

The Sounds of Sega

Lesson Objective & Summary

Objective: Students will explore the historical and cultural aspects of Sega music and dance in Mauritius. Students will make their own maravanne and try playing it, as well as listen to (and dance to) selections from Sega music.

Summary: Students will listen to different types of music and consider the different types of dancing they are familiar with. Students will recall and refresh their knowledge of the history of Mauritius, particularly the history of slave labor. Students will watch [The Sega Dance video](#) and read the [corresponding blog](#), noting their observations about who developed the Sega dance, what types of instruments and costumes are used, and how modern Sega dance differs from the older Sega dances of slavery days. Students will then have a chance to create their own maravanne and, if desired, try playing and dancing the Sega.

Standards & Benchmarks

From the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture. (*Culture, 1*)
- Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place. (*Culture, 2*)
- Personal identity is shaped by an individual's culture, by groups, by institutional influences, and by lived experiences shared with people inside and outside the individual's own culture throughout her or his development. (Individual Development and Identity, 1)

From the New York State Standards for the Arts

- Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts. (*Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts*)
- Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles. (*Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources*)
- Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society. (*Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts*)

Grade Level:
Upper Elementary

DURATION:
2 - 3 Lessons

SUBJECTS:
Arts Ed, Social Studies

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Background Information for Educators

Sega dancing and music emerged among the slave populations of Mauritius who worked the tea and sugarcane plantations during the French period (1710-1810) and the British period (1810-1968; slavery was abolished in 1835) of Mauritius. Although Sega dancing's exact influences are unknown, dance movements reflect Afro-Malagasy influences, similar to the dance traditions of Madagascar, whereas the music reflects European folk music styles.

Sega music tends to be in 6/8 time and is predominantly played by three main instruments: the Ravanne, a large, flat drum traditionally made with goat skin and warmed before playing; the Maravanne, a long, narrow box filled with sugarcane sticks and dried seed and used as a shaker; and the Triangle, which was a piece of metal used to call the slaves in. A guitar-like stringed instrument made from a gourd, or calebasse, and a single string, were also used traditionally, but in recent years, they have been replaced with modern guitars.

Sega music lyrics often focus on slave life, freedom, and a longing for home. Unlike many other dance forms, Sega dancers do not lift their legs but keep their feet close to the ground. Dancing is often improvised and reflects the vibrant rhythms of the instruments.

Traditionally, the outfits worn by Sega dancers were black or brown and particularly conservative. However, as the Sega dance was modernized, stylistic flairs, such as short tops that expose one's bare midriff, and long, flowing, colorful skirts, became more common place for women Sega dancers. Men tend to wear open neck shirts.

Guiding Questions	Key Vocabulary
<p>Who created the Sega dance?</p> <p>Why was the Sega dance created?</p> <p>What are some of the themes sung about in Sega music?</p> <p>What are the instruments used in Sega music? What were they made from and why is this important?</p> <p>What do you notice about Sega costumes?</p> <p>How have the traditional dancing and costumes changed as Sega became more modernized?</p> <p>Do you notice any similarities between Sega dancing and other forms of dancing you know?</p>	<p>Ravanne</p> <p>Maravanne</p> <p>Triangle</p> <p>Conservation</p> <p>Modernization</p> <p>Rhythm</p>

Lesson Plan

1. Pick 3-4 familiar songs from different musical genres (suggestions: classical, hip-hop, country/folk, & pop) and play brief clips for students. Choose musical selections that invite students to move their bodies.
2. After sharing the musical clips, ask students to notice what their bodies did. Why did they respond to the music that way? How were some of their movements similar? How were some of the movements different?
3. In small groups, have students list what types of dance they are familiar with. Ask them to consider the different types of music played with different dances, as well as what purpose different types of dance may have in culture (e.g.: hip hop music/dancing reflects street life).
4. Ask students to consider where they think dancing comes from? What is its significance? Why might it be an important part of a culture? Why do music and dance often go together?
5. Have students share out what they recall about the history of Mauritius. If needed, have students refresh their memories by reading the blogs [Bienvenue a Maurice](#), [Discovery, the Dutch, and the Dodo](#), [The French Period](#), and [The British Period](#), and/or watching some of the following episodes that give a brief overview of Mauritius: [Port Louis](#); [Sugarcane in Mauritius](#); [Le Morne](#).
6. Watch [The Sega Dance video](#) and read the corresponding blog [Sing, Dance, Celebrate](#). Ask students to take notes on any observations they made about costumes, instruments, and the origins of Sega dancing. Use the guiding questions in this lesson plan to help students as they make observations about the dancing styles, the instrumentation (and their materials), and even the themes sung about.
7. If necessary, highlight for students that Mauritius was an island that was colonized first by the Portuguese, then by the Dutch, French, and British. Under French and British rule, African slaves were brought to work the tea and sugarcane plantations. These slaves kept their African ancestral traditions alive through dance and music. Dance and music served as an expression of what they longed for: freedom and a home.
8. Challenge students to consider how Sega music and dance has changed as it has become more modernized (e.g.: costumes, different materials used to make the Ravanne and triangle). Even though slavery was abolished in 1835, Sega music and dance traditions continue to be celebrated today. Challenge students to consider why?
9. Ask students to consider the different instruments used in Sega music. Ask students what similarities they notice between Sega instruments and other instruments they are familiar with. Draw students' attention to what the instruments are made out of, and where they think these materials came from.
10. Model for students how to make a maravanne (directions below). Once students have created their maravannes, invite them to make music (and even dance!) as they listen to Sega music (music links provided below).
11. Following the activity, have students respond (orally or written) and reflect upon what they learned about Sega Dance and Music traditions.

Making Maravanne Shakers

You will need:

- One single serving-sized cereal box
- Enough beans, uncooked rice, dry seeds, and/or mulch (pet stores often sell bags of dried grass, wood chips, and other biodegradable supplies quite inexpensively) to fill each box about three-quarters full.
- Tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper, glue, decorations for the outside

Directions

1. Carefully open the cereal box so that the flaps remain intact and remove the cereal inside (Eat it if your teacher allows!).
2. Fill the box until three-quarters full with beans, uncooked rice, dry seeds, and/or mulch (or a combination).
3. Carefully seal the box with tape, making sure the box is securely closed.
4. Cover the box with construction paper using glue and scissors, and decorate as desired.
5. Enjoy shaking your maravanne! Listen to Sega music and play along.

Here are a few links to Sega Dance music

<http://www.maurinet.com/sega1.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD4D53C24004B2D6B>

Challenge Questions / Lesson Extensions

- What other musical/dance traditions do you know of that reflect daily life? Compare and contrast these traditions with Sega.
- Examine the movements and motions of Sega dance further. What are the dancers communicating about life as slaves through their movements?

Assessment / Evidence of Understanding

Students will recognize that Sega dance and music was birthed in the slave culture of Mauritius under French and British rule. Students will explain that Sega dance has its roots in African traditions, where many of the slaves originally came from. Students can explain some of the aspects of Sega traditions (instrumentation, dance movements, themes) and can explain how dance and music are an expression of culture and tradition.

Assessment Rubric	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Student Observations & Explanations (oral or written)	<p>Student can explain that Sega dance and music was created by slaves in Mauritius, and that different instruments were used to make the accompanying music.</p> <p>Student may or may not be able to explain how dance and music are expressions of a culture and its history.</p>	<p>Student can explain that Sega dance and music was created by African slaves in Mauritius, and that the dance, music, and instrumentation drew from their African roots.</p> <p>Student can explain that dance and music are types of expression that reflect culture and its history</p>	<p>Student can explain that Sega was created by African slaves in Mauritius under French and British rule. Student can explain that the dancing and music reflected the slaves' longing for freedom and for their homeland. Student can explain that the instruments that were used were made from items that slaves would have worked with in the fields (i.e.: the maravanne was traditionally made from sugarcane fibers).</p> <p>Student can explain how music and dance are expressions of a culture and how they help to preserve and pass on the history of a group of people to future generations.</p>

Additional Resources

Sega Dance History

<http://segamaurice.tripod.com/>

Mauritian Sega History and "How-To"

<http://www.maurinet.com/sega.html>

Sega Music Playlist

<http://www.maurinet.com/sega1.html>