

# Study Guide For Teachers

## **Ginga Brasileira** In ***Free to Dance***

presented by  
**Young Audiences**  
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### **ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

Ginga Brasileira travels from Brazil's 16th century slave plantations to Rio's Carnival in an exploration of Afro-Brazilian culture through dance. Efraim Silva and his dancers dazzle with their physical prowess, discuss Brazilian history and culture, sing in Portuguese and play traditional instruments.

### **LEARNING GOALS**

Students will:

- Be introduced to the history, culture and arts of Brazil.
- Understand the importance of discipline and physical well-being.
- Participate in a climate of multi-cultural appreciation.

### **ARTIST INFORMATION**

Efraim Silva, director of Ginga Brasileira, was born in Guarujá, Sao Paulo, Brazil. He started to practice Capoeira at age 13 and became an instructor at 17. He also studied Brazilian folk dance and music, particularly Maculele and Samba. He had his own academy of dance in Brazil until he moved to the United States in 1990. Since that time he has been dazzling audiences with his performances at schools, colleges, theaters and festivals across the United States.

Silva has been awarded state and federal certification as a professional musician and rhythmist and was awarded a Master of Capoeira certificate by the Sao Paulo Federation of Capoeira in 1994.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

"Free to Dance" showcases the samba, Brazil's national dance; as well the capoeira, combining dance, and martial arts; and the maculele, a stick dance from the Brazilian sugar cane plantations.

Samba, a Brazilian dance with many variations, is African in origin. It has been performed as a street dance at carnival for almost 100 years. Many versions are danced at the local carnival in Rio, during which there are "schools of Samba" involving thousands of elaborately costumed dancers performing to music of Brazil and Rio in particular.

Capoeira was created by African slaves, in Brazil, approximately 400 years ago as a martial art. Capoeira brings together dance, self-defense, and music. More than a martial art, Capoeira is also a social event filled with tradition and history.

The origins of Maculele are shrouded in mystery, and there are many stories, theories and beliefs. One version of the story is that during the slavery era in Brazil, the slaves in the sugarcane plantations would gather and play Maculele as a game to vent their anger and frustration from being slaves. At this time, machetes were used instead of sticks. Sticks were later incorporated for safety reasons.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

1. Brainstorm a list of things that students know about Brazil. Then, create a list of things they want to know. Take some time to explore a few of the things on the "want to know" list before the performance. Leave space for what they learn during the performance.

2. Ask your students about their own experience with and exposure to dance. Have they ever seen a live dance performance before? If so, what was their reaction to it? What do they expect to see during this performance?

3. Take some time to discuss Break dancing. What do students know about it? What kinds of movements are used in Break dancing? Capoeira, a martial art form used by Caribbean slaves in combat to escape the plantations of the 1800's shares many elements of Break dancing. Do any students Break dance or do another kind of informal dancing? Do any of the students do more formal dancing on a regular basis i.e. are any of them involved in ballet, tap dance or other dance activities?

4. Get the music teacher involved! Have students listen to Brazilian music and explore the rhythms so important to the various dances from this country.

## **VOCABULARY WORDS**

CAPOEIRA - An Afro-Brazilian art form: a mixture of dance, self-defense and gymnastics

MACULELE - a stick dance form created by African slaves on the Brazilian sugar can plantations

SAMBA - National music and dance of Brazil, the heartbeat of the Brazilian people. It is the heart and soul of the carnival, the exciting Brazilian festivity that celebrates life and music for five days and five nights every year on the streets of Brazil.

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

1. Discuss the performance. Ask the students which were their favorite part of the performance. In what ways was this type of dance different/the same as other dances they've seen before?

2. Dance can be an expression of a variety of cultures and traditions. For example the polka, waltz, reel, clog, and tap dancing each originates from different American cultural and historical traditions. Ask students to explore any dance traditions which form part of their family's history, culture or traditions. Have students research that country's/culture's dance form and other traditional art forms.

## **RESOURCES**

DeMille, Agnes. *The Book of Dance*. Golden Press, Inc., 1963.

Haskell, Arnold L. *The Wonderful World of Dance*. Doubleday & Co., 1969.

Kendall, Elizabeth. *Where She Danced*. New York: Knopf, 1979.

Merry, Suzanne. *Dancer*. Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1980.