

Discovery Theater

presents

Sironka:

Maasai

Born in the Rift valley province of Kenya, **Nicholas Sironka** is a well-known painter and batik artist whose vibrant work, reflecting his Maasai heritage, has been exhibited throughout Africa, the United States, and Europe. As an educator, he has taught batik, and with it an understanding of Maasai culture, through workshops, residencies, and his 2000-2001 Fulbright Scholarship to Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. With his wife Seleina, an artist in her own right specializing in Maasai beadwork, he has led a number of projects to identify and nurture creative talent among the Maasai youth and to help Maasai families lead better lives.

The young adults of the **Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe**, which Sironka founded in 2001, are chosen not only for their music and movement skills, but also to give their families a way of earning a living. The group's periodic tours of the U.S. and Britain—with bead-making, hair braiding, storytelling, dance, and batik workshops often accompanying performances—share a rich legacy of folk tradition with international audiences, as well as raising funds to educate Maasai girls and supply other basic community needs. The sale of beadwork ornaments at performances also supports these goals.

To learn more or donate to their nonprofit efforts, see www.sironkamaasai.com.

Discovery Theater Artistic Director: Roberta Gasbarre
Learning Guide: Anne Stewart O'Donnell

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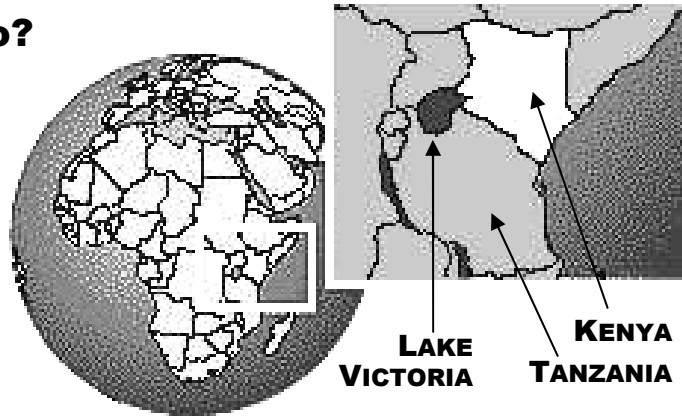
Guenther and Siewchen Yong Sommer

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See our website for tickets, location, directions, resources for teachers, and much more!

Who are the Maasai and the Luo?

The Friends of Sironka Dance Troupe includes members of **two peoples** who live in Kenya and northern Tanzania: the Maasai and the Luo. **The Maasai are herders of livestock, especially cattle**, and move around the region taking the animals to fresh grazing lands. (**Cattle are so important** to the Maasai that they count their wealth in cattle—the more cattle a man has, the wealthier he is!) **The Luo traditionally lived around Lake Victoria**—the second-largest freshwater lake in the world—so it's no wonder that they are **famous as fishermen**, as well as farmers.



What is Batik?

Nicholas Sironka is an artist in **batik** – an ancient way of making pictures or patterns while dyeing cloth. Designs are made by painting **hot wax** onto the undyed fabric. Then the cloth is dipped in dye. Like magic, the wax keeps the dye from coloring the cloth in the waxed areas.

(Sironka repeats these steps many times, with many different dyes, to get all the gorgeous colors in his batik artworks.) **Try it yourself!** Learn how to make your own batik t-shirt at www.historyforkids.org/crafts/africa/batik.htm. For a similar project without hot wax: www.epilogsys.com/Scoutingweb/SubPages/TShirts.htm#Glue.

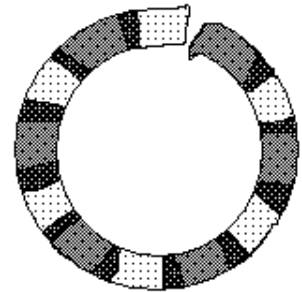


Make a “Beaded” Neckpiece!

The Maasai are well known for **beadwork**, made from hundreds of small glass beads in bright colors. The patterns and colors help to identify **which group within the Maasai** a person belongs to.

Make a “beaded” collar of your own! Take a paper plate, cut through the rim on one side, and cut out the center so you have a flat ring. Make lines with a pencil to divide the rim into fat and thin segments.

Using markers or crayons, fill in each segment with colored dots to look like beads. **Invent your own pattern** of repeating colors to identify **you!**



What’s the difference between a tribe, an ethnic group, and a country?

An **ethnic group** refers to a group of people who share a certain culture, different from that of others around them. Differences can include things like religion, race, ancestry, or language.

The Luo and Maasai ethnic groups are often called tribes, but **tribe** is such a vague word that many organizations no longer use it. It can mean nation, people, community, chiefdom, kin-group, or village. (In the U.S., tribe is a legal term. A group of Native Americans must be recognized as a tribe in order to participate in certain programs or be granted certain rights. In ordinary use, Native Americans often prefer the words **nation** or **people**.)

A **country** is a political state and the territory it covers.

Check It Out!

maasai-association.org

has plenty of information about the Maasai way of life, from a non-profit dedicated to preserving and celebrating cultural heritage. One highlight: slideshows of Maasai life and the countryside in which they live.