Juba Dance

SLSO Learning Lab

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

For Music Educators

Grades 4–8

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the American folk tradition of Patting Juba
- Improvise four- or eight-beat rhythmic patterns
- Listen and make connections between the Juba dance, the traditional American folk dance, and Florence Price's "Juba Dance" from Symphony No. 1
- Infer Florence Price's reason for using Juba dance in an orchestral composition

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU: Cr1A.4-5a
- MU: Cn10A.4-8a
- MU: Cn11A.4-8a

Illinois Music Learning Standards

- MU: Cr1.1.4-5a
- MU: Cn10.1.4-8a
- MU: Cn11.1.4-8a

Materials

- Recording of "Juba Dance" from Symphony No. 1 by Florence Price
- Hambone tutorial video
- Danny "Slapjazz" Barber video
- Recording of *Patting Juba*

Vocabulary

- Patting Juba/Hambone
- Call and response
- Body percussion

Group Discussion

The American folk song, *Patting Juba*, opens opportunity for discussions on slavery, equity, and race as it relates to the history of the United States and its current society. Make sure to read the lyrics along with your students. Questions have been included in the activity sheet to start the conversation or you can create your own.

Extensions

- Use the students' improvised call and responses as a B section when performing *Patting Juba*
- BBC Teach – Ten Pieces – Get Creative with Classical Music, provides a wealth of additional resources and ideas for teaching Florence Price's Symphony No. 1 to students, including an instrumental arrangement

Assessment

Call and Response (3-point rubric)

Student successfully:

- Performs the Hambone rhythmic pattern, or some variation of it, with a steady beat
- Creates his or her own four- or eight-beat rhythmic pattern
- Performs his or her own four- or eight-beat rhythmic pattern with a steady beat

Connecting to Florence Price's "Juba Dance" (2-point rubric)

Student successfully:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the cultural heritage of the American folk dance, Juba dance and Patting Juba
- Applies knowledge of slavery and the African-American experience to make inferences about the composer's intent, using insights gained through listening to the musical composition

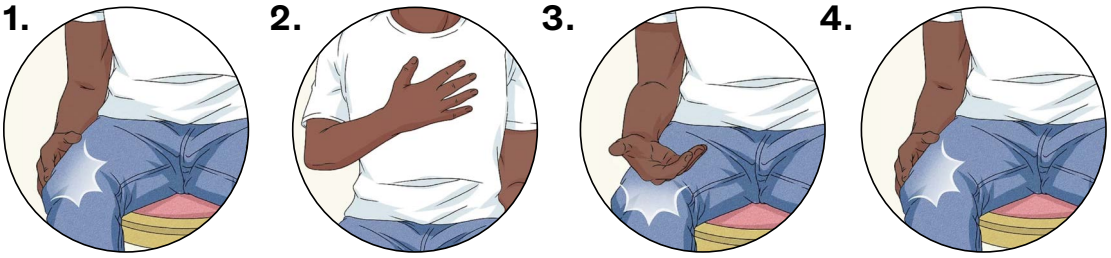
The title of the third movement of Florence Price's Symphony No. 1, "Juba Dance" originated in the 19th century as an African-American plantation dance performed by enslaved African people.

After the Stono Rebellion in 1739, plantation owners began to fear that enslaved people were hiding secret codes in their drumming patterns. So instead of using drums, the enslaved people used their bodies to make music to accompany their singing and dancing. This American musical tradition became known as "patting Juba," and it was the main accompaniment to the American folk dance known as Juba dance.

Learn the Patting Juba Pattern

Patting Juba is the slapping of the hands, legs, and body to make music. Today, it's most often called Hambone. Let's learn the traditional rhythm:

- Beat 1: slap your outer thigh with the palm of your hand
- Beat 2: slap your chest with the palm of your hand
- Beat 3: slap the top of your thigh with the back of your hand on the way back down from your chest
- Optional beat 4: slap your outer thigh with the palm of your hand



Use this video to help you learn the rhythmic pattern.

Watch master Hambone artist, Danny "Slapjazz" Barber. What are some of the different ways he varies the traditional Hambone rhythmic pattern?

Patting Juba Lyrics

The lyrics to *Patting Juba* reference the slave rebellions of the 18th and 19th centuries. Read the lyrics and discuss the following questions with your teacher or parent:

- Who do you think might have sung this song in the 1800s, the enslaved people or the slave owners?
- How do you feel about the lyric, "We bake the bread and you give us the crust"? Does that seem fair? Why or why not?
- What do you think the composer might have been trying to say with these lyrics?

Patting Juba

Juba this and Juba that,
Juba killed the yellow cat.
Bend over double trouble Juba.

We bake the bread
and you give us the crust.
We beat the corn,
and you give us the husk.
We cook the meat,
And you give us the skin.
And that's when my mama's troubles begin.

Use this video to sing *Patting Juba* as a call and response song. Then try patting the Hambone rhythmic pattern along with the song. Here is another recording of *Patting Juba* you can listen to and play along with.

Call and Response

Allow each person to take a turn being the leader. The leader will pat out an improvised four- (or eight-) beat pattern. Then everyone else will respond with four- (or eight-) beats of the traditional Hambone rhythmic pattern. Have fun and be creative with the Hambone patterns you create.

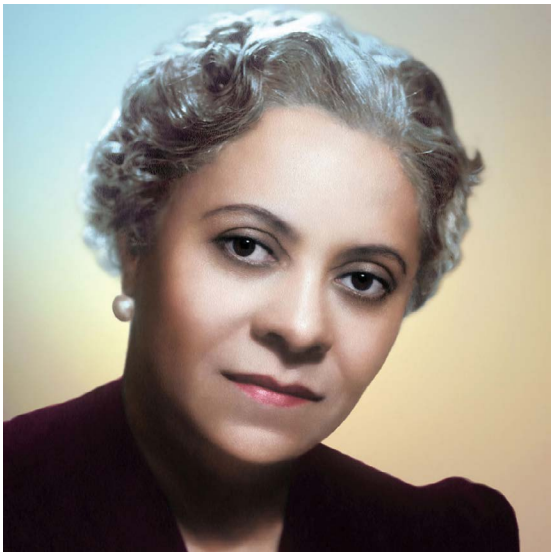


Did You Know?

The most famous Juba dancer from the 19th century was William Henry Lane or Master Juba, one of the first well-known Black performers in the United States. Entertainers like Master Juba popularized Juba dance and influenced the development of modern tap dance.

Symphony No. 1

Composer Florence Price named the third movement of her first symphony "Juba Dance." This movement sounds cheerful, but Price's decision to include it in her symphony was a powerful and intentional one. By highlighting a dance that originated with enslaved people, Price was able to share the experiences of many Black Americans through classical music. Not only did Price expand what American classical music could sound like, she also opened the ears of the mostly white and upper-class symphony-goers of the time to a cultural experience from a shameful and painful part of American history. Listen to Price's music. Can you hear the Patting Juba influence? What message or feelings might Price have been trying to express by using Juba dance in her musical composition?



Florence Price (1887-1953) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. At the age of 14, Price graduated high school as the valedictorian of her class. She then attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where she earned degrees in piano and organ performance. Price then moved back to the South to teach piano and compose, but racist threats of violence forced her family to move north to Chicago in 1927. In 1931, Price composed her Symphony No. 1, which the Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered the following year. It was the first work by a Black woman to be performed by a major symphony orchestra. Florence Price was a pioneer for women and Black composers in orchestral music.