¡SOFRITO!

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
February 19, 2015
Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of ¡Sofrito! We are thrilled to bring master storyteller David Gonzalez to our stage for the first time and to be able to share this colorful and diverse performance where salsa meets stories. Bring your appetite for fun, because you and your students won’t go home hungry after indulging in this zesty blend of music and folklore.

We thank you for sharing this very special experience with your students and hope this study guide helps to connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable. In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a variety of discussion questions and assessment activities. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

See you at the theater,

Des Moines Performing Arts Education Team

Support for Des Moines Performing Arts education programs and the Applause Series is provided by:


This study guide was compiled, written and edited by Yvette Zaord Hermann and edited by Karoline Myers.
Des Moines Performing Arts is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa’s cultural community. It is recognized nationally for excellence as a performing arts center and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

Des Moines Performing Arts presents professional touring productions, including theater direct from Broadway, world-renowned dance companies, family programming, comedy, and concerts.

Education and Community Engagement programs are core to Des Moines Performing Arts' mission as a nonprofit performing arts center.

Public education programs allow audience members and local artists to make meaningful and personal connections to the art they experience on our stages. Guest lectures and Q&As with company members allow audiences to explore the inner workings of the performance. In addition, master classes, workshops, and summer camps taught by visiting performers give local actors, dancers, and musicians the chance to increase their skills by working directly with those who know what it takes to succeed on the professional stage.

Through its K-12 School Programs, Des Moines Performing Arts strives to ensure that central Iowa students have affordable access to high quality arts experiences as part of their education. More than 50,000 students and educators attend curriculum-connected school matinee performances through the Applause Series annually. In addition, Des Moines Performing Arts sends teaching artists into the schools to provide hands-on workshops and residencies in special opportunities that engage students directly in the creative process. And, through its partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center, Des Moines Performing Arts provides teachers with in-depth professional development training on how to use the arts in their classrooms to better impact student learning. The Iowa High School Musical Theater Awards is Des Moines Performing Arts’ newest initiative to support the arts in Iowa schools, providing important learning tools and public recognition to celebrate the achievements of students involved in their high school theater programs.
YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience’s mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Musicians and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

* What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
* What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
* What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
* Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
* Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

* Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
* Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
* Turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins.
* Do not text during the performance.
* Respect the theater. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
* When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
* **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound. Other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
* Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end. If you must leave the theater during the show, make sure the first set of doors closes before you open the second — this will keep unwanted light from spilling into the theater.
* Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage — they will let you know what is appropriate.
* Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Seeing a live performance is a very special experience. Although it is not required, many people enjoy dressing up when they attend the theater.
Thank you for choosing the Applause Series with Des Moines Performing Arts. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.

ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP
* Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
* After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.
* Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks prior to the date of the performance.
* The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
* Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER
* When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an adult lead your group for identification and check-in purposes. A Des Moines Performing Arts staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you to a specific entrance.
* Des Moines Performing Arts staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
* Applause seating is not ticketed. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may be used to assign a group’s specific location in the hall.
* We request that an adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
* Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.
* As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause performances.

DIRECTIONS AND PARKING
* Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue. Turn onto 3rd Street and head south.
* Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3rd and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
* Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
* Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with Des Moines Performing Arts Education staff.

IN THE THEATER
* In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Civic Center performances.
* We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
* Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to the bus(es).
* If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

QUESTIONS?
Please contact the Education department at education@desmoinesperformingarts.org or 515.246.2355. Thank you!
STORYTELLING VOCABULARY

**storytelling**: an art that involves acting, singing, and movement. People have told stories for thousands of years in order to share wisdom and knowledge, preserve history, and to entertain.

**protagonist**: the main character in the story

Mario is an example of a protagonist. Image: nintendo.com

**antagonist**: the main character’s toughest obstacle in a story. An antagonist could be a person, animal, or even a force of nature.

Bowser is an example of an antagonist. Image: nintendo.com

**plot**: the main events of a story. (See diagram at top.)

**conflict**: a struggle between any characters in a story

**resolution**: the part of the story when the conflict is solved

ABOVE: A plot line. The parts of a story make up a plot. Each dot represents an event or an important dialogue between characters.

**character**: any person, animal or object that speaks or thinks in the story.

Image: wpengine.netdna-cdn.com

Can you think of gestures you use in your everyday life to show what you are thinking or feeling? Image: smh.com.

**dialogue**: a conversation between two people.


Before humans learned to write, they had to rely on memory to learn anything and had to be strong listeners. For this reason, a good storyteller was a highly respected member of the community.

Image: impactcommunicationsinc.com


Image: pickthebrain.com

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

In this original theater performance, storyteller David Gonzalez uses his brilliant comedic style to captivate audiences with enchanting tales from the Caribbean Latino world.

**Run Time:** Approx. 60 minutes

WHAT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE

Incorporating stories from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, and the Bronx, ¡Sofrito! combines these tales with music and rhythm that, together, introduces audiences to the pleasures of spoken word and Latin music.

¡Sofrito! spices up the stories with catchy chants and music that allow for audience participation during its songs and dances. The performance is a joyful celebration of Latino culture which emphasizes the idea of finding the right balance in life.

THE STORIES

The stories range in style but carry universal themes. For example, “There’s the tale of Chango, an Orisha or messenger of God in Afro-Cuban religion, who trades his powers of prophecy for the ability to play the drums. There’s a mythical tale about how the palm tree came to exist in Puerto Rico. And there’s a personal story about [storyteller David] Gonzalez’s uncle, who could make a tree sing” (Daniel Chang, *The Orange County Register*).

“I don’t pretend that this (show) is any way representative of Latino culture,” shares Gonzalez. “It’s representative of Caribbean Latino culture and the diaspora to New York.”

THE ARTISTS

**DAVID GONZALEZ**

David Gonzalez is a storyteller, musician, educator, music therapist, and passionate advocate for the arts.

Since he was introduced to the art of storytelling at the age of seven, David has performed for more than 1,500 audiences and has even hosted an award-winning children’s radio program *New York Kids* on WNYC-FM 93.9. David is a graduate of New York University’s School of Education where he was a recipient of a National Hispanic Scholarship fund grant. He was also a Research Fellow at NYU and has worked as a music therapist for the past 20 years. David is a talented artist with an amazingly unique style of solo theater.

THE MUSICIANS

David Gonzalez will be joined by four talented musicians:

- Wilson “Chembo” Corniel (congas and percussion)
- Daniel Kelly (keyboard)
- Ray Martinez (bass)
- Willie Martinez (drums)

**“Stir it up! Mix it up! Spice it up!”**
Q&A WITH DAVID GONZALEZ

1. What is your artistic background?

My Uncle Jose made me a puppet theater when I was seven and my mother sewed red velvet curtains for it. My first show was a musical (I sang all the roles), about a boy’s adventure in Central Park. In high school, I graduated from air-guitar to real guitar and music has been at the center of my life ever since.

From an early age I was drawn to human service work so quickly my creative life moved into the field of Music Therapy where I received Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate degrees. Music Therapy brings the art of music to the needs of the handicapped – often in creative collaboration: improvisations, songwriting, jam sessions, movement, poetry, and, yes, storytelling. I began working with stories in my sessions with emotionally troubled kids, helping them to create spontaneous operas and musical myths where they could express themselves … With my “kids” I lived first-hand the real power of art to touch, inspire and heal – it’s no wonder my artistic mission is to join great music and world myths onstage.

I never went to theater school and have no formal training — I’ve learned by watching and doing, always paying very close attention to the audience, observing their responses, making sure that they are journeying with me to the glorious places where myth and music lead us.

2. What inspires you to tell stories?

Stories saved me. There was a time in my life (I was about twenty-two), when I felt very confused about the “big picture” – I just couldn’t figure out what was important. Lucky for me I was introduced to Joseph Campbell and Robert Johnson, two of the best storytellers and story-thinkers that ever spun a yarn. I read everything they wrote. Suddenly and completely I saw how stories could be a comfort and an inspiration, and how stories join people. This is perhaps the main thing – that we gather together for storytelling, and then the stories, and the storytellers, shower us with their gifts.

I often choose to tell stories that are at first intriguing and confusing — tales that perplex me. By working on them, by exploring their situations and uncovering the story’s characters, I come to understand the deeper meanings hidden within the tale. This helps me sharpen my insight into myself and enriches my life.

3. What makes a good story?

A difficult situation inhabited by great characters, a bucket-full of colorful details, and a brilliant resolution.
Latin music is a strongly percussive style of music that can be played on many types of instruments, percussion and otherwise. The term, “Latin percussion” refers to a large family of musical percussion instruments used in Latin music. These instruments are also used in different musical styles from Latin American regions, all of which have roots in African tribal music. Though many different instruments can be used in Latin American music, there are a number of instruments that are typically and particularly meant for Latin music. Some of these are pictured here.

**BONGOS**
A pair of small drums attached to each other and played by hand. The larger “male” drum has a diameter of about 8 inches, and the smaller “female” drum is about 7 inches. The male drum has a lower pitch than the female drum. Bongos originated in Africa and the Caribbean.

**GUIRO**
Made out of a hollow gourd (or wood), the guiro is played by scraping a stick across its grooved surface.

**CONGA DRUMS**
Conga drums descended from African drums made out of carved-out tree trunks covered with skin. The various ways of striking the drum and the placement of the hand strikes on the surface make for a variety of sounds.

**MARACAS**
Made from an oval or round hollow gourd that is filled with small beads or seeds, the maracas are the most common rattle-type percussion instrument. They are derived from Native American rattles.

**SHAKERE, or African Shaker**
This instrument, played widely in Latin music, is made from a hollow gourd covered with a loose mesh with beads.

**CLAVÉS**
Clavés are two hard wooden sticks that are held in lightly cupped hands and struck together. They have a high penetrating sound, and often play a special Latin rhythm called the Clavé Rhythm (see below).

**LEARN THE CLAVÉ RHYTHM!**
Afro-Cuban music is built upon a rhythmic pattern called the Clavé Rhythm. To learn the basic 3-2 Clavé Rhythm, try the following:

Counting evenly 1 – 8, clap on the beats that are large and bold.

1  2 3 4  5 6 7   8

Next try clapping and do the counting silently. Then try stomping the rhythm.

Can you clap the rhythm by just feeling it without counting? If so, you are “feeling” the Clavé Rhythm!
The island of Puerto Rico is located in the northeastern Caribbean off the coast of Florida. The archipelago (group of islands) of Puerto Rico includes the main island of Puerto Rico, which is the smallest of the Greater Antilles, and a number of smaller islands. Between the 7th and 11th century, the Taíno culture developed and became the dominant culture on the island until Christopher Columbus arrived in November of 1493. Columbus named the island San Juan Bautista, in honor of Saint John the Baptist. Later, the island took the name of Puerto Rico which means “rich port” in English. Today, Puerto Rico is a tourist destination because of its beautiful beaches, mountains, rivers and rainforests.

**FACTS**

- **Languages:** Spanish and English
- **Capital:** San Juan
- **Population:** 3.7 million, est. 2013
- **Area:** 3,515 sq. mi. (Iowa = 56,276 sq. miles.)
- **Government:** An unincorporated territory of the United States of America
- **President:** Barack Obama
- **Money:** the American dollar ($)
- **National Tree:** Ceiba (“SAY-ba”)
- **National Flower:** Flor de Maga (which grow on trees like a hibiscus but much larger.)
- **National Bird:** Reina Mora (or a stripe-headed tanager)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- The world’s largest single-dish radio telescope is in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. It is over 1000 feet across and covers 20 acres!
ABOUT CUBA

Cuba, officially known as the Republic of Cuba, consists of the island of Cuba and several other small islands. Cuba is located in the northern part of the Caribbean where the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean meet. Its neighbors are Florida, the Bahamas, Haiti and the Cayman Islands.

Cuba is the most populous country in the Caribbean. Cuba’s people, culture, and customs have been heavily influenced by the ancestry of the Taíno people, the period of Spanish colonialism, the introduction of African slaves, and influences from the United States.

FACTS

Language: Spanish

Capital: Havana

Population: 11.3 million, est. 2013

Area: 44,200 sq. mi. (about the size of Pennsylvania)

Government: Totalitarian Communist state

President: Raul Castro

Money: Cuban peso (CUP) and Convertible peso (CUC)

National Tree: The Royal Palm

National Bird: Tocororo
(Its feathers showcase the colors of the Cuban flag: red, blue and white.)

DID YOU KNOW?

◊ Cuba is the largest island in the West Indies.
◊ In 1997, Christmas became a holiday on the island for the first time since the 1956 revolution.
◊ Cuba has over 200 bays and 289 beaches!
PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever played an instrument before? Did you like it? Is it easy or difficult?
2. How do you become a good musician?
3. What is your favorite story? Why do you like it?
4. Have you ever had someone read a story to you? Who? Have you ever read a story to someone?
5. Do you ever tell stories? When?
6. What different ways do we experience stories? (Examples: books, telling them around the dinner table, plays, movies, etc.)
7. What purposes do stories serve? Why do you think we experience stories in our lives so frequently and in so many ways?
8. In your opinion, what makes a good story?
9. Storyteller David Gonzalez has said, “I’ve learned by watching and doing, always paying very close attention…” (See page 8). What is something that you have learned by watching others and then trying to do it on your own? What was it like to learn this thing in this way?
10. The show we are going to see is called ¡Sofrito! Sofrito is an essential flavor in Caribbean Latino cooking. It is a salsa made of a unique blend of wonderfully different ingredients. Why do you think the show is named after this food?

1) THE MAGIC STORY BAG

Goal: Students will experiment with storytelling based upon a prompt.

Explanation: Using physical objects as a jumping-off point, students will experiment with the elements of telling a story.

Activity:
1. Before the activity, gather all supplies:
   ◎ A bag that you cannot see through
   ◎ An assortment of objects, such as a toothbrush, baseball, marker, rock, feather, etc. There should be at least one object for each student.
2. Explain to students that their goal in this activity is to create a story around the object that they pick out of the bag. Explain also that each object is “magic” and integral to the story.
3. Ask each student (without looking) to pull out an object. Each student should be given a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the object.
4. Ask each student to create a story around the object and (for younger students) draw a picture from the story that includes their magic object.
5. Put students in pairs and have them verbally share their stories using their object to help tell the story.
6. Encourage partners to ask questions about each other’s pictures and stories.

Follow-up Questions:
1. How did it feel to create a story around an object? Did the object make it easier or more difficult to do so? Why or why not?
2. What role does imagination play in storytelling?
3. What did you like or dislike about being able to create something of your own?
4. Did you enjoy telling your story aloud?
5. Did it help that the object was present?
6. In what ways would telling the story have been different if the object was not there?
2) THE TRICKSTER FIGURE

Goal: Students will develop written responses to a Puerto Rican folk tale read-aloud.

Explanation: After students hear “The Song of the Coqui” (koak-EE) read aloud and discuss the literary device of the trickster figure, they will develop their own fable.

trickster: a figure appearing in various guises that typically engages in mischievous activities. Tricksters are commonly included in folklore and mythology and can be seen as cultural heroes.

Activity:
1. Read aloud the Puerto Rican folk tale “The Song of the Coqui” (found on pages 15-16). HINT: Practice your read-aloud to include voices and correct pronunciation of the Spanish words.
2. Introduce the concept of trickster figures in storytelling. Ask students:
   ◦ What is a trickster?
   ◦ Was there a trickster in “The Song of the Coqui”?
   ◦ Who was it? (Help students to recognize the tree frog was the trickster.)
   ◦ What happened to the tricksters in the story? Did they deserve it?
   ◦ Is it an important part of the story for the trickster to get caught? Why or why not?
3. Ask students to consider the setting of the story. Where did it take place? Is the setting important in “The Song of the Coqui”? Could it be moved to Des Moines? New York City? Tokyo?
4. Tell students that they are going to be responsible for inventing their own setting and creating their own trickster characters. You decide if students may work solo or in small groups.
5. Set parameters for the stories (adjust according to your class’s level and needs). Examples:
   ◦ Stories must have a title
   ◦ Stories must include exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and a resolution
   ◦ Stories must have at least 4 characters
   ◦ All characters must be animals
   ◦ One character must be a trickster who is “found out” at the end
   ◦ Dialogue must be written in quotation marks
   ◦ Include at least 10 lines of dialogue

Follow-up Questions:
Which class trickster character most resembled the Coqui in the story you heard?
2. Which trickster character did you think was the funniest? The smartest? The most memorable? Your favorite for another reason?
3. Can you think of a real-life trickster character? Who?
4. Why do you think writers or storytellers would include a trickster character in their stories? Do you think you will find one in ¡Sofrito!?

Follow-up Question for After the Performance:
Did any of the stories in ¡Sofrito! have a trickster-type character?

3) MAKE SOFRITO!

Explanation: Sofrito is an essential flavor in Caribbean Latino cooking. It is used as a “base,” which means it tastes delicious with many combinations of meats, beans, and vegetables. A unique blend of wonderfully different ingredients, the rich and delicious salsa makes you want to dance!

Ingredients:
   ◦ Olive Oil
   ◦ 1 tsp. Oregano
   ◦ 1 Onion, diced
   ◦ Salt and Pepper
   ◦ 1 Green pepper, diced
   ◦ 2 Cloves of Garlic, mashed
   ◦ 1/2 Can of Tomato Sauce

1. With adult supervision and help, sauté onion, pepper, and garlic in olive oil until transparent.
2. Add tomato sauce and oregano, simmer for five minutes, then enjoy!
4) CULTURE EXPLORATION

Goal: Students will investigate another culture from a specific angle of their choosing.

Recommended Grades: 4-8

Explanation: Students will experiment with the internet research process without the pressure of writing a research paper.

Activity:
1. Review the fact sheets about Cuba and Puerto Rico included in this study guide (see pages 10 and 11). Then ask students what information is missing.
2. Ask students to define “culture” in their own words. Record multiple answers before a student consults a dictionary. Ask students: Do we have a complete definition? Does the word “culture” have an antonym?
3. Ask students to define important parts of their own culture as young people in America. Make a chart entitled, “Culture is...”
4. From this chart, select “researchable” categories, and add more, such as: traditional music, video games, art, dance, food, literature/stories, traditions, beliefs, values, religions, architecture, languages...
5. Give students access to a map of the world and ask them to choose a country (not the USA). After they choose a country and you record it, they select one of the elements from the “Culture is...” chart. Tell them they will conduct preliminary research to see how large their category is.
6. Give students a guideline for how to collect their research. They can list the different cultural information they collect, following each with the URL of their source. Older students can practice using MLA format to cite each fact they collect and produce annotated bibliographies or Works Cited lists. Younger students can collect images.
7. If you have access to a computer lab, you may want to add some friendly competition and see who can find the most information about their selected country’s cultural element. For example, someone who choose “Syria” and “religion” may find more than someone who chose “Canada” and “languages.” (You decide if use of Wikipedia calls for disqualification.)
8. Ask students to review their lists and highlight one particular thing that jumps out at them as interesting to learn more about. Encourage independent, informal research to get their questions answered.
9. You may conclude this activity as an informal investigation or formalize student work into a research presentation or report.

Follow-up Questions:
1. What did you learn from your own research? From other students’ research?
2. Would you choose the same country and cultural element you chose to explore if you could start over? Why or why not?
3. How does America’s culture compare with the culture you chose?
4. Besides the internet, what other sources would be valuable to learn about another culture?
5. Do you think the world will soon have one culture? Why or why not?

Variation for Younger Students:
1. Follow steps 1-5 at left.
2. Allow students to collect and print images that represent the cultural elements they selected to investigate within their country.
3. Students may present their favorite image to the class, or you might help students create a presentation of their images as a slideshow, collage or other visual presentation.

As students conduct their research, encourage them to look for examples of the categories above within their selected culture. Image: bilingualkidsrock.com.
Read aloud this Puerto Rican folktale, as part of the pre-show exploration activity found on page 13.

**KEY TO PRONUNCIATION**

- Puerto Rico: PWER-toe REE-ko
- la cotorra: la coat-OR-a
- Iguaca: ig-WAH-kah
- Viento: VEE-en-toe
- premio: PRAY-mee-o
- Si: see
- El Yunque: El JOON-kay
- coqui: ko-KEE

"THE SONG OF THE COQUI"


Many, many years ago, when the earth was still covered with trees and green and flowering plants, and the animals lived together in peace, the islands of the Caribbean were ruled by la cotorra (the parrot), La Iguaca. Queen Iguaca was a wise and caring ruler, but she was saddened by what she saw in her native island of Puerto Rico.

The animals of Puerto Rico had grown lazy.

The island no longer resounded with the song of the birds or the croak of the frogs or whispered with slithering snakes.

No one had the energy to run and play.

No one wished to sing and dance.

And certainly, no one wanted to work.

The only thing the animals would do was eat and sleep.

The Queen thought and thought and thought. How could she bring Life back to her island?

Then one day, when the Sun was in good cheer and not a Cloud marred the Sky, El Viento (the wind) spoke to La Iguaca: "Your Majesty, I have the answer for which Her Majesty has searched so far and suffered so long."

"Speak, wise Wind," said the Queen. "What is the answer?"

"Your Majesty must hold a race for all the animals to enter. And to win this race, they each must work hard and exercise to get in shape."

Queen Iguaca stared at the Wind as if it had suggested that the Queen fly upside-down. "But Viento, you cannot be serious! Our animals wouldn’t care to enter a race!"

"Then," El Viento replied, "Your Majesty will offer them a premio, a prize they cannot resist."

"Sí," she said with a flap of her wings. "Sí, it might work. We shall do it!"

La Cotorra, or parrot, is the queen in this Puerto Rican folktale. Image: CoquiPR.com
And so La Iguaca, Queen of the Animals, announced to everyone on the island that a race would be held in one month and that the winner would receive a very special prize. But the nature of the prize would remain a secret until the race was won.

"A secret prize!" cried the animals. "A wonderful, special, secret prize!"

Excitement spread through the island. Each animal tried to guess what the prize might be. At the foot of a giant fern, deep in the rain forest of El Yunque, gathered all the tiny tree frogs of the island. Because they were mute, they signaled and drew pictures to tell each other what they thought the prize would be. Each tree frog knew what the perfect premio should be: a Voice. A Voice for all the tree frogs. And if they were to win such a special prize, they would sing and sing and sing, never again to be silent!

El Viento was right. For the next month, Life returned to Puerto Rico. Everyone trained for the big race. Especially the tree frogs. Because they were so tiny, they knew they had to devise a special strategy to beat the larger animals. It was their one chance to win a Voice, and they very much wanted a Voice.

The next morning, the tree frogs took their places all along the race route. The race was about to begin! Animals of all sizes lined up at the start line. The Air sizzled. The Sun beamed. The Sky grew intensely blue.

Queen Iguaca presided over the race from the top of a tall palm. "On your mark!" she yelled. "Get set! GO!"

The Earth thundered with the stampede of animals. A cloud of dust was all La Iguaca could see. Inside the dust cloud, there were snakes, birds, and reptiles... and the tiny tree frogs lined up along the sidelines were barely noticed.

As one frog fell behind or got pushed out of the race, another would take his place.

In the cloud of dust approaching the finish line, one last tree frog darted onto the trail. Only a few short feet from the line, he heard the snap of a snake’s whip-like tail. The tiny tree frog took one mighty leap and flew through the air, finishing first.

Queen Iguaca fanned her tail. "Congratulations! You are the winner! You shall have your prize, little one," she said to the panting tree frog. Queen Iguaca proclaimed, "Everyone, the tree frogs began with the right idea. They worked hard and planned together to achieve something they wanted dearly. For this they shall each be rewarded with the thing tree frogs want the most: A Voice."

The tree frogs hopped and danced and hugged each other.

"Wait!" commanded the Queen. The tree frogs froze. "Your victory was not an honest one, and for this you must also be punished. You will have a Voice, but only at night, and if you ever try to leave this island, you shall die."

And so it came to pass that in Puerto Rico, the tree frog sings only at night: "Co-kee! Co-kee!" he sings. The sound of his song is what gives him his name, the coqui. And if you are lucky enough to find a coqui, do not try to take him from his native island of Puerto Rico, because the coqui will surely die.

The coqui, or tree frog, is the trickster figure in this Puerto Rican folktale. Image: CoquiPR.com

Queen Iguaca presided over the race from the top of a tall palm. "On your mark!" she yelled. "Get set! GO!"

The Earth thundered with the stampede of animals. A cloud of dust was all La Iguaca could see. Inside the dust cloud, there were snakes, birds, and reptiles... and the tiny tree frogs lined up along the sidelines were barely noticed.

As one frog fell behind or got pushed out of the race, another would take his place.

In the cloud of dust approaching the finish line, one last tree frog darted onto the trail. Only a few short feet from the line, he heard the snap of a snake’s whip-like tail. The tiny tree frog took one mighty leap and flew through the air, finishing first.

Queen Iguaca fanned her tail. "Congratulations! You are the winner! You shall have your prize, little one," she said to the panting tree frog. Queen Iguaca proclaimed, "Everyone, the tree frogs began with the right idea. They worked hard and planned together to achieve something they wanted dearly. For this they shall each be rewarded with the thing tree frogs want the most: A Voice."

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The coqui, or tree frog, is the trickster figure in this Puerto Rican folktale. Image: CoquiPR.com
POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about the different stories you experienced in ¡Sofrito! Were some of the stories the same or similar to stories that you have heard before? How were they different?

2. Were there objects or props within the stories that were necessary or important? What were some of them? How would the performance be different if that object was not there?

3. Think about how these stories were presented. Did the storyteller use his body? If so, how did that help in the telling of the story? How did that affect you as an audience member?

4. Which story was your favorite? Why?

5. What do stories, fairytales, and folktales say about the cultures they belong to and about the people they represent? Think about stories or tales that you are personally familiar with in your life. What do they say about you or the culture or society you live in?

6. What if a story of or about a group of people was told or presented by someone who didn't belong to that group? How does this change how the story is told? Is it the same story? Why or why not? How does the teller affect the story that is being told?

7. Could ¡Sofrito! have been performed without music? Why or why not?

8. Do you remember the different instruments used? How did each instrument sound? How did their unique sounds contribute to the overall feeling of the piece?

9. After seeing the show, why do you think it was called ¡Sofrito!? Remember, sofrito is a salsa made of a unique blend of different ingredients. What "ingredients" did you see in this show? How did the artists “mix them up”?

1) WRITE A LETTER

Goal: To reflect on the performance experience and to practice writing skills.

Explanation: In this activity, students will write a letter about their experience to either the performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts education donors whose support keeps Applause Series tickets accessibly priced for school groups.

Materials:
◊ Paper
◊ Writing utensil

Activity:
1. After attending the performance, discuss the experience with your students. Use the following discussion questions to guide the conversation:

◊ What was the show about?
◊ What parts of the show were most exciting?
◊ Which character or story did you enjoy the most? Why?
◊ What did the characters learn?

2. Next, invite students to write a letter to the performers or to Des Moines Performing Arts donors about their theater experience.

Example letter starter:
Dear Mr. Gonzalez // Dear Donors...
My favorite part of the show was...
While watching the show I felt... because ...
If I could be in one of the stories, I would be the part of ... because ...

3. Mail the letters to:
Des Moines Performing Arts
Attn: Education Department
221 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Follow-up Questions:
1. What did you include in your letter? Why did you want to share that particular idea?
2) WRITE A REVIEW

**Goal:** To write a review of the performance.

**Explanation:** In this activity, students will reflect on the performance by writing their own review.

**Activity:**
1. Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of ¡Sofrito! to inform others about what they experienced.
2. In the review they should describe with detail:
   - what they saw
   - what they heard
   - how the performance made them feel
   - what the performance reminded them of
   - what their favorite part was and why
3. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it as vividly as possible.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What did you include in your review? Why did you want to share that particular idea?
2. What things did writing the review make you think about that you hadn’t thought of by just watching the show?
3. Is there anything that you would change about the show if you could? Would you add something or take something away?

3) DESIGN A CD COVER

**Goal:** Students will synthesize their ideas about the music and stories in ¡Sofrito! With imagery and fonts/typography that capture a mood.

**Explanation:** Artists need to determine how to represent themselves to the public and stay true to their particular vision or art form. Often they have to rely on others to help make the message both attractive and accurate. In this activity, students will act as advertising and graphic design professionals and design a CD cover that represents ¡Sofrito!.

**Activity:**
1. Ask students to imagine that David Gonzalez has asked them to design a CD cover for a recording of ¡Sofrito. He wants the CD design to celebrate how stories and music bring people together.
2. Have students think about important ideas and images that come to mind when they think about the performance and use those ideas to guide their design.
3. For a greater challenge, limit students’ color palate to black, white and one accent color.
4. After students have created their cover using art materials, have them imagine that they are going to present their design to storyteller David Gonzalez (played by the teacher). Ask students about the elements they included in their design, why they made those design decisions, and what the design communicates about the message of ¡Sofrito!.

**Follow-up Questions:**
1. What was your inspiration for the images and typography you chose?
2. How did you choose the colors in your design?
3. Which CD designed by your classmates is your favorite? Why?
RESOURCES AND SOURCES

BOOKS

◊ The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories by Carlos Fuentes and Julio Ortega

◊ Short Stories by Latin American Women: The Magic and the Real (Modern Library Classics) by Celia Correas Zapata and Isabel Allende

◊ Latin American Folktales: Stories from Hispanic and Indian Traditions (The Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library) by John Bierhorst

◊ Stories and Poems/Cuentos y Poesias: A Dual-Language Book (Dover Dual Language Spanish) by Rubén Darío and Stanley Appelbaum

◊ Abuela by Arthur Dorros. (A bilingual picture book appropriate for K-1 students about a grandmother and granddaughter in New York City.)

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM RESOURCES

“Storytelling in the Classroom” by Story Arts.
Provides rationale, lesson plans, a story library and assessment ideas to keep students engaged in this ancient art form.
http://www.storyarts.org/classroom/

“Baila! Latin Dance in the Spanish Classroom: Learning about Latin American history and culture through dance.”
Includes 5 minute dance tutorials that teach the basics of the Merengue, Salsa and Bachata.
http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-9-12/Baila_Latin_Dance

STUDY GUIDE SOURCES


David Gonzalez Official Website. www.davidgonzalez.com

“¡Sofrito! Study Guide” by Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

“The Teacher Guide for ¡Sofrito!” by The Kentucky Center.