



City Lore CASA Program
Residency Unit Plan

RESIDENCY: Storytelling Arts of West Africa: Song, Drumming & Percussion

CONTACTS:

Lead Teaching Artist: Harold Akyeampong
School: PS 274, 800 Bushwick Ave., Bushwick, Brooklyn
Principal: Ms. Olliviera
School Contact: Mrs. Perez, Assistant Principal
Classroom Teacher: Ms. Suerte
City Lore Contact: Amanda Dargan, Education Director
W: 212.529.1955 x14
Email: adargan@citylore.org

CREDITS:

All programs, brochures, flyers, posters, similar printed matter, or announcements relating to the services provided in this program should include the following credit: "This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

OVERVIEW:

In this residency students learn about the importance of folktale and folk music/song traditions in West African communities and their relevance for contemporary America. Students learn about the forms, characters, and community contexts where stories are told in these communities. They explore a variety of African percussion instruments and musical styles associated with folktales and understand how these instruments can be used to tell stories. Students learn how to play simple rhythms and make different tones on African percussion instruments, with a focus on the djembe drum. They explore the relationship between folktales, music, song, drama and culture. The residency culminates with a performance, titled "Ananse and the Drum" where students will retell several Ananse stories through drumming, dance, song, and drama.

INQUIRY QUESTION:

How can we tell stories through Music and Song? How do we tell stories differently through these arts from those told through words and pictures?

ARTS LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn/understand:

- The interrelationship of storytelling, music, song and drama in Ghanaian communities.

- The roles that storytelling, music, song, and drumming play in Ghanaian society and the roles they have played in African diaspora communities in the Americas
- Connections between the themes and characters in the Ananse stories to stories that they know
- Proper techniques for playing African percussion instruments, with a focus on the djembe drum

Students will be able to:

- Listen closely to an oral telling of Ananse stories from West Africa and retell the story in their own words
- Identify the main characters and main idea of the stories and make connections to stories in their own families and communities
- Sing songs from Ghana individually and as part of an ensemble
- Play different tones and rhythms on the djembe drum and other African percussion instruments
- Convey the main idea and characters in a story through drumming and song
- Retell stories using narration, drum rhythms and songs, along with dance, for an audience as part of an ensemble

NYC DOE BLUEPRINT FOR THE ARTS:

Music Making:

- Students will learn to play the djembe drum and other African percussion instruments using proper technique
- Students will learn to play several basic rhythms and different tones and use these to tell an Ananse story from West Africa
- Students will learn proper technique for striking the drum with their hands to produce different tones

Music Literacy:

- Students learn the language and terms of music and percussion: rhythm, tempo, tone, break, call and response, polyrhythm

Making Connections:

- Students understand that music and dance play important roles in West African cultural groups and communities
- Students understand the relationship between music and dance
- Students build strong content knowledge about communities in the West African country of Ghana
- Students understand the traditional music expresses cultural values and history

Careers and Lifelong Learning:

- Students learn how their TA learned drumming in both informal and formal settings
- Students learn about their TA's career path to becoming a musician and a teacher
- Students learn that becoming a musician teaches important life skills beyond the skills of playing music

KEY CONCEPTS and VOCABULARY:

Key concepts:

- Music has been essential in allowing peoples from different cultures to finding better ways of coexisting together.
- Ghanaian storytelling and music making is always about the community and group participation
- The music of Africa and the Americas is a result of this process in constant change and evolution.

Vocabulary:

- “Agoo” and “Amee”- A Call to Attention - Words from Ghana that have been made popular in America by the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Dance Africa program.
- Percussion - Any instrument that produces sounds through hitting, scrapping and shaking.
- Call and Response - An African performance technique that is used when there is a musical conversation between instruments, groups of instruments or singers.
- Oral Tradition - messages or stories transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another.
- Improvisation - to create something on the spot.
- Anansi/Ananse - A trickster spider character featured in many folktales in Africa and in the African diaspora.

MATERIAL RESOURCES:

School will provide:

- Space with room for students to sit in a circle with their drums and chairs for the instructor and teacher assisting with the program
- Projector to show images of Ghana and musical instruments and performances
- World Map

Teaching Artist will provide:

- Selection of small percussion instruments played in West African music
- Large djembe drum for TA
- Images of Ghana for projection

City Lore will provide:

- Age appropriate children’s book versions of Anansi stories from West Africa
- Small djembe drums for each student
- Fabric, tee shirts, animal masks & headdresses, and art supplies and stage set materials for final show

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Each residency session will include: 1) a warm-up activity to prepare our bodies and minds for learning and making music; 2) a review of the previous lesson; 3) a

demonstration by the TA of a new skill, technique, song, rhythm, or story; 4) time for students to practice the new material; and 5) a discussion for students to reflect on what they learned, make connections to their own cultures and the music/stories/songs they listen to, and ask questions.

SESSION 1: What is Percussion?

INTRODUCTION: TA introduces himself and gives an overview of what students will be learning and doing in the residency. Classroom promises and expectations are also discussed. Students introduce themselves with a name game that introduces the concept of rhythm and percussion.

DEMONSTRATION: What is percussion? TA shows different percussion instruments from his country, Ghana and French West Africa. He demonstrates the sounds that can be made on each instrument depending on how they are struck and how they are made. He asks students to listen closely to the sounds and describe the differences. By learning the history of these instruments students understand how African folk music connects to the contemporary Black Diaspora music.

DISCUSSION: Can you name and describe other percussion instruments? What are these instruments made out of?

ACTIVITY: Students play African percussion instruments and found objects to make different sounds and play a simple rhythm

SESSION 2: Africa Is Not A Country; It Is a Continent

Students learn to say the attention getting call and response “Agoo” and “Amee”. TA talks about the role of call and response in West African music and song and demonstrates examples.

Students are introduced to the Geography of Africa. They locate Africa on a world map and identify the countries of West Africa. TA projects images of Ghana, the West African country where he was born, including images of drumming and dance in community settings. He discusses the role music and dance play in everyday life and in special occasions.

Students learn about a membranophone from West Africa called Djembe. They learn how to create different tones on the drum depending on where and how they strike the drum with their hands. They learn to play a basic version of the West African Rhythm called Kakaduedui.

SESSIONS 3, 4, 5: Kodzi Kodzi (Ghana Folktales and Singing)

TA introduces the students to Folktale traditions in Ghana by describing the major elements of stories and how and when they are told in family and community settings. He introduces the trickster spider character, Ananse, and tells a story that features Ananse.

Asks students if they have heard other stories or seen shows or films that feature trickster characters.

Students learn to sing an African song, “Agya Adade” .

Students compare the elements in the music to social justice themed Hip-Hop songs and rhythms and learn the connections between African folk music and socially conscious Hip-Hop music as being about social change.

SESSIONS 6, 7, 8, 9: Everybody Bring Your Calabash

Students listen to the tapes of a popular Ghanaian childrens’ folktale and the song “Calabash”.

Students learn the basic Calabash beat and the song.

Students are divided into groups to practice performing the Calabash story.

Students practice the Calabash beat and the song.

Students perform the Calabash story with dumming and song for peer review.

SESSIONS 10, 11, & 12 : Bamaaya

TA narrates the Bamaaya Story and guides students to listen closely then learn to sing the associated song, “Bamaaya”.

Students are divided into groups to practice the song.

Students are introduced to the basic rhythms of Bamaaya

Students practice the rhythms and learn to sing “Sa Sa Sa”.

SESSIONS 13, 14, 15, 16 : Ananse and the Drum

Ms. Suerte introduces the students to the dramatic story that will open the performance of the Ananse stories from West Africa.

We discuss the common themes and characters in this story to the Ananse stories we will perform on the drums and through dance.

We discuss the elements of the story (setting, characters, conflict/resolution, moral of the story) and the role each character plays.

Students are assigned roles and practice drum rhythms associated with their character and role.

Students learn different musical pieces to accompany and help to tell the story:
Osibeiku Ayabofo, Adjongu Bolanbo

Students perform the story for peer review.

SESSION 17: Putting It All Together

Working with TAs and our classroom teacher we will combine some of the stories, songs, and rhythms we have learned together for a final ensemble piece that demonstrates how we have learned to convey the characters, settings, plots, and moral of each story through the different art forms.

Students review their characters and the stories they are telling for the show.

Discuss: What worked well? What do we need to improve for the show? Have we told our stories in a way that our audience will understand?

SESSIONS 18, 19, 20: Rehearsals

We will meet in the auditorium to have run-through rehearsals in the auditorium to get familiar with the space and know where to sit and enter the stage the day of the culminating event. Students will receive the costume and instrument they will play at the performance.

We will discuss and practice skills and behaviors for working as an ensemble and performing for a live audience

Feedback from teaching artists and other school staff and peer reflections on how we're conveying our characters and telling our stories.

SESSION 21, 22: Culminating Performances

Students will wear costumes, face paint and other props and percussion instruments to perform for the school and for families and friends. They will perform with their teaching artists, Harold Aykeamong and Yahaya Kamate.

SESSION 23: Reflections on Our Work

Students reflect on their experience in the residency and what they learned with both teaching artists, Harold Akyeamong and Yahaya Kamate.