1. What is the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza?



To Prepare:

- Read through the component.
- Preview Component 1 of the **Lesson 6 Slideshow** (slides 4–20).
 - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page. If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes.

Slides 1–3: Information for the Teacher

Slide 4: Component 1 Introduction Slide

To better understand the development of bomba music in Puerto Rico and its role in the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza, it might be helpful to review some historical context (much of which is covered in Lesson 1 of this pathway). Optional: Click the down arrow to quickly review the following topics, before moving forward with this lesson (you could also return to Lesson 1, Component 1 for a more comprehensive review):

Slide 4.2: The Colonization of Borinquen (Puerto Rico)

Slide 4.3: Puerto Rican Identity

Slide 4.4: Sovereignty and Puerto Rican Identity

Slide 4.2: Historical Context: The Colonization of Borinquen

Share Information:

- Like many other places in the world, the original inhabitants of Puerto Rico were subjected to the abuses of European colonizers.
- The indigenous peoples of the island, the Taino (who originally called the island *Borinquen*), were forced into labor by Spanish colonizers in the early 16th century.
- Over a short period after the initial arrival of the Spanish, the population of Taino peoples was decimated via mass genocide (violence, diseases, overworking, etc.) by the Spanish.
- With little cheap labor available, Spanish colonizers brought kidnapped West Africans and enslaved them, forcing them to work the land for the benefit of the Spanish empire.

- Over the development of the sugar trade in the Caribbean, essentially serving only European interests, Puerto Rico's economy developed to one centered on the production of sugar cane, as well as coffee.
- Slavery was technically abolished in 1873 in Spanish colonies, but external economic and political control of the island did not cease.

Slide 4.3: Historical Context: Puerto Rican Identity

Share Information:

- It was during the end of 19th century that **Puerto Rican identity** was developing, incorporating cultural elements of **Indigenous, African, and European** peoples.
 - Note: It is important to remember that Puerto Rican identity is quite diverse, not only regarding ethnic heritage, but also concerning class lines.
- While there are many shared aspects of Puerto Rican identity, there are also as many challenges that arise due to racial and class barriers, still connected to earlier colonial times.

Slide 4.4: Historical Context: Puerto Rican Sovereignty and National Identity

Share Information:

- In 1898, the Spanish-American War ended, and the U.S. took control of much of the Caribbean, including Puerto Rico.
 - Note: For a detailed timeline of the Spanish-American War and its involvement with Puerto Rico, see this [Library of Congress resource](#).
- Officially, Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. This means that it is neither a sovereign nation nor a US state. Puerto Ricans are US citizens but cannot vote in US presidential elections.
 - The identity of Puerto Rico is further complicated by its status as a US territory—ideas about national identity are disrupted. Some citizens favor US statehood, while others favor independence. Some people would prefer for Puerto Rico to maintain its status under US protection with a certain degree of autonomy, an Estado Libre Asociado (Free Associated State).

Slide 5: Cultural Dialogues: Bomba

Share Information:

- As you have learned throughout this pathway, Puerto Rico identity is uniquely tied to its great diversity.
 - Each group that has been part of Puerto Rico's history (e.g., Indigenous/Taino, Spanish and other European groups, African communities), has also contributed

to its unique cultural activities (including music, arts, language, sports, and more).

- Bomba music provides a great example of this cultural dialogue (a fusion of African, European, and Indigenous elements).
- **Listen to a short sample of "bomba" music now (embedded)—before moving on with the lesson.**

Slide 6: Bomba: African Influences

A. Share Information:

- *Bomba* is a musical style that cannot be separated from its history on the island.
- It is thought to be derived from 17th century enslaved Ashanti people (descendants from the Ghana region).
- Bomba dancing is also linked to Congan traditions (What is today Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola) through stylistic features related to dance.
 - Note: Consider showing students these regions on a map.
- A barrel-shaped drum from Congo is said to have inspired drums used in bomba music.

B. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to the embedded audio clip (30-40 seconds) of *bomba* music ("Bomba," by an ensemble from Loíza, Puerto Rico).
 - *What is "African" about this music?*
 - **Students might notice the instruments (drums and other percussion instruments such as sticks and shakers) and other musical characteristics such as chanting, the percussive sound, syncopated rhythmic patterns, and call and response form (common in many African music traditions).**

Slide 7: Loíza and Bomba

Share Information:

- **Bomba** is one of the musical centerpieces of **Loíza**, an Afro-Puerto Rican town established by *cimarrones*.
 - *Cimarrón* is a term in Spanish used to describe enslaved peoples who had escaped.
- Loíza is a town populated of many African descendants. Musical genres therefore reflect West African roots.
 - *Loiceños* is the title given to people who reside in Loíza.
 - Interestingly, only 38.7% of Loiceños identify themselves as Black only or African American (Census Bureau, 2019).

- Many more people may describe themselves as Hispanic or Latino.
- In general, Loiceños (and most people throughout the island) do not strictly define themselves by race. **More than anything, they identify as Puerto Rican.**

Slide 8: Loíza and Blackness

Share Information:

- A problematic notion rooted in the colonial period links "Blackness" to notions of "primitiveness".
 - Though false, this characterization has been harmful in places like Loíza, which is predominantly Black. At times, the town has been categorized as “primitive” or “isolated” from the rest of the island.
 - This type of narrative promotes racial divisions and marginalizes people and their music traditions.
- In reality, **Loíza provides a great representation of African-influenced culture—as seen in practices and performances of music like *plena* and *bomba*.**
 - Note: Learn more about plena music in Lesson 4.

Slide 9: Bomba: Secret Codes and Haitian Connections

A. Share Information:

- In addition to Loíza, bomba developed in other Puerto Rican coastal towns (such as Ponce, San Juan, and Mayagüez), among Afro-Puerto Ricans and Black Haitian immigrants.
- Enslaved people gathered socially and played *bomba* to celebrate. Since enslaved people were often forbidden from gathering socially, they often used this time to bond and connect with one another. These gatherings were called *bembes*.
- While gathering communally, they used chants and rhythms to plan escape routes without the knowledge of the slave owner.
 - *Bomba* music served as a distraction (through banging of instruments and loud singing), providing opportunities to escape.
 - Since slave owners could not decipher this communication, the communication was secret.
 - The term that described this secret communication was “talking drums.”
- *Bomba* was also influenced by Haitians who fled their country after the Haitian revolution.
 - Some of the songs were even written in Haitian French Creole (examples: Meliton tombé, Yuba la marilé); also, many rhythms in bomba: (sicá, yubá holandé, leró as well as instruments *bamboula*) are in French creole.

- Because of this deep and rich history, bomba is celebrated and holds great cultural meaning for the local and diasporic Afro-descendant population.

B. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to a 20–30 second example from the embedded recording (“Ven aca Ven Aca /Meliton Tombe”).
 - *Do you hear the drums and communal singing?*

Slide 10: Loíza: Irish and Catholic Connections

Share Information:

- Another enduring aspect of cultural life in Loíza specifically and Puerto Rico in general is Catholic practice.
- The Catholic church in Puerto Rico was heavily influenced by Irish immigrants on the island who often owned the plantations during the colonial period.
 - The official patron of Loíza is *San Patricio* (Saint Patrick).
- Loíza's downtown features a beautiful Catholic church: Church San Patricio y Espiritu Santo (En. Saint Patrick and Holy Spirit), built in 1647.

Slide 11: Santiago Apóstol: Matamoros, the Moorslayer

Share Information:

- Although San Patricio (Saint Patrick) is the official patron of Loíza, one of the most obvious and pervasive expressions of cultural inheritance from Catholic Europe to its American colonies is the celebration of the region's patron saint, Santiago Apóstol (i.e., Saint James).
- Nicknamed Matamoros (En., Moor killer) for his mythical participation in the Battle of Clavijo, when Spanish Christians defeated Muslim Moors, **Santiago Apóstol is the most celebrated of all the saints in the Catholic pantheon.**
- Colonizers of Puerto Rico looked up to St. James and reportedly shouted, “Dios ayuda y Santiago” (translation: God help us and Santiago) as they invaded the indigenous Taino land.

Slide 12: Santiago Apóstol: Matamoros, the Moorslayer

Share Information:

- It might seem strange that the image of a "moor killer" is celebrated in a town heavily populated by people with African heritage.
- **However, in Loíza, among Afro Puerto Ricans, Santiago is embraced as a symbol of freedom and protection.**

Slide 13: The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza!

Share Information:

- The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza (translation: Festival of Apóstol St. James in Loíza) is celebrated for 10 days, from the 24th of July to the 2nd of August.
 - The event is deeply connected to the Roman Catholic Church in Puerto Rico.
 - Throughout the 10 days, masses, prayers (called *novenas*), weddings, and baptisms are frequent.
 - Community gatherings and fundraising events contribute to the festival atmosphere.
 - *Bomba* performances are common at town squares or on stages.

Slide 14: Vejigantes and Caballeros

Share Information:

- Vejigantes and caballeros are two of the most important symbols of the festival.
 - During the festival, people often dress up as **vejigantes** (pagan demons - representing "evil") and **caballeros** (gentlemen/cowboys - representing "good").
 - Vejigante masks are made from coconut shells and are complemented with bright-colored costumes.
 - Their name is derived from the word vejiga (bladder). Traditionally, vejigantes carry water in sacks for bladders and throw water at the audience.
 - The masks, which represent pagan demons, feature horns.
 - The caballeros (gentlemen/cowboys) represent the protectors of Santiago.
 - During the festival, they fight playfully against vejigantes.

Slide 15: Legend of the Fiesta

Share Information:

- Although the exact origins of the festival are unknown, a legend claims the festival began when an old woman found a small statue of Santiaguito (a nine-inch image of baby Santiago) next to a tree and gave it to a priest.
 - The priest left it in a place inside the church, but the next day, it miraculously appeared at the base of the tree where the old lady had originally found it.
 - The priest called this story a miracle and it was then stated that each year there should be a procession from the tree to the church, and around the town.

Slide 16: A Processing Fiesta

Share Information:

- During Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza, statues of Santiago are carried across neighborhoods for three days. In Loíza, the statues are taken in a symbolic procession from a local house to church.
 - *Danza* is the main genre of music that is used during the more religious parts of the procession.
 - *Plena*, *merengue*, and *calypso* can also be heard either from musicians on movable floats or the *carreton alegre* (translation: happy cart, a cart that is designed with festive colors and novelties of the Fiesta).

Slide 17: The Three Statues

Share Information:

- Three statues of St. James are cared for in three separate houses in Mediana Alta, Loíza.
- The three statues have different protective uses: Santiago of Men, Santiago of Women, and Santiaguito (or Santiago of the Children).
- The people who care for the statues are called *mantenedores* (maintainers).
 - They are responsible for caring for them throughout the year, carrying them into the festival streets in Loíza on the day of the fiesta,
- Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza is the only time of the year when the three statues are together.
- When set inside the homes, the statues are not on altars.
 - People are still able to come inside the home and talk to the statue and to ask for promises.
 - The statues are viewed almost as a highly respected family member inside the home.

Slide 18: Optional: “Music as Order and Chaos”

Watch Video:

- If time allows, watch a video that provides a glimpse into the Fiesta de Santiago Apóstol de Loíza experience (approx. 10 minutes): https://youtu.be/eVYOI_eanrc.

Slide 19: Lesson Component 1 - Learning Checkpoint

- *How did bomba music develop in Puerto Rico?*
 - Puerto Rico identity is uniquely tied to its great diversity and bomba is a clear example of cultural dialogue (a fusion of African, European, and Indigenous elements). **It originated in Puerto Rican coastal towns (e.g., Loíza) among Afro-Puerto Ricans. It has strong links to West African music traditions** and remains very important to Loiceños (people who reside in Loíza.)

- *What are the origins of the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza, and what is its social significance?*
 - Although the exact origins of the festival are unknown, **it is based upon Santiago Apóstol (En., St. James): The most celebrated of all saints in the Catholic pantheon.** It is celebrated in Loíza for 10 days, from July 24th–August 2nd. **During this time, the community comes together to celebrate and pray.** The main event is a procession, within which statues of Santiago are carried through neighborhoods. **Music genres, such as bomba, danza, plena and calypso play a big role in the celebration.**

Slide 20: Lesson Navigation Slide

2. Component Two: What is Bomba Music?



To prepare:

- Read through the component.
- Preview the **Lesson 6, Component 2 Slideshow** (slides 22–37).
 - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page, (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes).

Slide 22: Bomba!

A. Watch Video:

- Begin this component by showing students a video traditional bomba music for a Fiesta Santiago Apóstol in Loíza's Matauri neighborhood.
 - If time allows, check out another performance here (featuring Viento de Agua, performing bomba music at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KcFR3JWp3s> (this video will also be featured later in the component).
 - *What do you notice about the instrumentation, dancing and rhythms?*
 - **The important elements of bomba music will be unpacked throughout this component. At this point, the students will likely identify drums, shaker, syncopated rhythms, and communal chanting/singing. They might notice how the dancer holds her skirt/hip movements and communication between the dancer and drummers. Perhaps they will make a connection between this music and other West African music traditions they have heard.**

B. Share Information:

- Share this additional information about the video with students (which will likely be familiar for students who completed Component 1):
 - The description for this video says that for the Maturi barrio fiesta: "the community organizes and performs the toque de bomba (bomba jam) before the procession of the Saint with women. The town gathers to celebrate the traditional Fiesta Santiago Apóstol. There are three images of the same saint, which correspond to three African deities. One for men, one for women, and the Saint of Children."
- **If students did not complete Component 1 (or, if you'd like a quick review) - click the down button for a brief overview of the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza (the performance space featured in this video).**

Slide 22.2: Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza!

Share Information (review from Component 1):

- The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza is celebrated for 10 days, from the 24th of July to the 2nd of August!
 - It is an **important community gathering** in Loíza, a coastal town in Puerto Rico.
 - It is related to the **Roman Catholic Church**: Masses, prayers (called *novenas*), weddings, and baptisms are frequent.
 - **Bomba performances** are common at town squares or on stages.
 - People often dress up in **costumes** - it is a "Carnival-like" atmosphere.
- The main event of the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza is a three-day **procession**, within which statues of Santiago (St. James) are carried through neighborhoods.
 - During the festival, people often dress up as **vejigantes** (pagan demons - representing "evil") and **caballeros** (gentlemen/cowboys - representing "good").
 - Vejigante **masks** are made from coconut shells and are complemented with bright-colored costumes. The masks, which represent **pagan demons**, feature three horns.
 - Their name is derived from the word vejiga (bladder).
 - Traditionally, vejigantes carry water in sacks for bladders and throw water at the audience.
 - The caballeros (gentlemen/cowboys) represent **the protectors of Santiago**.
 - During the festival, they fight playfully against vejigantes.

Slide 23: Bombastic Bomba

Share Information:

- The term **bomba** translates to "bomb", but it can also be interpreted as an expression of its sound—a **big boom**.
 - Historically, the term *bomba* referred to a type of drum (bamboula).
 - Today it is used to refer to all aspects the music: the **genre** itself; the name of the **full group** of performers; the **dance** (e.g., "baile de bomba"; **drums** "tambores de bomba").
 - Community organized bomba gatherings (in Puerto Rico and beyond) are known as **bombazos**.

Slide 24: Bombastic Bomba

Share Information:

- Bomba is performed by **drummers, dancers, and singers**.
- Performers and audience members gather in a circle, creating a space in the middle for dancing called the **soberao** (also called the **batey**).
 - These terms (and the concept) are influenced by the Taino indigenous people.
 - This set-up enables unobstructed views between drummers and dancers.

Slide 25: Bomba and Gender

Share Information:

- Unlike other male-dominated drumming traditions in the region, bomba is practiced by **both male and female participants**.
 - It can be danced in pairs or individually.
 - Solo dancers are usually woman (both drummers and dancers are known as **bomberas**).
 - While dancing, women usually use their upper body (arms, shoulders, hands).
 - Males who perform bomba music (both on drums and dancing) are known as **bomberos**.
 - While dancing, men usually use their lower body to dance (legs and feet).
 - Men also employ more jerky movements than do women when dancing.
 - Queer identities are called **bomberxs**
 - In general, people who identify as queer challenge traditional gender roles in practicing bomba music.
 - During staged performances, multiple pairs may dance together. **See Lesson 7 for more about staged bomba performances.**

Slide 26: El Piquete

Share Information:

- **Piquete** is a term that describes the musical dialogue between dancers and drummers.
 - First the dancer enters the circle (called the *soberao* or *batey*) and greets the drummers by performing a *paseo* (stroll).
 - The dancer then moves to the rhythm and the drummer responds to the dancer's moves, altering and developing its rhythmic improvisation.
 - Sometimes dancers and drummers challenge each other—creating a competitive but festive spirit.

Slide 27: El Piquete in Action

Watch Video:

- Watch a video of Viento de Agua performing traditional bomba at the 2005 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.
 - Observe the piquete (interaction between the dancer and drummers).
 - Note: The entire video is about 6 minutes long, but the dancer enters at 01:30.

Slide 28: Bomba Fashion

Share Information:

- When participating in bomba, women sometimes:
 - Wear a "blusa ya falda" (a two-piece folk dress)
 - Wear a flowy skirt
 - Wear an "amapola" in their hair (the Puerto Rican national flower)
 - Wear a head wrap or headband
 - Wear casual/street clothes—especially when performing at town squares, soberaos, or other informal gatherings

Slide 29: Instruments: Barril de Bomba

A. Share Information:

- Bomba rhythms are played on *barriles de bomba* or simply, *barriles* (bomba barrels).
 - Barriles are barrel-shaped wooden drums (oak) with goatskin heads. The hands directly hit the drum to make the sound.
 - They are classified according to their function and size:
 - **Subidor** (Also called *El Primo* or *seguidor*):
 - lead drum, higher pitched/smaller, plays repique (improvises), follows the dancer
 - **Buleador** (Also called *El Segundo* or the "*bomba*"):
 - bigger and wider, lower pitched, performs an ostinato pattern to lay down the groove

B. Watch Video:

- Watch the short, embedded video to learn more about these drums.

Slide 30: Instruments: Cuá, Güiro, and Maracas

Share Information:

- Additional instruments used in bomba belong to the idiophone family and are of Taino (indigenous) origin.
 - **Cuá:**

- A hollow log struck with a stick on the body (sometimes played on the sides of certain drums)
- **Güiro:**
 - A gourd that has grooves. A stick or fork is used to scrape against the grooves to create a rhythm.
- **Maracas:**
 - Gourds filled with seeds. They are shaken.

Slide 31: Bomba Grooves

A. Share Information:

- *Bomba* music has 16 distinct rhythms.
 - These rhythms vary in meter (e.g., 6/8, 2/4, or 3/4).
- The style of each rhythm is inspired by where it is performed: **Each region performs bomba in its own way.**
 - *Seis corrido* is the *bomba* variant performed in Loíza.
 - Other popular variants include: *yubá*, *sicá*, and *holandés*.
 - Important families in different regions help to preserve these traditions.
 - The Ayala family in Loíza maintains and transmits the *seis corrido* rhythm.

B. Watch Video:

- Watch the embedded excerpt from a *seis corrido bomba* class in Majestad Negra, Loíza (2 minutes).

Slide 32: Bomba Jam!

Enactive Listening (Perform Bomba):

- Facilitate a drumming activity with students. Tailor this activity to meet your needs! Consider these ideas:
 - Use the rhythmic patterns/instruments in the chart shown below.
 - You might need to use substitutes for the instruments (rhythm sticks, woodblock, or the side of a drum for *cúa*/another large drum for *buleador*).
 - Have students use body percussion before adding instruments (e.g., students can say the part while playing it on their knee and thigh before playing it on the instrument).
 - *Cúa*: R, RL, R, L
 - Maracas: up-down, up-down, up-down, up-down
 - Drums: knee, thigh, thigh-thigh or low, high, high-high
 - Teach the rhythms “by ear” first. The written notation could be used to enhance the learning experience later in the process.

- **Divide the class into three groups: Once each group learns its part, they can jam together.**
- Note: This activity was inspired by a Smithsonian Folkways lesson plan on bomba music, written by Sandra Sanchez. Find the whole lesson here: https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/lesson_plans/FLP10112_Bomba.pdf.

Slide 33: Bomba Vocals

A. Share Information:

- Bomba song lyrics often reflect the **hardships** of slave labor on sugar plantations.
- They are usually sung in Spanish (sometimes Creole French), and consist of **short, repetitive, rhythmic phrases**.
 - Historically, the lyrics were sometimes used to relay **coded messages**.
- Songs often use **call and response form**: an individual lead singer (or sometimes several) alternates with a group of people.
- Note: Especially if students did not complete Component 1, explain that bomba developed in Puerto Rican coastal towns among Afro-Puerto Ricans and Black Haitian immigrants. Enslaved people would gather socially to play music at events called bembes: These gatherings were often a medium to plan liberation: The loud music served as a distraction as people used chants and rhythms to plan escape routes without the knowledge of the slave owner.

B. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to the embedded example (“Agua Tiré,” performed by the Parrilla Family in Loíza). Start the recording at 01:22.
 - *Do you hear these characteristics? (Yes, especially call and response form and short, repetitive, rhythmic phrases.)*
 - Note: The lyrics are: Llegando al puente, agua tire. O li, agua tire (Arriving at the bridge I threw in water. Oh, li, I threw in water).
- Optional: Listen to an example of Creole French in bomba music: <https://folkways.si.edu/chanteclair-trio/choucane/caribbean-latin-world/music/track/smithsonian>.

Slide 34: Bomba: African Roots

Share Information:

- Some argue African musical influences, which are so clearly present in bomba music, have helped make this genre so popular— in Puerto Rico and internationally:
 - **Call and response:** The lead singer performs a melodic line, and a group of singers sing back a response.
 - **Collective participation:** Everyone takes part in the musical performance (including the audience).

- **Polyrhythm:** Multiple meters are played at once (e.g., 3 against 4: one musical line is felt in 3/4 time while another is felt in 4/4 time).
- **Syncopation:** The regular metrical accent is disrupted because weak beats are stressed (stressing beats that normally wouldn't be accented, creating an "off-beat" feeling).
- **Improvisation:** Spontaneous performance (not rehearsed ahead of time), often inspired by dancing.

Slide 35: Attentive and Engaged Listening

A. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to “Bomba” (recorded in Loíza in 1967).
- *What African diasporic influences are most pronounced? (Answers will vary – each of these influences is present in this listening example.)*
- *What instruments can you identify? (voice, shakers, sticks, drums, guiro)*

B. Engaged Listening:

- Encourage students to actively engage with the recording while listening - use these ideas or your own:
 - Clap or play the beat on a drum.
 - Clap or play rhythm sticks on beats 2 and 4.
 - Hum the melody for the “response”.
 - Softly tap an improvised rhythm.
 - Perform the bomba jam rhythms (notated on slide 31).

Slide 36: Lesson Component 2 - Learning Checkpoint

- *What are the three most important aspects of bomba music?*
 - **Drumming (and playing other instruments), dancing, and singing**
- *What are the main instruments used in bomba music?*
 - **Barriles de bomba (subidor/primo and buleador/segundo), cuá, guiro, maracas, voice**
- *What are the typical performance spaces for bomba music?*
 - **Bomba is often performed at community fiestas and festivals in town squares. Performers and audience members gather in a circle, creating a space in the middle for dancing called the soberao (also called the batey).**
- *What African diasporic influences are present in bomba music?*

- **Call and response form, collective participation, polyrhythm, syncopation, improvisation**

Slide 37: Lesson Navigation Slide

3. Component 3: Fiesta and Bomba: Identity on Display

To prepare:



- Read through the component.
- Preview the **Lesson 6, Component 3 Slideshow** (slides 38–53).
 - Open the “Launch Slideshow” link on the righthand menu of the Lesson landing page, (If you are able to use a different screen than the students, have them open the “Student Slideshow” link, which will not show the notes).
- Optional: Print out Venn diagram worksheet (find below)
- Optional: Print out mask-making instruments from the National Museum of American History:

https://amhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/puerto/carnival_mask.pdf.

Slide 38: Component 3 Introduction Slide

Slide 39: Bomba: Performance Spaces and Participants

Share Information:

- Explain/review that bomba music developed in Puerto Rico's coastal towns among Afro Puerto Ricans. It is **performed by dancers, drummers (instrumentalists) and singers and influenced by West African music traditions** (e.g., call and response, collective participation, polyrhythms, syncopation, and improvisation).
- Typical performance spaces include:
 - Town centers (called *soberao* or *batey*)
 - Staged performances
 - Fiestas and festivals
- Everyone is a participant in bomba music (including audience members – both locals and visitors)!
- Instrumentalists play drums (*barriles de bomba*), *cúa* (hollow log struck with a stick on the body), *guiro*, and shakers.
- There is a line of communication between dancers and drummers: Dancers move their bodies to mimic to the rhythmic patterns of the lead drummer and vice versa.
- Singers utilize call and response form, performing short, repetitive, rhythmic phrases.
- **If students did not complete Components 1 or 2, click the down arrow so students can listen to/watch an example of bomba music before moving on.**

Slide 39.2: Bomba!

Watch Video:

- Watch an excerpt from a bomba performance at a Fiesta Santiago Apóstol in Loíza's Matauri neighborhood.
 - *What do you notice about the instrumentation, dancing, singing, and rhythms?*
 - Students will likely identify **drums, shaker, syncopated rhythms, and communal chanting/singing/call and response form**. They might notice how the dancer holds her skirt/hip movements and **communication between the dancer and drummers**.

Slide 40: Fiesta and Identity

Share Information:

- In this component, we will focus on **fiestas and festivals** as ideal spaces for the convergence of cultural identity.
- Specifically, we will explore how bomba and other cultural symbols at the **Fiesta Santiago Apóstol** foster the construction of collective identity that is unique to Loíza, Puerto Rico.

Slide 41: Fiesta Santiago Apóstol: A Procession of Identities

Share Information:

- The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol is an expression of Puerto Rico's wide identitarian make up; it is a space where identity is signaled through:
 - Sound and music
 - Fashion and masks
 - Carnival characters
 - Food

Slide 41.2: Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza!

Share Information:

- The Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza is celebrated for 10 days, from the 24th of July to the 2nd of August!
 - It is an important community gathering in Loíza, a coastal town in Puerto Rico.
 - It is related to the Roman Catholic Church: Masses, prayers (called *novenas*), weddings, and baptisms are frequent.
 - People often dress up in costumes - it is a "Carnival-like" atmosphere.
 - The main event of the festival is a three-day procession, within which statues of Santiago (St. James) are carried through neighborhoods.

Slide 42: Fiesta Symbols: Sound and Music

A. Share Information:

- One way in which identity is expressed at this festival is through the juxtaposition of musical genres:
 - There are two genres of Puerto Rican music that play significant, yet distinct roles in the celebration of Santiago Apóstol: **Bomba** and **Danza**.
 - Though primarily known for bomba, the first and final days of the celebration and procession are framed by solemn religious character and the performance of danza.

B. Watch Video:

- Watch an excerpt from the embedded video, which provides an example of danza, performed at the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol.

Slide 43: Fiesta Santiago Apóstol: Bomba

Share Information:

- Bomba is generally considered African-inspired music, and therefore, represents Loíza's proud African heritage: Loíza colors are red, green and yellow in homage to Africa.
- It also signifies the history of slavery on the island, represents the marginalized working class (often Afro Puerto Rican), and can be viewed as resistance towards assimilation.
 - Long ago, this music genre was limited to performances at plantations and on holidays.
 - After slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico in 1873, bomba performances were still degraded: The practice was not regarded as sufficiently Western European, or "white" enough.
 - There were several (unsuccessful) governmental efforts to restrict and ban bomba music.
 - Some churches (e.g., Pentecostal) labeled bomba music as "devil worship" and called the practice "sinful" (primarily due to the loud music and hip movements).
- More details about bomba within the context of Fiesta Santiago Apóstol:
 - Bomba is played at the town's square during the festival days.
 - Church choirs sometimes perform religious songs along to the rhythm of *bomba*.
 - It is also played during *novenas* (prayers) to warm up before the festival days.
 - The "Grupo Hermanos Ayala" (Ayala family are considered the "custodians" of Loíza's bomba traditions.
 - Sometimes, bomba music is played at different points during the procession to Medianía Alta, Loíza (especially near the Ayala family's cultural center—called 'Batey de los Hermanos Ayala').

- After mass or processions, at the end of the day, people gather around the town center to hear people play *bomba* and *plena* music.
 - Note: For more information about plena music, visit Lesson 4.
 - *Plena* and *bomba* are often linked to one another because both musical styles have African links.

Slide 44: Fiesta Santiago Apóstol: Danza

A. Share Information:

- *Danza* music, due to its roots in Western Europe, symbolizes propriety and sacredness with Saint James and the Catholic church.
 - In Puerto Rico, danza combines aspects of *contradanza* (a classical European dance music) and Afro Caribbean elements.
- *Danza* music is often heard during the first and final days of celebration (the more sacred/religious parts of the festival).
- The procession of the Santiago statues is also framed by solemn religious character and the performance of danza.

B. Attentive Listening:

- Listen to the embedded audio example called “Danza.” (a piece inspired by the Puerto Rican danza style—composed by Louis Moreau Gottschalk in 1857, recorded by Amiram Rigai in 1991).
- *Which elements sound "European"? Which elements sound "Afro Caribbean"?*
 - Although answers will vary, students may notice this example **uses the piano and the beginning sounds very much like Western classical music. In the middle section, a distinct syncopated feel is introduced.**

Slide 45: Optional Creative Activity #1: Bomba vs. Danza

Creative Activity Instructions:

- If time allows: To further understand differences and similarities between bomba and danza, students can watch excerpts from video examples again and complete a Venn diagram (placing similarities between genres where the ovals meet in the middle).
- Click the orange box embedded in the slideshow to access the worksheet (it is also available at the end of this teacher’s guide).
- You could also consider assigning this activity as homework.

Slide 46: Masks and Fashion

Share Information:

- During the procession, people dress up in masks and costumes as they follow the statues of St. James through the streets (representing different aspects of St. James's story).
- One of the most common costumes represents characters known as **vejigantes**: pagan demons with horns.
 - The masks are made from coconut shells.
 - People dress in bright colors such as green and yellow, with horns attached to the top of their masks.
 - In Spanish, *vejiga* means bladder. Traditionally, people in these costumes would carry water in sacks to represent bladders and would hit people with them (playfully of course!).

Slide 47: Masks and Fashion

Share Information:

- **Caballeros** (gentlemen/cowboys) represent the protectors of Santiago.
 - They fight for him (playfully) against vejigantes during the festival.

Slide 48: More Fiesta Characters

Share Information:

- Masks and symbols at Fiesta Santiago Apóstol signal a variety of class, gender, and religious identities.
 - **Viejo** (old man) is a character with white hair, who walks with a cane, and is dressed nicely (usually a coat and tie). He symbolizes the protectors of Saint James and "European values".
 - **La Loca** (crazy/deranged woman) is usually a male dressed up as a lady. La Loca wears black soot on her face, wears messy clothes, and has messy hair. This character acts stereotypically "crazy" (the English translation of Loca is crazy as well) by laughing hysterically and sweeping the streets. She is there to "clean" the path for St. James, both symbolically and spiritually.

Slide 49: Optional Creative Activity #2: Make a Mask!

Creative Activity Instructions:

- If time allows, your students can make their own vejigante masks, following this guide from the National Museum of American History: https://amhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/puerto/carnival_mask.pdf.
 - The linked guide contains detailed instructions and a list of materials.
 - Note: This activity could be completed as homework or as a collaborative project with the art teacher in your building.

Slide 50: Fiesta Symbols: Food

Share Information:

- Food is extremely important at Fiesta Santiago Apóstol (and any type of Puerto Rican celebration)!
- Some common fiesta foods include: **mofongo** (fried green plantains mashed with garlic, *chicharrón* [deep-fried pork skin] and cilantro), **bacalaitos** (codfish fritters), **casabe** (an indigenous Taino round bread made from yucca), and **arepas de coco** (coconut fry bread).
 - Three-ingredient recipe to make casabe: <https://cuban.recipes/casabe/>.
 - History of mofongo (and recipe): www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/a-brief-history-of-puerto-ricos-beloved-mofongo-180979947/.

Slide 51: Friends of Loíza: Fiesta and Diaspora

Share Information:

- **Friends of Loíza** are people from other places who join in this celebration.
- **Hijos Ausentes** (absent sons) are people who have moved away from Loíza or those born in the US, who gather to celebrate the Fiesta of Santiago Apóstol.
- New York City and Philadelphia both hold celebrations of the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza.
 - These celebrations help to preserve Puerto Rican traditions in an international context.
- **Regardless of birthplace, everyone is welcome to celebrate this fiesta!**

Slide 52: Lesson Component 3 - Learning Checkpoint

- *Why is Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza a good example of cultural convergence?*
 - Some examples of how different cultural identities converge at the festival include: **the juxtaposition of musical genres** (notably, bomba and danza), **the way that gender and race are portrayed** (e.g., "Viejo", the old, well-dressed white man symbolizes the protectors of St. James whereas "La Loca", the crazy black woman "cleans" the path for St. James), and **the combining of religious and secular components** (e.g., the religious character of the Santiago statue procession followed by community music jams – bombazos).
- *What are some cultural symbols that are "on display" at Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza?*
 - **Sound and music** [e.g., bomba and danza], **fashion and masks** [e.g., brightly colored costumes, character masks], **Carnival characters** [e.g., vejigantes, caballeros, viejo, la loca], **food** [e.g., mofongo, casabe]

Slide 53: Lesson Navigation Slide

2014 National Music Standards Connections

MU:Pr4.2.E.Ia Demonstrate, using music reading skills where appropriate, how compositional devices employed and theoretical and structural aspects of musical works impact and inform prepared or improvised performances.

- Students will perform on instruments (and read written notation for) basic rhythmic patterns within a three-part bomba jam.

MU:Re7.2.E.Ia Explain how the analysis of passages and understanding the way elements of music are manipulated inform the response to music.

- Students will identify instruments used in bomba music (timbre).
- Students will identify the important musical characteristics associated with bomba music (e.g., singing, rhythms, form/structure, improvisation).
- Students will identify similarities and differences between bomba and danza music.

MU:Re8.1.E.Ia Explain and support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works, citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, contexts, (when appropriate) the setting of the text, and personal research.

- Students will explain the relationship/interaction between drummers and dancers in bomba music.
- Students will identify and explain common lyrical themes in bomba music.
- Students will explain how historical context informs how musical elements are applied in bomba music.
- Students will identify similarities and differences between bomba music and danza music.

MU:Cn11.O.T.Ia Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

- Students will explain the history, development, and influences of bomba music in Puerto Rico.
- Students will explain how historical context informs common lyrical themes in bomba music.
- Students will explain the origins of the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza and describe its social, historical, and cultural significance.
- Students will explain the connection between bomba music and Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza.
- Students will identify cultural symbols on display at the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol de Loíza.
- Students will identify the participants and performance spaces for bomba music.

- Students will discuss how race, gender, and religion relate to the history and practice of bomba music and the Fiesta Santiago Apóstol.
- Students will explain why certain music traditions are sometimes marginalized.

Additional Reading and Resources

- Bofill Calero, Jaime O. 2014. “Bomba, danza, calipso y merengue: Creación del espacio social en las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol de Loíza.” *Latin American Music Review* 35, no. 1 (Spring/Summer): 115–138. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43283326>.
- Colón-León, Vimari. 2021. “Bomba: The Sound of Puerto Rico’s African Heritage.” *General Music Today* 34, no. 3: 13–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371321990665>.
- Yurchenco, Henrietta. 1971. Liner Notes for *Folk Songs of Puerto Rico*. Folkways Records FWO4412. <https://folkways-media.si.edu/docs/folkways/artwork/FWO4412.pdf>.
- Zaragoza, Edward C. 1990. “The Santiago Apóstol of Loíza, Puerto Rico.” *Caribbean Studies* 23, no. 1/2: 125–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25612991>.

Worksheets

Bomba vs. Danza

