



# The United States Army Field Band

## *In My Dream*

*A Celebration of African-American Music*

### IN MY DREAM: MIDDLE SCHOOL GENERAL MUSIC, LESSON PLAN #2 ADDING IT UP: TEXTURES AND LAYERING

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will identify musical textures.  
Students will sing in unison from a given starting pitch.  
Students will create and perform polyphonic rhythms.

**MATERIALS:**

- *In My Dream*: tracks 8 (“I Believe I Can Fly”) and 10 (“I’m on The Battlefield / I’m a Soldier”)
- Percussion instruments, if available
- Recording of African drum music, if available (many local libraries have a decent selection)

#### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Begin by leading class in a unison, *a cappella* rendition of “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.”
2. Track 8 should be cued to 00:49. Following the song, play this excerpt through to the end. Ask students the difference between what they heard on the recording and what they sang: Did the singers use different rhythms? Did the class sing different melodic lines, or the same?
3. The terms “monophony,” “homophony,” and “polyphony” should be on the board. Can the students define them without looking them up? Words such as “monotonous,” “monopoly,” “homonym,” or “polygon” can help them to figure these out.
4. Can the students match “My Country” or “I Believe I Can Fly” to one of these textures? Sing or play recording again to reinforce definitions.
5. Play track 10 through 00:42. What are these voices doing? Which texture is this?
6. Divide the class into three groups, one for each texture, and play all of track 10. Members of each group should raise their hands when they hear their respective texture. This step may need repetition if some segments are debated.
7. At the track’s end, cue back to 3:30. How many different things are happening? Compare, if possible, to a recording of West African drumming. Divide the class into groups of 4 to create simple polyrhythms; use instruments if they are available, or use clapping, snapping, stomping, and other sounds if necessary. Patterns should be 16 beats in length.
8. Closure: Each group should perform their original rhythmic patterns for the class.

#### **EXPLORATION:**

1. Teach the class more about homophony by adding a harmony line to a song they already know (such as “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”) or more about polyphony by singing “Row Row Row Your Boat.” Teach them the beginning section of track 10 for a more complex example of polyphony.
2. Have each member of the groups from step #6 find an example of that texture in their music collections at home.

3. Using the *In My Dream* liner notes as a springboard, have members of the class research the role of African-Americans in the Union Army and the way in which music might have played a part in their lives.

**ASSESSMENT:** Did the students correctly identify musical textures?  
Did the students sing in unison from a given starting pitch?  
Did the students successfully create and perform polyphonic rhythms?

**NATIONAL STANDARDS\*:**

- 1a. Students sing accurately and with good breath control throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles.
- 2a. Students perform on at least one instrument accurately and independently, alone and in small and large ensembles.
- 4a. Students compose short pieces within specified guidelines
- 4c. Students use a variety of traditional and nontraditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging.
- 6a. Students describe specific music events in a given aural example, using appropriate terminology.

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