THE EXCITEMENT OF DANCE, MUSIC, THEATRE AND STORYTELLING COMES TO YOU!

WE TELL STORIES
The Spirit of Black Folklore
LET’S GET STARTED!

Enclosed is a packet of information about the scheduled program. Please review all of the documents carefully, as they are the materials you will need to sponsor a successful program.

THE DAILY SCHEDULE

It is important that the daily schedule be maintained as specified on the confirmation document. If special circumstances occur once the project has begun, notify Music Center staff as soon as possible. Changes may be accommodated pending artist availability (which can be limited). We request that all participants be seated in the performance area and ready to begin at the scheduled times.

STUDENT SUPERVISION AT SCHOOL SITES

In accordance with California law, The Music Center requires that a classroom teacher be present with students at all times. It is expected that teachers will attend events with their class and actively participate in the learning experience.

YOUR FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

About a week after the performance, you’ll receive an invoice in the mail. You have 30 days to pay upon receipt of the invoice. We do ask that you wait until you receive the invoice before sending payment.

ARTIST INTRODUCTION & STAGING REQUIREMENTS

Please introduce the artist with the enclosed introduction. There is also specific information you will need to prepare for the arrival of each artist. Please give the tech sheet to the school personnel in charge of setting up the performance area well in advance of the scheduled dates. Be sure to have ready any equipment which may be required.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

These pre- and post-event classroom activities are designed to enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the program. Please duplicate this preparation material and distribute to all teachers whose students will be attending the event to allow them to fully prepare the students.

PRESS RELEASE AND POSTER

A pre-made press release is available should you wish to publicize the event. A premade poster is also included so that your school community can be aware of the upcoming event.

We applaud your commitment to arts education and look forward to working with you.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call us at 213-972-4310.
"I would like to introduce today's performance which is presented by the Music Center of Los Angeles County. This performance is titled The Spirit of Black Folklore and features We Tell Stories. These actors are going to tell you some African and African American folktales. Folktales were originally told to teach lessons. So see if you can figure out the lessons these stories have to teach. Please welcome We Tell Stories!"

Feel free to encourage the adult members of your audience to share the experience on social media!
Tag us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram at @MusicCenterLA and we might repost your photos!
SPACE
- 15' wide x 15' deep minimum
- Portable stages must be sturdy, level and securely lashed

SURFACE
- Freshly mopped (not waxed)
- Irregularities covered with tape
- Extraneous clutter removed

OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE
- The area must be shaded, sheltered from wind, and away from distractions

DRESSING AREA
One dressing room (not a restroom) near the stage

EQUIPMENT
- One microphone with stand for indoor performances.
- Three microphones for outdoor performances

AUDIENCE SEATING
- Need at least one aisle in the audience, for access to and from the stage.

ARRIVAL
- 15-30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time to prepare and set up

PARKING
- Three spaces close to the venue for loading and unloading

ASSISTANCE
- Please have a school representative ready to welcome the performers and to stay and help as needed.

START TIME
- Please prepare to start the program on time
- Students should be in the venue, seated and ready to begin at the listed times
WE TELL STORIES— “The Spirit of Black Folklore”

ART FORM: Storytelling/Theater
STYLE: Contemporary
CULTURE: African, African American

MEET THE ARTIST:

We Tell Stories is a multi-ethnic storytelling troupe founded by Artistic Director Carl Weintraub. The company has a threefold purpose: to entertain and educate children through the literature, folklore, and mythology of all times and cultures; to expose them to the processes of language and acting as art forms; and to inspire them to plumb the depths and reach the heights of their own creativity. To this end, the group diligently seeks fresh material and performs it with an extemporaneous flavor, encouraging children to participate in their minds, from their seats, and on the stage. In this way, the children see themselves as an integral part of the process, not only witnessing, but also experiencing the stories’ morals, the art, and the fun. An old trunk filled with props and costumes is the solitary set, and it is the group’s hope that the audiences go away saying to themselves, “I could do that!” And, perhaps they will!

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

The Spirit of Black Folklore features the work of black writers, as well as anonymous tales from the black folk traditions. The central themes explored are: depth of spirit; ethnic pride; and the willingness to laugh when things go wrong. Their repertoire includes: “John Henry,” the African American folk hero who is pitted against a machine; “Akimba and the Magic Cow,” a story about friendship and greed; and “The Lion in the Well,” a Brother Rabbit story about overcoming the oppressor. Sometimes, “Signifying’ Monkey,” by Oscar Brand Jr., is also included. It is a poem that has evolved from folk tale to early American urban street poetry. A trio of actors uses the company’s signature trunk of costumes and props to create the magic and bring the stories to life.

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

African American, or black folk tales, originated with the people who were brought from Africa to this country against their will. Torn from their families, cultures, languages and customs, they were forced to work as slaves. The slave owners forced them to speak English, but forbade them to learn to read or write it. Thus, the folktales that grew out of their experiences mingled their native African rhythms with the new language they were learning. Memories and customs from the old world of Africa became blended over time with the cultural contacts the plantation slaves made in their new world. This resulted in a rich body of folk expression about the slaves and their experiences. They created tales in which various animals -- such as rabbit, fox, bear, wolf, turtle (terrapin), snake and possum -- took on the characteristics of the people found in the new environment of the plantation. The rabbit, known as B’rabbity and later called Brer, Buh, or Bruh Rabbit, became a particular favorite of the slave tellers. Rabbit was small and apparently helpless compared to the powerful bear, the wily fox and the ferocious wolf. But the slave teller made the rabbit smart, tricky and clever -- the winner over larger and stronger animals. Still, Bruh Rabbit sometimes got into trouble, just as the slaves did, which made him seem all the more human. Over time, the slaves identified with Bruh Rabbit, making these tales highly unusual in the animal folklore genre. After the Civil War, a slave character, usually called John, often took the place of Bruh Rabbit in the tales. John became the trickster hero who outwits ‘Old Mas,’ the slave owner, and wins his freedom.

A group of slave narratives that were true tales of escape also developed, as did tales of magic, fantasy escape, and the supernatural. These folktales were once a creative way for an oppressed people to express their fears and hopes to one another. They were created out of sorrow, but the hearts and minds of the Black people who formed them expanded them, passing them on with love and hope. Ultimately, we must look on the tales as a celebration of the human spirit.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

• Do you think it important to study the stories and cultures of people different from ourselves? Why or why not?

• Which story or poem from the performance did you like the best? Give reasons why.

• In what countries, cities, towns or countryside were the stories set? Can you identify any of these places on a map?

• In what ways did the actors use costumes or props? How were these ideas creative and imaginative?

• Did any of the stories have expressions, or figures of speech, that are different than you have heard before?

• What have you learned about other cultures from the stories included in today’s performance? Cite specific examples.

• Would you like to hear, or read, more folk tales from Africa and African American origins? From other cultures? Explain your answer.

FRAMEWORK FOCUS—LANGUAGE ARTS:

Listen to a musical sample of jazz, a genre (style) of music that has its roots in Africa. This indigenous American art form was developed in New Orleans, Louisiana near the turn of the 20th century. Created from a melting pot of cultures and experiences, the core of its revolutionary musical sound came from the blues, but also incorporated ideas and aesthetic values from Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. Jazz has various types, such as swing, bebop, progressive, rock and Latin.

Watch sections of the video documentary “Jazz,” by Ken Burns. Play selections of works by jazz legends: Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane. Point out, and discuss, how improvisation is used by jazz musicians. Make a connection to the way the actors used improvisation to tell stories in The Spirit of Black Folklore.

LEGEND

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CONTENT STANDARD STRANDS

★ Artistic perception
● Creative expression
■ Historical & cultural context
◆ Aesthetic valuing
◊ Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

★ Retell one of the folk tales from the performance. Start by dividing the story into three parts: beginning, middle and end. Then list the key scenes which occur in each section. Next, list the main characters and settings. Finally, have students take turns retelling the story in their own words.

● Collect a group of pictures of scenic beauty from Africa and the American South. Choose rural settings, preferably without any people in them. Travel magazines and nature magazines are good sources, as well as picture postcards. Divide the class into small groups and let them choose a picture to work from. They should then devise a story specific to the picture they have chosen, using the folk tales from the performance as models. Give groups 30 minutes to plan and rehearse their stories. Share them with the class.

● Divide the class into small groups and give each group three unrelated words to incorporate as an integral part of an original scene. Give the groups 30 minutes to plan the scene, assign the roles, and rehearse the story, improvising dialogue and action. Suggestions for word combinations:
  - toothbrush - horse - earring
  - paper clip - telephone - baked potato
  - balloon - paintbrush - door knob
  - candle - compass - deck of cards
  - toaster - teddy bear - hammer

❖ Have students read a fairy tale or folk tale from a culture of their ancestry of interest. Share the story with the class using language or story-telling customs unique to the story’s heritage.

❖ Evaluate the performance of The Spirit of Black Folklore using a set of specific criteria. This might include: clear themes; well developed plots; believable characterizations; dramatic appeal; and imaginative use of props and costumes.

❖ Discuss ways that the stories conveyed lessons that might relate to experiences in students’ lives. Divide the class into small groups to role-play selected scenarios that focus on a lesson.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:


___________________________ and THE MUSIC CENTER ANNOUNCE

WE TELL STORIES TO PERFORM ON ____________________________

___________________________ and The Music Center today announced the upcoming We Tell Stories performance. As part of the school’s continuing efforts to enrich its curriculum and its students’ educational experience, the school will present a special performance of We Tell Stories. The performance is presented by The Music Center’s education department which provides many offerings including live performances, classroom workshops, scholarship and training programs, online arts curriculum, on-campus events and professional development.

We Tell Stories is a masterful group of theatre artists, founded in 1981 by children’s theatre innovator Carl Weintraub. The group uses a unique blend of storytelling, audience participation and sometimes original music to bring folklore, literature and mythology from all cultures and times to life. An old trunk filled with homemade props and costumes serves as the vehicle through which sets and characters are created, with ordinary objects transforming to support extraordinary stories. Humor and fantasy enthrall as stories of honesty, friendship, self-esteem and more enlighten all audiences. The professional artists who make up the company of We Tell Stories handle audiences of all age ranges with ease, and consistently deliver first-rate, mad-cap performances with joy and enthusiasm. Whether the viewer is young or simply young at heart, We Tell Stories is sure to capture, entertain and educate.

The Music Center on Tour is the premiere resource for high-quality performing arts performances in Los Angeles County. For more than 35 years, schools and communities have benefited from the program’s roster of diverse and compelling performing artists who serve as models of artistic excellence, inspire creative thinking and introduce young audiences to the world’s diverse cultural traditions. Music Center artists represent and celebrate the finest artistic contribution of the world’s cultures – from the colorful regional dances of Mexico and the exquisite music of the China, to the pulsating rhythms of Brazil and the golden harmonies of 20th century America.

Schools can choose from more than 70 performances in music, dance, theatre and storytelling from an internationally acclaimed roster of artists seen across the globe in films, theaters, concert halls, television shows and museums.

About The Music Center
As L.A.’s performing arts destination, The Music Center is L.A.’s home to the world’s greatest artistic programs and events. With four iconic theaters and four renowned resident companies – Center Theatre Group, the LA Master Chorale, the LA Opera and the LA Philharmonic – and recognized for its illustrious dance programming, Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center, The Music Center is a destination where audiences find inspiration in the very best of live performance, as well as nationally recognized arts education and participatory arts experiences. With The Music Center On Location, the non-profit performing arts organization brings events and activities to locations outside of its Downtown Los Angeles campus. The Music Center also programs and manages Grand Park, a 12-acre adjacent greenspace, with year-round free programming. For more information, visit musiccenter.org Follow The Music Center on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (@MusicCenterLA).

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For more information, please contact The Music Center at 213-972-3338. Members of the media are welcome to cover this performance. Please contact The Music Center prior to sending a reporter or photographer to the school.
THE MUSIC CENTER PRESENTS

WE TELL STORIES

DATE: ______________________  TIME: ______________________

SCHOOL: ______________________

musiccenter.org/ontour
ARTS INTEGRATION PARTNERSHIPS

The Music Center’s teaching artists work in the classroom facilitating student learning and modeling effective instructional strategies for teachers. Essential skills and vocabulary in music, theater, dance, or visual art are connected to universal themes and integrated with other content areas.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Professional Development targets arts integration strategies for K-12 teachers in dance, music, theatre, and visual arts. Teachers learn creative and effective approaches for integrating the arts into their content areas. Additionally, The Music Center offers the Summer Arts Studio for Educators. This program consists of events tailored for classroom teachers, arts teachers and educators.

STUDENT MATINEE PERFORMANCES

Each year Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center offers free student matinee dance performances. All performances include a teacher orientation session and curriculum guide for students.

THE BLUE RIBBON CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

The Blue Ribbon Children’s Festival, designed specifically for fifth grade students, is an annual admission-free program at The Music Center. Students experience a live professional performance at a world-class performing arts center, then gather together to perform a short choreographed dance inspired by the production.

VERY SPECIAL ARTS FESTIVAL

The Very Special Arts Festival is an annual admission-free event celebrating the artistic achievements of students with disabilities and their mainstream peers. The festival features student and professional performances on two stages, visual and performing arts workshops, and a student art exhibit created around a central theme.

SPOTLIGHT

Much more than a competition, Spotlight is a scholarship and training program, which encourages personal and artistic growth, while exploring new possibilities in the arts.

ARTSOURCE®

The Music Center’s Artsource® curriculum is designed to bring the expressive world of the arts into classrooms. The materials are available online free of cost.

OTHER ON CAMPUS MUSIC CENTER OFFERINGS:

Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center, Dance Downtown, Symphonian Campus Tours, Grand Park