

Study Guide For Teachers

Rockcreek Steel Drum Band *In* **The Birth of Steel Drum Music**

Presented by

Young Audiences

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Rockcreek Steel Drum's Band, "Bermuda Blue" takes the audience on a journey through the development of the modern steel drum instrument. The story starts in the small Caribbean Island of Trinidad in the 1940's with roots spreading back to the traditional "Talking Drums" of Africa. Bermuda Blue demonstrates the different types of steel drums and other Caribbean instruments while playing Calypso music. Students join the band to play steel drums and tamboo bamboo. Students will leave with an appreciation and understanding of steel drum music, the instrument and its history and culture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Steel pans (steel drums) were created on the Caribbean island of Trinidad in the 1930s, but steel pan history can be traced back to the enslaved Africans who were brought to the islands during the 1700s. They carried with them elements of their African culture including the playing of hand drums. These drums became the main percussion instruments in the annual Trinidadian carnival festivities.

LEARNING GOALS

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of music as an essential aspect of history and human experience.
- Students will develop the ability to recognize music as a form of individual and cultural expression.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to perceive, perform, and respond to music.
- Experience performance through singing and playing instruments in general, vocal, and instrumental settings, and listening to performances of others.
- Students will understand how people in the United States and around the world are alike and different.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Print out the map from the “every culture” website listed in the resource list to show the shape and culture of Trinidad and its location in the Caribbean.

Watch the Pete Seeger documentary (see the list of resources). Have students discuss the condition of the villages and the differences in the culture of Trinidad and the United States.

AFTER THE PROGRAM

Use the information on this site <http://www.steelpan-steeldrums-information.com/> to explore the different types of steel drums in a steel drum orchestra and how they each work together to produce the full orchestra sound.

Have students discuss their favorite songs from the assembly. Why did they choose specific songs? Why not others? What did they like about the music/lyrics?

Print out an image of the currency of Trinidad. The steel drum is so important that country’s culture that they have put it on their money. Have students discuss what things in our culture are important enough to go on our currency.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Talking Drum - a drum from Africa that can make high and low pitches that mimic speech

Oral History - history told from one generation to the next without being written down

Call and Response - singing method where leader sings a line and group sings a response

Tambo Bamboo - percussive sounds made from pounding bamboo poles on the ground

Caribbean Islands - a group of islands south of The United States and North of South America

Trinidad - an island country in The Caribbean where steel drums instruments were first built

Carnival - a winter celebration in The Caribbean equivalent to Mardi Gras in the United States

Panorama - an annual national steel drum band contest in Trinidad during Carnival

Steel Drum Instrument - a steel drum barrel hammered and shaped to produce musical pitches

Steel Drum Orchestra - an orchestra made up of different types of steel drum instruments

ARTIST INFORMATION

Kevin Martin has been playing, building, and teaching people to play steel drum instruments for over twenty years. Kevin founded Rockcreek Steel Drums in 1998 as a steel drum musical instrument manufacturing company with an educational branch. Rockcreek Steel Drums has built and sold thousands of steel drum instruments in over 40 countries around the world and in almost every state in the US. Kevin has also played thousands of steel drum performances and brought his workshops to festivals, events, and schools. Kevin works to spread the experience of playing steel drums and the history of this great instrument born in Trinidad.

RESOURCES

This fifteen minute film shows city life in Trinidad in the early 1960’s during the early years of steel drum instruments. It shows them being made and played. A wonderful and short documentary. You may need to download this to your computer ahead of time to play it in your classroom.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PM7JjNwKg3s>

An excellent informational site about the steel drum, including history, information on the types of steel drums and steel drum orchestras.

<http://www.steelpan-steeldrums-information.com/>

This is an excellent brief history of the steel drum instrument told through the life story of one of its founders, Ellie Mannette.

www.pas.org/experience/halloffame/MannetteElliot.aspx

This website provides a free touch-play keyboard with steel drum sound samples used for each pitch. It is a fun way to explore the sound of the instrument on a traditional keyboard layout.

www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_fpf/client_fpf/ks2/music/piano/steel_drums.htm

This webpage gives a good basic overview of the culture, history and geography

<http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Trinidad-and-Tobago.html>