

# Study Guide



## The Beast

In "SANKOFA: African American Music from Spirituals to Hip Hop" students will learn elements of Storytelling, Improvisation, and Call, and Response in American Music. A brilliant mix of TedTalk-style interactive lecture with an exciting live band, SANKOFA educates and entertains. Students learn about the oral tradition through the West African storyteller/poet known as the Griot; explore coded language in Spirituals; join musicians on stage to discover improvisation in Jazz; learn call and response in Reggae, and party with their teachers to some classic Hip Hop. Developed by Pierce Freelon, a college professor, hip hop artist, and father of two, this performance is entertaining and informative for all ages, taking careful steps to use tone, vocabulary and interactions that specifically relate the corresponding age of students. Sankofa is consistently lauded as "the best assembly EVER" by students and faculty alike.

**Did you know?** This performance is a public service of the Sampson County Exposition Center, Sampson CenterStage Performing Arts Series and the County of Sampson and is totally funded and underwritten through the financial contributions of many businesses, corporations, civic organizations, and individuals from across Sampson County and is provided **FREE** to students from Clinton City Schools and Sampson County Schools.

Many thanks to all **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** Sponsors...On the day of the performance a complete list of Class Acts Sponsors will be distributed to each teacher...

**How you can help!** Please take a moment to have YOUR students write a note of appreciation to our sponsors...without them this performance would not be possible...

This study guide was prepared and provided as a courtesy of the ***Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students*** series and is designed to aid in preparing students for an exciting performance...We encourage you to make use of this valuable resource designed to not only enhance each student's theatergoing experience; but to also complement their total educational experience.



## Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students

For additional information, contact Ray Jordan at 910.592.6451.  
[www.sampsoncenterstage.com](http://www.sampsoncenterstage.com)

# GOING TO THE THEATRE (101)



## Going to the Theatre

Watching a live performance is very different than watching television or going to the movies. When you see a live performance you play a part too! Your role is an audience member. As an audience member you should obey the following instructions:

When you arrive, follow an usher to your seat. Your group may be assigned to specific areas or seats in the theatre. Please stay in the seat that you are given until the show is over.

Most theaters do not allow cameras, cellular telephones or recording devices. Please leave these at home or in your classroom.

Food, drink, candy and chewing gum are not allowed in the theatre.

Book bags and/or oversized handbags are not allowed in the theatre.

When the theater lights dim, it means the show is about to begin...Please be quiet.

Listen and watch carefully. Talking and making noise disturbs the performers on stage and your fellow audience members. Please hold your comments until after the performance. Of course when something is funny you may laugh. You may even cry when something is sad.

Show your appreciation by clapping when the performance is over and when the performers take a bow.

Stay seated after the show and an usher or your teacher will lead you out of the theater.

### SPECIAL NOTE

This show will have a question and answer period following the performance. Please stay seated after the curtain call. If you have a question, raise your hand. Speak loudly and clearly when you are called upon.

# Theatre Collaborators



When we see a show, we often think of only the performers on stage. However, many people come together to make a performance happen. Read the list of theatre collaborators and answer the discussion questions with a partner.

**Musical Arranger** - A music arranger is someone who arranges a piece of music for a music director, music producer, conductor, a group of performers or a single performer. Most music arrangers know how to read and write music, have a good knowledge of music theory and know how to play several instruments.

**Sound Engineer** - An audio engineer helps to produce a recording or a live performance, balancing and adjusting sound sources using equalization and audio effects, mixing, reproduction, and reinforcement of sound.

**Director** - helps the performers understand their roles and tells them where to move on stage. The director also collaborates with designers to create the entire picture you see on stage.

**Costume Designer** - imagines and designs the clothing and other items worn by the performers on stage.

**Lighting Designer** - imagines and creates the lights of a performance to enhance the mood and the setting.

**Set Designer** - makes a map of each set and its changes

**Props** - items held or used by the actors on stage that help tell the story

## THINK ABOUT IT!



Why is changing the color of lights important for the mood in a scene?

If you were a character in a play, what color gel would you choose for your spotlight?  
Why?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...



1. If you were to work in the theater business, which theater collaborator would you rather be?
2. Which job seems most challenging? Why?

## **Teacher's Guide to *Sankofa: African American Music from Spirituals to Hip Hop***

Greetings Teachers,

*The Beast* is excited about performing at your school. We can't wait to share our genre-bending Hip Hop and Jazz curriculum with your students and faculty – we always have a fun time! In this guide, we've provided you with some resources to prepare you and your students for our performance. Please feel free to use any of the information to give your students a bit of background to the program.

This is an interactive performance, which relies on participation and volunteers, so be prepared – we might even call on you teachers! Please let your students know that they are welcome to clap or sing along with us if they like. There will be times in the show when we will need them to be calm, quiet, and attentive so that we can deliver the teaching points for each genre we cover. We will use time-tested West African call-and-response phrases “AGO! AME!” to bring the group into focus if they get too riled.

### **Objectives:**

By the end of this workshop/performance students will be able to:

1. Identify the several styles of African American music.
2. Define common musical themes across various American musical styles, including: improvisation, storytelling and call & response.
3. Understand how music relates to history and culture.
4. Recognize different styles of music by sound.

### **SANKOFA: African American Music from Spirituals to Hip Hop**

#### *Performance*

- a. The Beast performs 2 original songs, illustrating our genre-bending work.
- b. Griot – introduce students to the West African Griot/Jeli – a historian and musician who used the oral tradition to communicate stories.

#### *Spirituals - Storytelling*

- a. Political/historical significance of Spirituals
- b. African origins/ use of coded language
- c. The Beast live performance – “Wade in the Water” or “Amazing Grace”
- d. Lyrics/music analysis, socio-political impact
- e. Emphasize storytelling

#### *The Blues – Storytelling*

- a. What does it mean to be Blue?
- b. Historical significance of The Blues
- c. Write our own “Blues” with the students, perform with audience participation
- d. Emphasize storytelling

*Jazz - Improvisation*

- a. Historical trajectory American music, from Blues to Jazz (New Orleans, etc)
- b. The Beast performs “When the Saints go Marching in”, explaining relationship to New Orleans, and showcasing soloists.
- c. Emphasize storytelling and *improvisation*
- d. Allow students to experiment with improvisation, through vocal improvisation (scatting)

*Hip-Hop – Call and Response*

- a. Historical overview, including the four elements of Hip-Hop culture
- b. The Beast performs Sugar Hill Gang's “Rapper's Delight”, and showcases storytelling, improvisation and call and response.
- c. Lyric/music analysis, socio-political impact

*The Beast – Genre-Bending*

- a. Overview: exploring the relationships between American music genres, from Spirituals to Hip-Hop, and investigating how each style has affected and influenced generations of youth in America.
- b. Live performance, exploring of musical continuities across genres and generations, as interpreted by the repertoire of The Beast.

**Definitions:**

**Sankofa** - a West African philosophy, encouraging one to look back to the past in order to move forward. The literal translation for Sankofa is, “go back and fetch it”.

**Griot/Jali** - a storyteller, historian and musician, who maintains a tradition of oral history in parts of West Africa.

**Coded Language** – the hidden, double meaning behind words and lyrics, only understood by people within a certain group.

**Blue** – the feeling of being melancholy or sad.

**Improvisation** – to create or perform spontaneously or without preparation

**Soloist** – in a jazz ensemble, the soloist is the primary person improvising, usually over a predetermined sequence of chord changes.

**Genre-bending** – genre bending is the art of fusing different musical styles together.

## **Styles of Music to be covered**

**Oral Tradition** – America’s first songs were all forged with the same instrument – the voice.

**Spirituals** – What W.E.B. Dubois called sorrow songs; Negro Spirituals are songs of enslaved Africans and African Americans, derived from field hollers, religious hymns and African scales and rhythms

**The Blues** – a musical style forged in the deep south of the United States, The Blues is the bedrock of American musical culture: giving birth to jazz, rock and roll, rhythm and blues and country.

**Jazz** – America’s “classical music,” Jazz was forged in New Orleans, inspired by African rhythms and European instruments.

**Hip Hop** – Hip Hop is a cultural movement consisting of many elements including the DJ, B Boy/B Girl, Emcee and Graffiti Artist.

## **Song List:**

Teachers might consider finding the original versions of these songs as performed by the artists listed below. The students will then be able to make a connection to the way *The Beast* performs the piece and the ways that it is simultaneously similar to and different from the original composition.

*Wade in the Water* – Fisk Jubilee Singers

*Go Down Moses* – Fisk Jubilee Singers

*Amazing Grace*-Fisk Jubilee Singers

*Sweet Home Chicago* – Robert Johnson

*Dupree Blues* – Blind Willie Walker

*When the Saints go Marching In* – Louie Armstrong

*Take The A Train*-Duke Ellington

*Well You Needn’t*- Thelonius Monk

*Three Little Birds*-Bob Marley

*Rapper’s Delight* – Sugarhill Gang

*The Message* – Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five

*Once Again* – The Beast

*Movement*-The Beast

*Freedom* – The Beast



# AT HOME

Dear Parents,

Recently, your student attended a performance by The Beast presenting "SANKOFA: African American Music from Spirituals to Hip Hop." Students learned elements of Storytelling, Improvisation, and Call, and Response in American Music. Students learned through the oral tradition of the West African storyteller/poet known as the Griot.

Prior to attendance, teachers reviewed proper theatre etiquette with students and gave some background information about the concert.

As a parent, you are your child's best teacher. They can also teach you through their experiences. Ask your student about the performance they attended and read through this booklet. Share some experiences that you or other family members have had while attending a live concert.

Thank you for your participation in the arts.



## DO IT!

A reviewer writes an opinion of the actors, sets, and director for a newspaper or magazine. Write your review of the performance for your family.

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