

Soweto Gospel Choir

OnStage Resource Guide



2018|19

overture.org/onstage



ABOUT OVERTURE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Overture Center for the Arts fills a city block in downtown Madison with world-class venues for the performing and visual arts. Made possible by an extraordinary gift from Madison businessman W. Jerome Frautschi, the center presents the highest-quality arts and entertainment programming in a wide variety of disciplines for diverse audiences. Offerings include performances by acclaimed classical, jazz, pop, and folk performers; touring Broadway musicals; quality children's entertainment; and world-class ballet, modern and jazz dance. Overture Center's extensive outreach and educational programs serve thousands of Madison-area residents annually, including youth, older adults, people with limited financial resources and people with disabilities. The center is also home to ten independent resident organizations.

RESIDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society
Children's Theater of Madison
Forward Theater Company
Kanopy Dance Company
Li Chiao-Ping Dance Company
Madison Ballet
Madison Opera
Madison Symphony Orchestra
Wisconsin Academy's James Watrous Gallery
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra

Internationally renowned architect Cesar Pelli designed the center to provide the best possible environment for artists and audiences, as well as to complement Madison's urban environment. Performance spaces range from the spectacular 2,250-seat Overture Hall to the casual and intimate Rotunda Stage. The renovated Capitol Theater seats approximately 1,110, and The Playhouse seats 350. In addition, three multi-purpose spaces provide flexible performance, meeting and rehearsal facilities. Overture Center also features several art exhibit spaces. Overture Galleries I, II and III display works by Dane County artists. The Playhouse Gallery features regional artists with an emphasis on collaborations with local organizations. The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters' Watrous Gallery displays works by Wisconsin artists, and the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art offers works by national and international artists.

RESOURCE GUIDE CREDITS

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Dear Teachers,

In this resource guide you will find valuable information to help you apply academic goals to your students’ performance experience. We have included suggestions for activities which can help you prepare students to see this performance, ideas for follow-up activities, and additional resources you can access on the web. Along with these activities and resources, we’ve also included the applicable Wisconsin Academic Standards in order to help you align the experience with your curriculum requirements.

This Educator’s Resource Guide is designed to:

- Extend the scholastic impact of the performance by providing discussion ideas, activities and reading to promote learning across the curriculum;
- Promote arts literacy by expanding students’ knowledge of music, science, storytelling and theatre;
- Illustrate that the arts are a legacy reflecting the values, customs, beliefs, expressions and reflections of a culture;
- Use the arts to teach about the cultures of other people and to celebrate students’ own heritage through self-reflection;
- Maximize students’ enjoyment and appreciation of the performance.

We hope the performance and this resource guide will provide you and your students with opportunities to integrate art learning in your curricula, expanding it in new and enriching ways.

Enjoy the Show!

Curriculum Categories

 Language Arts

 Social Emotional

 Social Studies



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We want your feedback!

OnStage performances can be evaluated online! Evaluations are vital to the funding of this program. Your feedback educates us about the ways the program is utilized and we often implement your suggestions.

Survey: <https://www.surveymoz.com/s3/4318898/OnStage-Post-Show-Survey>



About Soweto Gospel Choir

Three weeks after the Soweto Gospel Choir's first album, "Voices of Heaven," was released in the U.S., it was No. 1 on Billboard's World Music Chart.

There are a number of reasons for that:

- Amazing voices, superbly intertwined in gut-wrenching solos and soaring harmonies
- Intricate rhythms, as infectious as they are multi-layered and essential, expressed through voice, percussion, and movement
- Dazzling costumes

But those aren't the only reasons why this group, founded in 2002, became one of the world's leading ensembles, winning two Grammys, three associated Grammys, an Emmy, three South African Music Awards, one Oscar nomination, and an American Gospel Music award.

It's because their music touches the soul and takes it to a better place, one full of joy, happiness, and love. Not many vocal groups have a Nobel Peace Prize winner as

a patron, but Soweto Gospel Choir does – Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the renowned human rights activist.

Soweto Gospel Choir performances are all about welcoming and inclusion. They regularly perform in several of South Africa's 11 official languages, and their shows feature a mix of tribal, traditional, and popular African gospel styles – as well as some tunes that may sound familiar to young American ears.

No wonder the group has played for leaders like President Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey, and connected with audiences from the Academy Awards to the World Cup to the Memorial Service for Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Musicians like Chance the Rapper, Celine Dion, Peter Gabriel, John Legend, and many more are eager to work with them.

During the show, you'll see performers do more than sing. They also dance, drum, play keyboards, and, in general, embody the power of music to bring people together and lift the spirit.

History and Information - Soweto

Soweto is part of the municipality of Johannesburg Metro Council. The name “Soweto” is acronym of sorts for South Western Township, which was the official description of the area. But for many the name is synonymous with both the worst excesses of apartheid and the ultimately successful struggle against it.

The community traces its origins back to the discovery of gold in 1865, which drew thousands of people to the area. The area has been known by many names over the years, including Klipspruit and Pimville. Racial segregation shaped the growth of the community, because non-white people were only allowed to live in certain places and Soweto was one of them. As more and more black people came to Johannesburg to find work, they were forced to crowd into Soweto and created squatter’s camps, building shanties from scavenged materials on plots that measured six meters by six meters. Roughly 89,000 people lived in these slums when they were destroyed in 1955. Today Soweto covers an area of 77.23 square miles and is home to 1,271,628 people.

It was on June 16, 1976 that the eyes of the world turned to Soweto. Even as students across the country were becoming more politically conscious and interested in challenging the restrictions of apartheid, the South African government announced that it planned to force schools to teach in Afrikaans. On that June day, 3,000 – 10,000 students came together in Soweto for a peaceful protest. But as they marched, they were met and blocked by police. At first the police tried to break the group up with tear gas, but then they fired directly into the crowd of unarmed schoolchildren.



Soweto

The estimates of how many schoolchildren and adults were killed or hurt vary, because the police tended to under-report killings and protesters did not want authorities to know they’d been protesting. One official inquiry said 575 people were killed, and many more were injured.

In response to this brutality, protests erupted in other parts of the country and continued for some time. The police shootings of schoolchildren caused international outrage, and inspired anti-apartheid activists to work even harder.

Today, June 16 is celebrated as Youth Day in South Africa, to honor the role young people played to end the rule of apartheid.



Definition of Apartheid

Apartheid means “apartness” in Afrikaans, the language spoken by the Boers, descendants of Dutch colonists. It was a comprehensive system of racial segregation which operated in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Under this system, in housing, education, employment, and almost all aspects of daily life, people were separated on the basis of whether they were black, white, ethnic Asians, or people of mixed race.

Music vs. Apartheid

Music played a very important role in the struggle against apartheid.

In the 1940s-50s, the popular music of the people of South Africa concerned themes that were important to their daily lives and the way they lived. Part of this included what it was like to live under apartheid.

For example, musicians work at night, but for black musicians on their way home from playing that meant they had to have a night pass and frequently faced harassment from police.

As songs became more openly political in the Fifties, there was a lot of crossover between popular music and protest music, whether it was the songs themselves or the people who performed them.

After the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, in which 69 peaceful protesters were killed by security forces, it was very clear that change would not come easily to South Africa, and many people found that music gave them the strength to carry on.

Increasing repression in the 1960s forced artists to hide the meaning of their songs in order to get by the censors when they recorded them, but in live performances, everyone knew that, for example, the lyric “winning my dear love” was really a tribute to the movement leader, Winnie Mandela.



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Miriam Makeba Singing “Soweto Blues”

The oral traditions of the native people of South Africa provided an effective underground way for people to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and responses to this repressive form of government.

Resistance to apartheid continued to grow, and by the 1980s activists and artists alike were standing up to the system in more direct ways. Sometime their careers were ruined as a result.

After Roger Lucey wrote a song about police brutality, not only was his record company harassed by security, his tapes were confiscated from record stores and people could be put in jail for up to five years just for owning his music.

Throughout decades of struggle against repression, music helped to build a sense of unity among those challenging apartheid, and helped them endure government persecution, arrests, and even executions.

When musicians like Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, and Letta Mbulu were forced out of their country, they shared their music with the rest of the world and increased international awareness of the injustice taking place in South Africa.

*Nelson Mandela*

About Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa, was born on July 18, 1918, in Mvezo, South Africa. The son of a chief of the Madiba clan of the Tembu people, he was named Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and also known as Madiba. He went to college, joined the African National Congress (ANC), and studied law, opening the first black law office in South Africa in 1952.

As an anti-apartheid activist, he was harassed by security forces and frequently forbidden to travel, give speeches, or go to meetings. In 1960, as part of the increasing repression of apartheid, the ANC was banned and Mandela went underground to continue to fight for freedom. Even with a knack for avoiding capture that earned him the nickname “the Black Pimpernel,” Mandela was arrested in 1962 and kept in jail until 1990.

When he was finally freed, Mandela returned to activism. In 1993, he and FW de Klerk, the white leader who worked with him to end apartheid, both received the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1994, after being able to vote for the first time in his life, Mandela became the first democratically elected – and black – president of South Africa. Nelson Mandela died at his home on December 5, 2013.

Mandela was a lifelong advocate for peace, freedom, and equality. He wrote, “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”

This year, 2018, marks the hundredth anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s birth. Organizations all over the world are organizing activities to honor his life and legacy, taking action to inspire others to help make the world a better place.

*Soweto Gospel Choir*

Activities & Resources

Watch the music videos from Soweto Gospel Choir listed in the Resources Section. Ask students to observe the way the performers move and sing, and discuss similarities and differences between the company members' style and current popular performers.

From *Applause Series Curriculum Guide*:

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of their favorite songs.
2. Encourage them to think about:
 - Their favorite songs now
 - Songs or chants they learned and liked as a child
 - Songs that remind them of family or traditions
 - Songs that are meaningful to them because of the lyrics, etc.
3. After students have created their lists, have them jot down notes on why the songs are important to them. What memory do they have of the song? Who else do they share this memory with?
4. Ask students to write a story with a beginning, middle, and end about one of their favorite songs and what it means to them. Have them add simple illustrations as they feel is appropriate.

Follow-up Questions:

1. What are the different styles of music that you wrote about?
2. What different feelings do you associate with your favorite songs?
3. Why do you think music has such a powerful impact?
4. Do all of your favorite songs represent the same time period in your life?
5. Do your favorite songs represent different parts of your life? (Students may think of examples related to holidays, their faith, memories of being with family or friends, being part of a team, etc.)

Resources

The Soweto Gospel Choir's [homepage](#)

The [Soweto Gospel Choir's version of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah](#)

This [video](#) of Soweto Gospel Choir features the men's dance moves

The Soweto Gospel Choir performs [Mudimo](#)
[South African History Online](#)

An [academic article](#) by Anne Schumann on the role music played in the struggle against apartheid

Video compilation of [excerpts of struggle songs](#)

The [Nelson Mandela Foundation website](#) has access to many resources regarding Mandela's life, work, and legacy.

[South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid, Building Democracy](#) has resources and curriculum ideas designed for high school teachers and useful for everyone.



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Activity – African Legends & Folktales – Told for a Purpose

By Susie Maughan

Grade Level: K-4

Background: This lesson plan is developed around the children's literature book by Ann Grifalconi, *The Village of Round and Square Houses*. This book is an African folktale about the village of Tos. This is a village like no other for the women live in round houses and the men live in square houses. The story is told from the point of view of a young girl who grew up there. The story tells about how a volcano near this village erupted and burned all of the homes except for one round house and one square house. The village chief called for the tall people (men) to live in the square house and the round people (women) to live in the round house. This story is told by a grandmother to her granddaughter one evening after dinner while they are sitting in the moonlight, looking up at Naka Mountain.

People in many of the villages in Africa live in mud huts with thatched roofs. The walls of the houses are made of mud bricks that have been dried in the sun. The roofs are made by weaving grass and plants around a cone-like structure.

Chinua Achebe, one of Africa's most influential and widely published writers, explains in his book of essays, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, about the African oral storytelling tradition, stemming from a belief that art is, and always was, at the service of people. He wrote, "Our ancestors created their myths and told their stories for a human purpose." For this reason, Achebe believes that "any good story, any good novel, should have a message, should have a purpose." Stories pass down explanations for certain events and ways of life. Legends are usually regarded as grounded in fact; in many instances, they have proved to be extremely accurate accounts of the history of a people. Folktales, on the other hand, are recognized as fiction. The Village of Round and Square Houses is considered a folktale, yet it is also an accurate account of the village of Tos.

Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of an African folktale and the African oral storytelling tradition, by orally sharing an example of a place they like to be alone and a place where they like to be together with others.

Materials: *The Village of Round and Square Houses* by Ann Grifalconi

Activities:

1. Ask students how many of them like to hear stories told to them from their parents or grandparents? Why? Tell students that today they get to hear an African story told by a grandmother to her granddaughter.
2. Begin by explaining to students about stories. Most stories pass down explanations for certain events and ways of life. Ask students if they can think of some examples of stories that they know that have been passed down from generation to generation. Some might include: Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan, etc. Explain to students that these stories are called folktales. Folktales are recognized as fiction.



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3. Explain that you are going to read them a book that is an African folktale. Before reading the book explain that Africans have a rich oral storytelling tradition. Most of their stories were told orally. African ancestors created their myths and told their stories for a human purpose. Ask students to listen in the story and see if they can tell for what purpose this story was told.
4. Read the book.
5. Ask students what they feel the purpose of this story is. After listening to their suggestions, explain that one of Gran'ma's purposes for telling this story to her granddaughter is to explain to her why they are able to live in peace. Reread the second to the last page. "So you see, Osa, we live together peacefully here-Because each one has a place to be apart, and a time to be together."
6. Have students think-pair-share with a partner of a place they have in their own lives where they like to go and be alone, and also a place where they like to be together with others.
7. After both students have had a chance to share, invite willing students to share with the larger group. They will share their information in the African storytelling tradition (orally).

Evaluation: Listen to students during think-pair-share and in large group sharing.



Activity - Examining *Old Sof'Town* poem

From Cal Performances Engagement Guide for the Festival of South African Dance

Grade Level: 5-8

Materials:

- Copies of the poem, *Old Sof'Town* by Alfa Moolla
- Writing utensils and paper

Objectives:

- Students will read and understand the poem, *Old Sof'Town* by Alfa Moolla
- Students will be able to appreciate the words, message, and rhythms of the poem
- Students will be able to enhance these elements of the poem with body percussion, call and response, and other artistic choices

Background:

Sophiatown, also known as Sof'town or Kofifi, was a legendary cultural and political center in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s.

It was one of the few urban areas in South Africa where black people could legally own property before the 1990s. Located outside Johannesburg, at its peak Sophiatown was home to a dynamic, multi-racial, predominantly black community of 54,000. This is where both Tsaba-tsaba, a popular form of music which combined African melody with swing and jazz, and the renowned Archbishop Desmond Tutu were born. Even with poverty, crime, and overcrowding, it was a vibrant community, and its heyday is frequently likened to the Harlem Renaissance.

But as Johannesburg and its surrounding communities grew, eventually Sophiatown was deemed too close to white communities to satisfy the strict segregation laws of apartheid. It was also known to be a place where races mixed, which the apartheid regime had made illegal in most ways. The government decided to force the people of Sophiatown to move.

In 1955, 2,000 heavily-armed policemen forcibly removed 60,000 people from their homes. Some residents fought for as long as they could, but eventually Sophiatown was destroyed. The government built a new town which they named Triomf, or "Triumph" in Afrikaans.

However, in 2006, as the people of South Africa strove to deal with their past and forge more democratic future after the fall of apartheid, the community's name was changed again – back to Sophiatown.

Activities:

1. Distribute copies of the poem, and read it aloud as students follow your voice.
2. As a class (either in one voice, or with individual students reading various sections) read the poem out loud again.



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*Soweto Gospel Choir*

3. Discuss the poem.
 - What images, thoughts, emotions does the poem bring up for you?
 - What rhythms do you hear in the poem?
 - Which lines lend themselves to call and response?
 - What gestures might accompany lines or words from the poem?
4. Do call and response as a class
 - Discuss together: what are the lines or words that lend themselves to call and response?
 - Decide on the call and response (it doesn't have to be words from the poem, you might add your own words.)
 - Choose who will be the call leader(s), and who will respond. Think about the energy, tempo, volume and rhythm of your call and response.
 - Read the poem again, adding your call and response.
5. Find a rhythm, body percussion, and gestures to go with the poem
 - Discuss together: What are the rhythms underneath/behind the lines of the poem?
 - Read the poem through again until you find these rhythms.
 - Now experiment with trying different body percussion and vocal rhythms. What rhythms help accent lines/ words in the poem? If you have two or more rhythms accompanying the poem, experiment with how they can complement or work off each other well.
6. Divide class into small groups of four or five and assign each group a stanza from the poem. Tell them each small group will share their stanza with rhythms and call and response
 - Ask each group to decide how they want to perform their stanza. By taking turns with lines? One leader reading and the group responding? Reading certain sections all together? Ask groups to settle on their body percussion and/or vocal rhythms and practice combining both.
 - As a class, read through the poem again out loud, with each group sharing their stanza in their chosen way.

Old Sof'town

1.

In old Sof'town,
the jazz struck chords,
the jazz lived, it exploded,
out of the cramped homes,
rolling along the streets,
of old Kofifi,
in tune to countless blazing heartbeats.
In old Sof'town,
Bra' Hugh breathed music, Sis' Dolly too,
and Bra' Wally penned poems that still ring
true.
In old Sof'town,
Father Trevor preached
equality and justice,
for all, black and white and brown,
and all shades, every hue,
even as oppression battered the people,
black & blue.
In old Sof'town,
the fires of resistance raged,
'we will not move' was the refrain,
even as the fascists tore down Sof'town,
with volleys of leaden rain.
In old Sof'town,
the people were herded,
like cattle,
sent to Meadowlands,
far away and cold and bleak,

as the seeds of resistance,
sprouted and flourished,
for the coming battle.
In old Sof'town,
the bulldozers razed homes,
splitting the flesh of a community apart,
only to raise a monument of shame,
and 'Triomf' was its ghastly name.

2.

In Jozi today,
we remember those days,
and those nights of pain,
that stung our souls.
like bleak winter rain.
Yes, we remember old Sof'town,
as we struggle onward,
to reclaim our deepest heritage,
and build anew,
a country of all hues and shades,
of black and of white and of brown.
And yes, we will always remember,
and yes, we will never forget,
the price that was paid,
by the valiant sons and daughters,
of old Sof'town,
those vibrant African shades and hues,
of black,
of white,
of brown.

Add gestural movement (if time and desired):

1. Discuss together: What gestures might you make to accompany certain lines or words?
2. Experiment with making the gestures big and sweeping, small and precise.
3. Explore making the gesture a whole body movement, or using the upper half or lower half of your body.
4. Move around the space doing your movement(s). Will you use lots of space, or just a little?
5. Will your movements match your rhythms or accent them? Are they quick or slow?
6. Try doing the movements with different energies. What energy works best with your movement?
7. Experiment with movement transitions between your gestural movements.
8. Decide how you want to bring your movements into the performance of your stanza.
9. Do you want one or two to read, do the rhythms and call and response while the others dance? Do you want the group to perform the poem first, and perform the movement after?
10. Groups perform stanzas with movements for each other.

Reflection:

How do your group find your rhythms? How did you decide which gestures to use?

If you were going to teach somebody this poem, what would you say about it?



Academic Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Speaking & Listening Standards K-5

1. Engage effectively in collaborative discussion
2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a presentation
3. Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker

Social Studies

Political Science & Citizenship

- C.4.1 Identify and explain an individual's responsibility to family, peers, and the community, including the need for civility and respect for diversity

The Behavioral Sciences

- E.4.4 Describe the ways in which ethnic cultures affect the daily lives of people
- E.4.9 Explain how people learn about others who are different from themselves
- E.4.11 Give examples of how artistic creations are expressions of culture

Dance

Critical Thinking

- E.4.1 Identify how dance movement is similar to and different from ordinary movement

Communication & Expression

- F.4.4 Interpret and react to dance through discussion

Making Connections

- H.4.4 Study dance from a particular culture and/or time period

Music

Analysis

- F.4.3 Demonstrate perceptual skills by listening to,

answering questions about, and describing music of various styles representing diverse cultures

Evaluation

- G.4.1 Devise criteria for evaluating performances and compositions
- G.4.2 Explain, using appropriate music terminology, personal preferences for specific musical works and styles

History & Culture

- I.4.1 Demonstrate audience behavior appropriate for the context and style of music performed
- I.4.2 Listen to and identify, by genre or style, examples of music from various historical periods and world cultures

Theatre Education

Play Reading & Analysis

- A.4.1 Attend a live theatre performance and discuss the experience
- Explain what happened in the play
 - Identify and describe the characters
 - Say what they liked and didn't like
 - Describe the scenery, lighting and/or costumes



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About Live Performance

Unlike movies or television, theater is a LIVE performance. This means that the action unfolds in front of an audience, and the performance is constantly evolving. The artists respond to the audience's laughter, clapping, gasps and other reactions. Therefore, the audience is a critical part of the theater experience. In fact, without you in the audience, the artists would still be in rehearsal!

Remember, you are sharing this performance space with the artists and other audience members. Your considerate behavior allows everyone to enjoy a positive theater experience.



Prepare: Be sure to use the restroom before the show!

Find Your Seat: When the performance is about to begin, the lights will dim. This is a signal for the artists and the audience to top conversations. Settle into your seat and get ready to enjoy the show!

Look and Listen: There is a lot to hear (dialogue, music, sound effects) and a lot to see (costumes, props, set design, lighting) in this performance. Pay close attention to the artists onstage. Unlike videos, you cannot rewind if you miss something.

Energy and Focus: Artists use concentration to focus their energy during a performance. The audience gives energy to the artist, who use that energy to give life to the performance. Help the artists focus that energy. They can feel that you are with them!

Conversations: Talking to neighbors (even whispering) can easily distract the artists onstage. They approach their audiences with respect, and expect the same from you in return. Help the artists concentrate with your attention.

Laugh Out Loud: If something is funny, it's good to laugh. If you like something a lot, applaud. Artists are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. They want you to laugh, cheer, clap and enjoy your time at the theater.

Discover New Worlds: Attending a live performance is a time to sit back and look inward, and question what is being presented to you. Be curious about new worlds, experience new ideas, and discover people and lives previously unknown to you. An open mind, curiosity, and respect will allow a whole other world to unfold before your eyes!

Please, don't feed the audience: Food is not allowed in the theater. Soda and snacks are noisy and distracting to both the artists and audience.

Unplug: Please turn off all mobile phones and other electronics before the performance. Photographs and recording devices are prohibited.



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Overture Center's mission is to support
and elevate our community's creative culture,
economy and quality of life through the arts.

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