

**The Music Center
Performing Artists
in Schools and
Neighborhoods**

**Exciting
Dance
Music
Theatre
Storytelling
Performances
Come 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 host 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, notify The 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.

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 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.

PRESS RELEASE AND POSTER

A template press release is included should you wish to publicize the event. If you wish to use it, simply copy the text into a word document and fill in the blanks with the appropriate information. A premade poster is also included to let your community know about the upcoming event.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

These pre- and post-event classroom activities are designed to deepen the understanding and engagement 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.

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.

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.

Performance Introduction

"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 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

- Sound system with microphone input. If three lavaliers are available, please let the artists know when they arrive.

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 representative ready to welcome the performers and to stay and help as needed.

START TIME

- Please prepare to start the program on time
- Audience 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 diverse storytelling troupe founded by Artistic Director Carl Weintraub. The company has a three-fold 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 Brer 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 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'rabby 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 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*.

California Arts Standards: Artistic Processes

- Cr** Creating
- Pr** Performing/Producing/Presenting
- Re** Responding
- Cn** Connecting

Learn more at:

<https://tinyurl.com/ArtsStandardsCA>

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

Pr Present 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.

Cr Collect a group of pictures of scenic beauty from the continents of Africa and North America. Choose rural settings, preferably without any people in them. Divide the class into small groups and let them choose a picture to work from. They should then develop 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.

Cr 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

Cn Have students read a fairy tale or folk tale from a culture of their ancestry. Share the story with the class using any language or custom unique to the story's heritage.

Re 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.

Cr 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:

The Editors of TIME for Kids Series. *Heros of Black History: Biographies of Four Great Americans*. TIME for Kids, 2017.

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

AND THE MUSIC CENTER ANNOUNCE

WE TELL STORIES TO PERFORM ON _____

_____ and The Music Center today announced the upcoming We Tell Stories performance. 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.

_____ of the prestigious PASA Award for lifetime achievement by professional artists in schools.

For more than 40 years, The Music Center Performing Artists in Schools and Neighborhoods have been the premier resource for high-quality educational performances, offering one of the most compelling and diverse artistic rosters. The Music Center's incredible artists bring the magic of live performance to audiences throughout Los Angeles County, with an emphasis on programs that are an excellent fit for educational and neighborhood settings. All Music Center Performing Artists in Schools and Neighborhoods performances include standards-based curriculum materials that feature background information on the artists and their performance, as well as related classroom activities with connections to multiple curricular disciplines. Schools can choose from more than 60 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

The Music Center convenes artists, communities and ideas with the goal of deepening the cultural lives of every resident in Los Angeles County. The \$70 million non-profit performing arts organization has two divisions: TMC Arts and TMC Ops. TMC Arts, The Music Center's programming engine, provides year-round programming inside The Music Center's four theatres, on Jerry Moss Plaza, outside at Grand Park—a 12-acre adjacent green space—in schools and other locations all over Los Angeles County and on a digital platform called The Music Center Offstage. TMC Arts presents world-class dance with Glorja Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center, free and low-cost public concerts and events, as well as live and digital K–12 arts education programs, workshops, performances, interactive experiences and special events. TMC Ops manages the theatres, the Plaza and Grand Park, which comprise \$2 billion in county assets, on behalf of the County of Los Angeles. The Music Center is also home to four renowned resident companies—Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Opera and LA Phil. For more information, visit musiccenter.org. Follow The Music Center on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @MusicCenterLA.

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For more information, please contact The Music Center at 213-972-3332. 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.

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Exciting
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WE TELL STORIES



DATE: _____

TIME: _____

LOCATION: _____



musiccenter.org/performingartists
@MusicCenterLA

THE
MUSIC
CENTER
A TMC Arts Program

ARTS INTEGRATION PARTNERSHIPS

Music Center teaching artists work in classrooms to empower student creativity and develop their artistic, work-force and life skills. The program deepens learning across the curriculum in collaboration with classroom teachers by combining dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts with content areas including English Language Arts, history, science and social emotional learning for students of all ages and abilities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Music Center's professional development programs bring educators together to participate in an experiential and immersive approach to integrating dance, music, theatre, visual and media arts into their classrooms. The focus is on meeting educators where they are and building their capacity over time and in depth — both at school sites and at The Music Center. As but one example, each year The Music Center's Arts Integration Symposium engages participants in all grade levels, art forms and content areas.

DANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center offers Student Matinee performances during each season featuring world-class dance performances that celebrate the diversity of L.A. communities; invited rehearsals that provide young people with an inside look at the creative process of dance companies in residence; master classes focused on technique, choreography and dialogue with professional dancers; and creative residencies where local youth engage with visiting dance companies for multiple days, including the Ailey school residency program.

STUDENT FESTIVALS

The Very Special Arts Festival engages students of all abilities as artistic creators and contributors. At the Blue Ribbon Children's Festival, fifth graders across the county experience live performances and dance together as a community.

SPOTLIGHT YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

A nationally acclaimed, free arts training and scholarship program that develops the creative capacity of high school performing artists in Southern California.

ARTS GROWN LA

A new platform for artistic expression already thriving in communities throughout Los Angeles County. From performances at parks, community centers, libraries, senior centers and civic events, to Hip Hop dance parties and youth lessons, Arts Grown L.A. collaborates with community partners and neighborhoods to uplift artists and creativity, complementing existing local programs.

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, Grand Park, Dance DTLA, L.A. County Holiday Celebration, Plaza Concerts, and Symphonian Campus Tours, among other activities

For all our offerings, please visit us at www.musiccenter.org