SCHOOLTIME
PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MEET THE ORCHESTRA

This activity addresses PA Academic Standards 1.3.C, 9.1.5.E, 9.2.3.G, 9.2.3.D, 9.2.3.A and National Core Arts Standards MU:Pr4.2.4c

Meet the Clave

Rhythm Activity

In **Schooltime: Meet the Orchestra**, you will hear a piece written by George Gershwin that features music inspired by the sounds of Cuba.

Where Is Cuban Music From?
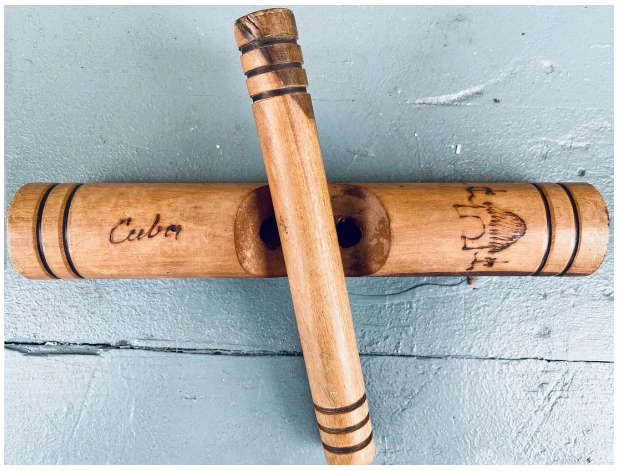
Cuban music comes from **Cuba**, an island country where the **Caribbean Sea, Atlantic Ocean,** and **Gulf of Mexico** all meet. It is just south of the state of Florida. Here is a map: https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/cuba.

Cuban music combines musical traditions from:

- **Spain** (melodies and instruments)
- **West Africa** (drums and rhythms)
- **Taíno Indigenous Population** (percussion instruments)



What Are Claves?



Claves are **two wooden sticks** you hit together. They make a sharp, clear sound that helps to keep the beat in lots of Cuban music. Claves are part of the percussion family.

The word **clave** is also the name of a **special rhythm**. The clave rhythm can be played with claves, or by clapping, or by tapping another object.

There are two main clave patterns: **2-3** clave, **3-2** clave

We are going to focus on the "3-2" rhythm. It is called "**3-2**" because of how the beats are grouped: **Three beats**, then **two beats**.

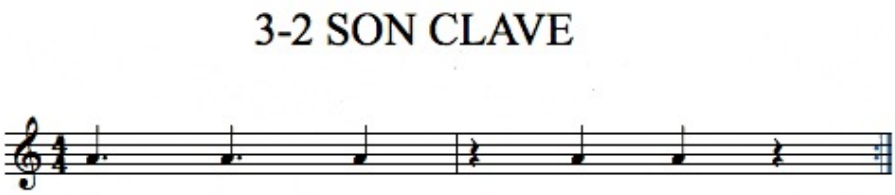
Listen to the 3-2 Clave

Listen to the 3-2 clave beat here.

Practice clapping along to the 3-2 clave beat here.

What It Looks Like in Music

This is how the 3-2 clave pattern appears written in musical notation:



Put it into Practice!

Can you hear the 3-2 clave rhythm in these songs?

Even when you don't hear the claves, the rhythm is still there – maybe in the drums, woodwinds, or other instruments. Try clapping along!

1. "**America**" from West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein
2. **Theme from Bluey** by **Joff Bush**

Gershwin's *Cuban Overture*



Now that you know the rhythm, let's try clapping the 3-2 clave while listening to the last two minutes of **Cuban Overture** by George Gershwin. This is the piece you will hear in Schooltime: Meet the Orchestra!

Don't worry if you can't hear the claves clearly — try to **keep the beat in your head** and **stay steady** with your claps. If you lose the beat, take a little break and try again.