

# Ciranda: The Brazilian Music and Dance that Creates Community

## OVERVIEW

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is Ciranda, and how can group singing and dancing help us feel like a part of a community?

### OVERVIEW

*In this lesson, students will learn how to sing a Ciranda song in Portuguese, dance Ciranda steps as it is traditionally done, and define the meaning of “pulse” in music. They will familiarize themselves with part of Ciranda’s history and learn how it is a part of the larger culture of building community in the State of Pernambuco, in Northeast Brazil.*



Illustration: Henrique Gomes

Ciranda is a type of dance and music from the Brazilian state of Pernambuco that is very popular on the Atlantic coast. It is particularly important to the culture of the island of Itamaracá, where the wives of fishermen sang and danced while waiting for their husbands to arrive from the sea after the day’s catch. Ciranda has also appeared simultaneously in areas of the interior of the Zona da Mata Norte (countryside) in Pernambuco. In the early history of Ciranda, participants were mostly rural workers and fishermen.

Pernambuco’s strategic location at the easternmost tip of the continent of South America made it an economic and cultural center during colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Because of its most important crop, sugar cane, millions of Africans were brought through the capital city, Recife, and traded into slavery for other products and services. As a result, it became a hub for the exchange of knowledge and culture between the Pernambuco State and other nations. The culture of the region was influenced not only by Portuguese and Dutch colonizations, but later, by English Jews who, together with African slaves and Indigenous Peoples, transformed the state into a great cultural melting pot. Pernambuco is also home to the oldest and most traditional of Carnival celebrations, in Recife and Olinda. Throughout this region oral tradition is of great importance, as knowledge has been passed down in formal and informal ways from generation to generation, through the people who keep traditions alive. Ciranda is a perfect example of this.

Ciranda is described as a democratic dance. It does not hold space for prejudice or discrimination regarding sex, race, age, social or economic status of the participants, and there is no limit to the number of people who can participate in it. It is characterized by the formation of a large circle (*roda*), usually on beaches or in town squares, where members hold hands and dance to the sound of slow and repeated rhythms. It is very common in Brazil to define Ciranda

as a children's circle game, but in the Northeast region, mainly in Pernambuco, it is known as an adult circle dance. Participants can be of various age groups, with no impediments to children's participation as well. Over the years, it has transformed itself as a working class dance to one enjoyed by all, regardless of the time of year.

Ciranda begins as a small circle that increases as people come to dance. The circle grows in size as participants join hands with those who are already dancing. As it is customary to invite others to join, a participant can enter and leave without the slightest problem. When the circle or "wheel" reaches a size that makes it difficult to move, a smaller one forms inside the larger "wheel" (roda de ciranda).

The *cirandeiro/a* master is the most important member of the ciranda, being responsible for improvising verses, sometimes playing the ganzá (a shaker made of steel with seeds inside), and presiding over the music. The music is characterized by the use of call and response singing: the *cirandeiro/a* master sings the verse, then a vocal group or dancers repeat that same verse in response.

One of the most famous *cirandeiras* is Lia de Itamaracá, a Brazilian singer and composer who is considered a living heritage of the Pernambuco State. She has become a national Ciranda reference and her name is linked to the tropical island and state municipality of Itamaracá, where she was born and still lives. She is an icon of perseverance and resistance because of her music. Her importance transcends categories, as she is known internationally and in circles outside of folk, regional, or popular music circuits. Other important *cirandeiros/as* include Antônio Baracho, João Limoeiro, and Mestre Anderson. Pernambuco artists from outside of the genre, such as Chico Science and Lenine, have included Ciranda in their repertoires and played them live in their concerts.

Much remains unknown about Ciranda, its origins, and its practices. The first scholarship on the emergence of Ciranda dates from 1960 and is the work of the priest and musicologist Jaime Diniz. With the title "Ciranda: Circle of Adults in Pernambuco Folklore," published in the *Magazine of the Department of Cultural and Artistic Extension*, it is considered one of the most important documents about the genre. From the 1960s to the 1980s, dancing the ciranda had become fashionable and well-known as an important cultural expression. Unfortunately, folklorists who produced studies on the most diverse cultural practices in Pernambuco during this time merely cited the research of Diniz and Evandro Rabello when discussing Ciranda. As a result, there is still much to discover, and Ciranda remains primarily a tradition lived out and learned orally, by the people.



## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The importance of Brazilian Northeastern music culture in the world
- The way Ciranda helps people to interact with one another and form a community
- How to dance Ciranda and sing in Portuguese

### 2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to investigate how music contributes to social engagement with one's community by using their bodies and voices to dance, play, and sing Ciranda.

## ACTIVITIES

### VOCABULARY INTRODUCTION

1. Distribute to students **Handout - Ciranda Vocabulary Flashcards** (*you may need to cut the flashcards out beforehand*).
2. Introduce students to the Spanish vocabulary used in this lesson by going through the **Ciranda Vocabulary Slideshow**.
3. Explore the document **Suggested Activities for LADAMA Vocabulary Flash Cards** for suggestions on ways students can practice Spanish using the flash cards either before the lesson or as homework.

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:
  - Do you ever have family gatherings, or parties with friends and neighbors? (*If necessary, you can specify by mentioning events such as holidays, block parties, birthdays, weddings, etc.*)
  - During these events, do you ever listen to music together? If so, what type of music?
  - At these events, do you ever sing music together? If so, what kind of music? (*If necessary, remind students that people often sing together for birthday celebrations.*)
  - At these gatherings, do people dance together? Have you been to an event where people are dancing?
  - Why do you think music and dance is often a part of celebrating and coming together as a family or community?

## PROCEDURE

1. Display **Image 1, Brazil Illustration**. Inform students that in class today they will be exploring Ciranda – a type of music and dance that people in Brazil often perform as a community to celebrate. Ask students:

- Have you ever heard of the country of Brazil? Do you know what continent it is in? (*South America*.)
- What do you know about Brazil? Please share anything you have already learned about Brazil.
- What language do they speak in Brazil? (*Portuguese*.)

2. Display **Image 2, Map of the Brazil**. Inform students that Brazil is a large country with many different types of people who live there. Ciranda comes from the area known as Pernambuco. Ask students:

- Can you find Pernambuco on the map? Where is it? (*On the easternmost part of the country*.)
- Is Pernambuco close to an ocean? If so, which one? (*The Atlantic Ocean*.)

3. Display **Image 3, Ciranda Instruments**. Inform students that Ciranda uses unique instruments. As a class, try pronouncing each instrument in the image.

4. Play **Clip 1, Ciranda Instrument Examples**. Pause the video after each sound, and ask students to identify what they think the instrument is by calling out the name or raising the appropriate flash card from **Handout - Ciranda Vocabulary Flashcards**. Then, continue the video to display the answer, and ask students to repeat back the name of the instrument. Proceed in the same manner for each of the 5 instruments.

Then, ask students:

- Was it easy or difficult to identify the instruments based on their sounds?
- How do you think people play each instrument?

5. Inform students that they will now listen to how all the instruments they learned about work together in Ciranda. Play the YouTube clip **Lia de Itamaracá singing “Eu Sou Lia Minha Ciranda Preta Cirandeira”** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pt3pjLjBog>) (*Please note that the video is offsite, so it may need to be loaded prior to class*). After listening to the song, ask students:

- Did you hear all the instruments from the previous flashcard game?
- What do you think of this music? Could you dance to it?

6. Explain that Ciranda is a music and dance shared by all people, in large groups, that originated as a way to relax at the end of a hard day’s work. It is danced in a large circle and in the company of others, and sung to share stories and relax at the end of a long workday.

7. Inform students that they will now learn how to dance to Ciranda. To dance to the music, they will need to first discover the pulse of the music. Play **Clip 2, Ciranda Rhythm and Dance**. Pause the video as needed or use the below excerpted sections of the clip. See **Handout – Ciranda Teacher’s Guide** as a guide for this activity. Excerpted sections:

- Ciranda Rhythm and Dance Excerpt: Introduction to Pulse

- Ciranda Rhythm and Dance Excerpt: Practicing a Pulse
- Ciranda Rhythm and Dance Excerpt: Ciranda Instruments
- Ciranda Rhythm and Dance Excerpt: Ciranda Dance Instructions
- Ciranda Rhythm and Dance Excerpt: Dance Together

8. After completing the video, ask students:

- How did you use your body to emphasize the pulse of the rhythm?
- How does it feel to dance in a circle facing your classmates? Is this a new experience for you or is it similar to a kind of dancing you are familiar with?

9. Show **Image 3, Lia de Itamaracá**. Explain to students that they will be learning how to sing a song by one of the most famous cirandieras - Lia de Itamaracá - called “Minha Ciranda

(written by Capiba)”.

10. Play **Clip 3, LADAMA - Ciranda Song**. Pause the video as needed or use the below excerpted sections of the clip. See **Handout – Ciranda Teacher’s Guide** as a guide for this activity. Excerpted sections:

- Ciranda Song Excerpt: Learning the Lyrics
- Ciranda Song Excerpt: Singing the Chorus Together

- Ciranda Song Excerpt: Singing the Whole Song

11. After completing the video, ask students:

- How did it feel to sing in Portuguese? Was it your first time?
- Were you able to feel the pulse while singing?

12. **Activity for General Music Class:** Use the transcription in **Handout - Ciranda Teacher’s Guide** to have your band class perform “Minha Ciranda.”

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Tell students that now that they know how to dance and sing Ciranda, it’s time to do it freely as a class.
2. Play the YouTube clip Lia de Itamaracá singing “Eu Sou Lia Minha Ciranda Preta Cirandeira” again (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pt3pjLjBog>). As the teacher, act as cirandeira/o by standing in the middle of the circle and directing the students’ movements (if needed, watch this YouTube video for an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pt3pjLjBog>).
3. After free dancing Ciranda, ask students:
  - How did it feel to dance Ciranda together?
  - How does a circle bring people together?
  - What is something that you like to do after a long day’s work?



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Write a reflection or draw a picture of how Ciranda helps people to interact with one another and form a community.
2. Research and report on another type of circle dance found throughout the world (for example, the Hora, Kalamatianos, Dabke, or An Dro).
3. Create your own circle dance with a signature move!
4. Write a lyric and melody that other students in your class could sing in unison with you.

## STANDARDS

**NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (NAFME)***Core Music Standard: Creating*

Plan and Make: Select and develop musical ideas for defined purposes and contexts.

Evaluate and Refine: Evaluate and refine selected musical ideas to create musical work(s) that meet appropriate criteria.

Present: Share creative musical work that conveys intent, demonstrates craftsmanship, and exhibits originality.

*Core Music Standard: Performing*

Analyze: Analyze the structure and context of varied musical works and their implications for performance.

Interpret: Develop personal interpretations that consider creators' intent.

Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine: Evaluate and refine personal and ensemble performances, individually or in collaboration with others.

Present: Perform expressively, with appropriate interpretation and technical accuracy, and in a manner appropriate to the audience and context.

*Core Music Standard: Responding*

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

*Core Music Standard: Connecting*

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

## NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

### *Creating*

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

### *Performing/Presenting/Producing*

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

### *Responding*

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

### *Core Music Standard: Connecting*

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standards 11: Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)*

Craft and Structure 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)*

Comprehension & Collaboration 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence



such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

*College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)*

Text Types and Purposes 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

*College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language (K-12)*

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

**SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)**

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 9 : Global Connections



## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Ciranda Instrument Examples
- *LADAMA* - Ciranda Rhythm and Dance
- *LADAMA* - Ciranda Song

### HANDOUTS

- Handout - Ciranda Vocabulary Flashcards
- Ciranda Vocabulary Slideshow
- Suggested Activities for LADAMA Vocabulary Flash Cards
- Handout - Ciranda Teacher's Guide