



SONES DE MÉXICO ENSEMBLE'S FIESTA MEXICANA

Applause Series Curriculum Guide
May 1-2, 2017

 **DES MOINES
PERFORMING ARTS**

CIVIC CENTER • STONER THEATER • TEMPLE THEATER • COWLES COMMONS

Sones de México

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for joining us for this special Applause Series presentation of Sones de México Ensemble's cultural concert, *Fiesta Mexicana*. Sones de México Ensemble has been sharing the sounds of *son*— Mexico's lively music and dance tradition— with audiences around the United States since its founding in 1994, and we are delighted to welcome them back to Des Moines to share their *Fiesta Mexicana* program for young audiences. *Fiesta Mexicana* promises to take you and your students on a tour of Mexico's history and culture through song, story, and dance.



Sones de México Ensemble's Lorena Iñiguez

We hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your 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 wide variety of discussion questions and activities. 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

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This study guide was compiled and written by Karoline Myers; edited by Michelle McDonald and Eric Olmscheid.
Adapted from education program materials by Sones de México Ensemble.

ABOUT DES MOINES PERFORMING ARTS



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 55,000 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 300,000 people visit Des Moines Performing Arts venues each year.

Des Moines Performing Arts opened in 1979.

Des Moines Performing Arts has three theater spaces:

- *Civic Center, 2744 seats*
- *Stoner Theater, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Civic Center.

Cowles Commons, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a community gathering space. Features include the Lauridsen Fountain, the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture by Claes Oldenburg, and the Swirl sculpture by Jim Campbell.

As a nonprofit organization, Des Moines Performing Arts depends on donor funding to support facilities, programming, and education programs.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for our 21st season of school performances!

GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



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?

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.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Des Moines 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 and causing a distraction.
- * 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!

*GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



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.
- * Des Moines Performing Arts 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.
- * Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
- * Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- * All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted online. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

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.

ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- * When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes.
- * Each group will be assigned a specific location in the hall, and ushers will escort groups to their seats upon arrival. 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 that other adults position themselves throughout the group.** This helps with supervision purposes and is especially important in the event a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- * Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging individuals' seat locations or taking students to the restroom. This helps ensure that everyone has a seat in your designated section, as well as allows us to more efficiently seat other arriving groups. This helps us to start the performance on time.
- * As a reminder, children under the age of three are not permitted in the theater for Applause Series performances.

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, please wait for your group to be dismissed prior to exiting the theater.
- * 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!

VOCABULARY

Aztec: an empire in central Mexico that was at its height when the Spanish arrived in Mexico. The Aztec people became sick from smallpox and other diseases brought by the Spanish, and the Spaniards destroyed the Aztec capital. 'Xipe,' which opens the *Fiesta Mexicana* performance, is an example of an Aztec ritual piece.



A 16th century painting depicting Aztec people building an artificial agricultural island, or *chinampa*.

Image courtesy of kids.britannica.com.

beat: a steady pulse in music that guides the rhythm. Audience members will be asked to clap to the beat during some of the songs performed by Sones de México Ensemble.



Image courtesy of anamericaninbuda-pest.com



Image courtesy of ToastMastersClubs.org

bilingual: using or being able to use two languages. Sones de México Ensemble

presents some parts of their performance in English and some parts of their performance in Spanish, which makes *Fiesta Mexicana* a bilingual performance.

danza de los viejitos: a dance from the tradition of the Purépecha people in which dancers imitate the elderly in a funny way. Dancers wear wooden masks with rosy-painted cheeks and carry a cane.



Costume for the *danza de los viejitos*.



Image courtesy of standtogetherdanbury.org

ensemble: a group of musicians, actors, or dancers who perform together. Sones de México Ensemble is an example of a music ensemble.

hacienda: a large estate or plantation in Spanish-speaking countries. During the Spanish rule of Mexico, the head of a hacienda was Spanish, and the workers on the hacienda were often native peoples.



An example of a hacienda estate in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.

Image courtesy of acheaolo-



Image courtesy of fellowshipwesleyan.org

heritage: a tradition or something that is passed down from one generation to another. Folk

music and stories are part of the Mexican heritage that Sones de México Ensemble honors through their performance.

la acamaya: a shrimp-like creature that lives in a river in central Mexico.



La acamaya.

When children in Mexico do not behave, they are sometimes told stories about *la acamaya* the way American children are told stories about the bogeyman.

mestizo: people whose heritage is a mix of Indian and Spanish blood. Today, most Mexicans are mestizos.



Image courtesy of kids.nationalgeographic.com

Mexico: the southern-most country in North America. Mexico was

the home to various advanced civilizations beginning with the Olmec and including the Maya, the Toltec, and the Aztec. Mexico was conquered by the Spanish during the early 1500s and was ruled by the Spanish until 1821.

mimetic: related to imitation. In the concert, "mimetic" dances will imitate the movements of a buzzard, a duck, and a cat.



A buzzard, one of the animals that will be imitated in a mimetic dance.



Image courtesy of pravsworld.com

tempo: the speed at which music is played. You will hear different tempi of music during the performance.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE, page 1 of 3



Image courtesy of Sones de México Ensemble.

Sones de México Ensemble's *Fiesta Mexicana* is a 60-minute, bilingual performance for young audiences. Sones de México Ensemble began performing this educational program in Chicago schools in 1994. As demand grew, they began to take it to audiences throughout the country. Today, it has been "polished like a pebble in a stream, evolving as the band has responded to the reactions of kids," according to executive director Juan Dies.

Taking audience members on a musical tour of Mexico, the program incorporates a diverse range of acoustic folk music and folklore from several regions of the country. Through song, story, and dance, the program honors the heritage of Mexico's unique *mestizo* culture and its native, Spanish, and African influences.

Learn more about the different pieces on the program and their relationship to Mexican culture before coming to the theater.

XIPE

The program begins with an Aztec ritual piece that serves to awaken the senses. The piece pays tribute to Mexico's native cultural roots and the sacred elements of the Aztec cosmology: Water, Earth, Fire, and Wind. The dancer calls upon the energy of these elements in a ritual dance where he faces the four sacred directions: North, South, East, and West. On his head, he wears a feathered headpiece. Incense is burned, and the conch shell is blown. The *huéhuetl* and *teponaztli* drums are beaten, along with the strumming of the *concha*—a guitar made on an armadillo shell. Ankle shakers made with dried seeds from a plant sown onto a leather strip are also played.

'Xipe' Spanish lesson...

The four elements:

Water — Agua

Earth — Tierra

Fire — Fuego

Wind — Viento

LA ACAMAYA

Buried in the banks of a Mexican river in the *huasteca* region lives a small, ugly-looking relative of the shrimp known locally as "La Acamaya." (The *huasteca* is a mountainous region in central Mexico that includes the states of San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas, Querétaro, Hidalgo, Guanajuato, and Veracruz.)

When children don't behave, they are told about "La Acamaya" similar to the way American children are told about the bogeyman. The song tells about dangerous magical creatures that inhabit the waters: a crocodile, a mermaid, and *la acamaya* — warning children to be careful when they bathe by the river or at the beach. In the chorus, children in the audience can respond with a fretful "uy, uy, uy" "ay, ay, ay".



The shrimp-like "La Acamaya."
Image courtesy of redescolar.ilce.edu.mx.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE, page 2 of 3



EL RATÓN VAQUERO (THE COWBOY MOUSE)

This song was written by Mexico's premier children's music composer Francisco Gabilondo Soler, a well-known radio host on the XEW station in Mexico City during the 1950s. He wrote all the songs for his show, including this fun, bilingual song about a Texan cowboy mouse that does not speak Spanish and finds himself put in a Mexican jail. The song is set to a lively polka beat in a 2/4 meter that is popular in folk songs along the Tex-Mex border.

Frustrated by his new home, the cowboy mouse sings a chorus in English which is followed by a response in Spanish.

English Chorus:

"What the heck is this house
For a manly cowboy mouse,
Why don't you let me out
And don't catch me like a
trout?"

Spanish Response:

"Conque si, ya se vé,
que no estás agusto aqui
y aunque me hables ingles
no te dejaré salir."

DANZA DE LOS VIEJITOS (DANCE OF THE OLD MEN)

In the Mexican state of Michoacán, the Purépecha Indians celebrate a festival where a series of comical or satirical dances known as "old men dances" are performed. The selection chosen for the Fiesta Mexicana program is a circle dance called "El Trenecito" (The Little Train). It is used to teach the meaning of *tempo* in music (i.e. "fast" *tempo* vs. "slow" *tempo*).

The audience is asked to summon "Doña Sabina," who is actually one of the musicians in costume. She emerges to lively, forceful foot-tapping and wears a hat with multicolor ribbons, a straw wig, and a white, wooden mask that represents a smiling, rosy-cheeked old woman. She also holds a cane.

Several volunteers from the audience are asked to join a train-like chain by holding hands together. The music begins in a slow 2/4 meter and the audience is asked to follow the beat with hand-claps. As the train speeds up, the tempo increases too and the clapping must get faster to keep up with the train.

There are three theories that attempt to explain the origins or meaning of this piece:

- (1) that it began in the 16th century to make fun of Spaniards' rosy-cheeked complexions;
- (2) that it portrays a pre-Hispanic, humorous attitude that the Purépecha people have towards their elderly;
- (3) that it dates back to an Olmec worship tradition to *Hueheutéotl*, the "Ancient," who was the giver of fertility. The colored ribbons in the hat represent the rays of the sun, the cane stands for the sowing stick, and the forceful tapping is the rain.



Dancers dressed in traditional costumes for the "old men dances."

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE, page 3 of 3



Image courtesy of steppenwolf.org

EL ZIPILOTE / EL PATITO / EL GATO (THE BUZZARD / THE LITTLE DUCK / THE CAT)

This medley from the Mexican state of Guerrero introduces some dances from the Tixtla region. These dances are often referred to as “mimetic” because dancers imitate the movements of different animals. Children in the audience can participate from their seats by moving their arms and heads like a buzzard, a duck, or a cat, as led by the dancer. Children can learn to clap the rhythm of *chilena*: 1-pause-3-4-5-6. 1-pause-3-4-5-6, 1-..., etc.

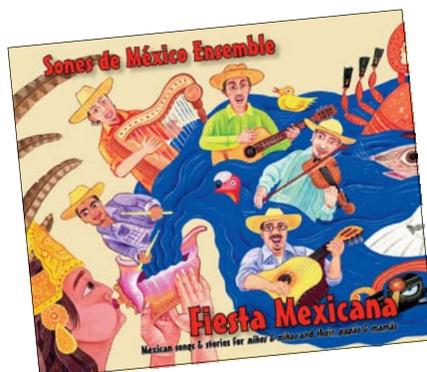
The rhythm is often called *chilena* for its relationship to the Chilean *cueca*. It can be traced to an African origin, brought to Mexico, not through the Caribbean or the Atlantic as one would expect, but through the Pacific Ocean. African mining slaves based in Peru were brought North during the California Gold Rush. Along the way, they stopped in Mexico, leaving behind the *chilena*. Particular to this style is the beating on an empty overturned wooden box called *cajón* and waving a handkerchief by the dancer.

LA BAMBA

The show culminates with two versions of this festive Mexican standard: the American rock-n-roll arrangement popularized by California-based 1950s icon Ritchie Valens and the other in the original Veracruz folk style.

The audience is invited to clap along to the beat: 1-2-3-pause, 1-2-3-pause....etc. Everyone may get up and dance by stomping the beat with their feet on the floor. The song has many verses as the performers can improvise. When they can sing no more, they all sing together “Ay, te pido de compasió que se acabe La Bamba y venga otro son.” (I beg you please to finish this song and play something else!) With this the show ends.

The style of music reflects another example of Mexico’s African heritage brought via the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Most of Mexico was cultivated on a *hacienda* system (Spanish patronage over the indigenous population). However, a number of African slaves were brought to the coastal plains of Tabasco, Campeche, and Veracruz to plant sugar cane and coffee. (They knew how to grow these plants by working on plantations in the Caribbean first.) These slaves eventually escaped to form their own inland communities and leave their mark on the people and music. Recognition of widespread African roots in Mexico have only been acknowledged in recent years.



Did you know?

Sonos de México Ensemble also has a bilingual, double album for children entitled *Fiesta Mexicana*. One disc is in English, and one is in Spanish, which allows children to be exposed to both languages. The pieces performed in the live stage show are featured on the album, as well as stories and additional songs.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Image courtesy of Sones de México Ensemble.

A GRAMMY® and Latin GRAMMY® Award Nominee, Sones de México Ensemble is a Chicago-based music and dance performance group made up of accomplished Mexican musicians and educators. The group specializes in *son* — a rich and lively Mexican music and dance tradition — and its many regional styles. The group's cross-cultural approach links *son* to the diverse ethnic roots of Mexico's *mestizo* culture: Native American, Spanish, and often-overlooked influence of African music in México.

Sones de México Ensemble has performed and offered programs touching the lives of children and adults in twenty U.S. states. The group also travels the country presenting concerts, accompanying professional dance companies, playing clubs, and offering lectures and workshops.

THE MUSICIANS AND THEIR INSTRUMENTS

Sones de México Ensemble is a sextet, which means it has six players. Together, the ensemble plays a collection of more than 25 Mexican folk instruments. Each musician plays multiple instruments, as noted below.

Víctor Pichardo, Music Director

- Violin
- Mandolin
- Vihuela (Mariachi 5-string alto guitar)
- Quinta huapanguera (8-string baritone huasteco guitar)
- Jarana tercera (Veracruz 8-string tenor guitar)
- Clarinet
- Caracol (conch shell)
- Quijada (donkey jaw)
- Vocals

Juan Díes, Executive Director

- Guitarrón (6-string fretless bass guitar)
- Guitar
- Teponaztli (Aztec slit drum)
- Ayacaxtli (shakers)
- Vocals

Juan Rivera

- Violin
- Requinto jarocho
- Jarana
- Guitar
- Small percussion
- Vocals

Zacbé Pichardo

- Marimba
- Cajón (box drum)
- Congas
- Bongos
- Jarana
- Saxophone
- Harp

Lorena Iñiguez

- Zapateado (foot-tapping)
- Ayoyotes (ankle shakers)
- Cajón (box drum)
- Quijada (donkey jaw)
- Claves
- Guiro

Javier Saume

- Drum set
- Maracas
- Mallets
- Cajón (box drum)
- Miscellaneous percussion

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS



Image courtesy of Sones de México Ensemble.

Sones de México Ensemble plays a large collection of Mexican folk instruments, as shown above. Learn more about some of the unique instruments they play before seeing the performance.

STRING INSTRUMENTS



CONCHA

The concha is a guitar-like string instrument that uses a dried armadillo shell for its back. The body and neck are made from wood. The word *concha* means “shell” in Spanish.



VIHUELA

The vihuela is a 5-string guitar that is played in Mariachi bands. It is played with fingers strumming open chords on the fretted part of the neck.

PERCUSSION



AYOYOTES

Ayooyotes are special ankle shakers that are made with dried seeds

from a plant sown onto a leather strip.



CAJÓN

A cajón is a wood box drum that is traditional to southern Mexico. It is played by slapping one or two sides with sticks or the hands.



HUEHUETL

A huehuetl is an upright drum shaped like a tube. It stands on three legs cut from its base and has skin stretched over the top. It can be played by hand or wooden mallet.



QUIJADA

The quijada is made from a donkey's lower jawbone.

When struck with the hand it makes a rattling noise. A beater is used to strike the bone or pulled along the teeth to make a rasping sound.



TEMPONAZTLI

The temponaztli is made from a log. It contains

three slits on its topside, which creates “tongues” of different lengths. The tongues are struck with mallets to produce different pitches.

OTHER



CARACOL

The caracol is a conch shell that is played as a wind instrument. A

hole is placed at the top of the shell, and the musician blows into it like a horn to produce the pitch.

ABOUT MEXICO



In the early 1500s, the Spanish arrived in Mexico. The Aztec people got sick from smallpox and other diseases that the Spanish brought with them. The Spaniards also seized and destroyed the Aztec capital, called Tenochtitlán. The Spanish ruled Mexico until 1821.



An example of an ancient Aztec pyramid.

QUICK FACTS:

Capital City:	Mexico City
Population:	122.3 million
Official Language:	Spanish
Currency:	Peso

GEOGRAPHY & NATURE

Mexico is a land of extremes, with high mountains and deep canyons in the center of the country, sweeping deserts in the north, and dense rain forests in the south and east. It is a country that is rich in natural resources like oil, silver, copper, and agricultural products.

Few nations on Earth support as many plant and animal species as Mexico does. Located partway between the Equator and the Arctic Circle, it is a refuge for animals fleeing extreme cold in the north and intense heat in the south.



Quetzal bird.

In northern Mexico, deserts are full of plant and animal species that have found ways to survive the harsh environment. The rain forests and coastal wetlands of eastern Mexico are home to thousands of tropical plants and elusive animals like jaguars and quetzal birds.

HISTORY

The Olmec people, Mexico's first complex society, emerged in the southeastern part of the country around 1200 B.C. They were later followed by the Maya, the Toltec, and the Aztec peoples.

Mexico's ancient societies built great cities and huge pyramids, created remarkable works of art, and even studied the stars and planets to determine when to plant crops and hold ceremonies.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Mexico is the product of a rich Indian heritage and three centuries of Spanish rule. Today, most Mexicans are *mestizos*, which means they have a mix of Indian and Spanish blood. In addition to these two groups, scholars are just beginning to understand the African influences that have also shaped the culture of Mexico as a result of the Spanish slave trade.

Throughout its history, Mexico has been home to great artists. The Maya and other Indians made impressive murals, sculptures, and jewelry. Modern Mexican artists include great painters, photographers, sculptors, and muralists.

Mexicans take sports seriously. In ancient times, losers of a ritual ball game were once put to death. In some dangerous sports, like bullfighting and rodeo (which was invented in Mexico), competitors still put their lives on the line.

'About Mexico' information from National Geographic Kids.

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 1 of 3



1) SOUND EXPLORATION

Best for: Grades K-2

Goal: To explore and describe different sounds

Explanation: Many of the folk instruments played by Sones de México Ensemble are made from objects found in nature or the daily lives of the Mexican people who originally created them. Examples include the donkey jawbone and the ayoyote ankle shakers (see page 10 for more information). In this lesson, students will explore and describe sounds created by common items from their lives. (This activity works best if done by small groups so that students can hear the individual sounds they create.)

Activity:

1. Stock your classroom with items that students can use to create various sounds. Ideas include pots, plastic containers, cooling racks, boxes, glasses of water, bottles, and different kinds of utensils. Try to include a variety of materials and textures.
2. Invite students to choose two items (a larger item and a utensil usually works best).
3. What kinds of sounds can they make using the two items?
4. Ask students to share two or three words that describe the sound that they created.
5. Now invite students to change one element of their sound. (How does the sound change if they tap a box with a spoon instead of scraping it across the top? What if they use a plastic spoon instead of a wooden spoon?) Ask them to describe how the sound changes.
6. After every student has had a chance to explore making different sound combinations, play a piece of music on your classroom CD player. Invite the class to play along with their new instruments.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why would people use items around them to make music?
2. Are the sounds you created similar to any musical instruments that you know?
3. What types of things made the sound change? (Consider action taken, strength of action, type of material, whether the item was bumpy or smooth, etc.)
4. Do you think Sones de México Ensemble will play any instruments that you have heard before? Do you think they will play any instruments that are new to you?

Follow-Up Discussion for After the Performance:

1. What instruments do you remember from the performance?
2. How did each of these instruments look or sound?
3. Did the performance remind you of anything you have seen or experienced before?
4. How did the music make you feel?

PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION, pg. 2 of 3



2) RHYTHM EXPLORATION

Best for: Grades 3-5

Goal: To understand the concept of rhythm and to hear the rhythm that exists around us.

Explanation: Rhythm and sounds are a part of life in every culture. During the performance, the ensemble will invite the audience to clap along to the beat of “La Bamba” and the *chilena* rhythm of “El Zipolete...” In this activity, students will create their own rhythms with their bodies and other instruments they find in the classroom.

Activity:

1. Create a simple clapping rhythm for the class to echo. As they master each rhythm, make a new complex rhythm for students to repeat. You can expand from just clapping to stomping your feet, snapping your fingers, or gently slapping the knee or chest.
2. See if you can make a class song using these different rhythms. Divide the class into groups and have each group come up with their own rhythm. Have them perform them in varying orders or all together.
3. Next, have your students look around the classroom for ordinary objects that can be used to create new sounds. For example, scrunching or shaking a trashbag, opening and closing of a pencil box or backpack, tapping a pen on the desktop, etc.
4. Have students create a short rhythm that they would like to make with their chosen “instrument” and write out a notation that they can read corresponding to their rhythm. (You may want to collaborate with your music specialist for this portion of the activity.)

5. Arrange these notations in different orders to create a class musical piece. If helpful, you may want to collaborate with your school’s music specialist for this part of the activity.

Discussion:

1. What is rhythm?
2. Where can you find rhythm? Do you have your own rhythm?
3. Can you see rhythms? What do they look like?

Follow-Up Discussion for After the Performance:

1. Could you hear the different rhythms throughout the performance? How did they change the feel of the different pieces?
2. Which piece was your favorite and why?
3. Do you remember any of the rhythms that were played during the show? Were these harder or easier than the ones you made up in class?
4. 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?

Activity adapted from Ordway Center’s study guide materials for San Jose Taiko.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION AND ASSESSMENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which piece was your favorite and why?
2. Do you remember any of the rhythms that were played during the show? Can you recreate them?
3. 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?
5. What did you notice about the costumes worn by the performers? Were they the same the entire concert? How did they change and why?
6. What dances do you remember from the performance? Do you remember any of their meanings or inspirations?
7. Did the performance remind you of anything you have seen, heard or experienced before? If so, in what way?
8. The musicians also told stories during the performance. What stories do you remember? Did any of them have a message? If so, what?
9. Is music the same all over Mexico? Why or why not? How did Sones de México Ensemble demonstrate this idea?
10. Sones de México Ensemble calls their program a “musical tour” of the regions of Mexico. Did you actually travel to Mexico during the performance? What are other ways that we can be “transported” or experience a time or place without actually visiting it? (i.e. books, movies, plays, our imaginations, etc.)
11. The concert opened with ‘Xipe’ — an Aztec ritual piece that pays tribute to Mexico’s native cultural roots and the sacred elements of the Aztec cosmology. Do you remember what the four elements were? What did the dancer do to honor those elements?
12. Fiesta Mexicana was a bilingual concert, as some of it was presented in English and some of it was presented in Spanish. Do you or someone in your family speak more than one language?

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:

- ◇ How did the performance make you feel?
- ◇ What surprised you about the performance?
- ◇ What do you think was the main message or idea of the performance?

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 Sones de México Ensemble //
Dear Donors...

My favorite part of the show was...
While watching the show I felt... because ...
If I could be in your ensemble, I would ...

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?

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION, pg. 2 of 2

2) DESIGN A CD COVER

Goal: To demonstrate understanding of elements of Mexican culture through visual art

Explanation: The image at the top of pages 13-15 is similar to the CD cover of Sones de México Ensemble's children's album, *Fiesta Mexicana*. Many of the images in the art are related to the songs that students will experience at the theater. In this activity, students will design their own CD cover that they feel represents Sones de México Ensemble's music.

Activity:

1. Show students the image at the top of pages 13-15. Ask them to identify different elements and how they relate to what they experienced at the theater.
2. Next, tell students to pretend that Sones de México Ensemble has asked them to design a new CD cover for their next album. They want the CD cover to celebrate the music and culture of Mexico.
3. Ask students to identify several important ideas and images that come to mind when they think about the concert and what they learned about Mexico.
4. Ask students to sketch several design ideas on scratch paper.
5. When they have settled on a final design, have them create their final rendition on good paper.
6. You may also ask them to create a list of song titles or a title for the entire album.
7. Have students imagine that they are going to present their design to Sones de México Ensemble, played by you. Use the discussion questions to ask them about their design.

Discussion Questions:

1. What elements did you include in your design and why?
2. Are there other elements that you considered but did not use?
3. Why did you use the colors you chose?
4. Why should I choose your design and title?
5. What does your design tell a people about our music/culture?

3) "OLD MEN" MASKS

Best for: Grades 3-5

Goal: To create a mask in the style of the Purépecha "old men dances" costumes.

Explanation: During the performance, Sones de México Ensemble will perform an example of an "old men dance" featuring the character of Doña Sabina (see page 8 for more information). In this activity, students will create their own Doña Sabina-inspired masks.

Materials:

- ◇ Paper plates
- ◇ Exacto knife
- ◇ Large rubber bands or yarn
- ◇ Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- ◇ Raffia (optional)
- ◇ Dowels (optional)
- ◇ Ribbon (optional)



Activity:

1. Prepare one paper plate mask per child by using an exacto knife to cut out two eye-shaped holes in the plate.
2. Invite students to use crayons, colored pencils, markers or other art supplies to decorate the mask however they wish.
3. Staple the ends of a large rubber band (cut) to opposite sides of the mask or secure the mask with yarn or string.
4. If you wish to complete the costume, you may elect to create hair out of raffia and a cane from a dowel (see photo at right). You may top the cane with multi-colored ribbon.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you remember about Doña Sabina from the performance? What did she wear?
2. How did Doña Sabina move at the beginning? How did her movements change?
3. How did you choose to decorate your mask? Is your mask similar or different to the mask worn by Doña Sabina?
4. Why do people dance?

RESOURCES AND SOURCES



CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Books – Mexican Folk Tales:

DePaola, Tomie. *Adelita*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002.

Kimmel, Eric A. *Cactus Soup*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2004.

McAlister, Caroline. *Holy Molé!: a Folktale from Mexico*. Little Rock, Ark.: August House Publishers, 2007.

Morales, Yuyi. *Just in Case: A Trickster Tale and Spanish Alphabet Book*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2008.

Audiovisual:

Ensemble performing "La Bamba":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJo0qdBsncI>

Websites:

"Mexico." Enchanted Learning.
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/school/Mexico/>
Contains maps, craft ideas, information about explorers and conquistadors, and native animals to Mexico.

"Mexico." TIME for Kids Around the World.
<http://www.timeforkids.com/destination/mexico>
Contains an interactive map and sightseeing guide, teacher resources, history timeline, introduction to Spanish phrases, and basic facts on Mexico.

STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

"Cajón de Tapeo."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caj%C3%B3n_de_tapeo

"Conch"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conch>

Dictionary — Yahoo! Kids.

"Huehuetl"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huehuetl>

"Mexican Vihuela"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_vihuela

National Geographic Kids. *Mexico Country Facts, Information, Photos, Videos*.
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/places/find/mexico/>

Sones de México Ensemble Chicago.
<http://sonesdemexico.com/index.html>

"Quijada"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quijada>

Sones de México Ensemble Chicago. *Fiesta Mexicana Program Guide*.
http://sonesdemexico.com/files/Kids_Show_08.pdf

Sones de México Ensemble Chicago. Educational Programs 2016 Brochure.
http://sonesdemexico.com/files/education_programs_brochure.pdf

"Teponaztli"
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teponaztli>