

Program Name: African Playground

Artist: The Traditional Music Society

Special Requirements:

Wood floor or stage (24' x 28' preferred); dressing area; PA system with five microphones on boom stands; large world map (or map of Africa); area should be clean and clear of students 30 minutes before performance. Note: If a wood floor is not available, program content is adjusted for lower impact dance styles.



Performance Description

Children all over the world learn as they play. This universal concept is explored by The Traditional Music Society in this performance of *African Playground*.

Students embark on an exciting journey to the West African countries of Senegal, Gambia, and Liberia. The ensemble engages audience members with their examples of what African children do for fun and enjoyment. They perform songs and stories that tell about the life of children in an African village. In addition to running, jumping, and skipping, African children play rhythmic hand-clapping and foot-stomping games.

They also sing songs and dance traditional dance steps.

During this performance, students are taught African dialects and learn traditional basic greetings. In addition, the audience is introduced to the various percussion instruments as they learn “Drum language” (phonetic phrases) to better understand the rhythms.

At the end of the performance, the audience has an opportunity to learn basic African dance steps and gets a chance to participate with the ensemble in a re-creation of West African playground activities.

Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of how children spend their days in West Africa.
- Understand the importance of music and dance to West African society.
- Recognize the value of cooperation in music and dance.

Behavioral Studies:

- Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior

Dance:

- Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods.

Artist Bio: The Traditional Music Society



Bird Fleming developed his interest in music and drumming in his fifth grade band class. Since his parents could not afford a drum set, he played the bongos. By the age of 20, Bird was proficient in a variety of African and Afro-Cuban instruments. His career then led to him San Francisco where he performed and studied traditional hand drumming.

After moving to Kansas City in 1981, Bird began performing

traditional music in schools, community centers, and universities throughout the metropolitan area. He formed The Traditional Music Society, an arts organization devoted to multi-cultural arts education. This organization, composed of musicians and dancers sharing a similar background in folk music, has developed programs that teach students about different cultures through music and dance.

List of Resources:

Books:

[The Healing Drum: African Wisdom Teachings](#) by Yaya Diallo, Mitch Hall
Destiny Books; (January 1, 1990)
ISBN: 0892812567

[The Drummer's Path: Moving the Spirit With Ritual and Traditional Drumming](#)
by Sule Greg Wilson
Destiny Books; (August 1, 1992)
ISBN: 0892813598

[The Healing Power of the Drum](#)
by Robert Lawrence Friedman
White Cliffs Media;
(September 2000)
ISBN: 0941677877

[Ritual: Power, Healing, and Community](#)
by Malidoma Patrice Some
Penguin Books; (December 1, 1997)
ISBN: 0140195580

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022
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Vocabulary

Call and response: African musical concept in which a singer or musician answers a call from another singer or musician.

Djembe (pronounced 'jim bey'): A goblet or vase-shaped, single-headed hand drum played with the whole hand.

Jambo: Swahili greeting meaning hello.

Jeli (a.k.a. griot:) The name for the African historian who is the record-keeper, counselor, mediator, master dancer and second in power to a king or queen.

Jun-jun: West African bass drum played with two sticks.

Oral tradition: A method of passing down history and tradition through songs and stories rather than the written word.

Post-Performance Activities

1. Discuss the music and dance you saw today. What role did music and dance play in West African society? What is the role of music and dance today in our country? How is the program you saw similar to the music and dance you have seen in this country? How is it different?
2. Africans used music to celebrate harvests, the arrival of guests, and everyday life from lullabies to songs to accompany chores. Examine the role of music in your own life. Do you use special songs or music on special occasions? What music do you find stimulating, motivating, or soothing?
3. How else do you use music, and what are its effects on your everyday life?

