

LIED CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS
STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

2013–2014



2013



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FOR PERFORMING ARTS

2014

PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

AREAS OF INTEREST:
Music, Cultural Studies, Social Studies, Language Arts

BACKGROUND

Special performances of world-class artists bring young people and educators (Pre-K–12th grades) together from across Nebraska to share an unforgettable experience. Presenting all genres of performing arts — theater, music and dance — the Lied's student matinee performances enhance classroom learning, expand cultural awareness and inspire young people and their teachers through exposure to the arts. Finally, there are shadow puppets. These usually come from the East and create silhouettes.

ABOUT SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

For nearly 11 years, the Soweto Gospel Choir has been dazzling audiences around the world with their traditional and contemporary gospel music. This Grammy award winning gospel group from South Africa will have you clapping along to their heartfelt songs. Their songs, whether performed a cappella or accompanied by a four-piece band and percussion section, are characterized by earthy rhythms and rich harmonies that are performed in six of South Africa's 11 official languages. This ensemble blends elements of African gospel, Negro spirituals, reggae, and American popular music. The nearly 50 members of Soweto Gospel Choir stand out from the normal gospel group with their bright, colorful costumes and energetic dancing. The group has performed for a number of high profile people, including performances for Nelson Mandela, and has toured internationally. They also have a song featured in the Disney Pixar Film *Wall-E*. *The New York Times* calls them "meticulous and unstoppable . . . spirited and spectacular."

ABOUT GOSPEL MUSIC

As students attend the dynamic performance of the Soweto Gospel Choir, it may help to give them a brief history of the music they are hearing prior to the performance. While commonly associated with religious music, gospel music can actually vary from culture to culture and social context to social context. Sometimes, this music is written for religious or ceremonial purposes, but it could also be written as an entertainment produced for the marketplace or simply for aesthetic pleasure. Characterized by dominant vocals and strong harmonies, this style of music is typically performed with choirs accompanied by piano or Hammond organ, drums, bass guitar, and more recently, electric guitar.

With the gospel roots lying in African spirituals, which is evident when watching the Soweto Gospel Choir perform, much of this style of music stemmed from the oral tradition and uses repetition frequently. Gospel songs often use a call and response style, allowing everyone the opportunity to join in the song, no matter their education or literacy levels. In the United States, gospel music can be traced back to the 17th Century during the enslavement of African Americans. These African American slaves used the tradition of repetition when they sang spirituals and created work songs while working in the fields, but much of these slaves' inspiration for this music also came from the spiritual hymns they heard at their masters' church services.

Gospel songs earned their title in the 19th Century when Phillip Bliss released his songbook *Gospel Songs: A Choice Collection of Hymns and Tunes* in 1874. The songs printed in Bliss's book represented the new style of church music, which were easier to grasp and sing than traditional hymns at the time. These songs developed with the mass revival movement and Holiness-Pentecostal movement with Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey.

With Sankey as the primary gospel voice of the revivals, a number of other musicians emerged to create this music during a time in which the rural churches were more open. Publishing houses, such as Homer Rodeheaver and Charles Tindley, helped produce large quantities of this new music and allowed songwriters and composers to become more creative in their work.

Gospel music continued to grow with the Holiness-Pentecostal movement, or sanctified movement, in the 20th Century. This movement targeted



people who disliked the sophisticated church music and preferred the music created when the congregation would bring in its own instrumentation, such as tambourines and electric guitars. Gospel music spread more rapidly with the radio in the 1920s, which also brought more marketing of gospel records. During the 1920s and 1930s, African American gospel quartets began to become popular with their a cappella style of music.

After World War II, gospel music moved to larger venues with elaborate concerts. Joe Bostic produced the Negro Gospel and Religious Music Festival in 1950 that allowed black gospel to be featured at Carnegie Hall. It expanded each year and was finally held at Madison Square Garden in 1959. Today, a number of gospel music genres and subgenres exist, such as urban contemporary gospel, gospel blues, Southern gospel, progressive Southern gospel, Christian country music, bluegrass gospel, and Celtic gospel.

ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

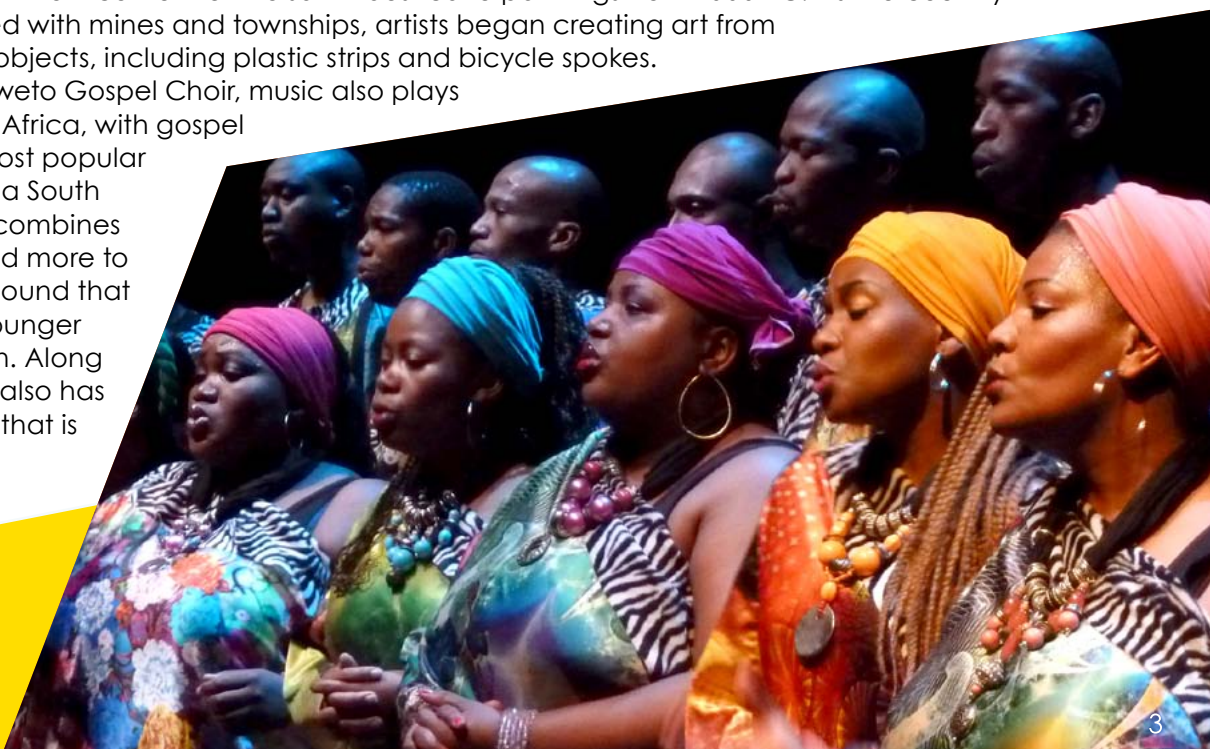
The Soweto Gospel Choir is comprised of members solely from the nation of South Africa. To prepare students for the performance and to tie the choir's art to your social studies curriculum, it may be beneficial to give students a background on South African culture and history.

As its name implies, South Africa rests at the southern tip of Africa and is divided into nine provinces. More than 51 million people reside in South Africa, making it the 24th most populous country. A number of diverse cultures make up the large population and the country recognizes 11 official languages. While wandering the streets of South Africa, a traveler will commonly hear English in public, but it is only the fifth most-spoken home language. Each ethnic group is equally represented in South Africa's constitutional monarchy, which as a parliament-dependent President residing as the chief officer. While South Africa has the largest economy in Africa and the 28th largest in the world, nearly a quarter of the population is unemployed and living in poverty.

Similar to the United States, the three branches of South Africa's government (the executive, judicial and legislative branches) are governed by the Constitution, which gives the superior courts the responsibility of striking Parliament's executive actions if they are unconstitutional. Parliament has an upper house, the National Council of Provinces, which consists of 90 members equally representing the nine provincial legislatures. It also has a lower house, the National Assembly, which consists of 400 members who proportionally represent the country and are elected every five years. The three branches of government have their own capital cities, with Cape Town being the legislative capital that houses Parliament, Pretoria being the executive capital that houses the President and Cabinet, and Bloemfontein being the judicial capital that houses the Supreme Court of Appeal.

South Africa also has its own unique artwork, much of which includes some of the oldest art objects in the world. This ancient artwork was found in a South African cave and dated back nearly 75,000 years. Along with some of this artwork come the Khoisan tribes' cave paintings from 1000 BC. As the country became more populated with mines and townships, artists began creating art from a number of interesting objects, including plastic strips and bicycle spokes.

As is obvious with the Soweto Gospel Choir, music also plays a role in the art of South Africa, with gospel and kwaito being the most popular forms of music. Kwaito is a South African music style that combines rap, reggae, hip-hop and more to create a slower-paced sound that is popular among the younger South African population. Along with music, South Africa also has a unique style of dance that is full of energy.



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS POSSIBLE FOLLOW UP LESSONS

To ensure that students receive a truly arts integrated learning experience, it may help to continue using the arts or provide a number of follow up activities after attending the Soweto Gospel Choir performance. The Kennedy Center for Performing Arts offers a number of interdisciplinary lessons that may be helpful following the performance. Within these lessons, many opportunities exist to promote literacy with your students. Below are a few examples of such lessons:

America, A Home for Every Culture

American culture reflects a mosaic of all the many cultures that make up the United States.

How can you define American food, music, or language?

Cultures collide and combine when students attend the Soweto Gospel Choir performance. To help support understanding and respect for the variety of cultures with which students may come in contact on a daily basis, this lesson from the Kennedy Center invites students to explore what makes the American culture unique. Students learn immigrant groups' words that were integrated into the English language, the origin of music and instruments from various ethnic backgrounds that forms American music, and the impact of foods from different cultures on the food they eat regularly. The lesson wraps up with the students making a class "Multicultural Family Recipe Book" as well as creating poems and drawings that represent their understanding of diversity's value. This lesson, which fuses music and visual arts with geography and history, invites students to become more literate as they synthesize and evaluate their newfound opinions on diversity in their lives. Through writing poetry, students learn not only the rhythm and movement evident in the music performed by Soweto, but also how to express their ideas in meaningful ways. To view this entire lesson, click [here](#).

Learning from Lyrics

What lessons about history can be learned from music and other arts?

The soulful music performed by Soweto Gospel Choir comes from a blend of cultures and musical styles. This lesson from the Kennedy Center allows students to research various styles of music, such as rock, country, rap, alternative, etc., to explore current social issues. Just as gospel made its movement in the United States from the field songs of slaves, other music reveals history and social issues of different times. After researching the song, students analyze and interpret the song's meaning to create a visual representation of its cultural significance. Blending history with music and visual arts, this lesson asks students to present their opinions and research orally, which also aids in their literacy development. Students will be utilizing their literacy skills of application, evaluation and synthesis to create a thought-provoking and articulate presentation of how music reflects the social issues in their past and current lives. To view this entire lesson, click [here](#)¹.

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Explore the origins of "The Black National Anthem"

Similar to the lesson above, this lesson from the Kennedy Center considers historical events and social issues through the arts. Students will evaluate art, poetry, and music to see how historical events inspire art that conveys emotions and mood. From here, students will begin to see the "big ideas" behind the pieces that relate back to hardships, fairness, equity and a desire to make a change. Through this lesson, students also exercise their literacy skills by interpreting and identifying metaphors, other figurative language, and rhythm within the works they read. They will then apply this newfound knowledge to create their own poetry pieces that convey the big ideas central to their own lives. Students will learn to articulate their ideas aesthetically while utilizing their literacy skills of interpretation and analysis. To view this entire lesson, click [here](#)².

In further attempts to promote literacy, incorporating further writing activities will help students improve their writing and communication skills. Having students journal about their experiences both with the performance and any extensions to the performance will help them synthesize their knowledge. By exploring various forms of writing, students will apply their new knowledge and experiences in a way that will make them more effective and entertaining communicators as they continue their educational careers.

NEBRASKA'S CONTENT STANDARDS AND THE NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

The majority of standards listed below must be adapted to appropriate grade levels. This is not a complete list of applicable standards, but instead provides a set, or examples, of relevant standards for teachers to develop lessons in line with Nebraska's educational standards and requirements.

CORE CONTENT STANDARDS

The Nebraska Standards can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website <http://www.education.ne.gov/>.

SOCIAL STUDIES

HUMAN SYSTEMS

SS 0.3.4: Students will recognize that people belong to different groups and live in different settings

SS 0.3.4.a: Identify aspects of culture within the local community and other communities (e.g. food, language, religion, celebrations, and popular culture, such as food, music and sports)

SS 2.3.4: Students will identify the characteristics of culture

SS 2.3.4.a: Identify patterns of cultural traits (e.g., language, religion, food)

SS 8.3.4: Students will analyze and interpret patterns of culture around the world

SS 8.3.4.a: Compare and contrast characteristics of groups of people/settlements

HISTORICAL COMPREHENSION

SS 3.4.2: Students will describe the development of people, events, ideas, and symbols over time using multiple types of sources

SS 3.4.2.a: Describe the role of historical people, events, ideas, and symbols, including various cultures and ethnic groups

SS 12.4.2 (WLD): Students will analyze the impact of people, events, ideas, and symbols upon world history using multiple types of sources

SS 12.4.2.a: Analyze and evaluate the impact of people, events, ideas, and symbols, including various cultures and ethnic groups, on history throughout the world

LANGUAGE ARTS

The following Language Arts Standards can be achieved mostly through reflection and follow-up activities

Reading

Students will learn and apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend text

VOCABULARY – 1.1.5

1.1.5: Students will build literary, general academic, and content specific grade level vocabulary

1.5.b: Relate new grade level vocabulary to prior knowledge and use in new situations

Writing

Students will learn and apply writing skills and strategies to communicate

WRITING GENRES – 2.2.2

2.2.2: Students will write for a variety of purposes and audiences in multiple genres

2.2.2.a: Write for a specific purpose

2.2.2.e: Compare models and examples (own and others) of various genres to create a similar piece

Speaking and Listening

Students will learn and apply speaking and listening skills and strategies to communicate

SPEAKING SKILLS – 3.3.1

3.3.1: Students will develop and demonstrate speaking skills to communicate key ideas in a variety of situations

3.1.a Communicate ideas orally in daily classroom activities and routines

LISTENING SKILLS – 3.3.2

3.3.2: Students will develop and demonstrate active listening skills across a variety of situations

3.3.2.a: Demonstrate listening skills needed for multiple situations and modalities

3.3.2.c: Listen and retell main ideas or information

3.3.2.d: Listen to and ask questions about thoughts, ideas, and information being communicated

3.3.2.d: Listen to and summarize thoughts, ideas, and information being communicated

Reciprocal Communication

RECIPROCAL COMMUNICATION – 3.3

3.3: Students will demonstrate reciprocal communication skills

3.3.c: Interact and collaborate with others in learning situations by contributing questions, information, opinions, and ideas using a variety of media and formats

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

The National Arts Standards can be found at <http://www.artsedge.org>.

MUSIC

Content Standard 7

Evaluating music and music performances

GRADES K–4: Students explain, using appropriate music terminology, their personal preferences for specific musical works and styles

GRADES 5–8: Students develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of music performance and compositions and apply the criteria in their personal listening and performing

GRADES 9–12: Students evaluate a given musical work in terms of its aesthetic qualities and explain the musical means it uses to evoke feelings and emotions

Content Standard 8

Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

GRADES K–4: Students identify ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music (e.g. foreign languages: singing songs in various languages; language arts: using the expressive elements of music in interpretive readings; geography: songs associated with various countries or regions)

GRADES 5–8: Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music (e.g. language arts: issues to be considered in setting texts to music; social studies: historical and social events and movement chronicled in or influenced by musical works)

GRADES 9–12: Students explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music (e.g. language arts: compare the ability of music and literature to convey images, feelings, and meanings)

Content Standard 9

Understanding music in relation to history and culture

GRADES K–4: Students identify by genre or style aural examples of music from various historical periods and cultures

GRADES 5–8: Students compare, in several cultures of the world, functions music serves, roles of musicians, and conditions under which music is typically performed

GRADES 9–12: Students identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context

FOOTNOTES

here — http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-3-4/America_A_Home_for_Every_Culture.aspx

here¹ — http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-9-12/Learning_From_Lyrics.aspx

here² — http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-5/Lift_Every_Voice_and_Sing.aspx

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is made possible through grants from The Cooper Foundation, the Lincoln Arts Council, and through support from the Lied Center's Education Programs.

2013



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