

Lesson 2: Learning “Ola de la Mar”

Aim: What elements make up a plena song?

Summary: Students will explore the rhythms and instruments utilized in a plena song, and learn about the social context of plena music.

Materials: Musical Explorers digital resources, Musical Explorers Student Guide, classroom instruments

Standards: National 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11; NYC 1, 2, 3, 4

Vocabulary: güícharo, pandereta, plena, rhythmic layers, seguidor, segundo

Plena originated among urban workers of Puerto Rico’s coastal areas, mainly in Ponce and Mayagüez, shortly after Spain lost political control of the island, and thus during the early period of US colonial rule. Like bomba, plena is sung in a call and response style. In plena, the singer, rather than the dancer and drummer, does the improvising. Lyrics are often inspired by current events. Thus, plena has sometimes been called “el periódico cantado” (the sung newspaper). More broadly, the songs relay oral history, and reflect the singer’s own perspectives, beliefs, hopes, and feelings.

Sing “Ola de la Mar”

- Listen to “Ola de la Mar,”  Track 35.
- Learn the lyrics to the chorus using “Ola de la Mar” pronunciation,  Track 36.
- Sing the chorus using “Ola de la Mar” chorus,  Track 37.



O - la de la mar, O - la de la mar, Tráí - ga - me la paz,

Tráí-ga-me la paz que mi ple-na va'a so - nar Tráí-ga-me la paz que mi ple-na va'a so - nar

“Ola de la Mar” Translation

Chorus:

Ola de la mar, ola de la mar
 Tráigame la paz,
 Tráigame la paz que mi plena va a sonar
(x2)

Entre ola y ola, entre ola y ola
 Mi plena va sonar
 Ola de la mar, tráigame la paz
 Tráigame la paz que mi plena va a sonar

(Chorus)

Siempre cuento contigo, siempre cuento contigo
 A la hora de la verdad
 Cuando tengo tristeza o si no felicidad.
 Cuando tengo tristeza o si no felicidad.

(Chorus)

Saquen los panderos, saquen los panderos
 Y vamos a tocar
 Ola de la mar tráigame la paz
 Tráigame la paz que mi plena va a sonar.

(Chorus)

*Siempre que oigo la plena, siempre que oigo
 la plena*
 Me dan ganas de bailar
 Ola de la mar tráigame la paz
 Tráigame la paz que mi plena va a sonar.

(Chorus)

(x2)

Chorus:

*Wave of the sea, wave of the sea
 Bring me peace,
 Bring me peace that my plena will sound
(x2)*

*In between the waves, in between the waves
 My plena will start to ring
 Wave of the sea, bring me peace
 Bring me peace that my plena will sound*

(Chorus)

*I always count on you, I always count on you
 At the moment of truth
 When I am sad or when I am happy
 When I am sad or when I am happy*

(Chorus)

*Take out the panderos, take out the panderos
 And we will begin to play
 Wave of the ocean bring me peace
 Bring me peace that my plena will sound.*

(Chorus)

*Every time I hear the plena, every time I hear
 the plena
 I feel like dancing
 Wave of the ocean bring me peace
 Bring me peace that my plena will sound.*

(Chorus)

(x2)

The core rhythm instruments in plena are a series of three pandeteras—hand drums similar to tambourines without the jingles—and a güicharo or güiro (scraped gourd). In order from largest to smallest, the pandeteras are the seguidor, the segundo, and the requinto. The seguidor, segundo, and güicharo play a foundational rhythm that remains constant throughout a plena song. The requinto improvises more intricate rhythms on top of the established base rhythm.

