

# 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 7: Bomba Landscapes: The Flow of People,  
Technology, and the Music Industry*

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### Lesson Overview

*Bomba* is a genre of music performed by drummers, dancers, and singers. It developed in Puerto Rican coastal towns among enslaved Africans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas Lesson 6 of this Learning Pathway focused on bomba within the context of community celebrations (fiestas), Lesson 7 explores bomba as “spectacle” (staged performances).

Since its origins in Puerto Rico, bomba has seen waves of public popularity. At times, however, it has fallen far from the eyes and ears of the mainstream, marginalized and even nearly lost. Thanks to the efforts of various local and diasporic communities, it has experienced a revival, and is a very popular form of Puerto Rican cultural expression today. Especially in diasporic communities, many fiestas and festivals feature staged events of traditional cultural practices—making them more central and accessible among large crowds. Due to new technologies and commercialization, bomba music is now popular in places all over the world.

In Component 1 of this lesson, students will have ample opportunities to make music. After learning two popular bomba rhythms and singing short call and response phrases in Spanish, they will have an opportunity to create and perform their own class arrangement of a traditional song. In Component 2, students will grapple with and construct personal understandings of complex ideas such as *identity* and *authenticity*. In Component 3, they will explore how technology, commercialization, and standardization affects how people around the world engage with bomba music.

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## Lesson Components and Student Objectives\*



### 1. **Bomba as Spectacle: Introduction** (30+ minutes)

- Identify important musical and cultural characteristics of bomba as “spectacle” (staged performance).
- Perform rhythms associated with the bomba tradition.
- After ample opportunities to listen to a recording, create and perform a class arrangement of the song “Siré y Siré”.



### 2. **Bomba as an Expression of Identity** (30+ minutes)

- Explain how bomba contributes to the construction of personal, collective, diasporic, and global identity.
- Define “authenticity” and explain the connection between this (complex) idea and bomba.
- Explain how bomba has been preserved and promoted, in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora.









### 3. **Bomba: Technologies of Transmission** (30+ minutes)

- Explain how technologies of transmission have affected bomba music.
- Explain how the commercialization of bomba music has changed it and why these changes can be viewed as positive or negative, depending on who you ask.

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\*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. Component One: Bomba as Spectacle: Introduction

### **To prepare:**

- Read through the component.
- Preview Component 1 of the **Lesson 7 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 2–3: Information for the Teacher**

#### **Slide 4: Component 1 Introduction Slide – *Bomba* as Spectacle: Introduction**

Tell students: “In this lesson we be studying *bomba* music from Puerto Rico, but we will also dive deeper into important cultural concepts—like *diaspora*.”

#### **Slide 5: “Traditional” Bomba**

##### Watch Video and Discuss:

- Watch the embedded video clip from a “traditional” bomba, performed on stage.
  - *How is this music introduced? (It is announced as “the music of Black people in Puerto Rico”.)*
    - *Why do you think it was announced in this way? (It has clear, West African musical influences. It developed amongst Afro Puerto Ricans.)*
  - *What musical and cultural characteristics seem to define this genre? (At this point, students might identify **instrumentation [large drums and maracas]**, a **rhythmic/syncopated feel**, and **short, repetitive phrases [call and response between a soloist and a group]**.)*
- Note: This video was briefly introduced in Lesson 6. Whereas Lesson 6 focused on bomba as an integral part of community celebrations, Lesson 7 focuses on bomba as “spectacle” (staged performances) - especially in the Puerto Rican diaspora (this performance takes place in Washington, DC).

#### **Slide 6: “Traditional” Bomba**

##### Watch Video and Discuss:

- Watch the short video clip again. This time, consider and discuss some additional questions:

- *Where do you think this performance is taking place? What kind of venue? Who/what is the performance for?*
  - **This performance took place on the main stage at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC. This festival honors contemporary living cultural traditions and celebrates those who practice and sustain them. Each year, this festival welcomes over one million visitors.**
- *Do you think this is a spontaneous performance or something more formally organized? (This is a staged, formally organized event.)*
- *If you are familiar with other performances of bomba, how does this performance compare? (Answers will vary.)*
- *Do you think identity is a factor in this performance? How or why? (Answers will vary.)*

### **Slide 7: What is Bomba?!?**

#### Share Information:

- *Bomba* is a genre of music performed by drummers, dancers, and singers.
  - The word "bomba" (bomb) can be interpreted as an expression of its sound—a big boom.
- In Lesson 6, we learned that bomba music developed in Puerto Rican coastal towns among enslaved Africans in the 17th century.
  - Enslaved people gathered socially and played bomba to celebrate.
    - Sometimes, these gatherings were 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 owners.
- **Important Note:** If you did not complete Lesson 6 (or if you would like to review), click the down arrow to view a series of slides (7.2 - 7.7) that provides a review of some of the basics of bomba music (e.g., cultural influences, common instrumentation, and important musical characteristics). When you are ready, move on to slide 8 (and proceed with the rest of this component - which will include some music making opportunities).

### **Slide 7.2: Bomba's Instrumentation**

#### Share Information:

- Bomba owes its sonic identity to its **instruments** and its highly **rhythmic quality**.
- It uses a specific set of instruments:
  - Large barrel drums utilize a vibrating membrane to produce sound (membranophones).
  - Other hand-held instruments produce sound through striking, scraping, or shaking (e.g., maracas, claves, cowbells - idiophones).

### Slide 7.3: Two Drums: *Barriles de Bomba*

#### Share Information:

- Two very important drums (membranophones) used in bomba are called ***barriles de bomba*** or simply, ***barriles***.
  - These instruments are similar to barrel-shaped drums used in different parts of Africa.
- There are two sizes of barriles. They are classified according to their function and size:
  - ***Subidor/primo***: lead, smaller, plays *repique* (improvises, following the dancer).
  - ***Buleador/segundo***: bigger and wider, performs an ostinato pattern to lay down the groove.

### Slide 7.4: The *Cuá*

#### Share Information:

- Another important instrument in bomba is the ***cuá*** (two wooden sticks striking a wooden surface).

### Slide 7.5: *Maraca(s)*

#### Share Information:

- Another very important piece of the ensemble is the ***maraca(s)*** (a hollow instrument filled with beads, seeds, or other materials which strike the insides of the instrument as it is shaken).
  - You might be tempted to use two hands and two maracas together as shakers but in the bomba tradition, only one, somewhat large maraca is used (or two are held in one hand).

### Slide 7.6: Call and Response

#### Share Information:

- Bomba also involves singing, often of a call and response nature between a lead singer and a chorus.
  - In the call and response technique, you should be able to hear an obvious 'leader' and a responder or group of responders.
- It is important to note that call and response is a practice associated with many musical styles from different parts of Africa.
- Note: You will have a chance to listen to more examples of call and response as this lesson progresses.

### Slide 7.7: *Piquete: A Conversation Between Drums and Dancers*

#### Share Information:

- One quality that is especially unique to bomba is the **conversation** between the drums and dancers, called *piquete*.
  - The dancer moves to the rhythm and the drummer responds to the dancer's moves, altering and developing its rhythmic improvisation.
    - This is unlike many other musical traditions in which the dancers mainly follow the music but do not lead the musicians.
  - As noted earlier, the buleador player performs a strong ostinato pattern while the subidor player interacts with the movements of the dancer.
  - The performances can be playful or serious with dancers and drummers challenging one another through improvisation and interplay.
- Note: You will have a chance to watch the piquete a little later in this component.

### **Slide 8: Bomba “Spectacles”**

#### Share Information:

- Now that you have reviewed what bomba sounds like and know a bit about its musical and cultural characteristics, let’s shift the conversation to the meaning of “bomba as spectacle”.
- A **spectacle** is a staged performance that is particularly striking or moving.
  - It makes use of sensory experiences and effects.
    - These could include costumes, scenery, dancing, music, and narratives used in performance.

### **Slide 9: Listening for Bomba’s Important Features**

#### Watch Video:

- Let’s watch an extended version of this staged performance of bomba (the video is approx. 6 minutes).
  - The performance took place at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC.
- As you watch, identify important features of this music, such as: instruments (barriles and maracas, short/rhythmic phrases, call and response structure).
- Pay special attention to the piquete:
  - The dancer moves to the rhythm of the drums. The lead drummer watches the dancer carefully and reacts to her movements, altering his rhythmic improvisation accordingly.

### **Slide 10: Bomba: Play Along!**

#### Engaged Listening:

- Watch the video again, but this time, without sound.
  - Using body percussion (laps), hand drums, desks, or any other surfaces safe for striking with hands, improvise rhythms to match the dancer’s movements.

- If time allows, give students a chance to reflect on this experience:
  - *How did this feel? What did you notice about playing music in this way? How is this different than what we might encounter in other musical styles? (Answers will vary. Students might note the difference between prepared and improvised performances. Within the context of their “school” music experiences, students will most likely be more familiar/comfortable with the idea of “prepared” performances.)*

### **Slide 11: Bomba Grooves**

#### Engaged and Enactive Listening (Performing):

- Two important rhythms in bomba music are called *síca* and *yubá* (*sicá* is more common).
- Try to play these rhythms as notated below (start slowly).
  - Students can use instruments, desks, or body percussion to represent the different instruments.
  - As a reminder, bomba has historically been passed down through oral transmission (aka word of mouth) - not by written transcriptions as seen on this slide. Teachers can use the notation as a teaching aid (and to learn the rhythms themselves) but should consider teaching these rhythms to students "by ear".
- **Some hints for sequencing:**
  - Start with the *sicá* rhythm.
  - Learn it through body percussion first. Then, add instruments! (Use replacement instruments, if necessary.)
  - Learn the rhythm first - before listening. (Divide the class into groups and try to perform all three rhythms at once.)
  - Then, listen to the embedded recording again: Students should try to identify some of the rhythms they just learned.
  - Finally, try to play the *sicá* groove while listening to the recording (if the students are up for the challenge - it is fast!).
- If time allows, following this sequencing to learn the other, less common bomba rhythm, *yubá*.
  - *Would this rhythm fit with the recording? (no) Why or why not? (The song from the recording is felt in groups of 4 beats - 4/4 time. The *yubá* groove is felt in 3/4 time and therefore doesn't "fit" with this recording.)*

### Sicá Rhythm:

### Yubá Rhythm:

## Slide 12: Experiencing Call and Response: “Siré y Siré”

### Engaged Listening:

- As we have learned, bomba also contains singing—often of a call and response nature between a lead singer and a chorus.
  - It is important to note that call and response is a practice often associated with many musical styles from different parts of Africa.
- Let’s listen to another song performed by Viento de Agua, called “Siré y Siré”.
  - *Can you hear the “caller” and the “responders”?*
- Listen again:
  - After identifying the call and response, try to sing along:
 

**Siré, Siré, sí me voy para Mayagüez.**  
Translation: Yes, I’ll go, yes, I’ll go, yes I’m heading for Mayaguez (a city in Puerto Rico).

**Siré Siré, porque están tocando mi balance**  
Translation: Yes, I’ll go, yes, I’ll go, for they’re playing my balance (my rhythm).
- Optional discussion question:
  - *Do you know other songs or types of music that use call and response?*
    - **Note that this technique has been used in a huge variety of musical styles and genres, including African American spirituals, rap, R&B, old time music, punk, country, heavy metal, European classical music, among many others.**
- Note: This activity was drawn from an existing [Smithsonian Folkways lesson plan written by Sandra Sanchez](#).



### Slide 13: Put It All Together!

#### Music Creating and Performing Activity:

- After repeated listening to this track, create your own arrangement of "Siré y Siré".
  - Consider using the sicá rhythm to create your "groove".
  - One student (or you) can be the leader and a group of students can sing the song.
  - Other students can play the instrumental parts.
  - You could even have one student be the lead drummer (who improvises).
  - Consider performing your arrangement for an audience.
  - Have fun!

### Slide 24: Sustainability of Bomba

#### Share Information:

- Since its origins, bomba has seen waves of public popularity.
  - At times, however, it has fallen far from the eyes and ears of the mainstream, marginalized and even nearly lost at times.
    - **Note: Marginalization** is the process of social exclusion; in other words, the process by which a dominant group exercises a certain amount of control over the social positioning of another group.
  - These waves of popularity can be attributed to a variety of factors, including racial and class discrimination, other popular musical styles, and methods of transmitting the music (i.e., technology).
- In the face of many modern challenges, bomba has experienced a revival, due, in large part, to the efforts of local and diasporic communities.
  - See Components 2 and 3 to learn more about bomba revival efforts.
  - **Note:** Click to the next slide to unpack the term **diaspora**.

### Slide 15: What is Diaspora?

#### Share Information and Discuss:

- Bomba has been a basis of celebration and identity formation for many in Puerto Rico and its *diaspora*.
- **Ask:** *What is diaspora?*
  - Diaspora is **the dispersal of people from a singular location (homeland) to other parts of the world.**
  - Some points to lead a deeper discussion about diaspora in a Puerto Rican context:
    - Oftentimes, such as has been the case for many Puerto Ricans, people are displaced from their homelands by unfavorable conditions created by a more economically powerful nation. For many Puerto Ricans in the diaspora, this history goes back to the interventions made by the United States after the Spanish-American War.

- For more information about this complex history, see Component 3 of Lesson 1.
- People of the Puerto Rican diaspora can be found all over the globe, including places you might be very familiar with, such as New York City and Hawai'i.
- The Puerto Rican diaspora has also caused the emergence of diasporic identities, sometimes expressed through music and other artistic means. This idea will be explored as the lesson progresses.
- The Puerto Rican diaspora is represented in the album covers shown on this slide:
  - Los Pleneros de la 21 is a bomba and plena group that was founded in New York City in 1983.
  - Like most ethnic groups in Hawai'i, Puerto Ricans began coming to the islands in the early 1900s as plantation laborers.
  - Viento de Agua was founded by legendary drummer Héctor "Tito" Matos. He was born in Puerto Rico and later emigrated to New York City.

### **Slide 16: Mapping Puerto Rican Diasporas**

#### Share Information and Study Map:

- Did you know that almost 6 million people of Puerto Rican descent live in the rest of the United States?
  - The Puerto Rican diaspora is spread out all over the country. Large diaspora communities of Puerto Ricans in the United States can be found in New York, Chicago, Hawai'i, Philadelphia, Massachusetts, and Florida.
    - New York City is the largest.
- Take a moment to study the embedded maps. Map on the left: **Locate Puerto Rico** (to the right of the Dominican Republic). *How far do you think Puerto Rico is from the US mainland? (It is over 1000 miles from the tip of Florida and about 1600 miles from New York City.)* Map on right: **Locate New York City** on the map. **Find the approximate location of other Puerto Rican diaspora communities** in the United States.

### **Slide 17: Mapping Puerto Rican Diasporas**

#### Study Map:

- Take a moment to study the dispersion of Puerto Ricans across the United States.
  - Pay special attention to Puerto Rican diaspora communities near your geographic location.

### **Slide 18: Significance of Bomba as Spectacle**

#### Share Information:

- Bomba music is culturally, socially, spiritually, and politically significant to many people - both on the island and in the Puerto Rican diaspora.

- It has been sustained through a variety of efforts by local and diasporic communities, sometimes sponsored, promoted, and/or guided by government agencies, the music industries, activists, ethnomusicologists, etc.
- Staged performances (spectacles) ensure many people in places around the world continue to have opportunities to experience bomba!
- To learn more about bomba spectacles as a reflection of cultural identity continue to Component 2.
- To learn more about how the character of bomba has changed/transformed into a more institutionalized/standardized form of musical performance, explore Component 3.

### Slide 19: Learning Checkpoint

- *What are some important musical and cultural characteristics of bomba music?*
  - **Bomba developed in Puerto Rican coastal towns among enslaved Africans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.** It is performed by **drummers** (instrumentalists), **dancers**, and **singers**. It owes its sonic identity to its **instruments (barriles de bomba [drums], cuá, maracas)** and its highly **rhythmic quality**. It utilizes **call and response**, and is well-known for the conversation between drummers and dancers, called **piquete**.
- *What are some important characteristics and benefits of bomba as "spectacle"?*
  - A bomba spectacle is a **staged performance** that is **particularly striking or moving** due to auditory (e.g., musical sounds, improvisation) and visual effects (e.g., costuming, dancing, stage atmosphere). These staged performances, which often occur at formally organized festivals and events, have **helped to sustain bomba** in the face of many modern challenges. In the diaspora, staged bomba performances **help people connect with their cultural heritage**. These performances also **introduce many new listeners to this tradition**.
- *What were some challenging and rewarding aspects of creating and performing your arrangement of "Siré y Siré"? (Answers will vary.)*
- *What is diaspora, and what locations on the US mainland are part of the Puerto Rican diaspora?*
  - **Diaspora is the dispersal of people from a singular location (homeland) to other parts of the world. The Puerto Rican diaspora is spread out all over the United States. Large diaspora communities can be found in New York, Chicago, Hawai'i, Philadelphia, Massachusetts, and Florida. NYC is the largest.**

**Slide 20: Lesson Navigation Slide**

## **2. Component 2: Bomba as an Expression of Identity**

### **To prepare:**



- Read through the component.
- Preview the **Lesson 3, Component 2 Slideshow** (slides 21–42).
  - 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 21: Component 2 Introduction Slide – Bomba as an Expression of Identity**

### **Slide 22: What is Bomba?!?**

#### Share Information:

- *Bomba* is a music genre that eveloped in Puerto Rican coastal towns among enslaved Africans in the 17th century.
  - It is performed by drummers, dancers, and singers.
  - For a deeper review of the most important characteristics of bomba music, see slides 7.1–7.7.
- Bomba is socially and culturally significant (both on the island and in the diaspora as an expression of identity, political resistance, and/or religious belief (among other things).
  - For a review of the term *diaspora*, see slides 15–17.
- Whereas Lesson 6 focused on bomba as community expression (e.g., informal performances, fiestas), **Lesson 7 focuses on bomba in more institutionalized ways (e.g., staged performances).**

### **Slide 23: Bomba and Puerto Rican Identity**

#### A. Share Information:

- New York City has been home to millions of people from all over the world, including many Puerto Ricans.
- The connection between Puerto Rico and New York City is so strong that a word exists for people who share social and cultural relationships with both places: Nuyoricans (New York + Ricans). **We’ll learn more about this later.**
  - NYC has historically been extraordinarily culturally diverse and demonstrates the richness and variety of different identities in the United States.
  - For many political, economic, social, and cultural reasons, many people with shared cultural and/or national identities have gathered, celebrated, and lived in specific New York City neighborhoods.

- Examples of this are Little Italy in Manhattan, Little Guyana in Queens, the traditionally Polish neighborhood of Greenpoint in Brooklyn, and Spanish Harlem in Manhattan, just to name a few.
- It is important to keep in mind that these areas and their communities are not fixed but continue to change and grow, just as cultures do.
- Puerto Ricans who have moved to New York City have often lived in Spanish Harlem, Williamsburg in Brooklyn, South Bronx, and other areas of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens.

B. Watch Video and Discuss:

- Watch the embedded video of Los Pleneros de la 21 on *Sesame Street*.
  - *Why do you think this performance might be important and meaningful for young people in New York City? (Although answers will vary, students might mention it is affirming and empowering for children to see themselves and their culture reflected in the media and educational materials.)*
  - Interesting side note: The little girl dancing in this video (Julia Loiza Gutiérrez-Rivera) is still a member of Los Pleneros de la 21!

### Slide 24: What Is Identity?

Share Information:

- *Identity* is what makes you, well, you.
  - Identity is a combination of factors, such as homeland or hometown, ancestry, social groups, interests, gender, race, sexuality, school, etc.
- Music can be a way of understanding identity, either individually or collectively.
  - Individually, you might consider how your own music tastes say something about who you are (to yourself and others).
  - Collectively, many cultural groups, families, subcultures, and communities can express their group identities through music performance, listening habits, and other forms of musical production and consumption.

### Slide 25: Considering Personal Identity

Discussion:

- Take a few minutes to discuss your own identity with a classmate.
  - You won't be able to cover everything, so choose one or two parts of your identity that you feel are significant to you.
- Next, consider the following questions (if time allows, you could discuss these questions as a full group):
  - *Why did you choose those aspects of your identity to discuss?*
  - *How do your favorite activities, foods you eat, music you listen to, or languages you speak be related to those elements of your identity?*

- *Why might a sense of identity be important to people? How is it important to you?*
- Note: Learning for Justice provides a helpful worksheet that can help guide this activity. Find it [HERE](#).

## **Slide 26: Diasporic and Global Identity**

### Share Information:

- Bomba music is an important part of identity for many members of **Puerto Rican diasporic communities**.
  - Optional discussion questions: *If you were moving to another city, state, or country, what aspects of your own culture would you want to bring? How would you do it? If you wanted to show it to others, how would you?*
- Beyond the diaspora, people all over the world, of many different nationalities and ethnicities, perform and listen to bomba music.
  - In this way, bomba can be a part of a person's **global** identity.
- Some terminology:
  - *Diaspora*: The dispersal of people from a singular location (homeland) to other parts of the world.
  - *International*: Describes relationships between nations.
  - *Global*: Relates to the whole world. Global identity is a sense of connection, community, and belonging that transcends (and does not rely on) national borders.
- Note: In Component 3, we will explore the globalization of bomba music through technology.

## **Slide 27: The Bomba Revival**

### Share Information:

- Since its origins, bomba has seen waves of public popularity at times and has fallen far from the eyes and ears of the mainstream, even being purposely marginalized in some cases.
  - Note: Marginalization is the process of social exclusion; in other words, the process by which a dominant group exercises a certain amount of control over the social positioning of another group.
  - These waves can be attributed to a variety of factors including racial and class discrimination, other popular musical styles, and methods of transmitting the music (i.e., technology).
- **Thankfully, it has experienced a revival through the collaboration of Puerto Rican locals, people in the diaspora, and the state (government).**

## Slide 28: The Bomba Revival: Local Efforts

### Share Information:

- Rafael Cepeda (1910–1996) is widely recognized as the "patriarch" or father of bomba and plena.
  - A prolific performer and composer, Rafael was a passionate advocate of traditional musics in Puerto Rico, specifically bomba and plena.
  - Many people credit him with reviving these music traditions on the island and helping them gain international popularity.
- Note: Visit Lesson 4 to learn all about plena music!
- Note: For a quick comparison of bomba and plena music, click the down arrow (optional).

## Slide 28.2: Bomba vs. Plena: What's the Difference (Optional)

### A. Share Information:

- Sometimes, bomba and plena are mischaracterized and even confused for one another by cultural outsiders (e.g., people from outside of Puerto Rico and its diaspora, people unfamiliar with the genre or practice, etc.).
- Although bomba and plena are quite distinct, they are related musical forms - which makes it even more confusing! Some popular Puerto Rican Groups (e.g., Los Pleneros de la 21, Viento de Agua) play both bomba and plena music.
- It is important for both performers and listeners to become familiar with the musical differences that separate the genres.
  - Understanding the differences and similarities allows performers to enter into rich musical conversation with one another. These dialogues produce musical innovations (e.g., fusions) and ensure the individual histories of these seminal musical practices are not forgotten.

### B. Watch Videos and Share Information:

- Consider watching the short, embedded videos and sharing some basic information about similarities and differences between bomba and plena, before moving on with the lesson.
  - **Some similarities:**
    - Both traditions developed among Afro Puerto Ricans and are influenced by African music traditions.
    - Both traditions emphasize improvisation.
    - Both traditions have a strong dance component.
    - Both traditions are embraced by diasporic communities as an important part of Puerto Rican identity.
  - **Some differences:**
    - Bomba developed in the 17th century. Plena did not emerge until later (20th century).



- Bomba places more emphasis on rhythms/percussion instruments, while plena is more melodic and folk-song based (tells a story). Plena has been referred to as the "people's newspaper", as the music helped deliver the news around neighborhoods.
- Bomba uses barrel drums called barriles (lower pitched) and plena uses hand drums called panderetas (higher pitched).
- Plena has one basic rhythm, whereas bomba has sixteen.

### **Slide 29: La Familia Cepeda**

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- With his wife, his three daughters, and his eight sons, Rafael founded a performance ensemble called "La Familia Cepeda".
- For over fifty years, this group has preserved the complex drumming, dance steps, vocal improvisation, and many-layered rhythms that characterize bomba.
  - **Watch the short, embedded video of La Familia Cepeda performing bomba.**

### **Slide 30: The Bomba Revival: Local Efforts**

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- Rafael Cepeda's children and grandchildren continue to carry on the bomba and plena traditions, extending the life of the musical style and cementing it into Puerto Rican culture.
  - **Watch the short, embedded video of La Familia Cepeda performing at a community festival in 2010.**

### **Slide 31: The Bomba Revival: Local Efforts**

#### Share Information:

- Rafael's son, Modesto, recognized that one way for communities to maintain culturally significant musical practices is through education.
  - He founded the Escuela de Bomba y Plena Rafael Cepeda Atilas, located in Santurce, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
    - This school helps young people of Puerto Rico learn the traditions of bomba and plena.
    - It promotes pride in Puerto Rican cultural practices and emphasizes their continued significance to many Puerto Rican communities, providing lessons and classes as well as presenting staged performances (spectacles) of bomba.

### Slide 32: The Bomba Revival: State-Sponsored Events

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- Governmentally promoted and supported bomba performances and events have increased exposure to bomba across the island, helping to promote and sustain cultural identity.
  - One example of this is Dia Nacional de la Bomba (The National Day of Bomba)—a day of celebration intended to recognize the history and cultural impact of bomba music.
    - Other state-sponsored events in Puerto Rico include many sponsored talks, performances, and educational events facilitated by expert bomba performers, music scholars, master drummers, and other experienced culture bearers.
    - Bomba music (alongside other types of traditional music) is also featured at state-sponsored celebrations/fiestas/parades around the island (e.g., Puerto Rican Day).
- To illustrate, show at least the first 2-3 minutes of the embedded video (Fiesta en el Batey de Los Hermanos Ayala - Celebration of the Día Internacional de la Bomba!).

### Slide 33: State-Sponsored Events: Let's Discuss

#### Reflective Activity:

- Engage students in reflection, using the following questions as conversation-starters (this could occur through larger or small group discussions or students could respond through writing):
  - *To what extent do you think institutional, or government sponsored cultural events, such as staged bomba performances, impact how some Puerto Ricans might understand their cultural heritage and identity?*
  - *Why might governmental institutions be interested in promoting bomba on the island?*
  - *What are some possible positive outcomes of bomba performances sponsored by governmental institutions?*
  - *Are there any drawbacks?*
    - **Of course, there are no clear right or wrong answers to these questions. The idea is for students to think deeply and critically about these issues.**
    - Students might mention these types of events are usually **well-funded** and **bring large-scale promotion and publicity** to a historically marginalized music tradition.
    - They might also note that **governmental institutions might be interested in promoting bomba to make money.**
    - Some have argued the potential of "**staged**" **bomba performances** to promote/foster cultural identity is limited because they **often disregard the original context of the music.**

- It is important to remember that originally, this music was played at social gatherings among enslaved Africans who often used it as a medium to plan liberation. It was often used to express anger and sadness about their situation.
- At various points in history, **this music has been marginalized due to race and class tensions and discrimination** (sometimes by the government and those in positions of power). It is important to consider how this history might affect how performers and audience members feel about state-sponsored, staged performances of this music.
- **Some people go so far as to claim that "staged" bomba performances cannot be considered "authentic"**, because originally, this music was performed informally as part of social, community-based gatherings/celebrations.
  - Authenticity is a complex topic that will be explored through the activity on the next slide.

### **Slide 34: Exploring the Complexities of Authenticity**

#### Reflective Activity:

- On the surface, **authenticity** describes something that is real, true, and/or original.
- But - there are many different uses of the word, which have both positive and negative results. Determining what is and is not “authentic” is a complex, subjective process.
- Encourage students to reflect on the complexities of authenticity through this four-step activity:
  1. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to discuss this question:
    - *What does the word authenticity mean to you?*
  2. After students discuss their interpretations of this concept, on their own, ask them to make a short list of traditions they consider to be important to their identity (e.g., a favorite food ... maybe a grandmother’s recipe, social or religious events, a special holiday tradition, a sport or pastime, clothing, song, etc.).
  3. As they look at the list they made, they can consider these questions:
    - *Do you consider these aspects of your identity to be “authentic”? Why or why not?*
    - *Who gets to decide what is considered authentic?*
    - *How would you feel if someone told you something on your list was not an “authentic” representation of culture?*
  4. Encourage students to share their ideas with the whole class.
    - Hopefully, this activity will help students realize that authenticity is a complicated idea that can be viewed and interpreted in many ways.
    - Some additional topics you may wish to explore and discuss:

- *Who is a cultural insider? (A cultural insider has been defined as someone who “has more knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural characteristics of the local institutional community than an outsider because they share the same social background than an outsider because they share the same social background, culture, and language” (Liu & Burnett, 2022).)*
- *What problems could arise if someone claims a cultural insider’s practice is NOT authentic?*
- *Can issues of authenticity impact feelings of identity? Can they impact pride in one’s cultural identity?*
- *Do you think staged bomba performances seem more or less authentic to Puerto Ricans on the island, members of diasporic communities, and non-Puerto Ricans? (Most likely, staged performances are interpreted as very authentic for non-Puerto Ricans, who have likely never experienced it any other way. They are probably interpreted as less authentic to people on the island, who have experienced this music in the context of informal community gatherings and fiestas.)*
- **Most importantly, students should understand that cultural traditions are not frozen in time – they are dynamic ... always evolving and changing as people encounter different ideas, experiences, and social dynamics. As this occurs, “authenticity” becomes more and more difficult to define.**

### **Slide 35: The Bomba Revival: Diasporic Communities**

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- As we mentioned earlier, in many ways it is thanks to diasporic communities that the bomba revival occurred and has been so significant.
- Outside of the island of Puerto Rico, many community organizations around the globe have been created to promote bomba.
- Fiestas and festivals are held across the diaspora as a way of celebrating Puerto Rican heritage and culture.
  - These events often feature staged performances of traditional cultural practices—making them more central and accessible among large crowds.
  - Bomba and plena are very popular at these events.
- To illustrate, watch the embedded video of Los Pleneros de la 21 at the 2005 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC.

### **Slide 36: Los Pleneros de la 21 in NYC**

#### Share Information:

- The group you just watched, Los Pleneros de la 21, is one of several community organizations that protects and promotes plena and bomba music in NYC through performance, cultural exchange, and education. (Remember, earlier in this lesson you watched them performing on Sesame Street in the early 1990s.)
  - Since the 1980s, in East Harlem (aka Spanish Harlem), members of Los Pleneros de la 21 have worked together to promote cultural exchange, protect traditions, and educate communities through Puerto Rican musical styles such as bomba and plena.
  - Some of their community-based initiatives include:
    - Community workshops, which teach bomba and plena to interested members of the community - these are offered for both children and adults.
    - Bomba and plena demonstrations and workshops in public schools.
    - Bringing in guest master artists to teach and discuss their work.
    - Working with other grassroots cultural organizations to bring cultural events to the local community.
    - Bringing fiestas to the East Harlem area, such as Las Fiestas de Cruz (Feast of the Holy Cross) and Fiesta Navideña (Christmas Party)!
    - Releasing albums so the public can hear and learn about bomba and plena.
    - Touring within the United States and internationally. They have performed in places like Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Canada, Australia, and Russia.
  - There are many other organizations in the United States that provide similar resources to their own local communities, such as Bomba Marilé (in Utah) and Aguacero (in Central California).

### **Slide 37: Fiestas and Festivals in the Diaspora: *Las Fiestas de la Cruz* in East Harlem**

#### Share Information and Watch Video

- One important annual event organized by Los Pleneros de la 21 is called *Las Fiestas de la Cruz*.
  - Las Fiestas de la Cruz (Feast of the Holy Cross) are a series of events, performances, and celebrations stemming from a Puerto Rican tradition.
    - The celebration involves chanted rosaries (Catholic tradition) in honor of the cross that Puerto Ricans inherited from Spain.
  - Bomba is a major part of the fiesta.
- Watch some video clips from *Las Fiestas de la Cruz* in East Harlem (2023)!

### **Slide 38: Fiestas and Festivals in the Diaspora: *Fiesta Boricua* in Chicago**

#### Share Information and Watch Video

- Another great example of a fiesta in the diaspora is the *Fiesta Boricua* in Chicago—a large gathering and series of celebrations of Puerto Rican cultural heritage.
  - This fiesta highlights performances of traditional Puerto Rican musics—including bomba.
  - Oftentimes, fiestas such as these will even invite performing artists from the island as part of the celebration!
- Check out the embedded news broadcast from this festival in Humboldt Park, Chicago.
- Optional: If time allows, you could explore additional discussion questions **(answers will vary)**:
  - *Why is this event important to Puerto Rican-Chicagoans?*
  - *How do events like this contribute to identity construction for people in diasporic communities?*
  - *How can community-based organizations use music to promote pride in cultural identities?*
  - *Do you think there is a difference in how these types of events are perceived in Puerto Rico vs. in the diaspora?*

### **Slide 39: Optional Research Activity: Bomba and Activism**

#### Share Instructions:

- Throughout the Puerto Rican diaspora, organizations use bomba as a tool to promote cultural diversity, providing opportunity for youth (people of all ages really) to learn about their own cultural heritage, or the cultural heritage of others.
- Some of these organizations also use bomba as a tool for social activism.
- Do a little research on your own by visiting the website of one three organizations. Find out: *What is their mission? Do they support any social causes?*
  - [Los Pleneros de la 21](#)
  - [Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center](#)
  - [BombaY](#)
- Share what you learn with the rest of the class: *What do these organizations aim to contribute to their communities, regions, and the world?*

### **Slide 40: Optional Closing Video: “Baila Julia Loiza” at the 2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival!**

#### Watch Video and Reflect:

- If time allows, close out this component by watching an extended version of "Baila Julia Loiza", performed onstage at the 2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

- Ask students: *Do you remember Julia?* She was the little girl who danced in the Sesame Street video!
- Note: She starts dancing at 03:30.
- Some context to share with students: The liner notes for this album state that this song "sums up the young dancer's artistic life since childhood". When they made the studio audio recording for this song, Julia danced in front of the lead bomba drum, played by her father, Juango (who wrote the song). His drumming was intended to "bring this fine young dancer's movements to life in the listener's imagination."
- Ask students: *Does this performance feel like a celebration of cultural identity? In what ways? (Answers will vary.)*
- Food for thought: *We know that dancing is an integral part of bomba. Do you think this music tradition can be conveyed authentically through an audio recording? (Continue to Component 3 to learn more about how technologies of transmission have affected the bomba tradition.)*

#### Slide 41: Learning Checkpoint

- *How can bomba (as spectacle) contribute to the construction of personal, collective, diasporic, and global identity?*
  - **Music can be a way of understanding identity on many levels. Many cultural groups, families, subcultures, and communities express group identities through music performance, listening habits, and other forms of musical production and consumption. In Puerto Rico, many people embrace bomba as an important part of community celebrations and a symbol of Afro Puerto Rican heritage. In diasporic communities, staged bomba performances at organized festivals help people connect with traditional cultural practices. Beyond the diaspora, people all over the world, of many different nationalities and ethnicities, perform and listen to bomba music. In this way, bomba can be a part of a person's global identity.**
- *How does the idea of authenticity relate to bomba?*
  - **Some have argued that in some ways, "staged" bomba performances disregard the original context of the music (originally, it was performed informally as part of social, community-based gatherings/celebrations). However, it is important to remember that determining what is and is not "authentic" is a complex, subjective process. Cultural traditions are not frozen in time – they are dynamic ... always evolving and changing as people encounter different ideas, experiences, and social dynamics. As this occurs, "authenticity" becomes more and more difficult to define.**

- *What are some ways that bomba has been preserved and promoted, both in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora?*
  - **Bomba has been preserved and promoted through the collaboration of Puerto Rican locals, people in the diaspora, and the state (government). Many people credit Rafael Cepeda with reviving bomba music on the island and helping it gain international popularity. He found the group *La Familia Cepeda*, and his children and grandchildren continue to carry on his legacy today. Bomba is also promoted on the island through state-sponsored events, for example, Dia Nacional de la Bomba (The National Day of Bomba). In diasporic communities, organizations (such as Los Pleneros de la 21) promote bomba music through performances at festivals, cultural exchange, and education.**

**Slide 42: Lesson Navigation Slide**



### **3. Component Three: Technologies of Transmission**



#### **To prepare:**

- Read through the component.
- Preview the **Lesson 3, Component 3 Slideshow** (slides 43–58).
  - 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 43: Component 3 Introduction Slide – Bomba: Technologies of Transmission**

#### **Slide 44: What is Bomba???**

##### Share Information:

Note: This slide is a review, especially intended for students who did not complete Components 1 or 2.

- *Bomba* is a genre of music performed by drummers, dancers, and singers.
- It developed in Puerto Rican coastal towns among enslaved Africans in the 17th century.
- The word “bomba” (bomb) can be interpreted as an expression of its sound—a big boom.
- As we have learned throughout Lesson 6 and 7, bomba is socially and culturally significant (for people both on the island and in the diaspora).
- Especially if you did not complete Components 1 or 2, listen to the embedded example of bomba music (“Siré y Siré”, by Viento de Agua).

#### **Slide 45: Bomba as Commercial Expression**

##### Share Information:

- In Components 1 and 2 of this lesson, we learned that although bomba originally developed as a form of **community expression**, some performances of bomba music have become more **institutionalized** over time.
  - Community activities and events tend to focus on smaller, regional areas or local groups. Community activities often (but not always) intersect with commercial and institutional action (e.g., state-sponsored festivals that sometimes produce some sort of monetary gain).
  - Institutional activities are staged performances at large events (often put on for political, national, transnational, official, and/or governmental purposes).
- In Component 3 we will take a closer look at bomba as **commercial expression**.

- Specifically, we will explore how the **standardization, new technologies**, and the **commercialization** of bomba music affects how people all over the world can connect and engage with this tradition.
  - Commercial approaches are those performances of bomba that produce some kind of monetary gain.

### **Slide 46: Technologies of Transmission**

#### Discussion:

- Ask students to consider the following questions:
  - *How do you listen to music? What about your friends? How do your parents, grandparents, or other family members listen to music? How did they listen to it in the past?*
- After giving students time to discuss these questions (with a partner, in small groups, or a full class—you might even want to write some of their ideas on the board), move to the next slide.

### **Slide 47: Technologies of Transmission**

#### Share Information:

- In the last activity, you likely came up with at least a few different ways that people listen to music. These are considered **technologies of transmission** – in other words, **equipment that allows us to listen to music that is not being performed live**. These could include:
  - Phonograph
  - Radio
  - Record player
  - Cassette (tape) player
  - CD (compact disc) player
  - MP3 player
  - Streaming services

### **Slide 48: Live vs. Recorded Musical Performances**

#### Reflection:

Note: This reflection activity could occur through small group discussion, or the students could provide a written response.

- Ask students to reflect on their own experiences of hearing music—any music, live and in-person or on a recording.
  - *Do you prefer live or recorded musical performances? Why?*
  - *How are live and recorded performances similar and different?*
  - *What are some benefits and drawbacks of live vs. recorded performances of music for performers?*

- *What are some benefits and drawbacks of live vs. recorded performances of music for listeners?*
- Some hints:
  - **Students can consider factors related to sound quality, the impact of the performance or listening environment, interaction between performers and audience members/listeners, convenience, accessibility, cost of attending live performances for listeners, cost of traveling for performers, fatigue performers experience while traveling and performing live, how many listeners performers can reach with their music, potential monetary gain for performers, etc.**

### **Slide 49: Commercialization and Bomba**

#### Share Information and Discussion:

- *Commercialization* is the process of making something (in this case, music) into a product that can be bought and sold.
  - Musical examples of this include records, CDs, MP3s, streaming music subscriptions, etc. (the technologies of transmission we talked about earlier).
- Commercialization changes bomba, so it can be seen as both positive and negative, depending on who you ask.
  - Ask students: *How do you think commercialization changes bomba? Why do you think there is some disagreement among bomba practitioners and enthusiasts regarding the role of commercialization?*
    - Some hints:
      - **Some bomberos (a term for someone who performs bomba music) and bomba enthusiasts are most interested in maintaining (or preserving) traditional forms of bomba. From this perspective, any "changes" at all will likely be viewed as negative (e.g., removing the visual aspects of bomba by making an audio recording, deemphasizing dance, removing the spontaneity of the improvisation that occurs between the drummer and dancer, blending bomba with other musical styles, such as salsa and plena). Other bomberos and bomba enthusiasts are more welcoming to adaptations and musical fusions. They view changes to the tradition and the integration of bomba with other musical styles as a natural process of creating art. Of course, the views of many people fall somewhere in between these two perspectives.**
- Advance to the next slide for an opportunity to compare live and recorded versions of bomba for yourself!

### Slide 50: Baila Julia Loiza!

#### Attentive Listening:

- Watch an excerpt from the video recording of the song "Baila Julia Loiza", performed by Los Pleneros de la 21 at the 2017 Smithsonian Folklife Festival (watch the whole performance if time allows).
- Then, listen to an excerpt (or the full recording) of the studio-recorded audio version of the same song.
  - *What are some differences between the live performance and studio-recorded (audio) version of this song? Which do you prefer? Why? (Answers will vary.)*
    - Consider encouraging students to jot down some notes regarding similarities, differences, and personal preferences as they watch and listen.
- About the song: Juango Gutiérrez (member of Los Pleneros de la 21 and author of this song) dedicated it to his daughter, Julia (who is a renowned bomba dancer and also a member of the group. The liner notes for this album state that this song "sums up the young dancer's artistic life since childhood". When they made the studio audio recording for this song, Julia danced in front of the lead bomba drum, played by her father, Juango. His drumming was intended to "bring this fine young dancer's movements to life in the listener's imagination."
  - Note: In the video, Julia begins dancing at 03:30.
  - Additional (optional) discussion question: *Do you think Los Pleneros de la 21's audio recording of this song succeeds in bringing the dancer's movements to life in the listener's imagination?*

### Slide 51: Standardizing Bomba

#### Attentive Listening:

- As you will see and hear in the next part of this lesson, bomba's commercialization led to a kind of 'standardizing' of the music.
- Listen to an excerpt from a song called "Mayelá, recorded by Viento de Agua.
  - *Do you think this is a good song for dancing? Why or why not? (Yes!)*

### Slide 52: The Influence of Rafael Cortijo and Ishmael Rivera

#### Share Information:

- Rafael Cortijo was a powerful force in the shift to a more standardized recorded bomba, especially as his popularity rose along with his musical partner, Ismael Rivera.
  - Cortijo and Rivera's performances and recordings of bomba (which were widely accessible due to the commercialization process) helped to popularize bomba as a representative musical style of Puerto Rico.
    - But - they didn't just use their popularity to influence musical tastes and spread bomba around the world – they also helped to challenge racism

against Black Puerto Ricans at home by demanding equal pay for all the musicians in their band.

- **Because these artists became extremely popular both in Puerto Rico and in the diaspora, we can still see their influences on bomba stylings to this day, including the usage of the rhythm we will learn about on the next slide: bomba sicá.**

### **Slide 53: Standardizing Bomba: Sicá**

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- Although bomba has 16 rhythmic varieties, one stood out in the era of commercialization – *Sicá*.
  - The sicá rhythm is great for dancing.
  - In large part because it has been used frequently in popular recordings, it has become one of the "standard" and most played rhythms in bomba music.
- Watch the embedded video, which features the sicá rhythm, performed by Viento de Agua at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.
- Note: In Component 1 (beginning on slide 9), there is a music-making activity related to the sicá rhythm. Students are encouraged to learn the rhythm and perform it using classroom instruments.

### **Slide 52: Bomba Moves**

#### Share Information:

- Audio recordings and other technology advances ensure that musical styles do not remain isolated in a singular location.
- Regarding bomba specifically, recordings have extended the reach of this music tradition far beyond Puerto Rico, to the rest of the world.
  - This includes the large population of people in the *diaspora*, who can listen to recordings from back home or even make new ones inspired by the early recordings we have discussed. Just to name a couple of examples:
    - **NYC:** In Component 2, we learned about the importance of bomba music to Nuyoricans (people who share strong social and cultural relationships with both New York City and Puerto Rico). When people disperse from one location to another, they take important aspects of their culture (such as music) with them.
      - Many bomba performers in New York City (who we have discussed throughout this lesson) often use live performances (at events like fiestas/festivals and educational/community workshops to celebrate Puerto Rican culture.
        - But - it's not just live music and dance that has allowed this movement to flourish. Recordings by influential artists like Rafael Cortijo, Ismael

Rivera, and Los Pleneros de la 21 (among many others) have influenced Nuyoricans for multiple generations!

- **Hawai'i:** In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Puerto Ricans were recruited for work on sugarcane plantations in Hawai'i after natural disasters caused a massive shortage in sugarcane from Puerto Rico.
  - Sadly, they were often the targets of poor treatment and discrimination on these plantations, especially because of their unclear US citizenship statuses. Despite the many challenges they faced, workers and their families brought with them many cultural assets, such as food, arts & crafts, and music – including bomba!
    - Puerto Rican-Hawaiian musicians have also made many new recordings of their own, which have been made available worldwide through various technologies of transmission.
  - Optional: If time allows, listen to an example of a recording Puerto Rican-Hawaiian musicians made in (“Bomba Negra”, performed by Charles Figueroa and August, Virginia, and Wayne Rodrigues).
    - *Do you notice any differences between this example and others we have listened to in this lesson?*

### **Slide 55: Bomba: Influencing Other Genres**

#### Share Information:

- As the quintessential Afro Puerto Rican music genre, Bomba has been used by artists in many other genres, such as salsa, rap, jazz, reggaeton, for commercial purposes. It has also inspired classical music.
  - Sometimes it is used as a symbol for Blackness or Africanness (the music is said to have a "bomba" feel).
  - Other artists use aspects of the tradition more literally in their music.
  - Examples of artists from different genres who have been influenced by bomba:
    - Rap and Reggaeton: Vico C, Tego Calderon, Calle 13
    - Jazz: Willam Cepeda, Miguel Zenon
    - Salsa: Hector Lavoe and Willie Colon
  - Note: Learn more about salsa and reggaeton in Lesson 9.

### **Slide 56: Commercialized Community-Centered Education Efforts**

#### Share Information and Watch Video:

- Some themes we have covered in this lesson have been community, education, and commercialization. Sometimes, we can see very clear intersections of community, education, and commercialization. One example of this is in literature for children.
- Watch book trailer: “When Julia Danced Bomba/Cuando Julia Bailaba Bomba” is a children’s book by Dr. Raquel M. Ortiz.

- The book teaches children about bomba practice and performance while addressing issues such as race, gender, Puerto Rican identity, diaspora, and more.
- Discuss (if time allows):
  - *How might commercial education initiatives like this impact identity for Puerto Rican and diasporic communities? (Although answers will vary, students might note these types of initiatives affirm identity and cultivate cultural pride for students with Puerto Rican heritage. However, there is always a chance the representation of bomba or Puerto Rican culture in the book might not match students' personal experiences. This type of initiative assumes children will connect with bomba music just because they have Puerto Rican heritage.)*
  - *In what ways might the commercial aspect of this type of education tool impact how bomba and identity are understood by general audiences? (Although answers will vary, students might note these types of initiatives expose students all over the world to a culture and music tradition they might not experience otherwise and can promote cross-cultural understanding. However, there is always a risk of generalizing, essentializing, and promoting stereotypes [e.g., all Puerto Ricans like and listen to bomba music, bomba music is the most or only important music genre in Puerto Rico].)*
- Note: Find a recording of the author (Raquel M. Ortiz) reading this book [HERE](#).

### Slide 57: Learning Checkpoint

- *How have technologies of transmission affected bomba music, both inside and outside of Puerto Rico?*
  - **New technology, such as audio recordings, have made bomba more accessible to more people, especially to those in diasporic communities. These recordings have also spread and popularized bomba in places all around the world. Technological advances have also had implications for performers, who can reach more listeners without having to travel and perform live as much.**
- *How has the commercialization of bomba changed it?*
  - **Audio recordings deemphasize dance, remove the spontaneity of improvisation, and tend to blend bomba with other musical styles, such as salsa and plena. Commercialization has also led to a kind of "standardizing" of the music (the desire for a music genre to sound a certain way). Certain rhythms (most notably sicá, which is great for**

**dancing) are used much more than others and are recognized as representative of the "bomba" sound.**

- *Why can these changes be viewed as both positive and negative, depending on who you ask?*
  - **Some bomberos and bomba enthusiasts are very concerned with maintaining/preserving traditional forms of bomba (e.g., emphasis on the conversation between drummer and dancer, emphasis on community engagement, preserving more of the 16 possible rhythms, keeping bomba distinct from other musical genres). Others are more welcoming to adaptations and view changes to the tradition and the integration of bomba with other musical styles as a natural process of creating art. Of course, the views of many people fall somewhere in between these two perspectives.**

**Slide 58: Lesson Navigation Slide**



## **2014 National Music Standards Connections**

MU:Cr1.1.E.Ia Compose and improvise ideas for melodies, rhythmic passages, and arrangements for specific purposes that reflect characteristic(s) of music from a variety of historical periods studied in rehearsal.

- Students will imitate/demonstrate the improvisation that takes place between drummers and dancers during a bomba performance (piquete).

MU:Cr2.1.E.Ia Select and develop draft melodies, rhythmic passages, and arrangements for specific purposes that demonstrate understanding of characteristic(s) of music from a variety of historical periods studied in rehearsal.

- After ample opportunities engage the characteristics of bomba music and listen to a recording, students will create their own arrangement of the song “Siré y Siré”.

MU:Cr3.1.E.Ia Evaluate and refine draft melodies, rhythmic passages, arrangements, and improvisations based on established criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes.

- Students will refine and practice their class arrangement of the song “Siré y Siré”.

MU:Cr3.2.E.Ia Share personally-developed melodies, rhythmic passages, and arrangements – individually or as an ensemble – that address identified purposes.

- Students will perform their class arrangement of the song “Siré y Siré”.

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.

- Using body percussion and rhythm instruments, students will demonstrate two rhythms associated with bomba (sicá and yubá), with and without a recording (learning by ear and through written musical notation).
- Students will demonstrate call and response form through singing.

MU:Pr4.3.E.Ia Demonstrate an understanding of context in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the historical context of bomba music by performing the “call” and “response” of a traditional song (in Spanish).

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

- Students will identify and describe musical characteristics that define bomba music (instrumentation, stylistic characteristics, structure, phrasing, improvisation).

- Students will identify similarities and differences between bomba and plena 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 identify similarities and differences between the contexts within which bomba music is performed (informal gatherings, community fiestas, staged performances).
- Students will explain the historical context of bomba music.
- Students describe similarities and differences between live and recorded musical performances of bomba music.

MU:Re9.1.E.Ia Evaluate works and performances based on personally- or collaboratively-developed criteria, including analysis of the structure and context.

- After listening to a live performance and studio recorded audio version of the same song, students will explain their personal preference for one vs. the other (defending their evaluation through evidence related to factors like sound quality, authenticity, personal impact, context, adherence to the typical characteristics of bomba, etc.).

MU:Cn10.o.H.Ia Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

- Students will make personal choices as they create their own class arrangement of the song “Siré y Siré”.
- Students will explain how identity relates to bomba.
- Students will explain why bomba music is culturally significant to people in the Puerto Rican diaspora.
- Students will explain the roles of Puerto Rican locals, people in the diaspora, and the state (government) in the revival of bomba music.
- Students will describe how (and why) members of diasporic music groups like Los Pleneros de la 21 in NYC seek to protect and preserve bomba and plena 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 identify the location of large Puerto Rican diasporic communities in the United States.
- Students will identify similarities and differences between bomba and plena music.
- Students will explain how authenticity relates to bomba.
- Students will identify important celebrations/festivals in the United States that feature bomba performances.

- Students will explain how new technologies of transmission (and commercialization) have changed bomba over time.
- Students will explain differences between live and recorded musical performances.
- Students will identify several other music genres that have been influenced by bomba.

## **Additional Reading and Resources**

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