



# Crosspulse

## Percussion Ensemble

# STUDY GUIDE



# RHYTHMIX CULTURAL WORKS



Dear Teachers and Educators,

Rhythmix is excited to have you and your students join us for **Performance, Art & Learning "PAL"**. PAL assemblies are designed to foster awareness of world cultures, stimulate a sense of pride in students' cultural heritage and deepen connections to their communities.

PAL assemblies also serve as a catalyst for arts learning and a springboard for integrating arts education into your classroom.

To help your students gain the most out of each PAL assembly, we suggest that the learning begin before, and continue after, every performance. 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**, the accompanying curricular resources can help foster students' artistic competencies, cultivate their appreciation and understanding of the arts, and support them to fully engage in lifelong arts learning.

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

Thank you for joining us on this journey,

Your "PALs" at Rhythmix



# Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble

*A wonder-producing [quartet] - they drum, they dance, they chant, they slap and pat their torsos and limbs, they make visual music that fills a room with physical excitement.*

—The San Francisco Bay Guardian



*Photo by Cliff Warner*

Part international drill team, part polycultural rhythm section, Crosspulse delights audiences with synchronized movement, world drumming, lush harmonies and innovative body music. From Jazz, Body Music, Afro-Cuban drumming and Beatbox, to Appalachian Banjo, African American Spirituals and Found Sound, their high-energy performances are engaging, educational and encourage active participation. Loud, rowdy, athletic, playful, subtle, delicate and ethereal -- their sounds and movement are fluently integrated, enabling audiences to *see* music and *hear* dance.

The Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble is **Keith Terry, Omar Ledezma Jr, Bryan Dyer, Evie Ladin and Amber Hines**. For more information on the group, visit [www.crosspulse.com](http://www.crosspulse.com)



# Learning Goals

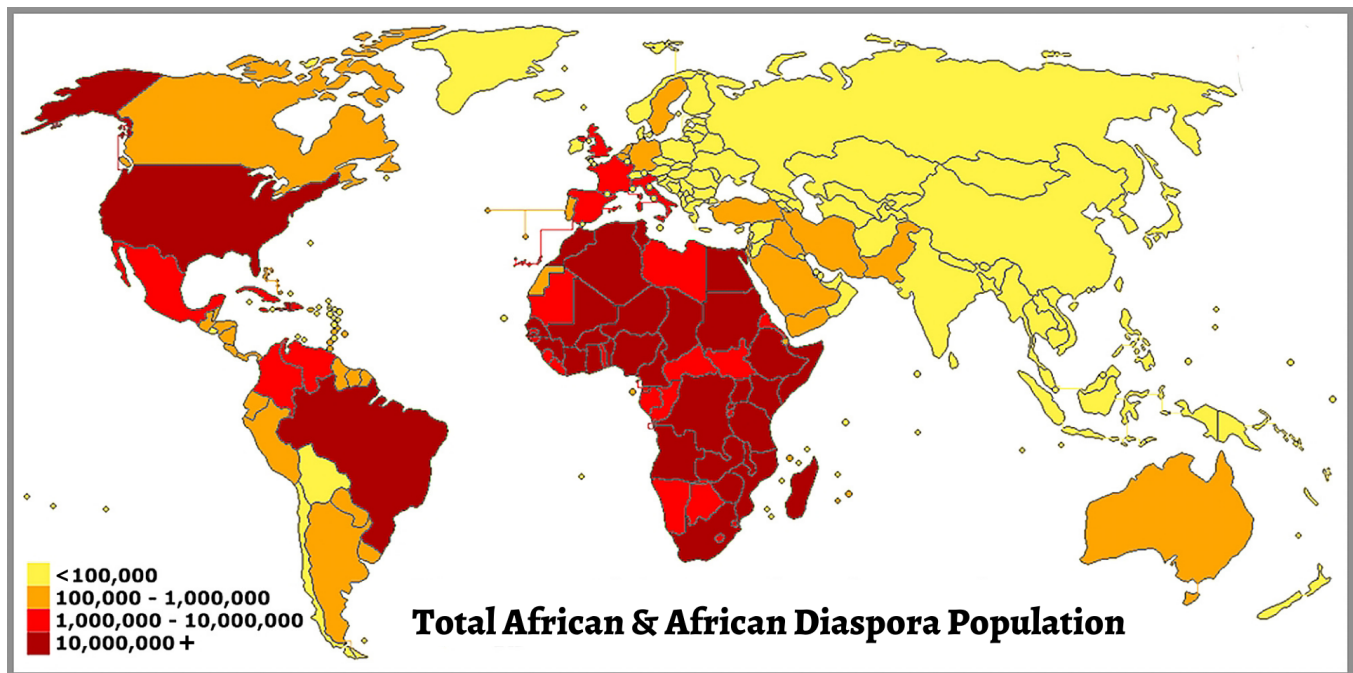
Students will learn in depth **how the African diaspora has influenced music and dance throughout the Americas.** Students will learn the history, geography, math, science, language arts and social studies incorporated in the music and dance traditions of Venezuela, West Africa and several cultures within the United States. They will learn about unusual instruments, new languages and how rhythm can be found all around us, connecting us in unexpected ways. Students are always encouraged to relate the information to their own cultural traditions.

# Vocabulary

**A Capella** - singing without the accompaniment of instruments. [Watch the Imani Milele Choir in an informal a capella practice.](#)

**Diaspora** - A diaspora refers to a scattered population of people living outside of their original homelands. Often these people have been forced out of their home countries en masse (in large groups) due to politics, war or commerce, but people also choose to migrate voluntarily for jobs or better opportunities.

The **African Diaspora** consists of the worldwide collection of communities descended from native sub-Saharan Africans, predominantly in the Americas. The movement of the African people outside of Africa occurred largely from the 1500s to the 1800s because of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade.



**Appalachian Music** - Appalachian music is the music of the region of Appalachia in the Eastern United States. It is derived from various European and African influences, including English ballads, Irish and Scottish traditional music (especially fiddle music), hymns, and African-American blues. [Watch Rhiannon Giddens playing Real Old Mountain Dew](#)

**Banjo** - originally an African instrument (the akonting), the banjo met the violin, or fiddle, in the American South during slave times, and evolved into what we now consider traditional Appalachian music. The banjo was originally made from a gourd and gut strings, and has always had one short drone string and style of playing that distinguishes it from other instruments.



*Daniel Laemouahuma Jatta playing the akonting.*



*5-String banjo*

**Body Music** - Likely the oldest music on the planet, there are traditional and contemporary forms of Body Music all over the world. A combination of music and dance, we like the term Body Music, as we include not only percussion, but melody and harmony, and other tones that the body makes. [Watch Keith and Evie of Crosspulse in a Body Music performance!](#)

Question: Can you name some different ways the performers are making music with their bodies? Do you know any other dance or music traditions that use body music?

**Call and Response** - a traditional style of singing in Africa and elsewhere, where a call is given, and may change, but the audience knows the response and sings it back.

*Do you know any call and response songs?*

**Clave** – The clave is a percussive musical instrument consisting of two sticks that are struck together. The pattern played on the clave is the rhythmic foundation for much of Afro-Cuban music and other music of the African musical diaspora, including pop and rock music in the United States.

**Conga** – Drums used in much of Afro-Cuban music as well as Latin Jazz. Usually played in pairs with differing tones, the congas are originally related to the Ngoma drum from the Congo in Africa.



**Clave**



**Conga**

**Crosspulse** - Two or more different pulses, meters or time signatures happening simultaneously, in the same amount of time and space.

**Found Sound** – music made from objects not normally considered instruments; things you find around the house or out in the world that offer a variety of sounds when shaken or struck.

**Second Line** - Stemming from New Orleans jazz traditions, second line refers to the people, music and dancing that follows behind the “first line” of the main parade. Second lining can also refer to the type of dancing that accompanies these parades – a wild, strutting dance step to carry participants forward in pace with the brass band. So one can go to a second line, be in a second line and do the second line all at once. [Reference](#)

[Watch some second line dancing here!](#)

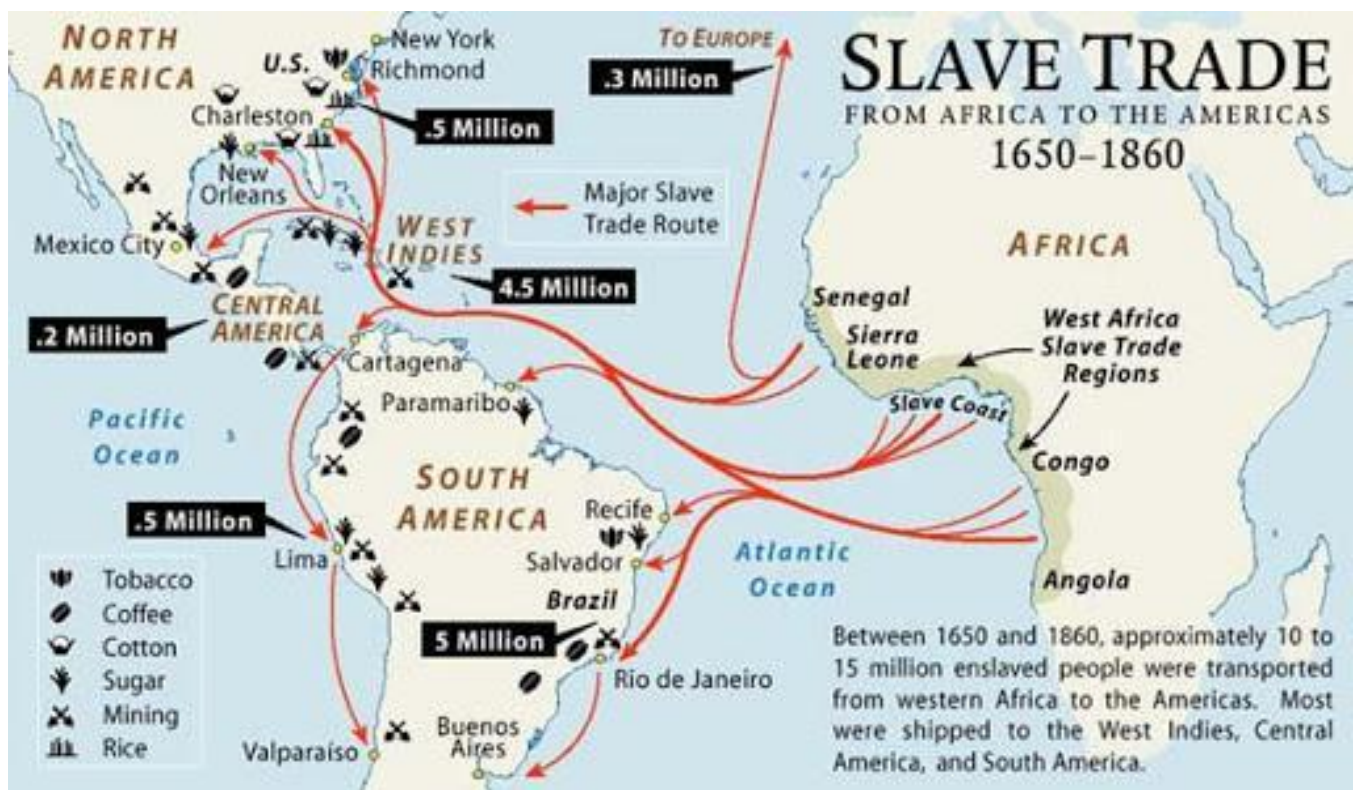
**Spirituals** – Religious songs associated with African-American Christians of the Southern US, derived from a combination of European Hymns and African musical elements. Developed by slaves in the early days of the United States, spirituals are songs of hope, freedom, struggle, and the strength of an oppressed people.

[Listen to “Hold On” an African-American spiritual with the Kuumba singers and Bobby McFerrin.](#)

**Stepping** is a form of percussive [dance](#) using the entire body as an instrument to produce complex rhythms and sounds with footsteps, spoken word and hand claps. Stepping was created by historically black fraternities and sororities on United States college campuses in the mid-20th century but is now also performed by schools, churches, cheerleading squads, and drill teams. Stepping has its origins in African foot dances such as the Welly "gumboot" dance, military exhibition drills, and the stage routines of popular Motown groups. [Wikipedia](#)

[Watch the Parkway District Steppers in Action!](#)

The **Transatlantic Slave Trade** was a segment of the global slave trade that transported between 10 - 12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas and the Caribbean from Western and Central Africa during the 1500s to the 1800s.





## Preparation

Teachers can discuss with their students the African Diaspora, starting with the slave trade. Find the West Coast of Africa on a map and follow the paths of trade to the New World. Emphasize all the places Africans were taken, and the cultures they mingled with (i.e. other settlers or immigrants, and native populations). Discuss how culture changes over time, using some of the activities in the Ideas & Activities section below.

Adventurous teachers can work with [Body Music Part One Instructional DVD](#) or [Rhythm of Math](#) and introduce their students to using Body Music in learning other concepts and skills.

## Ideas & Activities

These activities can be done with students either before or after a **Crosspulse** presentation. They encourage students to incorporate some of the ideas from the show into their own experience.

### Activity 1: Family Traditions

Curriculum Areas: Science / History & Social Studies / Language Arts / Art & Music

In the program, you can discover the variety of cultures that contribute to the global music and dance traditions Crosspulse performs. Students can uncover the roots of their own family music and dance traditions. Ask each student to research their particular ancestry:

- **Interview members of your family** (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles) about where they grew up. Where were they born? Where did your ancestors come from originally? When did they come to this country? What were their occupations? What kind of music or dance traditions did they have? Where did they practice them? At weddings, funerals, social gatherings?
- **Discover the path of migration of your family.** Where in America did your ancestors arrive? How often has your family moved? What kinds of social dances did your relations do in the different places, in different generations?
- **If you have a living relation that was raised in another country, ask them about the music and dance of that place.** What music and dance traditions from there continue to be performed in this country? How have they changed? What, if any, music and dance traditions of your ancestors do you practice? How did you learn them? Do you speak or sing in more than one language?
- **Go to the library and research the place of your family's origin.** If you have more than one ethnic background, compare the different countries and cultures that you came from. Perhaps you can find some audio or video recordings of the arts from those places. How do the music and dance traditions relate to each other? Are they very different or can you see some similarities? Do you combine them in your own life?



- **Have students learn a step, dance style, or song that comes from their ancestors' place of origin and teach it to the rest of the class.** Perhaps they can bring a video or audio tape to share, or information about the expressive cultures of their particular ethnic group(s).

## Activity 2: Rhythm Awareness

Curriculum Areas: Mathematics / Art & Music / Physical Education

From a heartbeat to a drumbeat, from a handclap to the layers of hands, feet and voices in a classroom symphony, rhythm creates a whole new language for students. Rhythm awareness develops concentration, reinforces thinking and counting skills, and creates harmonic group interaction.

- **Start with the downbeat** – this is the beat you would normally clap or step on with most music. Add the upbeat – the beats between the downbeats. When we count the beats ( 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), the upbeat is counted as the “and” (1 and 2 and 3 and 4, etc.). Now only clap the upbeat. Practice clapping, then walking, in tempo, then half-time (exactly half as fast, or on every other beat), then double-time (exactly twice as fast, or on both the downbeat and the upbeat). Use skipping steps, running steps. Have one person clap the downbeat while their partner claps the upbeat.

- **Do a call and response with clapping rhythms.** Use any part of your body to produce the rhythms. Divide the group into two and have them pass rhythms to each other. What parts of your body make sound?

- **Clave** is the skeletal rhythmic foundation that underlies much of Afro-Cuban music and other music of the African musical diaspora, including pop and rock music in the United States. There are many patterns of clave, usually based around a cluster of three beats and a cluster of two. How the patterns differ depends on which cluster comes first, and which beats fall on the downbeats and which fall on the upbeats. Below is an example of son clave, which is the signature rhythm underlying rumba music. You can see there is a cluster of three beats followed by a cluster of two. In the three, you play the downbeat twice, then an upbeat before the third downbeat. In the cluster of two, you play the upbeat before the fourth downbeat, then also play the fourth downbeat.

downbeat	X		X		X		X
son clave	X		X		X		X

[Follow along with a video demonstration here!](#) (0:00 - 0:31)

*The riff commonly known as Bo Diddley is a clave. Do you know it, or other patterns of clave?*

- **Crosspulses** are created when two or more different pulses, meters or time signatures are going on simultaneously, in the same amount of time and space. One of the most important crosspulses in African and Latin music is 6 over 4. To try this pattern, place one hand over each knee. One taps in 6, while the other taps in 4. The composite rhythm looks like this:

X	X	X	X	X	X
X		X		X	X

### Activity 3: Watching a Live Performance

Curriculum: History & Social Studies / Language Arts / Art & Music / Physical Education

Live performances have some very different qualities from what students may see on television or hear on recorded CDs. **Discuss live performances of all kinds:** dance, sports, speeches, etc. Can a live performance ever be repeated exactly the same? Why or why not? What does it feel like to perform live? What particular skills do you need? What do you experience during a live performance that is different from watching it on TV? How are live performances affected by things such as weather, the concert hall, the size and mood of the audience? What types of performances are your favorite and why?



*Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble at Rhythmix Cultural Works. Photo by Maurice Ramirez.*

## **Bibliography/Discography/Videography**

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*How Musical Is Man* by John Blacking; University of Washington Press, 1973 *Jazz*

*Dance* by Jean & Marshall Stearns, DaCapo Press, 1994 (ISBN 0-306-80553-7)

*Music of the Whole Earth* by David Reck, DaCapo Press, 1997 (ISBN 0 306 807491)

*Musics of Many Cultures*, Elizabeth May. University of California Press, 1983.

**Crosspulse Media** has produced six albums and two performance videos that exemplify the intercultural collaboration the group performs. The four instructional videos/DVDs are great teaching tools, and appropriate for all ages. Visit [www.crosspulse.com](http://www.crosspulse.com) to order.



Thank you for joining Rhythmix Cultural Works and  
Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble.

We look forward to seeing you next time!

This study guide was written by Crosspulse Percussion Ensemble with additional development by  
Rhythmix Cultural Works.

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## 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.

Thanks to the belief in the power of arts education and generous support from our funders and sponsors, PAL has served over 90,000 students since it launched in 2012.

For more info about Rhythmix, please visit: [www.rhythmix.org](http://www.rhythmix.org)

