A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators

This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss *African Roots/Latino Soul*. It contains background, discussion questions and activities for ages 6 to 12.

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*AFRICAN ROOTS*  
*LATINO SOUL*  

Recommended for Ages 6 to 12  
Grades 1-6
ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The museum theater production African Roots/Latino Soul began as an exciting partnership between Discovery Theater and more than 30 DC public school students under the guidance of Young Playwrights’ Theater (YPT). Students in grades 4-7 at MacFarland Middle School and grades 10-12 at Bell Multicultural School (many of whom come from, or have parents who come from, Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean) drew on their experiences and imaginations, working in small groups to compose monologues, dialogues, scenes, poems, and songs. Their writings became the basis of African Roots/Latino Soul.

Funded by the Smithsonian Latino Center, African Roots/Latino Soul is the second Discovery Theater production to be written by students, with the guidance of some highly talented teaching artists. The first was Retratos: Portraits of our World, developed the methods of engagements in partnership with YPT and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, in conjunction with the traveling exhibition Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits.

AFRICAN ROOTS, LO-O-O-ONG BRANCHES

Human history is the story of people moving from places they know, to places they don’t. Sometimes they go willingly, looking for new lands, a better job, or a farm of their own. Sometimes a war or a natural disaster causes destruction and sends people searching for someplace safer. And sometimes, people are forced to move by other people. The Atlantic slave trade is one grim example.

When the Spanish began to colonize the New World, they forced the native people they found there to work in their houses, fields, and mines. Many of these Indians died of disease and cruel treatment, and in their place, the Spanish government sent African slaves. Before the Atlantic slave trade was abolished in the 19th century, between 10 and 12 million Africans were shipped to the Americas. Some went to the English colonies of North America, but most went to Latin America and the Caribbean to work the sugarcane plantations and silver mines.

Today, most of the population of the Caribbean is of African descent, and so are half of the people of Brazil.

Did you know...?

...that slavery did not begin or end with the Atlantic slave trade? It took place in ancient times, and still occurs in some parts of the world today.

...that even before Columbus sailed for the New World, there were slaves in Spain? Some were Africans, some were other Spaniards, and some were even Slavs.
MUSIC IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKE HUMAN BEINGS HUMAN

Mothers comfort their babies with lullabies. We have specific songs for different holidays. A catchy rhythm can make boring work seem to go faster. Singing and dancing together can remind us of days past, comfort us during hard times, help us celebrate, and bring us closer to friends new and old. No matter where people end up, their music comes with them. And as they make new friends in new places, they combine old kinds of music into new ones. The new kinds of music can tell new stories.

For example, Úrsula Hilaria Celia de la Caridad Cruz Alfonso, also known by her stage name Celia Cruz, is called the “Queen of Salsa”. Her powerful voice and her rhythm-centric musical style made her the most popular Latin artist of the 20th century, gaining twenty-three gold albums during her career. US President Bill Clinton awarded her the National Medal of Arts in 1994. Her talent and spirit brought people together, and she will remain an icon of Latin music.

ACTIVITIES - FOR INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

ROOTS AND SOUL

Find a recording of a piece of music that represents or reminds you of where you or family came from.

Play it for your class. Tell them about it:

- Does that kind of music have a name? What do you know about its history?
- Where and when did you first hear that music?
- What do you and your family do when you listen to it – dance, clap, sing along? Make a poster about the song. On a BIG wall or bulletin board, post all the posters! Combine all the songs onto a single CD or DVD. As a class, decide on a title. Create a cover illustration (or use a photo of your class!) and write up liner notes telling about each song!

IN THEIR SHOES

Imagine that some terrible event – a hurricane, a war, the coming of cruel slave traders with guns – has swept you far away from everyone and everything you ever knew. You may have no idea where you are or how to get home. Perhaps even your familiar clothes are taken away.

What do you have left to help you survive?
Some suggestions: courage; talents and skills; intelligence; stories; music

Discovery Theater presents African Roots/Latino Soul
RECYCLED RHYTHM!

What countries are part of your heritage? Pick one of them. What music did they listen to there? What was the rhythm? Learn to clap it!

Find something around the house to turn into a drum or other percussion instrument. (You can make a bottlecap shaker if you want – see the instructions to the side.) Practice the rhythm on your instrument.

Now, take your instrument to school and share the rhythm with your friends. Listen to their rhythms, too. Experiment! Try combining their rhythms with yours to create the basis of a whole new sound!

PLEASE CHECK ONE (OR MORE!)

What is a survey? What is a poll? Have you ever taken part in one? What is one of the most common uses of a poll?

Collect as many examples as you can of forms, polls, or advertising surveys in which you are asked to “check off boxes” about yourself.

- Were the choices easy to make, or hard? What problems did you find with the questions?
- Why were you asked about yourself?
- Who was doing the asking? How were they going to use the information?
- Did you answer the questions, or not?
- Did the question seem to already make assumptions or take a side on an issue?

Poll your classmates! First, decide on a topic (favorite music, foods, pets, sports, games…). Then decide on the questions.

Decide how best to collect the answers...and do it!

Make a poster or graph to “publish” your results!

NAME THAT TUNE

The following kinds of music are mentioned in African Roots/Latino Soul:

- Merengue
- Cumbia
- Bachata
- Reggae
- Regaton
- Rock & Roll
- Go-Go
- Country/Ranchera
- Hip Hop

How many are you familiar with? Find an example of each and play it for the class. Where did it originate? What are its special rhythms and other features? What instruments are used? Who are some of its stars?
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX - IT’S YOU!

Get a photograph of yourself...or draw a small picture that stands for YOU. Using the resources below, make a card or box that opens to let YOU pop out!
Follow the directions on websites like http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/make-a-pop-up-book/ or in books like:
- “Pop-O-Mania: How to Create Your Own Pop-Ups” by Paul Ferris
- “The Pop-Up Book: Step-by-Step Instructions for Creating Over 100 Original Paper Projects” by Paul Jackson
- “Easy-to-Make Pop-Ups” by Joan Irvine

SUGAR CANE & SLAVERY - A DEADLY COMBINATION

- What is sugar cane? Where does it grow? What products come from it?
- What part did sugar cane play in the Atlantic slave trade?
- What steps were used by the slaves to turn sugar cane into sugar?
- How is sugar cane harvested and processed today? Who does the work?
- What other crops can be refined into sugar or sweeteners?
- How is the process the same as the sugar cane process, and how is it different?

RELATED RESOURCES

- https://www.youtube.com/user/rhythmweb/ These are videos of Afro-Cuban, African, or other Caribbean percussion traditions.
- My Name is Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz / Me llamo Celia: La vida de Celia Cruz by Monica Brown, illustrated by Rafael Lopez. An award-winning bilingual biography of the Queen of Salsa—fun for grades 2–4.
- http://www.topuertorico.org/ – website exploring Puerto Rico’s people, culture, history, food, and more.
- www.afrocubaweb.com/music.html -- links to sites for dozens of Afro-Cuban musicians, past and present, in Cuba and the U.S.. Many sites offer audio samples.
- www.pbs.org/buenavista/music - from PBS, song samples, glossary, and an interactive timeline of Cuban musical history, developed in connection with the film The Buena Vista Social Club
- The House of Musical Traditions – a DC-area landmark for decades, HMT stocks instruments and recordings from around the world. Spanish spoken! (7010 Westmoreland Ave., Takoma Park, MD; 301-270-9090 or www.hmtrad.com).
- Busboys and Poets – named in honor of Langston Hughes, this unusual bookstore offers lots of books on culture from an international perspective. (Multiple locations in DC/MD/VA; 202-387-POET or www.busboysandpoets.com).

VOCABULARY

Atlantic slave trade – the capture and transporting of African slaves across the Atlantic Ocean by ship for sale in the New World
Census – a periodic count or tally of the population
Colonize – to establish a group of citizens in another territory for the benefit of the home nation
Culture—the art, customs, beliefs and so on shared by a particular group of people
Descent – family background
Poll – to cast or record the votes of a body of people
Slave – a person held in servitude to another. From the Latin word for Slav, referring to the fact that many Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe had been reduced to slavery
Survey – to systematically obtain or make an overview of a group, a piece of land, etc.
Smithsonian Institution

OUR MISSION: “FOR THE INCREASE AND DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE…”

Smithsonian Associates advances the Institution’s mission through life-enriching educational and cultural experiences inspired by the Smithsonian’s research and collections for DC-region students, families, and adults, and for learning communities nationwide.

Discovery Theater has been presenting DC-area children with live educational performances for almost 40 years. With programs that enrich the Smithsonian experience for nearly 50,000 children annually, Discovery Theater is a gateway to the exhibits, collections, and themes contained in the museums and galleries on the National Mall and beyond. We 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, and musicians. Discovery Theater performances unite ideologies, enact themes that reflect the diversity of its audiences, open avenues of self-reflection, and offer an enjoyable means for parents and teachers to demonstrate life's lessons. There's so much to do and explore at the Smithsonian—and Discovery Theater is the ideal place to begin! For more information, please visit our website www.discoverytheater.org.

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