

Program Name: Anansi the Spider

Artist: Harlan Brownlee

Special Requirements:

A large, clear space for dancing, preferably a gymnasium or multi-purpose room

Special Points of Interest:

To the Ashanti, a child is said to inherit the father's soul or spirit (ntoro) and from the mother a child receives flesh and blood (mogya)

Other programs by this artist:

- The Giving Tree
- Simple Machines: Bodies in Motion
- Rain Forest
- Weather on the Move

Workshop Description

Anansi the Spider is a wise, funny, mischievous, and loveable folk hero who recurs in traditional Ashanti tales from Ghana, in West Africa. This story relates the tale of father Anansi and his six spider sons. When Anansi sets out on a dangerous journey and gets into trouble, each son does one thing to help, and all their efforts together save their father.

Teaching Artist Harlan Brownlee helps the students bring Anansi and his sons to life as she introduces the students to the concept of communicating through shapes. Harlan helps them define their Space Bubble, then leads the group through the creation of low,

medium, and high shapes. The participants expand upon their creations by forming shapes based on the characters of Anansi and his sons. The students observe each others' shapes and choose one to represent each character in the book.

The students explore the movement of time (fast and slow), space (high, medium, and low levels), and energy (percussive, sustained, swinging, and vibratory) through the characters they create.

The program ends with the students performing a dance based on the book *Anansi the Spider* using the shapes and movement qualities practiced in the class.



Curriculum Connections & Educational Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the main idea or message in visual media
- Have a greater understanding of the way in which shape can communicate meaning
- Demonstrate motif and variation with six basic shapes
- Use movement and dance to communicate a feeling, idea, or story
- Be able to discuss characters and their actions in stories



Artist Bio: Harlan Brownlee

Harlan Brownlee understands the transformational power that the arts have to improve the quality of life for individuals and the community. Brownlee has worked for 35 years in the arts education field as a performing artist, teaching artist, and arts administrator.

Mr. Brownlee is on the Kennedy Center's National touring roster for the Changing Education Through the Arts program and has conducted professional development, workshops, and residencies extensively in the Midwest and throughout the United States. Most recently, Harlan was chosen as a presenter for Project Lead the Way's National Conferences and awarded a 2019 Young Audiences National Residency Teaching Artist Credential.

He has designed and implemented hundreds of lesson plans instructing a weekly class at Community School #1 that integrates dance and movement with an emphasis on the subject areas of science and literacy. Harlan has instructed pre-service teachers as an adjunct professor for Rockhurst University's School of Education and the University of Missouri – Kansas City's School of Education.

Mr. Brownlee received his B.F.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and his M.A. from University of Missouri – Kansas City. His performance background includes work for thirteen years as one of the Artistic Co-Directors with City in Motion Dance Theater in Kansas City, Missouri.

List of Resources:

Books:

Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti (An Owlet Book)
Henry Holt & Company, Inc.,
March 1987
ISBN: 0805003118

Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions
by Margaret W. Musgrove ,
Leo Dillon (Illustrator), Diane Dillon (Illustrator)
Puffin, July 1992
ISBN: 0140546049

Talk, Talk: An Ashanti Legend (Legends of the World)
by Deborah M. Newton
Chocolate,
Dave Albers (Illustrator),
Troll Assoc (Lib.) January 1993
ISBN: 0816728178



Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022
KCya.org

Vocabulary

Body shapes: the spatial contour the body makes, such as curved, angular, twisted, or straight

Choreograph: the work or skill of planning dance movement to accompany music

Energy: an element of dance; the force and quality of movement defined by the degree of impetus and effort

Motif: an important and sometimes recurring theme or idea in a work of literature

Movement phrase: dance sequences that have a sense of completion

Space Bubble: the kinesphere that one occupies; it includes all levels, planes, and directions both near and far from the body's center

Spatial concept: one's relationship to the space around them

Post-Workshop Activities

1. Practice the movements learned in the workshop. Try to create new shapes inspired by the characters in the story.
2. Move the shapes through space using different locomotors. Try moving slowly or quickly.
3. Practice progressive relaxation which is the sequential tightening and releasing of muscles.