



Bachianas brasileiras No. 2, The Little Train of the Caipira (finale) by Heitor Villa-Lobos

CLASSROOM RESOURCE FOR KS2

For:

- Key Stage 2 in England and Wales
- Second Level, P5-P7 in Scotland
- Key Stage 1/Key Stage 2 in Northern Ireland

Written by Rachel Leach

Background

The composer:

Heitor VILLA LOBOS (1887–1959)

- Brazilian composer, conductor, cellist, pianist
- The ‘best-known South American composer of all time’
- Wrote more than 2,000 works in his lifetime

The music:

Bachianas brasileiras No. 2, The Little Train of the Caipira (finale)

- Bachianas brasileiras (Brazilian Bachian pieces) are a set of suites written between 1930 and 1945. They skillfully combine Brazilian folk music with Baroque (Bach) harmonies and techniques
- Each movement of the suites has a ‘Bachian’ title such as ‘toccata’ and a more descriptive, Brazilian title
- Describes a short journey by stream train through the Brazilian countryside
- This piece is ‘programmatic’ – i.e. it tells a story

Trailblazer:

Villa-Lobos led the way, bringing the melodies and sounds of music from his home country, Brazil, into a traditional orchestral setting

Learning outcomes

Learners will:

- listen and reflect on a piece of orchestral music
- create their own piece of music using instruments and voice
- perform as an ensemble
- learn musical language appropriate to the task

Curriculum checklist:

- play and perform in ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory

Glossary of music terms used:

Accelerando	Gradually getting faster (opposite: ritenuto or rallentando)
Crescendo	Gradually getting louder (opposite: decrescendo or diminuendo)
Motif	A very short musical 'idea' – often just a sound or a rhythm.
Off-beat	the 'weak' beats between the strong 'on-beats' of the pulse
Ostinato	a repeating (often rhythmic) pattern
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches – xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars, etc.
Programme music	tells a story or describes an event, place, emotion
Tempo	another word for speed
Unpitched percussion	percussion instruments that can only make a limited number of sounds – drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourines, etc.

Glossary terms can be found underlined throughout.

Resources required:

- classroom percussion instruments
- paper and art materials

This scheme of work is plotted out over six lessons. Feel free to adapt it to suit your children and the resources you have available.

The six lessons at a glance

Lesson 1:

- Activities: Watch the film, create artwork and movement inspired by the music
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
Develop an understanding of the history of music

Lesson 2:

- Activities: Play a pulse, speed up and slow down
Follow visual signals
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians

Lesson 3:

- Activities: Play Villa Lobos' rhythms
Learn about 'off-beats'
- Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression

Lesson 4:

- Activities: Create and play ostinatos
- Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 5:

Activities: Create a melody, structure ideas into a piece

Curriculum link: Listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

Lesson 6:

Activities: Structure sections of music into a bigger piece
Perform in a concert

Curriculum link: Play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
Improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the interrelated dimensions of music

LESSON 1

Watching and listening

1. **Prepare your class**

Explain to your class that you are going to begin a six-week music project focusing on a fantastic piece of music by a Brazilian composer called Villa-Lobos and watch the full orchestral performance online. Try to keep the name of the piece a secret at this point.

2. **Have a class discussion** about what you have just heard and seen. Tell your class that the music is **programmatic**, i.e. it is describing something. Can they work out what it is?

Discuss their ideas before telling them that the music is describing a method of travel. Can they work out which one?

3. **Watch the orchestral performance again.** Afterwards, ask the following questions:

- What vehicle is the music describing?
- Is it going fast or slow?

Reveal that the name of the piece is 'The Little Train of Caipira'.

4. **Listening task**

Give out paper and art materials. Ask your children to draw the type of train that they think is being described by the music. They can decide whether it is an old-fashioned steam train, a modern locomotive or even something futuristic. They may also wish to draw the landscape the train is travelling through or the people on board. As your class work on this keep the music playing in the background for inspiration.

5. **When this is achieved**, encourage some of your children to show their artwork to the class and discuss it.

6. **Listen again** and ask your class to think about the speed and movement of the train. Discuss their ideas afterwards. Villa-Lobos' music describes a train that is stationary, it then moves off and speeds up, something happens (at around 2'15). The train then moves off again before finally slowing to a stop.

Ask your children to think about what happens in the middle – can they add this on to their artwork?

7. **As you listen for the final time**, if you have space in your classroom, encourage a few volunteers to move around the room in time to the music, weaving in and out of the tables like a train – they could do this in one long line as if dancing the 'conga'. Encourage the rest of the class to wave at the train every time they hear the downward swoops of the woodwind instruments. Perhaps they can also pull on an imaginary whistle when they hear it in the music.

8. **FINALLY**, end your lesson by watching the BBC Ten Pieces Trailblazers film and discussing it.

LESSON 2

Speeding up, slowing down

1. **Warm-up**

Remind your children about Villa-Lobos and the work they did during the last lesson. Ask them to sit in a large circle and pass a clap around. Pass around some other 'train' sounds such as a 'woo-woo' whistle, the 'chugga-chugga-chugga' of the steam engine, a shout of 'all aboard!' from the signal master and the hiss when the train has come to a halt. Your children can suggest some of their own train sound effects too.

2. **Clap a slow pulse** and encourage your children to join in. Don't count in or speak, simply make sure everyone is watching and start confidently and clearly. The children will soon recognise that it is time to begin.

Practise stopping together too. Again, no talking or instructions are needed, just clap for the last time and hold your hands out in a clear 'stop' gesture.

3. **Try this several times** with different speeds and clapping for different lengths of time. The aim is to start and stop together as a team. You can also ask volunteers to try leading it.
4. **Ask your children** if they can remember what happened to the speed of Villa-Lobos' piece and therefore the speed of the train being described. His pulse cleverly speeds up, settles and later slows down again. Lead the pulse again – start very slowly and gradually speed up, settle on one speed for a while and then slow down to a stop. The more confidently you do this, the easier it will be able to follow.

Speeding up as a group is quite easy, settling on one speed is more difficult and knowing when to begin slowing down is hard. You may need make these stages clear with your facial expression or perhaps even mouth the words 'steady' and 'slow'.

Again, ask for volunteers to lead the same activity.

5. **Explain that musicians say accelerando** for speeding up and ritenuto for slowing down
6. **Move the pulse onto instruments.** Ask everyone to choose an instrument and lead the speeding up and slowing down again with everyone joining in on whatever instrument they have selected. Don't worry at this stage about specific pitches or this random selection of instruments, this is just a useful way of letting everyone have a go on the instruments and get used to them.
7. **Repeat this activity** several times allowing your children to switch instruments and try out as many different combinations as possible. Each time you perform, aim for everyone starting together, speeding up together and stopping together neatly. You might want to add a crescendo (getting louder) and diminuendo (getting softer) too. Should everyone play all of the time?
8. **FINALLY**, perform your pulse one last time having discussed and fixed the best way to do it.

LESSON 3

Train rhythms

1. Warm-up

Start with your class sitting in a circle and recap using just body percussion, your speeding up, settling and slowing down pulse from last lesson. You may also like pass around some 'train sounds' too.

2. Place some unpitched percussion instruments in the middle of your circle. Villa-Lobos uses the following in his piece, you might have them in your school:

- Guiro
- Shakers
- Drum

3. Choose someone to play the drum, they will keep the pulse. While you are still learning it is best to try for a steady speed (tempo) and leave the speeding up/slowing down until the rhythms are fixed and neatly performed. So ask your pulse keeper (drummer) to play a steady, moderate pulse. To make it a bit more interesting, Villa-Lobos sometimes adds a little rumble into his pulse, like this:



Challenge your pulse player to do the same. They can do it regularly like above (every four beats) or, like Villa-Lobos, randomly, i.e. whenever they feel like it.

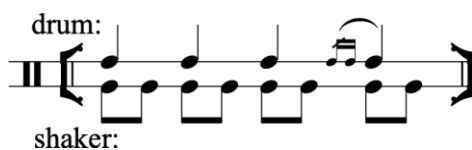
4. Explain

Villa-Lobos places a sound in between each beat of the pulse. Demonstrate the following using something like a shaker, maracas or cabasa:



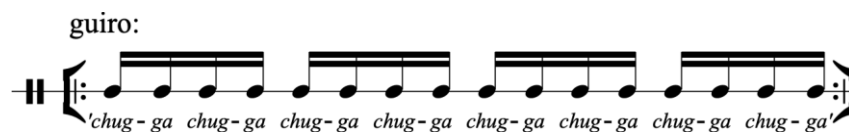
Explain that these beats are called 'off-beats'. They are placed exactly between the 'on-beats' of the pulse. Choose a volunteer or a small group of volunteers, to have a go.

It can be tricky to keep the off-beats steady. If so, encourage your player to play on the on-beats and the off-beats like this:



... you will still create the same effect as not playing them.

5. **Villa-Lobos adds** to this the sound of the steam engine, played by a guiro, like this:



This is heard constantly and needs to be played as evenly as possible; it might help the player to think '*chugga chugga*' as they play.

6. **Choose a volunteer** to play this and try all three rhythms together, like this:



7. **Explain that Villa-Lobos** also adds some clanking, banging machine sounds to the beginning as the train starts to move and a 'hissing' sound to the end of his piece when the train has stopped. Can your children suggest which unpitched percussion instruments could make these sounds? Villa-Lobos uses a tambourine and a ratchet (similar to a football rattle – a vibraslap or castanets will make a similar sound).
8. **Put all of these ideas together.** You can continue to work as a full class adding in instruments gradually as you work through. All of the above sounds and rhythms can also be performed on body percussion and voice if you run out of unpitched instruments, or you might like to split your class into small groups and ask them to work on this on their own. Either way, don't worry about changing tempo at this stage, keep the same speed throughout.
9. **FINALLY**, when this is achieved, end the session by putting all your ideas together to make your first version of the train. If any children feel they are stuck on body percussion explain that next week everyone will be on an instrument.

LESSON 4

Train ostinatos

1. Warm-up

Recap the pulse and all of the rhythms you have worked on so far using just body percussion. Explain that you are going to add some pitched percussion into your piece today but first you must create some repeating patterns.

2. **Ask the class to think of a sentence about travel.** Get lots of suggestions and choose the best one. They might come up with something like: 'We're riding on a train'. As you clap the pulse (or ask one of your drummers to softly play it) encourage the class to repeat their sentence on top fitting it to the pulse like this:

3.



Explain that this is called an 'ostinato'.

4. **Challenge one child** to play this ostinato on a xylophone using just the following pitches (borrowed from Villa-Lobos):



They might suggest something like this:



5. **Give out as many xylophones** (with these notes) as you have available and try out children on this ostinato until you have a team who can play it confidently and in time. If you have a lot of xylophones or are working in groups, you might want to create more patterns – stick to the same notes if you do.
6. **Explain that Villa-Lobos creates short musical ideas** (motifs) to describe the train's 'whistle' and 'horn'. Ask for suggestions as to how you might make these sounds with the instruments you have left over. This could be a task for beginner players or children brave enough to use their voices. These sounds are heard only a few times throughout the piece and seem to appear at random times i.e. not all the way through.
7. **FINALLY**, try layering up the ideas you have worked on in this session. You should have:
- The pulse and the unpitched patterns from last week
 - The hiss and clanking sounds from last week
 - Ostinato/s on xylophones
 - Sound effects representing the train's 'whistle' and 'horn'

LESSON 5

The little melody

1. **Warm-up**

Begin in a large circle with a quick focusing activity and recap, again without instruments, all the rhythms and ostinatos you have worked with so far.

2. **Explain**

The final ingredient to add to your piece is a short melody. This is a perfect task for any beginner players or singers. Villa-Lobos' melody is made up of just a few 'white' notes, it moves by step (i.e. no leaps) and is quite repetitive.

Here is the first phrase of the real melody (with a simplified rhythm):



3. **Choose a small group of children to play or sing this** and teach it to them. If you are singing it ask them to come up with some simple words such as those above.

4. **Challenge your melody group** to add another phrase onto their melody and thus make it twice as long.

At this point you might like to split your class into the following groups and allow each group time to practise their part of the eventual piece. You should have these groups:

- **Pulse and unpitched train rhythms**
- **Pitched ostinatos**
- **Sound effects (the hiss, clanking mechanical sounds, the whistle, the horn)**
- **Melody**

5. **Bring the class back together** and hear each group one by one. Challenge them to put their ideas together to make a piece with a similar structure to Villa-Lobos':

- Random clanking, machine sounds
- Train moves off, clanking slowly dies away
- Train speeds up (accelerando)
- Train moves for a while at a steady pace (the train's whistle and horn are heard occasionally)
- Train slows down (ritenuto)
- Train stops – big hiss!

6. **FINALLY**, end this session with your first run-through of this shape and write down carefully what you have done and who played what.

LESSON 6

Performance time!

1. **Warm up**

Sit the children in a circle and recap all the elements you have created so far using just voices and body percussion. Talk through your structure too.

2. **Get the instruments out** and split back into groups. Give the class just five minutes to remember their ideas and put their group sections back together.

3. **Try performing the whole structure** just like you did at the end of the last lesson. This is the time to practise your *accelerando* and *ritenuto* and think about creating a *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. Also check that the sound effects aren't happening too often – maybe they could be used to signal the shifts of speed.

4. **Remind your performers** that something happens in the middle of the real piece. You might like to refer them back to their artwork from lesson 1 or listen to Villa-Lobos' piece again. Can they quickly decide on a similar 'disruption' in their piece – this should be created by the sound effects team and should cause the train to stop. The resulting structure is therefore:

- Random clanking, machine sounds
- Train moves off, clanking slowly dies away
- Train speeds up (*accelerando*)
- Train moves for a while at a steady pace (the train's whistle and horn are heard occasionally)
- **SOMETHING HAPPENS, TRAIN STOPS**
- Train moves off and reaches its steady pace again
- Train slows down (*ritenuto*)
- Train stops – big hiss!

5. **FINALLY**, practise this new version and then invite another class to hear your music.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Cross-curricular activities

- **MUSIC:** Villa-Lobos was inspired by another BBC Ten Pieces composer J.S. Bach – listen to his [‘Tocatta and Fugue in D minor’](#). John Adams’ [‘Short Ride in a Fast Machine’](#) also describes a journey and is featured in BBC Ten Pieces.
- **LITERACY:** Write a story about an imaginary journey through Brazil on this little train and have a look at images of the real train and journey online.
- **RESEARCH:** Villa-Lobos had a really eventful life. After his father died he travelled all over South America and had lots of adventures. It is thought that some of these adventures were completely made up. Research his story and write his biography – it doesn’t have to be true!
- **UPLOAD:** Show us what you’ve created! Submit your creative responses using our [Uploader](#) for a chance to be featured on the Ten Pieces website.