

# Study Guide for Teachers

## Ginga Brasileira *Free to Dance*

presented by  
Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA  
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[www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)



### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

*Lindo Maravilhoso!* Beautiful, Marvelous! Travel from Brazil's 16th-century slave plantation to Rio's Carnival in an exploration of Afro-Brazilian culture through dance. Efraim Silva and his dancers dazzle students with their infectious rhythms and physical prowess, combining dance and the martial arts. The history, culture, and arts of Brazil become tangible for students in this exuberant

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

This program showcases samba, Brazil's national dance, as well capoeira, combining dance and martial arts, and the Maculele, a stick dance from the Brazilian sugar cane plantations.

Samba, a Brazilian dance with many variations, is African in origin. It has been performed as a street dance at carnival for almost 100 years. Many versions are danced at the local carnival in Rio, during which there are "schools of Samba" involving thousands of elaborately costumed dancers performing to music of Brazil and Rio in particular.

Capoeira was created by African slaves in Brazil approximately 400 years ago as a martial art. Capoeira brings together dance, self-defense, and music. More than a martial art, Capoeira is also a social event filled with tradition and history.

The origins of Maculele are shrouded in mystery, and there are many stories, theories, and beliefs. One version of the story is that during the slavery era in Brazil the slaves in the sugarcane plantations would gather and play Maculele as a game to vent their anger and frustration at being slaves. At this time, machetes were used instead of sticks. Sticks were later incorporated for safety reasons.

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will

Be introduced to the history, culture, and arts of Brazil.

Understand the importance of discipline and physical well-being.

Participate in a climate of multicultural

### VOCABULARY WORDS

**Capoeira:** An Afro-Brazilian art form that is a mixture of dance, self-defense, and gymnastics.

**Maculele:** A stick dance form created by African slaves on Brazilian sugar cane plantations.

**Samba:** National music and dance of Brazil; the heartbeat of the Brazilian people. It is the heart and soul of the carnival, the exciting Brazilian festivity that celebrates life and music for five days and five nights every year on the streets of Brazil.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

1. Brainstorm a list of things that students know about Brazil. Then create a list of things they want to know. Take some time to explore a few of the things on the "want to know" list before the performance. Leave space for what they will learn during the performance.
2. Ask your students about their own experience with and exposure to dance. Have they ever seen a live dance performance before? If so, what was their reaction to it? What do they expect to see during this performance?
3. Take some time to discuss breakdancing. What do students know about it? What kinds of movements are used in breakdancing? Capoeira, a martial art form used by Caribbean slaves in combat to escape the plantations of the 1800s, shares many elements with breakdancing. Do any students breakdance or do another kind of informal dancing? Do any of the students do more formal dancing on a regular basis (i.e., Are any of them involved in ballet, tap dance, or other dance activities?).
4. Get the music teacher involved! Have students listen to Brazilian music and explore the rhythms that are so important to the various dances from this country.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

1. Discuss the performance. Ask the students about their favorite parts of the performance. In what ways was this type of dance different/the same as other dances they've seen before?
2. Discuss how capoeira and breakdancing are similar and different. Do any of your students study a form of martial arts? If so, ask them to share how their practice is similar or different from capoeira.
3. Dance and music can have a powerful effect on our emotions. Have students discuss or write about how the dances in the program made them feel. Encourage them to use detailed and descriptive language.
4. Dance can be an expression of a variety of cultures and traditions. For example, the polka, waltz, reel, clog, and tap dancing each originates from different American cultural and historical traditions. Ask students to explore any dance traditions which form part of their family's history, culture, or traditions. Have students research that country's/culture's dance form and other traditional art forms.

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

Efraim Silva, director of Ginga Brasileira, was born in Guarujá, São Paulo, Brazil. He started to practice Capoeira at age 13 and became an instructor at 17. He also studied Brazilian folk dance and music, particularly Maculele and Samba. He had his own academy of dance in Brazil until he moved to the United States in 1990. Since that time he has been dazzling audiences with his performances at schools, colleges, theaters, and festivals across the United States.

Silva has been awarded state and federal certification as a professional musician and rhythmist and was awarded a Master of Capoeira certificate by the São Paulo Federation of Capoeira in 1994.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Samba Dance History:**

[https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Samba\\_Dance\\_History](https://dance.lovetoknow.com/Samba_Dance_History)

### **Capoeira History**

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/capoeira-occult-martial-art-international-dance-180964924/>

### **Maculele History:**

<http://capoeiraworld.blogspot.com/2011/05/history-of-maculele.html>

Liz Gogerly, *Dance Culture: Brazilian Dance*.

Roselyn Sanchez and Eric Winter, *Sebi and the Land of Cha Cha Cha*.