

### Lesson 1: Learning “Estoy Buscando un Árbol”

**Aim:** What elements make up a bomba song? What is the relationship between music and dance in bomba?

**Summary:** Students will learn about the rhythms and instruments used in a bomba song, and learn about the relationship of dance to music.

**Materials:** Musical Explorers digital resources, Musical Explorers Student Guide

**Standards:** National 1, 4, 6, 10; NYC 1, 3, 4

**Vocabulary:** barril, bomba, buleador, cua sticks, maraca, subidor

Bomba is a traditional style of Puerto Rican music initially created by enslaved Africans and their descendants in the context of the plantation and post-plantation life in early colonial Puerto Rico. It encompasses anywhere from 47 to 56 rhythmic patterns that can be organized within five main rhythmic families. The key to bomba is the way that music and dance intertwine: When improvising, it is the dancer who takes the lead and the musician who responds.



### Sing “Estoy Buscando un Árbol”

- Listen to “Estoy Buscando un Árbol,” Track 32.
- Learn the lyrics to the refrain using “Estoy Buscando un Árbol” pronunciation, Track 33.
- Sing the refrain using “Estoy Buscando un Árbol” refrain, Track 34.

Es - toy bus - can - do'un ár - bol que me de som - bra

### “Estoy Buscando un Árbol” Translation

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
Que me de sombra que me de sombra

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
To bring me shade, to bring me shade*

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
Porque es que tengo calor a mi me da

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
Because I am so tired and hot*

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
¡Ay! Que si está lindo que me deje besar

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
And if it's a nice tree, may it let me hug it*

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
¡Ay! Que si está bueno en mi soledad

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
And it's a good tree for my solace*

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
¡Ay! Que sea muy lindo como el Guilán Guilán

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
For it to be pretty like the Guilán Guilán*

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
Que no me deje que tenga piedad

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
One that will not leave me and will be pious\**

Estoy buscando un árbol que me de sombra  
Que de el sol me pueda tapar

*I'm in search of a tree for some shade  
One that will be able to shelter me from the sun*

\*This can also mean to have pity.

### Explore the Lyrics in “Estoy Buscando un Árbol”

- Read the lyrics aloud. Explain that lyrics in bomba songs often have deep meaning about people’s feelings, hopes, and dreams, and that they often use imagery from nature to illustrate or represent their feelings.
  - *What do you think the mood of the singer is? How do you think the singer is feeling?*
  - *What is the singer looking for? What else do you think the singer might need or want?*

### Bomba Instruments

In bomba music, the rhythms are played by large, barrel-shaped drums called barriles, which play two roles: the buleador role and the subidor role. The buleador plays the foundational rhythm while the subidor improvises. Additional instruments that add rhythmic layers include cua sticks, played on the sides of a smaller barril, and the maraca, typically played by the lead singer. On SG30, students will have an opportunity to compare and contrast these bomba instruments with the instruments used in plena.



### Perform Rhythm and Dance Conversation in “Estoy Buscando un Árbol”

- One of the signature aspects of bomba is that it is a conversation, or call and response, between dancers and musicians; and—in a bit of a role reversal—it is the dancer who leads the way. The dancer improvises movements, challenging the subidor, or lead drummer, to respond with rhythmic interpretations.
- Learn the movements for “Estoy Buscando un Árbol” at  [carnegiehall.org/MusicalExplorers](https://carnegiehall.org/MusicalExplorers).
- Using “Estoy Buscando un Árbol,”  Track 32, try out each of the movements.
- Once students are comfortable with the movements, form a circle and ask for a dancer to go into the middle. Ask the dancer to perform one of the movements from the dance vocabulary or improvise a new movement. Demonstrate the role of the subidor, responding to the movement by drumming or clapping a rhythmic phrase. It can be the same rhythm that the dancer performed, or a complementary rhythm.
- Ask for volunteers to take turns playing the role of the dancer and the subidor.
- When your students are comfortable, play “Estoy Buscando un Árbol,”  Track 32, giving students an opportunity to try out the roles of dancer and subidor.

### Musical Word Wall

Add the words *barril*, *bomba*, *buleador*, *cua sticks*, *maraca*, and *subidor* to the Musical Word Wall.