

Simon Rushby is assistant head at Reigate Grammar School in Surrey, and was a director of music for 15 years, and a principal examiner for A level music. He is the author of a number of books, articles and resources on music education. He is a freelance writer, ABRSM examiner, musician, songwriter and composer.

by Simon Rushby

INTRODUCTION

With Year 10 students, teachers are now nearly halfway through teaching the new GCSE music courses, and here I provide some support for Area of Study 4 of the Edexcel specification, which is simply entitled 'Fusions'. There are two set pieces of music for study here

- 'Release' by Afro Celt Sound System
- 'Samba em Prelúdio' by Esperanza Spalding

It might be helpful to look back to an earlier, more general *Music Teacher* resource (September 2016) on teaching the appraising component of Edexcel's course, which focuses on the importance of teaching the skills of aural analysis, given that students will have to answer questions in the exam about unfamiliar music as well as about set works.

In the specification, the wider listening suggested includes music by Celtic band Capercaillie, Turkish singer Demet Akalin, Cuban collective Buena Vista Social Club and jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie. It is essential to study unfamiliar music alongside the set works so that students get used to finding key characteristics and features for themselves, rather than simply 'learning' the features of their set works, so I will take that approach with this resource.

A brief history of fusion

There is very little music around today that *hasn't* developed in some way from a fusion of more than one style or tradition. Deciding on whether a piece of music represents a fusion is very difficult, and so the term is a very broad one. For the purpose of this Area of Study, fusion means a **clear juxtaposition** of two or more distinct **musical cultures** – in the case of 'Release', for example, this would be West African music and Celtic music.

The concept of fusion, however, stretches back a long way through musical history. Although the advent of radio and recorded sound in the early 20th century meant that new styles of music from far away could be easily disseminated around the world, composers' habits of travelling and picking up new influences goes way back to the Baroque period and beyond.

A good example is the German composer George Frideric Handel. He trained as a young musician in Halle, Germany, and then worked briefly in Hamburg before travelling to Italy to soak up the increasingly popular Italian operatic style. By the age of 27 he was living in England but continued to travel often, particularly to Germany and Italy to recruit singers for his English patrons and also to attend performances. So it follows that Handel's music is a heady combination of German, Italian and English styles, which set the benchmark for many composers after him, particularly in the worlds of **opera** and **oratorio**.

Jumping forward a number of years, in 1889 a world's fair was held in Paris known as the **Exposition Universelle**, which had as its centrepiece a new tower constructed by Gustave Eiffel. The fair showcased cultures from all around the world – there was an African village and a Wild West show, for example – and it was at one such showcase that the composer Claude Debussy first heard **gamelan** music performed by an ensemble from Java, Indonesia. This influenced Debussy immensely and much of his subsequent music was infused with gamelan or other Eastern styles and sounds.

Other composers of the early 20th century were influenced by sounds from other parts of the world. The rise of **jazz** affected the output of French composers Maurice Ravel and Darius Milhaud, for example. Milhaud, who trained in Paris, travelled to Brazil and the United States, and much of his music is influenced by Brazilian music and the jazz that he heard on the streets of Harlem, New York City.

In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály both used early recording techniques to record and preserve the **folk songs** heard in remote Hungarian villages, and incorporated the styles they heard into their own music. In England, Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, Gustav Holst, Percy Grainger and Frederick Delius were all influenced by folk music heard around the British Isles, and incorporated it into their own compositions.

LISTENING ACTIVITY: DISCOVERING FUSIONS

Some guided listening to the music of the composers mentioned above, and others, would be good to introduce students to the idea of fusion being a part of musical history, not just a modern concept. Here are some suggestions:

- Bach: Italian Concerto
- Mozart: Rondo alla turca
- Brahms: Hungarian Dance No. 5
- Bizet: 'Habanera' from *Carmen*
- Debussy: Pagodes
- Milhaud: Le boeuf sur le toit
- Ravel: Second movement ('Blues') from Violin Sonata in G
- Vaughan Williams: English Folk Song Suite
- Bernstein: West Side Story

20th-century fusions: jazz and pop

The final example above combines jazz styles with **Latin American** rhythms, and it was jazz that took fusion to new levels. Of course, jazz and **blues** had come themselves about because of the mix of African and European music prevalent in early 20th-century America, but stylised Latin and African rhythms became particularly popular with bandleaders in the 1930s and 1940s such as Duke Ellington, whose band's residency at Harlem's Cotton Club allowed him to experiment in his arrangements.

Here are a couple of examples of Duke Ellington's jazz fusion, so that you can consider with your students what traces there are of African, Caribbean or Spanish styles.

First, listen to **West Indian Influence** from Ellington's suite of pieces called *Black, Brown and Beige* here. Ellington gives a short spoken introduction explaining the music's context prior to performing the number, which is infused with a constant, African rhythmic drive.

Secondly, try *Caravan*, which has unmistakable Latin influences, since it was written by Duke Ellington's Puerto Rican trombonist Juan Tizol.

Pop music became very interested in fusion, particularly of world music styles, in the 1960s. The Beatles' guitarist George Harrison was fascinated with **Indian music** and studied the **sitar**, incorporating it into a number of Beatles songs such as 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds', 'Norwegian Wood' and 'Within You Without You'. ('Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' and 'Within You Without You' are discussed in detail in a previous *Music Teacher* resource on the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, February 2017.)

In the 1980s, singer-songwriter Paul Simon collaborated with **South African** musicians to make his album *Graceland*, which combines the South African styles and the vocals of the group Ladysmith Black Mambazo

with his own irreverent American pop style. Try 'You Can Call Me Al' and 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoe's – the latter provides the basis for an activity later in this resource.

Generating practice questions

With any of the above examples, listening questions can be devised that help students to prepare for question 8 of the exam, which is a listening question on a specific extract of unfamiliar music, and also for the single question in Section B, which is a comparison of two extracts – one from a set work and one from an unfamiliar piece.

For the **unfamiliar listening** question, get students to focus on specific musical techniques and characteristics in the chosen extract (which should be between 1:00 and 1:30 long), using the elements of music as a focal point. Here are some examples:

Suggested **melody** questions:

- Is the melody **conjunct** or **disjunct**?
- Does it rise or fall?
- Is it **major, minor, chromatic, pentatonic, modal** or something else?
- What examples of **repetition** are there?
- Are there any **sequences**?
- Is the **phrasing** balanced or imbalanced?

Suggested **harmony and tonality** questions:

- Are there any **cadences**? What types are they?
- Does the piece use mainly **primary chords** or is the harmony more complex?
- Are there any **chromatic chords**?
- What **key** is the piece in?
- Does it **modulate**? Where to?
- If it is not in a major or minor key, is it modal?
- Are there any harmonic **devices**, such as **pedal notes**?

Similar questions can be devised about the **rhythm, instrumentation** and **texture**.

For the **Section B** question, the main task is most likely to be an evaluation of the two extracts and a comparison of the familiar extract with the unfamiliar one, and usually there is a focal point to the question, such as the way in which more than one musical style is combined to create a piece of fusion. The answer has to be written in continuous prose and is worth 12 marks.

It is best to practise approaching the Section B question from an **element perspective**, and I encourage my students to start by making notes under the headings 'melody', 'harmony', 'rhythm' etc before deciding which points are relevant to the question. To achieve a high mark it is critical that examples are given from both extracts, and that there is a degree of actual **evaluation** from the student. Answers are marked from the point of view of two **assessment objectives**:

AO₃: DEMONSTRATE AND APPLY MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE.

This means that students need to use musical vocabulary and identify and give examples of musical features from each extract – for example: 'The melody is conjunct as can be seen in bar 2.'

AO₄: USE APPRAISING SKILLS TO MAKE EVALUATIVE AND CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS ABOUT MUSIC.

This means that the effect of different musical features needs to be considered, comparisons need to be made and links drawn to the focus of the question – for example: 'The melody is pentatonic, which is typical of Celtic vocal music and allows it to be simple and memorable.'

We will look at this in a little more detail later in the resource.

There are already many resources available which help students to build an overview of the set works and their main features, so I won't repeat that here. Instead, I have provided some broad background information on the artists, songs and styles in question, and then suggested some classroom activities that can be used to consolidate and revise both the students' knowledge of the music, and their appraising skills. There are also some practice questions on each of the two set works from Area of Study 4.

AFRO CELT SOUND SYSTEM: 'RELEASE'

Afro Celt Sound System were formed in 1995 by producer and guitarist Simon Emmerson, who was inspired while working in Senegal by the similarity between the melodic phrases of West African and Irish folk musics. He brought together African and Irish musicians back in England and the group's first album, *Volume 1: Sound Magic* did very well.

As the band were drawing together ideas for their second album in 1997, their keyboard player Jonas Bruce suddenly and unexpectedly died at the age of 27. Production of the album was suspended, but Irish singer-songwriter Sinéad O'Connor suggested a collaboration in Bruce's memory, and wrote the poignant lyrics that became the melodic hook of the track 'Release'. The album *Volume 2: Release* came out in 1999 and by mid 2000 had sold half a million copies and been nominated for a Grammy award.

ACTIVITY 1: OVERVIEW

Get your students to produce an overview of 'Release' based on the name of the band, by drawing up a table that looks something like this:

	'Afro': what African features are there?	'Celt': what Celtic features are there?	'Sound System': what electronic dance features are there?	Other significant features
Intro (0:00)				
Verse 1 (1:38)				
Verse 2 (2:55)				
Solos (3:51)				
Verse 3 (4:55)				
Build (5:51)				
Outro (6:59)				

Students can work in pairs or small groups on different sections of the piece, and then pool their ideas in a class plenary. It would be good to do some preparatory work on this to establish what kinds of things would fall into each category, going back to the elements – for example:

MELODY

- African melodies are often **pentatonic** and have **short phrases** that are **repetitive**. They may also be **conjunct** and **rhythmic**. There might be some **long notes** and a **call-and-response** element. Local African **dialect** might be used.
- Celtic melodies are often **modal** and highly **decorated** with **turns, grace notes and mordents**. They are usually **conjunct** and instrumental melodies are **virtuosic** or **showy**. There might be some use of a Celtic language such as **Gaelic**.
- Dance melodies are often **repetitive** and **hooky**, with use of **samples**. They might have **short phrases** and be **layered** or **looped**.

A table with the first row populated might look something like this:

	'Afro': what African features are there?	'Celt': what Celtic features are there?	'Sound System': what electronic dance features are there?	Other significant features
Intro (0:00)	Use of talking drum , and spoken words in African dialect .	Use of drone , and the bodhrán can be heard.	A synth is used to create a drone with electronic effects , and there is stereo panning . There are drum and synth loops .	Female vocalising and use of shaker.

ACTIVITY 2: POLYRHYTHM

Get students to compose a **polyrhythmic** piece using African and Celtic percussion. Restrict them to just a minute or so in length, and focus on the following features:

- A coherent structure – verse/refrain or ABA, for example.
- A balance of repetition and contrast.
- Use of African and Celtic instrumental sounds – talking drum, djembe, bodhrán, for example,
- Use of loops to create a layered texture.
- Inventive use of rhythms – a combination of African repetition and Celtic decoration (eg using triplets).
- Focus on polyrhythm – combining many repeating rhythms to create an exciting effect while maintaining a strong sense of pulse.
- 'Throwing' the pulse by using crossrhythms, syncopation, metre changes and so on.

A practice question on 'Release'

Listen to 'Release' from 0:00 to 1:38 **three** times and answer the following questions:

- (a) Identify **two** features from the list below that can be heard at the start of the extract. (2)
- ___ major key
 - ___ drone
 - ___ synthesizer
 - ___ repeating rhythm
 - ___ clear pulse
- (b) Name the two percussion instruments that are heard first. (2)
- (c) Other than the use of synthesizer, give three ways in which music technology is used to enhance this extract. (3)
- (d) Give three ways in which voices are used in this extract. (3)

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- a) Drone; synthesizer.
- b) Talking drum and shaker.
- c) Any three of: loops, reverb, stereo panning, EQ filter 'swoops', use of samples, layering/multi-tracking.
- d) Any three of: male voice, spoken, African dialect (Maninka), female voice, vocalising/'ah's, long notes, rhythmic speaking ('don't think you can't see me').

Unfamiliar listening: Paul Simon's 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes'

Listen to the first two minutes or so of Paul Simon's 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes', which was released in 1986 on his famous *Graceland* album. What made *Graceland* so successful was its mix of Simon's own very original style of singer-songwriter pop music and the vocal and instrumental music of South Africa, inspired by a two-week trip he made to Johannesburg where he recorded improvisation sessions with local musicians and bands.

The album featured the South African vocal group **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, who had been formed by Joseph Shabalala in the 1960s and were still led by him when Simon met them. The recording propelled Ladysmith Black Mambazo to international stardom, and they subsequently became one of South Africa's most prolific and successful groups.

Graceland was released at a time of significant unease in South Africa, due mainly to **apartheid**, which was a system of enforced racial segregation that had been part of the country's political and social identity since the late 1940s. Paul Simon came under criticism from many quarters for supposedly undermining the anti-apartheid movement in 'promoting' South African music when many artists were boycotting the country. However, the album was an unparalleled success and won a Grammy for album of the year in 1987.

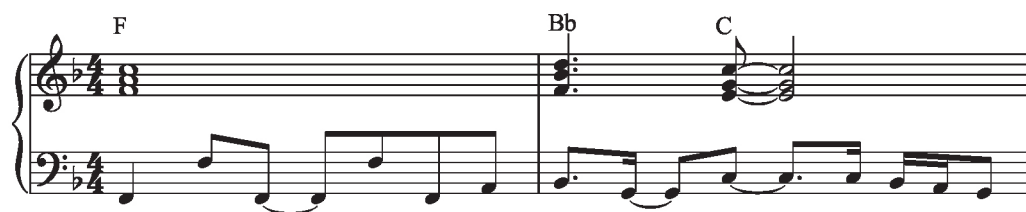
ACTIVITY 1: LISTENING

Ask students to work in pairs to identify some important features of 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes', focusing on approximately the first two minutes. The song begins with an **a cappella** (unaccompanied) vocal section performed by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, before the band enters, led by the guitar, and Paul Simons begins the verse. Students can focus on two important areas:

1. The fusion of musical styles:
 - What aspects of **African singing** stand out in the first vocal section?
 - Which features of the **harmony** are typical of African music, and which are typical of Western pop?
 - Which **instrumental techniques** come from African music, and which from Western pop? Think about what the guitar plays, and how percussion is used, for example.
2. Specific musical techniques and devices:
 - Go on the hunt for important musical and compositional techniques. What is the **key**? Which **chords** are used in the harmony? What **cadences** can you find?
 - What are the key features of Paul Simon's **vocal melody**? How does he use **repetition** and **rhythmic devices**? Is his melody **conjunct** or **disjunct**? What can you say about the **word setting**, and how is this different to the opening vocal section?
 - What are the main **rhythms** used? Where is there **syncopation**?
 - Can you name all the **instruments**?
 - How would you describe the **texture** of the two sections? How do they differ?

ACTIVITY 2: COMPOSING OR IMPROVISING

After the opening section of 'Diamonds on the Soles of her Shoes', the band sets up a repeating **chord sequence** over which Paul Simon sings. This two-bar chord sequence consists of the three **primary chords** in F major – chords **F (I), B flat (IV) and C (V)**, set out roughly like this:



Listen to how Paul Simon uses this simple chord pattern as the basis for his vocal part, and then work in small groups to produce a short, simple song or instrumental piece based on a repeating pattern, maybe using the following steps:

- Choose a key and two or three simple chords that belong to the key.
- Establish a pulse, a tempo and a metre (eg 4/4 time, 90 bpm) and work out a simple rhythm for the chords.
- Add a bassline that plays mainly or exclusively the root notes of the chords, like the bassline in the Paul Simon track.
- Either record and loop this chord pattern, or have two or three members of the group play it – perhaps on bass, guitar/piano and drums/percussion.
- Either compose or improvise some short melodic ideas to go over this repeating pattern. These can either be sung (to pre-written words or nonsense syllables) or played on an instrument. This could be recorded or performed live to the group.

Tip: when composing or improvising a melody, keep it short and simple. The most effective melodies have short, repetitive phrases of equal length, are mainly stepwise and use a limited range of notes. It's often a good idea to work out the rhythm of the melody first, on a single note.

ESPERANZA SPALDING: 'SAMBA EM PRELÚDIO'

The eighth of the eight Edexcel GCSE set works is a haunting rendition by American jazz bassist and singer Esperanza Spalding of a 1962 song by Brazilian guitarist Baden Powell and lyricist Vinicius de Moraes (who also wrote the lyrics to 'The Girl from Ipanema'). It is a **bossa nova** song that's been recorded by a number of artists and appeared on Baden Powell's album *Canto on Guitar* in 1970.

Esperanza Spalding is an American jazz bass player and singer, born in 1984, who trained at Boston's Berklee College of Music and upon graduation was immediately hired by the College as a teacher. She formed a trio and released her first album, *Junjo*, in 2006, which was not commercially successful but held in high regard by a number of esteemed jazz artists and critics. Her second album, *Esperanza*, released in 2008, was more successful and made it to the top five of the US jazz charts. She went on to great success with her third and subsequent albums, winning a Grammy for best new artist in 2011 despite being up against Justin Bieber, Drake and Mumford and Sons. Her more recent albums have crossed over successfully into mainstream music while remaining true to her jazz and Latin roots.

Latin American music – the music of South America and some of the Caribbean – is incredibly diverse and best known for its contributions to the world of dance and its infusion into jazz. You only have to have seen one edition of *Strictly Come Dancing* to appreciate the importance in dance of Latin American styles such as the rumba, mambo, cha cha cha and tango.

The Brazilian **samba** developed in Rio in the 20th century and became the national dance of Brazil, and the mainstay of **carnival** – the national festival held each year in February. The rhythm of the samba is **syncopated** and usually underpins songs, though it is heavily percussive. It is usually in simple duple time with a **polyrhythmic** texture – the most common type is called **samba batucada**.

Bossa nova came to prominence in the 1960s and is a jazzy type of samba made famous by composer and performer Antônio Carlos Jobim in his song 'Desafinado'. In bossa nova everything is understated – the singing is laid-back, the rhythms are relaxed, and tonality is often (but not always) minor. The guitar is a common instrument in bossa nova, and there are definite Spanish roots.

Spalding's version of 'Samba em Prelúdio' is the last track on her *Esperanza* album, and is in the bossa nova style, fusing Latin American rhythms with American jazz, which itself has a history steeped in African and European styles. The result is a mix of rhythm, harmony and melody infused with the flavour of many countries and cultures, and performed by Spalding on voice and **acoustic bass guitar** (a kind of cross between an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar) and voice. The track also features beautiful and virtuosic guitar playing from Spanish **flamenco** guitarist Niño Josele.

The lyrics, sung in Portuguese, are about the sadness of losing a loved one. The vocal part is mainly **syllabic** with much diversity of rhythm, and both guitar parts are **virtuosic** and complex, with **solos** when there is no singing that employ a myriad of playing techniques.

ACTIVITY 1: IDENTIFYING TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

Get students to identify places in the score where the following playing techniques and musical devices can be seen. This could be done by asking them to fill out the tables below:

Features of the vocal part	Location in the musical score
Lowest note	
Highest note	
Syllabic word-setting	
Triplet rhythms	
Rubato	
Sequence	

Features of the bass part	Location in the musical score
Stepwise melody	
Large leaps	
Semiquavers	
Double stops (chords)	
Harmonics	
Ornaments	
Syncopated rhythm	
Bossa nova rhythm	

Features of the guitar part	Location in the musical score
Virtuosic playing	
Plucked chords	
Imitation of vocal part	
Extended chords – eg 7ths, 9ths	
Chromaticism	
Syncopated rhythm	

ACTIVITY 2: SAMBA AND BOSSA NOVA

Read again the information above on samba and bossa nova, and do some more research into those styles. If possible, listen to some other examples.

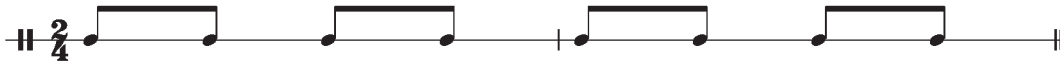
What features of 'Samba em Prelúdio' stand out as examples of samba and bossa nova influences? Get students to work in groups to identify them and become familiar with them.

ACTIVITY 3: SAMBA RHYTHMS

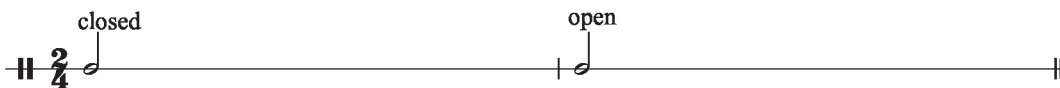
Get students to find out more about the specific rhythms and instruments found in a samba band, and to work with similar percussion instruments to create their own samba rhythms. Any types of drum (different sizes are good!), conga, bongo, cowbell, whistle, wood block, scraper or shaker can be used.

The **metre** of a samba is usually simple duple.

Shakers and scrapers (guiros) tend to play constant, even quavers:



The largest drum, called a **surdo** (but a bass or tenor drum would be fine), plays a simple minim rhythm, keeping a pulse. Usually the first of each pair of crotchets is 'closed' (played with the hand on the drum skin) and the second is 'open':



Agogo bells or cowbells tend to play a more dotted rhythm, like this:



Finally, **small drums** and/or **claves** play syncopated rhythms rather like this:



A practice question on 'Samba em Prelúdio'

Listen to 'Samba em Prelúdio' from 0:00 to 1:22 **three** times and answer the following questions.

- (a) Is the extract in a major or minor key? (1)
- (b) Name three virtuosic performing techniques heard in the bass part in this extract. (3)
- (c) Describe the texture throughout the extract. (2)
- (d) Describe the vocal melody throughout the extract. (3)
- (e) Identify the Latin American dance rhythm that is adopted at the end of the extract. (1)

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- a) Minor.
- b) Any three of: ornaments/mordents, double stops/chords, semiquavers, large jumps, rubato, glissando/portamento/string bend, triplets.
- c) Any two of: starts monophonic, becomes two-part, homophonic, sometimes three-part when the bass plays chords, becomes fuller when guitar enters with strummed chords.
- d) Any three of: triadic, outlines added chords, sequence, descending, chromatic, minor, short phrases, phrases are repeated/reprised, long note at end, loose rhythm/rubato.
- e) Bossa nova.

A section B question

The Section B question presents students with an extract from the set work to compare with an extract from an unfamiliar piece. Skeleton scores of both are provided.

To practice such a question in the context of AoS4, get students to listen to and follow the 'Samba em Prelúdio' from 0:00 to 1:50 once. Then play and show them this piano version with score of *Desafinado* from the beginning until 1:30 three times.

How do the two extracts combine jazz and Latin American characteristics?

Students need to adopt a fairly methodical approach to this question in order to gain high marks. A suggested approach could be:

- Identify the key characteristics of melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm, texture, instruments and form in each piece, and note these down in rough (using bullet points).
- Identify which of these characteristics are typical of jazz, and which are typical of Latin American music (samba or bossa nova).
- Plan and write the answer, ensuring that each musical feature is given a reference point (usually a bar number), musical vocabulary is used, and relating each feature to either jazz or Latin American music.