

# 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.*



Image: Raif Aracy

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 definition of pulse and how it is present in our daily life
- 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

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Display **Image 1, Definition of Pulse**. After reading the definition aloud as a class, ask students:

- What can you think of that has a pulse?
- What in your body has a pulse?
- Does a pulse always remain the same? What happens to your own pulse after exercising? What happens to your pulse when you rest?
- Does a pulse exist in music? Which instruments in music do you think provide the pulse? How can you play the pulse of music, without an instrument?

2. Tell students that they will learn how to identify and move to a musical pulse by exploring traditional instruments common to Ciranda, a style of music from Brazil. Pass out to students **Handout - Ciranda Instrument Flashcards**, and ask students to cut out each flashcard. (*Alternatively, teachers may cut out the flashcards before the lesson and give them to students.*)

3. Play **Clip 1, Ciranda Instrument Examples**. Pause the video after each sound (*a symbol will prompt when to pause*), and ask students to identify what they think the instrument is by raising the correct flash card. 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 did you connect the sounds of the instruments with what they looked like on the flashcards?
  - Does a pulse always remain the same? What happens to your own pulse after exercising? What happens to your pulse when you rest?
  - Does a pulse exist in music? Which instruments in music do you think provide the pulse? How can you play the pulse of music, without an instrument?
4. Gather students in a circle and play Clip 1 again, this time without pausing. For each instrument, have students try to identify the pulse by clapping or stomping along. Then ask students:
- Was it easy to follow the pulse, or pattern, of each instrument?
  - How did your movements change from one instrument to the next?
  - How did you feel playing the same pulse together as a class?

## PROCEDURE

1. Display **Image 2, Map of South America**, and ask students to find the country of Brazil.
  2. Display **Image 3, Map of Brazil** and point out the state of Pernambuco. Remind students that the instruments they learned are commonly played for Ciranda music, which comes from this region of Brazil.
  3. 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.
  4. Play **Lia de Itamaracá singing "Eu Sou Lia Minha Ciranda Preta Girandeira."**  
(<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=V9oEcjSxONk&feature=share> )  
(Please note that the video is offsite, so it may need to be loaded prior to class.) Ask students to listen actively. After listening to the song,
- ask students:
- Is there anything in the music that sounds like a heartbeat? If so, which instrument is playing it?
  - Do you recognize some of these instruments from the flash card game earlier?
  - If you were to pick the pulse of this song, what would it be? Demonstrate by clapping your hands.
5. Tell students that they will be dancing and singing in Portuguese and that it's time to stand up and move their bodies!
  6. Play and perform along to **Clip 2, LADAMA - Ciranda Rhythm and Dance** (*Note to teacher: feel free to pause and review at any point in the video. Use **Handout - Ciranda Teacher's Guide** as a reference.*)

7. 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?

8. Show **Image 4, Lia de Itamaracá**. Explain to students that they will be learning a song by one of the most famous cirandieras - Lia de Itamaracá - called “Eu Sou Lia Minha Ciranda Preta Cirandeira (written by Capiba)”

9. Play **Clip 3, LADAMA - Ciranda Song**. 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?

### 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 Lia de Itamaracá singing “Eu Sou Lia Minha Ciranda Preta Cirandeira” again (<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=V9oEcjSxONk&feature=share> ). As the teacher, act as cirandeira/o by standing in the middle of the circle and directing the students’ movements (If needed, watch this 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?

4. Ask students to write a reflection of how Ciranda helps people to interact with one another and form a community.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Create your own circle dance with a signature move! Ciranda taught you how to “lean in” together as you danced and sang. Now come up with your own move that could be used in a dancing circle.

2. 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 Instrument Flashcards
- Handout - Ciranda Teacher's Guide