Forces of Nature Dance Theatre

Executive Artistic Director/Choreographer
Abdel R. Salaam and Executive Managing Director Olabamidele Husbands co-founded the critically acclaimed Forces of Nature Dance Theatre Company in 1981. Forces of Nature, along with founding company member and principal soloist Dyane Harvey, have produced and presented professional ballets and concerts, conducted master classes, seminars, workshops and educational programs in New York City, the United States and throughout the world for over 42 years.


Forces of Nature's cultural matrix is centered in an African and an American intelligence that is global and environmental. Its aesthetic has been critically acclaimed as visceral, thought provoking and creatively brilliant. Forces of Nature utilizes a unique blend of performing arts, which includes contemporary modern dance, traditional West African dance, Afro-beat, fusion, contemporary ballet, house and hip hop forms as well as live and recorded music and the martial arts.

How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic
Scan the QR code or visit: njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources to access the podcast and the following show notes:

Part 1: About | Pre-show audio, 6 minutes
Includes: An introduction to the performance, artists & venue, welcome message
Written and hosted by Dania Ramos
Additional writing by the team behind Forces of Nature Dance Theatre Sound editing, sound design, and voiceover by Michael Aquino
Theme and outro music: NJPAC TD Jazz for Teens program Additional music from Epidemic Sound
Welcome message voiced by Eyesha Marable
Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos

Part 2: Connect | Post-show audio, 8 minutes
Includes: Reflection questions, a look at the symbols and principles of Kwanzaa
Written and hosted by Dania Ramos
Additional writing by Rochelle Herring-Peniston
Sound editing and design by Michael Aquino
Theme and outro music: NJPAC TD Jazz for Teens program Additional music from Epidemic Sound
Opening question voiced by Eyesha Marable
Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos

Part 3: Spotlight | Post-show audio, 10 minutes
Includes: An interview with NJPAC's Assistant Vice President of Community Engagement, discussion starters
Written and hosted by Dania Ramos
Sound editing and design by Michael Aquino
Theme and outro music: NJPAC TD Jazz for Teens program Additional music from Epidemic Sound
Interview guest: Eyesha Marable
Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos
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<td><strong>Prepare for the performance</strong></td>
<td>If you have five to 10 minutes: Have students listen to NJPAC On the Mic About for an introduction to the performance, what to expect at the theater and a welcome message. If you have 20 minutes: Explain that the performance is a mix of West African, contemporary and hip hop dance. This performance uses music and dance to explore cultural traditions in modern day with a focus on Kwanzaa. Ask the students what they know about Kwanzaa and show them the video for more information. If you have 30 minutes: Ask students to discuss the relationship between music and dance. How do the two art forms influence each other? Let them know that most of the music in this performance is percussive. Share the following Forces of Nature performance and drumming lesson.</td>
<td>Reflect: Listen to the next podcast episode: NJPAC On the Mic: Connect Twice during this episode, you’ll be prompted to pause the audio to allow students to share their responses to a reflection question. Continue the discussion with additional questions: What different styles of dance and movement did you recognize? What did you learn? Read: Have students learn more about Kwanzaa by reading National Geographic Kids Celebrating Kwanzaa or Smithsonian Kwanzaa: Students can learn more about Forces of Nature Dance Theatre’s Kwanzaa performance by listening to an exclusive interview in the final episode NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight Respond: In small groups, have students choose one of the principles of Kwanzaa discuss why they think that principle is important and what they can do to bring that principle into their own lives. Encourage students to think about how this principle connects to something in their own culture or family tradition. Where do you see these principles in your life and culture? Share your answer to the reflection questions: What was your favorite moment from the show? Which Kwanzaa tradition or principle could you most relate to? Why? What different styles of dance and movement did you recognize? What did you learn?</td>
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<td><strong>Experience the performance</strong></td>
<td>Notice the different types of dances and music you recognize in the performance. How do the different styles of dance help tell parts of the story? Sit back, relax and enjoy the performance!</td>
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<td><strong>Reflect, respond and read</strong></td>
<td>Reflect: Have students listen to the next podcast episode: NJPAC On the Mic: Connect Twice during this episode, you’ll be prompted to pause the audio to allow students to share their responses to a reflection question. Continue the discussion with additional questions: What different styles of dance and movement did you recognize? What did you learn? Read: Have students learn more about Kwanzaa by reading National Geographic Kids Celebrating Kwanzaa or Smithsonian Kwanzaa: Students can learn more about Forces of Nature Dance Theatre’s Kwanzaa performance by listening to an exclusive interview in the final episode NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight Respond: In small groups, have students choose one of the principles of Kwanzaa discuss why they think that principle is important and what they can do to bring that principle into their own lives. Encourage students to think about how this principle connects to something in their own culture or family tradition. Where do you see these principles in your life and culture? Share your answer to the reflection questions: What was your favorite moment from the show? Which Kwanzaa tradition or principle could you most relate to? Why? What different styles of dance and movement did you recognize? What did you learn?</td>
<td>Reflect: Listen to the next podcast episode: NJPAC On the Mic: Connect Share your answer to the reflection questions: What was your favorite moment from the show? Which Kwanzaa tradition or principle could you most relate to? Why? What different styles of dance and movement did you recognize? What did you learn? Read: Learn more about Kwanzaa by reading National Geographic Kids Celebrating Kwanzaa or Smithsonian’s Kwanzaa. Learn more about Forces of Nature Dance Theatre’s Kwanzaa performance by listening to an exclusive interview in NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight Respond: The seven principles of Kwanzaa are Umoja (unity), Kuumba (self-determination or helping yourself succeed), Ujamaa (collective work and responsibility or teamwork), Ujima (cooperative economics or sharing), Nia (purposes), Kuumba (creativity) and Imeni (heritage). Which one do you think is the most important? Why? Where do you see these principles in your life and culture?</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Introduce the idea of combining different art forms to create a new performance or work of art that explores or reimagines a theme. Engage students in a classroom discussion about mixing art forms or genres. Participate in a classroom discussion about mixing art forms or genres. Discuss the importance of combining different art forms. How can you combine music, dance, visual arts or spoken word to share your connection or interpretation of the principle? Use Activity Sheet 2, the NJPAC resources section of this TRG and your research to develop your presentation.</td>
<td>Forces of Nature Dance Theatre uses music and many forms of dance to create their performance about Kwanzaa. Participate in a classroom discussion about mixing art forms or genres. Complete Activity Sheet 1 to explore different dance and music genres. Check out the examples of combining genres and art forms in the resources section for inspiration.</td>
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<td><strong>Originage</strong></td>
<td>In pairs or small groups, students will choose one of the Kwanzaa principles to express through a combination of art forms or genres. Have them first complete Activity Sheet 2, which they may use as a guide.</td>
<td>Complete Activity Sheet 2 with a partner or small group. Create your own multi-art form or multi-genre presentation based on one of the principles of Kwanzaa. How can you combine music, dance, visual arts or spoken word to share your connection or interpretation of the principle? Use Activity Sheet 2, the NJPAC resources section of this TRG and your research to develop your presentation.</td>
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<td><strong>Rehearse</strong></td>
<td>Give your students time to refine and rehearse their presentations. Remind them that their presentation can be live, digital or both. Provide them with constructive feedback as needed.</td>
<td>Refine and rehearse your presentation. Ask your teacher or another group for feedback if you need help.</td>
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<td><strong>Make magic</strong></td>
<td>Allow time for all of the students to share their work. If appropriate, remind everyone about audience etiquette. Have students identify the Kwanzaa principles and art form in each piece they watch. Discuss briefly what they liked, noticed and learned from each presentation.</td>
<td>If you are performing, take a breath and do your best! If you are in the audience, quietly watch your classmates’ presentations and think about how they presented their Kwanza principles and the art forms they used. Share your observations after each performance.</td>
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Curriculum Standards

NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards
1. Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
2. Organizing and developing ideas.
3. Refining and completing work.
4. Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.
5. Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
6. Conveying meaning through art.
7. Perceiving and analyzing products.
8. Interpreting intent and meaning.
9. Applying criteria to evaluate products.
10. Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
11. Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

Find the Standards
For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
- National Core Arts Anchor Standards

Common Core State Standards

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills
9.4.5.C1.3 Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals with diverse perspectives to expand one's thinking about a topic of curiosity. (5th grade benchmark)
9.4.12.C1.1 Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas. (12th grade benchmark)
9.4.8.GCA.1 Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect. (8th grade benchmark)
9.4.8.GCA.2 Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal. (8th grade benchmark)

World Languages
7.1.L.INTRE1 Identify a few memorized and practiced words contained in oral, viewed, and written chunks of language in culturally authentic materials when supported by visual cues such as pictures and gestures and text support such as bolded words, bulleted lists, and/or captions.

Social-Emotional Learning
Self-Management Sub-competency 6 Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals.
Social Awareness Sub-competency 9 Demonstrate an awareness of the differences among individuals, groups, and others' cultural backgrounds.
Relationship Skills Sub-competency 16 Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

Social Studies
6.1.12.HistoryCA.14.c Determine the influence of multicultural beliefs, products (i.e., art, food, music, and literature), and practices in shaping contemporary American culture. (12th grade benchmark)

Forces of Nature Dance Theatre

Vocabulary
African Dance Various dance styles of sub-Saharan Africa that are closely connected with the traditional rhythms and music traditions of the region.
African Diaspora People of African origin who are living outside of the continent of Africa.
Classical Ballet A traditional style of ballet that relies on dance fundamentals and established academic techniques that have evolved during the dance form's history; it has a rigorous, precise, yet flowing aesthetic with formalized movement of the legs, arms, and head.
Contemporary Dance A style of dance focused on self-expression and storytelling. It pulls from traditional dance styles like ballet and jazz, but breaks away from the strict techniques and movements that make those styles so recognizable.
Diaspora The spread of a people from their original homeland.
Hip Hop Dance Original forms of hip hop dance evolved during the 1970s and 1980s, including breaking, popping and locking. Newer forms such as house, krumping, voguing, and street jazz emerged in the 1990s.
Kujichagulia One of the seven principles of Kwanzaa meaning self-determination.
resources

Websites
NJPAC’s Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education
About NJPAC
njpac.org/about
NJPAC resources | Forces of Nature Dance Theatre
njpac.org/education-program/forces-of-nature-resources
NJPAC | Eyesha Marable
njpac.org/about/our-people
Forces of Nature Dance Theatre
forcesofnature.org
Official Kwanzaa Website | The Symbols of Kwanzaa
officialkwanzaawebsite.org/the-symbols.html
National Geographic | Celebrating Kwanzaa
kids.nationalgeographic.com/celebrations/article/kwanzaa
Smithsonian | Kwanzaa
nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/kwanzaa
Google Arts and Culture | Power of the African Drum
artsculture.google.com/story/the-power-of-the-african-drum/
Nguzo Saba, USA
World Atlas | Where is the African Diaspora?
worldatlas.com/articles/where-is-the-african-diaspora.html
Whitehouse.gov | Fact Sheet: U.S. – Africa Partnership in Elevating Diaspora Engagement

Videos
University of Minnesota | History and Traditions of Kwanzaa
youtube.com/watch?v=dJloqULq7Iw
Inside Edition | What is Kwanzaa and How Is It Celebrated?
youtube.com/watch?v=x3Qg3a3DDG4
ExpertVillage Leaf Group | What is West African Dance
youtube.com/watch?v=7kQOBs7
African Five(ish) Minute Drum Lesson – African Drumming: Lesson 1: The Djembe
youtube.com/watch?v=tgBmsgFv3mM
The Hip Hop Nutcracker
youtube.com/watch?v=6rK45o63EwY
Metal Ballet | Metal Makes Everything Better
youtube.com/watch?v=FOCD14AKX/A
Spoken Word with Dance | Living with the Promise
youtube.com/watch?v=2yEshy6vZs0
the arts in your school

In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs and you’ll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It’s the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC’s forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something...you’ll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

study the arts at njpac

Saturday Programs: NJPAC’s Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of several programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

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Generous support for SchoolTime provided, in part, by

- Merck Foundation
- Prudential Foundation
- TD Charitable Foundation
- Turrell Fund
- Victoria Foundation


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