

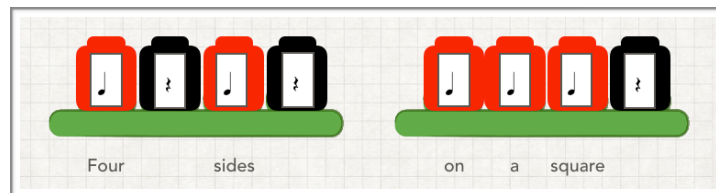
Perfect Square - Complementary Rhythms

Objective: Students will compose and perform a complementary rhythm.

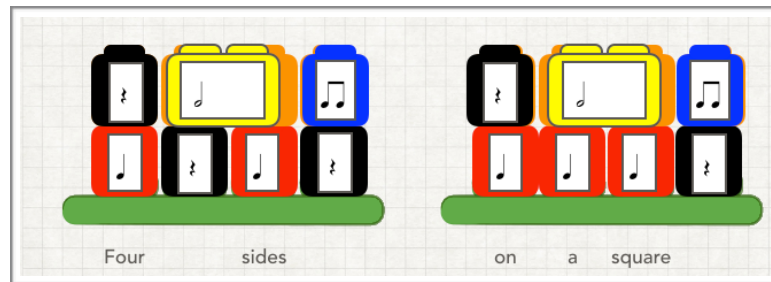
Materials: Beat Blocks, Perfect Square by Michael Hall, Perfect Square visual, unpitched percussion instruments, Orff instruments

Process:

- 1) Teacher introduces students an ostinato, a *short repeated rhythm* using the chant “four sides on a square” (see the second slide of the keynote).
- 2) Once students are comfortable with the ostinato, Teacher reads the book aloud. After each “day” happens in the book, students repeat the ostinato and pat it on their legs. Repeat the book and transfer the pattern onto a C and G bordun on pitched Orff instruments.
- 3) Teacher asks them to notate the ostinato onto Beat Blocks by sounding out each beat.



- 4) Next, Teacher explains that a complementary rhythm is a rhythm that happens at the same time, is different, and works together with the ostinato. The rule of thumb is that no more than 1 1/2 beats should be the same as the ostinato/first rhythm. On Beat Blocks, a complementary rhythm is a new layer of rhythm above the ostinato. There is a base/beat layer, the ostinato, and a third layer of the complementary rhythm. Reinforcing this layering process will help students understand and differentiate what they are hearing and feeling.



- 5) As a class, identify the first beat of the ostinato: a quarter note. *What blocks do you have that are NOT a quarter note? Half note, eighth notes, quarter rest....* Students select a block and place it above the first beat of the ostinato. Continue with the rest of the 8 beats. It's always helpful to have a predictable or repeated pattern as students may feel overwhelmed at first with all the sounds coming together. Keep it simple! Adding words to the rhythm will also aid them when rehearsing.
- 6) Rehearse the rhythm with body percussion or clapping. Teacher asks students *Do you like how it sounds? Is it easy to perform?* Students edit as needed, placing shorter note values (eighth notes, sixteenth notes) at the end to function as connectors. Rehearse, edit, repeat.

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- 7) When the complementary rhythm is complete and students are able to perform it confidently, rehearse with the ostinato, either the teacher playing it, or ideally the students split into two groups and performing it together.
- 8) Read the book again, performing the complementary rhythm and ostinato after each “day” in the book.
- 9) Teacher puts students into small groups, one for each day of the week (Monday-Saturday, 6 groups). Each group should decide on pitched or unpitched percussion (whatever they are experienced with) to play their version of the complementary rhythm for their day. Encourage the students to think of that “day”’s feelings and colors as inspiration for instrument timbre/ color.
- 10) Read the book again as a performance, hearing each group’s instrument timbre choices for each day. If students are struggling to play the ostinato *and* complementary rhythm within their small group, Teacher can play the ostinato.

Extension:

- A) Record the performance as audio for younger students in the school to listen to while reading the book. Students can take turns reading a page.
- B) Use a DAW such as Garageband to input the two rhythms and manipulate them with pitch and software instrument choices. See our website for an audio example of this.