

Jorge Arce
The Afro-Caribbean Show
Educational Guide, Grades K-12



About the Performance

The Afro-Caribbean Show is a highly interactive, multimedia one-person show that includes 25 percussion instruments, audience participation throughout, a geography lesson, and a theatrical representation of "How the Drums were in the Caribbean." In this program, students will understand the historical connection of the American Continent with the rest of the world with new geographical concepts using the Arno Peters Projection map. Audience members will also learn instruments and their history using mathematical concepts, and learn Afro-Caribbean dances in relation to Afro-United States dances. The program culminates in a final celebration with dance and music and full-audience participation!



About the Artist

Jorge L. Santiago Arce was born in Bélgica, a working-class neighborhood of Ponce, Puerto Rico known for its rich cultural traditions, including music and dances such as Bomba, Plena, and Danza. In addition to being an award-winning actor, dancer, singer, and performer, Arce is a cultural historian and researcher. As one of the most important cultural liaisons to the Puerto Rican community in the United States, he has performed and taught at schools and universities, concert halls and festivals, and community organizations since 1983. Arce holds a B.A. in Musical Theatre from Boston Conservatory of Music and a M.Ed. from Harvard University.

Program Learning Goals

1. To demonstrate how African culture has influenced the cultures of the Caribbean and Brazil.
2. To explore Afro-Caribbean instruments and rhythms.
3. To empower students to express themselves through music.

Essential Questions

1. What can learning about other cultures teach us?
2. How does studying history enhance our appreciation for the diversity of cultural values in our community?
3. How does the interaction of music and dance help us to better understand each other?

Vocabulary

- **Culture:** the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group
- **Diaspora:** a community of people who share a culture and traditional homeland but live in a different place either by choice or by force
- **Percussion instruments:** musical instruments sounded by striking, shaking or scraping
- **Beat:** the steady pulse of a song or piece of music
- **Rhythm:** a strong pattern of notes or beats in music
- **Tempo:** the speed of a song or piece of music
- **Improvisation:** composing, executing, or arranging something in real time

Spanish Music Vocabulary

- **Tambor** (*tahm-bohr*): drum
- **Baile** (*bai-leh*): dance
- **Música** (*moo-see-kah*): music

Key Facts and Context for Students

Afro-Caribbean Geography

The music, dances, and instruments featured in this performance originate in **North, Southeast and West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean Islands** including **Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Martinique, Guadalupe, Haiti** and other islands.



Featured Instruments

This performance will feature 25 different instruments, including:



Congas



Shekere



**Pandero
de Plena**



Claves

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What kinds of dance are you familiar with? Where are those dances popular?
- Who tells stories in your family? What are the stories about?
- How does music make you feel? Do you have favorite songs to listen to when you feel a certain way?

Pre-Performance Activity: Exploring Afro-Caribbean Culture

Learning Goals:

- To introduce students to the music, dance, and geography of the Caribbean
- To compare and contrast the diverse cultures within the Caribbean

Materials:

World map, map of the Caribbean Islands, vetted books and websites about West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean (see *resources on page 5*), access to YouTube, Spotify, etc. to find musical examples



Directions:

1. Discuss the meaning of the term “Afro-Caribbean.” What does this mean? What regions of the world are included? What do students know about the geography and culture from these places?
2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the following places and musical cultures: **Puerto Rico** (Bomba, Plena), **Dominican Republic** (Merengue), **Haiti** (Kompa), **Cuba** (Rumba, Carnival Comparsa), **Trinidad** (Calypso), and **Brazil** (Samba).
3. Have students research the geography and culture of their location, including traditional language(s), food, clothing, and the arts. Find several short examples of the music form(s) that originated in the location to share with the class.
4. Create a creative way to present findings to the class. This could include art, photos, poems, dance, etc. Be sure to incorporate the musical examples into the presentation.
5. Compare and contrast the music and cultures of these locations. What’s consistent across all of the locations, and what is unique to each place? How have students perceptions of these regions changed or developed from this activity? What do they expect to hear from the performance of *The Afro-Caribbean Show*?

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What instruments were used in the performance? How were they played?
- What music, dance, or language is important in your culture?
- What was your favorite part of the performance? Why?

Post-Performance Activity: Making Musical Instruments

Learning Goals:

- To make original percussion instruments
- To create layers of sounds and rhythms using handmade percussion instruments

Materials:

Coffee cans, beans, rubber bands, fabric, soda bottles and caps, paper towel rolls, paper clips, wooden sticks (for tapping), water

Tip for the teacher:

Collect materials in the weeks preceding this lesson.



Directions:

1. Discuss percussion instruments and how they make sound. Talk about the different instruments that Jorge Arce used in *The Afro-Caribbean Show*.
2. Have students brainstorm materials they could use to make instruments. Imagine how they could vary the sounds by changing the mechanics of their instruments (amount of beans, different sizes of cans, etc.).
3. Have each student make a percussion instrument using the collected materials. Encourage them to experiment with sounds before finishing their instruments.
4. Give students time to practice playing their instruments by themselves and with partners.
5. Have students make music with their instruments. Ask one student to begin. Gradually add layers of sound by adding more instruments one at a time.
6. Sing the chorus of a familiar or original song over the percussion ensemble. Try improvising responses as Jorge Arce taught during the performance.

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Further Resources

- [Jorge Arce Artist Website](#)
- [Jorge Arce Compilation / Compilación \(1993-2012\) Playlist](#)
- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Latin American Arts Collection](#)
- **Picture Books:**
 - Engle, Margarita: *Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music*, Clarion Books (2015)
 - Greenwood, Mark: *Drummer Boy of John John*, Lee & Low Books (2018)
 - Schofield-Morrison, Connie: *I Got the Rhythm*, Bloomsbury U.S.A. Children's Books (2014)
- **Fiction:**
 - Ortiz Cofer, Judith: *Riding Low on the Streets of Gold: Latino Literature for Young Adults*, Arte Publico Press (2003)
 - Shearer, Wendy: *African and Caribbean Folktales, Myths and Legends*, Scholastic Classics (2021)
- **Non-Fiction:**
 - Engle, Margarita: *Dreams from Many Rivers: A Hispanic History of the United States Told in Poems*, Henry Holt and Co. (2019)
 - Fennell, Saraciea J. (editor): *Wild Tongues Can't Be Tamed: 15 Voices from the Latinx Diaspora*, Flatiron Books (2024)
 - Jiménez Román, Miriam and Juan Flores (editors): *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, Duke University Press (2010)
 - Katz, William Loren: *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, Atheneum (1986)

Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Dance, Music, and Theatre

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (D.Cr.01, M.Cr.01, T.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (D.Cr.02, M.Cr.02, T.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (D.P.06, M.P.06, T.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (D.R.07, M.R.07, T.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (D.R.08, M.R.08, T.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (D.R.09, M.R.09, T.R.09)

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Curricular Connections, continued

Arts Standards: Dance, Music, and Theatre, continued

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (D.Co.10, M.Co.10, T.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (D.Co.11, M.Co.11, T.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

History and Social Science

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: connections among places (HSS.K.T2)
- Topic 3: History: shared traditions (HSS.K.T3)

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)
- Topic 3: History: unity and diversity in the United States (HSS.1.T3)

Grade 2

- Topic 1: Reading and making maps (HSS.2.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 3: History: migrations and cultures (HSS.2.T3)
- Topic 4: Civics in the context of geography: countries and governments (HSS.2.T4)

Grade 4

- Topic 1: North America: geography and map skills (HSS.4.T1)
- Topic 3: Early European exploration and conquest (HSS.4.T3)
- Topic 4b: The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today: The Southeast (HSS.4.T4b)

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Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science, continued

Grade 5

- Topic 5: Slavery, the legacy of the Civil War, and the struggle for civil rights for all (HSS.5.T5)

Grade 6

- Topic 1: Studying complex societies, past and present (HSS.6.T1)
- Topic 5a: Physical and political geography and indigenous populations of Central America and the Caribbean Islands (HSS.6.T5a)
- Topic 5b: Physical and political geography of South America (HSS.6.T5b)

Grades 9-12

- US History I Topic 3: Economic growth in the North, South, and West (HSS.USI.T3)
- US History I Topic 7: Progressivism and World War I (HSS.USI.T7)
- World History I Topic 1: Dynamic interactions among regions of the world (HSS.WHI.T1)
- World History I Topic 5: Global exploration, conquest, colonization, c. 1492-1800 (HSS.WHI.T5)
- World History II Topic 1: Absolute power, political revolutions, and the growth of nation states, c. 1700-1900 (HSS.WHII.T1)
- World History II Topic 3: The global effects of 19th century imperialism (HSS.WHII.T3)

Mathematics

Counting and Cardinality

- Know number names and the count sequence. (K.CC.A)
- Count to tell the number of objects. (K.CC.B)
- Compare numbers. (K.CC.C)

Operations and Algebraic Thinking

- Understand addition as putting together and adding to, and understand subtraction as taking apart and taking from. (K.OA.A)

Measurement and Data

- Describe and compare measurable attributes. (K.MD.A)
- Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category. (K.MD.B)
- Measure lengths indirectly and by iterating length units. (1.MD.A)

Number and Operations - Fractions

- Develop understanding of fractions as numbers for fractions with denominators 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8. (3.NF.A)

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Curricular Connections, continued

Mathematics, continued

Ratios and Proportional Relationships

- Understand ratio and rate concepts and use ratio and rate reasoning to solve problems. (6.RP.A)
- Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems. (7.RP.A)

World Languages Standards

Communication

- Engage in, negotiate with, and improvise with cultural norms, etiquette, and nonverbal cues. (S.4.e)

Linguistic Cultures

- Analyze and evaluate variations among products and practices and how they relate to perspectives in multiple cultures and communities. (S.5.a)
- Analyze and evaluate the contributions of various cultural influences in the development of identity. (S.5.b)
- Investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of culture through comparisons of diverse target-language cultures and their own (S.6.a)

Lifelong Learning

- Research, analyze, evaluate, and hypothesize about diverse perspectives and distinctive viewpoints found in authentic materials from target-language cultures. (S.7.b)
- Apply cultural and linguistic skills to participate in the school, local, and global community (S.8.a)

