



Christelle Durandy GWO-KAtet



A Musical Journey through the
French West Indies

STUDY GUIDE



RHYTHMIX CULTURAL WORKS



Dear Teachers and Educators,

Rhythmix is excited to have you join us for the 2021-22 season of **PAL - Performance, Art & Learning**. These assemblies are intended to serve as a catalyst for arts learning and a springboard for integrating arts education into your classroom activities and curriculum.

To help your students gain the most out of these PAL assemblies, we suggest that the learning begin before, and continue after, watching the videos. Utilizing the resources provided, your students can engage more fully with the performance experience, connecting what they see and hear to their personal lives, culture, community and any school subjects you choose.

Aligning with the **California Arts Standards**, activities are included in every Study Guide to help foster students' artistic competencies, cultivate their appreciation and understanding of the arts, and support them to fully engage in lifelong arts learning.

New this year, **Artist Q&A** videos focus on **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Through the Arts** with activities based on CASEL's SEL Framework to help students develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, show empathy for others, establish supportive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

At Rhythmix, we believe exposure to the arts can be a transformative experience, helping us learn about ourselves, each other, and the world.

Thank you for joining us on this journey,

Your PALs at Rhythmix



CHRISTELLE DURANDY GWO-KAtet: Meet The Artists



CHRISTELLE DURANDY: *Vocals, Tanbou-ka, Tibwa*

Of **French West Indies** ancestry, Christelle Durandy began performing Gwo-ka at a young age with the family band. Her repertoire is a cross cultural combination that draws upon a vast spectrum of West Indies folkloric music and jazz.

LALI MEJIA: *Vocals, Tanbou-ka*

A native of Maracaibo, **Venezuela**, Lali Mejia is a percussionist, composer and educator specializing in Afro-Venezuelan and Latin American music.



DENISE SOLIS: *Vocals, Tanbou-ka*

Denise is the founder of Las Bomberas de la Bahia. She specializes in “Bomba”, a style of music from **Puerto Rico** which shares some close rhythmic similarities with Gwo-ka and uses the same type of drums.



YISMARI RAMOS TELLEZ: *Dance, Chacha*

A native of **Cuba**, Yismari Ramos Tellez is a professional dancer who started her career in La Havana, and is now sharing her expertise as a dancer and choreographer in the Bay Area. Ysimari is well-versed in the dances of the West Indies.



French West Indies



The **French West Indies** are a tiny chain of islands southeast of the United States, east of Mexico and north of South America. They divide the **Gulf of Mexico** and **Caribbean Sea** from the **Atlantic Ocean**. The islands of the French West Indies are: **Guadeloupe**, **Désirade (an island in Guadeloupe)**, **Marie-Galante**, **Les Saintes**, **Martinique**, **Saint Barthélemy**, and **Saint Martin**. Can you find them all on the map? Can you find another name for this island group?

The West Indies were originally inhabited by the **Ciboney**, **Taino** and then **Carib** indigenous groups. European colonizers first arrived in the area in 1492, and by the 1600s, English, Spanish, Dutch and French colonizers had claimed various islands. During the 1600s and 1700s, enslaved Africans were brought to the West Indies to work the sugar and coffee plantations. The end of the 1700s saw the first successful slave rebellions, and the French enacted emancipation for its former slave colonies in 1848.

Throughout the years of colonization, a creole culture was formed through the mixing and blending of language, music and customs of the Indigenous, African, European and South Asian cultures that had been forced to live and work together in these tiny islands.

The French West Indies is now the home of internationally celebrated, widespread folkloric and popular music styles based on this rich history. Today, we will clap, count, dance and sing the rhythms of GWO-KA from the island of Guadeloupe.

Gwo-ka

The music you will hear today is a mixture of **African, European and Indigenous American** elements. The musical cultures are largely based on the music of enslaved Africans brought to the West Indies by European traders and colonizers, a long time ago. Secretly, the slaves started to use barrels in which food was stored to make drums. Adding goat skins on top, they would play with their hands. The African musical elements are a combination of instruments and styles from numerous West African tribes, while the European slaveholders added their own musics into the mix, as did immigrants from India. All the music is sung in a language called KREOL.

The songs in Gwo-ka are all performed in **CALL AND RESPONSE**. A dancer comes out to dance to the rhythm, having a *movement conversation* with the soloist who plays the drum freely (**improvisation**) while the two other drummers play a steady groove in **unison** (exactly the same).



KEYWORDS (in KREOL)

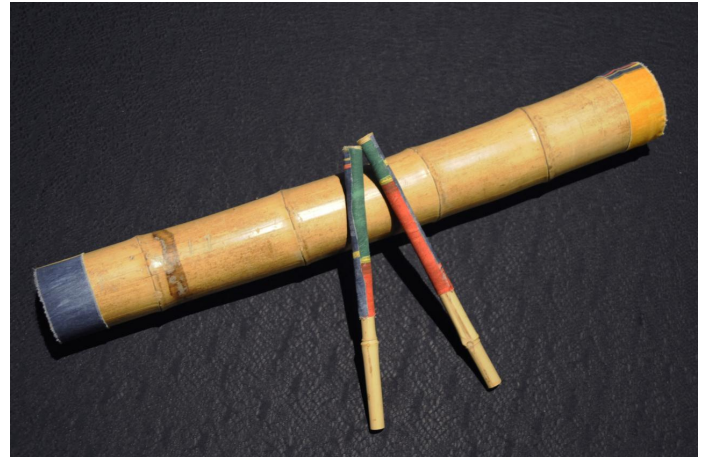
Chantè = SING
Bwatè = CLAP
Dansè = DANCE

Répondè = RESPOND
Tanbouyé = PLAY THE DRUMS

Instruments of Gwo-ka



Tanbou-ka (drums)



Tibwa (a piece of bamboo hit with two sticks)



Cha Cha (a type of shaker)

Rhythms of Gwo-ka

Gwo-ka consists of a total of 7 distinctive rhythms. Today, we will focus on four:

BOULADJEL, TOUMBLAK, KALADJA and MENNDE

1) BOULADJEL - Vocal percussion (percussive vocalization and hand claps combine to create exciting poly-rhythms)

To keep playing their music, enslaved Africans **FIRST** used the **ONLY** instrument available to them as they were not allowed to play drums.

WHICH INSTRUMENT? → Their **VOICE**.



How many different ways can we use our voice? speak; laugh; cry; scream; sing (high tone, low tone) The voice is capable of making all kinds of sounds and expressing many emotions (anger, surprise, fear, happiness or sadness...)

In the French West Indies, people still use the tradition of using their voice to imitate the sounds of drums while clapping rhythms with their hands, expressing their emotions. They sing when they are happy, sad and surprised.



2) **TOUMBLAK:** This is a **fast rhythm which expresses happiness, love and a good mood.** (It is the same rhythm as Bouladjel, but played on drums.)



3) **KALANDJA:** is a rhythm played **slowly to express heartache and sadness.** (It can also express relief, happiness and enthusiasm when/if the rhythm becomes faster).

4) **MENNDE:** has a **fast rhythm to express the joy of a party.** It's an invitation to walk in parades and is the main rhythm played during Carnival.



Carnival in Guadeloupe

In Guadeloupe Islands, Carnival is a major cultural event, which is celebrated over three months: January, February and March. Color, music, happiness and laughter fill the air and the streets with parades, floats, dance marathons, extravagant costumes, contests and, of course, Gwo-ka.



Dancers in Guadeloupe Carnival playing cha cha shakers.





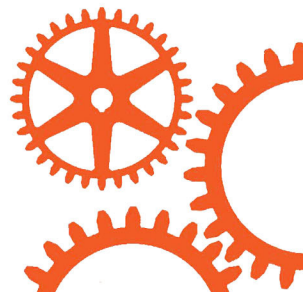
Thank You!

Thank you for joining Rhythmix Cultural Works and Christelle Durandy GWO-KAtet.
We look forward to seeing you next time!



For more information about Christelle Durandy, please visit:
<https://www.christelledurandy.com/>

For more info about Rhythmix, please visit: www.rhythmix.org



About Rhythmix Cultural Works

Rhythmix Cultural Works brings people of all ages together to experience and explore music, dance, visual art and educational opportunities. The organization seeks to build community by inspiring engagement in the arts as a way to learn about each other and the world. With a strong commitment to provide programming relevant to the local population, Rhythmix strives to promote cultural awareness, encourage participation in the arts, and support local artists in the presentation of their work.

Since Rhythmix opened its doors in 2007, the community-based arts facility has built its reputation through the artistic excellence and cultural depth of its programming. To date, more than 150,000 people have engaged in arts experiences, attending high-quality performances of world music, dance, theater, exhibits and community events, as well as enrolling in classes for youth and adults in the arts, crafts, and movement-based practices from other cultures.

About PAL - Performance, Art & Learning

Rhythmix Cultural Works believes that exposure to the arts can be a transformative experience and a catalyst for cultural celebration. In support of this vision, Rhythmix developed PAL as an assembly-based youth arts education program in collaboration with the Alameda Unified School District. PAL fosters awareness of world cultures and empowers underserved youth through exposure to educational music and dance performances.

In response to the ongoing pandemic, Rhythmix launched its PAL program virtually for the 2020-21 school year, expanding its reach to all schools in Alameda County. Thanks to the belief in the power of arts education and generous support from the foundations listed below, PAL has served over 40,000 students since its inception in 2012.



RHYTHMIX CULTURAL WORKS

Thanks to our PAL Funders and Partners

RADIUM



Robert L. Lippert
Foundation



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Scheinman

Lauren & Joshua
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This study guide was developed by Christelle Durandy, with modifications by Rhythmix Cultural Works.

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