

Study Guide for Teachers

Rhythm Poets In *Samba to Salsa*

Presented by

Young Audiences

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Rhythm Poets present a dynamic percussion performance showing the connections between verbal language and music, and the places that percussion can be found in their everyday lives (ie: movies, cartoons, sounds of windshield wipers in a car). The program introduces students to a variety of Latin and Brazilian percussion instruments played at a high level as well as songs with a strong focus on audience participation and active listening.

LEARNING GOALS

- Students will be introduced to a variety of percussion instruments
- Students will understand how these instruments are used to communicate
- Students will experience professional musicians playing at a high level
- Students will see how music, like language, dance and the visual arts, is a form of communication as well as a vital means of preserving social history and cultural heritage.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Percussion plays a role in many cultures from around the world. The first drums were log drums made from hollowed out trees and struck with sticks. There were also “stomping pits” which were hole dug in the ground covered by wooden boards and animal skin and jumped on producing a booming drum sound. Sounds are produced from objects by striking, shaking, or scraping them. Groups like “Stomp” have become very popular using found objects (trash cans, booms, buckets, car parts) to create music and change the way we think about percussion. Many of the traditional Latin and Brazilian percussion is taught in the “aural tradition” where the information is taught by verbally saying the parts before you play them on the instrument. “Drum Language” is universal and can connect people who normally may not be able to communicate with words.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Pandiero- the Brazilian version of a tamborine that has a skin

Conga- type of barrel shaped hand drum

Samba- Style of music from Brazil

Cajon- box drum played with hands coming from the word “caja” (box in Spanish)

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

- Students can bring in a found object and explore striking, shaking, or scraping it. Some ideas for percussion instruments are:
 - Wood blocks, sticks or stones (sharp sounds)
 - Fingers, palms, sticks (beaters)
 - Wastebaskets, kitchen pans, tin cans table tops (drumming)
 - Tin cans, margarine containers or paper bags filled with pebbles or sand (shaking sounds)
 - Clap, snap, stamp tap, pop or cluck (body sounds)
 - Bells, water glasses, or large bolts (rings sounds)
- Have students research Samba, Cajon (box drum), Conga, Latin percussion, and Pandiero. Have your students write down an observation or a question they might have during the assembly.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

Have students construct a rhythm using words by playing the syllables of the words.

For Example have your students say: **RICE-TACO-TACO-RICE**

Have students arrange a rhythm using the Pandiero language taught during the assembly such as:

Doom, Doom, Tic-tic-tic

Make your own percussion instruments!

- Have students find objects that resonate at different pitches when struck by a pencil. Arrange these objects in a row, placed according to pitch (high to low). Examine these objects to determine why some produce high tones and others, low tones – and why some are more resonant than others. Use these instruments to perform an original composition.
- Replace the percussive instruments with drinking glasses filled with varying levels of water. Create a melody in which one student plays a pattern that others imitate exactly; then, not so exactly to create a “call-and-response,” or solo/improvisational sequence.

RESOURCES

Stomp DVD

Pulse DVD

Evelyn Glennie “Touch the Sound”

ARTIST INFORMATION

Josh Robinson is a native of Woodstock NY who has been working as a Percussionist and teaching artist for the past 11 years. He is currently a member of "Alo Brasil", a popular Philadelphia based Brazilian band, "Spoken Hand percussion orchestra", a group that fuses Cuban, Brazilian, African, and Indian drumming traditions, and "Rhythms & Roots" Latin ensemble, a group that he co-founded back in 2000. He was selected to the Philadelphia Music Project's Latin orchestra led by famed bandleader Johnny Pacheco. He is a teaching artist with numerous arts organizations including the NJ & PA state council on the Arts, where he facilitates residencies, workshops, and professional development programs for people of all ages.

Francois Zayas is a composer, arranger and percussionist. Born in Cuba, Zayas graduated from the ISA (Instituto Superior de Artes) in 1998 and taught at that institution for nearly five years. He was a member of the National Symphonic Orchestra of Cuba for 10 years while collaborating with different projects and bands from diverse backgrounds such as Jazz, Hip Hop, Rock and other genres. From 1994 to his establishment in the USA, in 2006, he made several international tours with different groups. In the last 6 years he has collaborated with many musicians, choreographers and educators, sometimes with his own arrangements or original compositions, at other times as an instrumentalist.

Alex Shaw is a percussionist, vocalist, composer, and arts educator specializing in Brazilian music traditions. He holds a B.A. from Swarthmore College (2000) and is a member of Philadelphia's award-winning Spoken Hand Percussion Orchestra and Director of the renowned Brazilian ensemble, Alô Brasil. A freelance arts educator since 2001, Alex regularly teaches and performs throughout the tri-state region and joined the music faculty at the University of the Arts in 2010. He currently serves as board member for LiveConnections.org, as well as a lead facilitator for their music education programming.