

# Discovery Theater

*presents*

## Diane Macklin



Welcome to Discovery Theater! We are thrilled to bring Master Storyteller **DIANE MACKLIN**. She offers a variety of programs that combine African and/or African American stories with tales from other traditions. Students will experience an oral, visual, and physical approach to storytelling by utilizing *Storyteller Tools*: words (written and vocal), body, expression, mind, and imagination. Enjoy! Appropriate for ages 3 to 8.

*Discovery Theater Artistic Director:*  
Roberta Gasbarre

*Handout:* Jacqueline E. Lawton & Diane Macklin



The Smithsonian Associates

*Discovery Theater programs are made possible, in part, by gifts from*

**Guenther and Siewchen Yong Sommer**

**(202) 633-8700 • Info@DiscoveryTheater.org • DiscoveryTheater.org**

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

## About Diane Macklin

Master storyteller, Diane Macklin, has been described by The Washington Post as having a “dynamic” approach to engaging audiences of children and adults. Her “griotic” style delights audiences as she integrates her theatrical presence, dancing hands, and lyrical voice to create a unique story experience not to be missed. Her training as a cultural mediator and formal classroom teacher lends uniqueness to her commitment to quality programming, education, and arts integration.



In an interview with the Washington Post, Macklin explains that she left the formal classroom "in order to teach. The most traditional way to do that is through storytelling. And not just as entertainment, but as an art form that reaches everybody at some level. It doesn't matter where you come from in the world, who your ancestors are. Every single human being starts out with a story." Ms. Macklin is the resident storyteller at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art and has performed for the Colonial Williamsburg Storytelling Festival, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture, and Wolf Trap's Theatre-in-the-Woods. Visit her website at:

[www.dianemacklin.com](http://www.dianemacklin.com)

## Where is West Africa?

West Africa is one of the most ethnically diverse places in the world. Some of the countries that make up West Africa are:

Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria, Togo, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, Senegal, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast. It ranges from rain forests to barren deserts to modern cities and tropical islands. West Africans work as farmers, fishermen, and merchants. Popular West African foods are yams, cassava, plantains, hot spices, rice, peanuts, black-eyed peas, okra, green peas, and pineapples. The land is rich in resources and very beautiful, but living in West Africa is not easy. Many face challenges from civil war to disease and famine.



[www.solarnavigator.net/geography/west\\_africa.htm](http://www.solarnavigator.net/geography/west_africa.htm) - To learn more about West Africa

# The African Griot Tradition

A Griot is many things, a story-teller, historian, musician, and the keep of his or her people's traditions. In the past, Griots were known to advise Kings. The Griots of today, share some of the same songs and stories from those that were told in ancient times and have kept the history of their people alive. They are educated people and very wise. They learned from their parents or other relatives who were also Griots. It takes many years of practice to learn how to play the many drums and string instruments and to learn all the songs and histories. Traditionally, there is only one storyteller per village and he or she does not have to work the fields like many others. Their job is to tell stories and perform at celebrations and rituals.



[www.africa.mrdonn.org/griots.html](http://www.africa.mrdonn.org/griots.html) - to learn more about Griots.

## Activities

### Before the Show:

1. In a discussion or activity, have students reflect on what life was like before television, computers, video games, or radios. Help students to understand that stories were a way for people to entertain and to teach.
2. Explore the following questions:
  - What is a storyteller?
  - Who are storytellers? Answers may include family members, friends, neighbors, journalists, writers, musicians, rappers, photographers, and more.
  - Why is it important for a “storyteller” to tell her/his own story?

### After the show:

1. CREATING ORIGIN MYTHS (any subject): In groups or individually, students can create origin tales about how something came to be. The skies the limit here! Students can tell the story of how ice cream came to be, or light posts, numbers, microscopes, the moon, desks... the list is infinite.

# Resources

## Grades PK-2

Juan Bobo Goes to Work (Marisa Montes)

Anansi Does the Impossible: An Ashanti Tale (Verna Aardema)

Can You Guess My Name? Traditional Tales from Around the World (Judy Sierra)

Aesop Fables

## Grades 3-6

Mightier Than the Sword: World Folktales for Strong Boys (Jane Yolen)

Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls (Jane Yolen)

Stories to Solve: Folktales from Around the World (George Shannon)

African American Folk Tales for Young Readers (Richard Young and Judy Dockrey Young)

## Grades 7-12

The People Could Fly (Virginia Hamilton)

Fearless Girls, Wise Women, and Beloved Sisters: Heroines in Folktales from Around the World (Kathleen Ragan)

America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories (Anne Mazer)

## For You!

Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope (Ed Brody, et al)

The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing, and Using Folk Tales (Margaret Read MacDonald)

Last, but not least... YOUR STORIES!!!

## About Discovery Theater

Discovery Theater, the Smithsonian Institution's theater for children, has been dedicated to offering the best in live performing arts for young people since 1979.

Each year, more than 50,000 Washington-area children and their adults visit DT (now located in the Smithsonian's S. Dillon Ripley Center on the National Mall in Washington, DC) to explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, musicians and mimes. For details, visit 202-633-8700 or see [www.DiscoveryTheater.org](http://www.DiscoveryTheater.org).

