njpac
arts education

schooltime performance series



oran etkin's timbalooloo

finding friends far from home: a global journey

teacher resource guide

about the performance

Oran Etkin offers a unique and natural approach to music for young children. His method, Timbalooloo, employs informal, yet intentional, play-based experiences through which children explore the nuances of music and instruments. Inspired by the natural pitch, rhythm and tempo of language, music from cultures around the world is simplified and made accessible to even the youngest audience members. Children are involved in every aspect of Etkin's performances and workshops, which employ song, dance and body percussion.

In *Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey*, children meet Clara Net, with whom they travel and encounter additional friends (instruments) and styles of music. Big Mama Tuba joins Clara Net on the journey as they discover instruments from around the globe, such as the mbira from Zimbabwe, the balalaika from Russia and the erhu from China. The songs from each country are carefully chosen to offer call-and-response opportunities for audience members as well as chances for physical movement. By the end, audience members will gain not only a wealth of knowledge, but a one-of-a-kind interactive performance opportunity.



cultural connections

Both music and speech can be classified as language, a means of communicating with others. The connection between the two shows that fluency in one strengthens fluency in the other, particularly in young children. Similarities in both languages include meter, rhythm, pitch, tempo and volume. Variations of the aforementioned reveal nuances in human communication, perception and interpretation. Infants are typically exposed to, and respond to, music before spoken language. This tenet, in and of itself, illustrates the effectiveness of Oran Etkin's Timbalooloo approach to teaching music.

Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey utilizes a rote teaching approach, resulting in an attainable and enriching performance experience for audience members. The repetition of simple melodic phrases allows for quick and easy retention and imitation. Several of the songs used in the performance are traditional folk songs, passed down through generations orally: the identical method employed by Etkin. The content of folk songs represents the everyday lives of ordinary people from a culture. For example, the British American folk song "Coo Coo Bird" pays homage to the call of the titular bird, signifying the beginning of summer. Yet another example is the Japanese folk song "Sakura, Sakura," which celebrates cherry blossoms blooming, indicating spring has arrived.

Throughout the performance, audience members are introduced to multiple instruments from various regions of the globe. Regardless of audience members' homelands, each is likely to meet a brand new instrument during the performance. Etkin describes each and demonstrates their size, pitch, timbre and functionality. This effort to pique children's curiosity potentially opens a door to future musicianship. A similar approach to characterizing instruments was used in Sergei Prokofiev's 1936 work "Peter and the Wolf." Throughout the symphonic tale, various instruments represent various characters. Furthermore, each character is distinguished by a musical theme played by their assigned instrument. This timeless work has served as an educational tool for countless music educators across the globe.

vocabulary

Balalaika
A traditional triangular Russian instrument with three strings

Bell
The flared, opening piece at the bottom of a clarinet

Call and response
A musical conversation; a question and an answer

Clarinet
A long, black woodwind musical instrument that makes a smooth, rich sound when you blow air into it

Conductor
The leader of a musical group

Duet
A performance by two musicians

Echo
To repeat the same sound as someone else

Erhu
A traditional two-stringed Chinese instrument played with a bow; also called the Chinese violin

Folk song
A song passed down orally through generations featuring a simple tune and lyrics about the everyday lives of ordinary people from a specific culture

Mbira
Traditional African instrument made of a wooden board with keys that are plucked with the thumbs and fingers; also called a thumb piano

Mouthpiece
The part of a wind instrument (like a clarinet, trumpet or flute) where you put your lips or blow air to make a sound



Neck
The part of an instrument that connects its body to its mouthpiece

Quartet
Four musicians or singers who perform together as a team

Roma
An ethnic group of people who migrated to Europe from India centuries ago

Sakura
The Japanese word for cherry blossoms

Trio
Three musicians or singers who perform together as a team

inspired learning for the classroom

		Teacher Focus	Student Activity	NJ Student Learning Standards
P	Prepare	Discover what your students already know about this art form, topic or type of performance. Then explain more fully what they will see at the theater and why it's important. This can be accomplished by sharing images, vocabulary, videos or context that might help them appreciate the performance more fully.	Engage students by playing a "Name that Instrument" aural game featuring Western symphonic instruments they are likely to recognize (i.e., trumpet, drum, violin). Then, play a non-Western instrument sound that students will likely not recognize. Two recommendations for pre-made games can be found in the Resources section. Introduce *Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey* by informing students that the performance will take them on a worldwide voyage to hear musical instruments old and new.	Visual and Performing Arts Anchor Standard 11 **OR** Performance Expectation 1.3A.2.Cn11a
E	Experience	Review audience etiquette and go over expectations for arrival and departure from the theater. Before watching the show, provide a discussion question for them to consider during the performance.	Sometimes, an audience member is required to remain still and quiet during a performance. However, this performance is very interactive! When invited, students will be able to echo sounds, learn simple dance moves and use their bodies as percussion instruments. Ask students to consider the following: 1. How does it feel to be part of the show? Have you ever attended a show like this before? 2. What is one new and unique instrument you learned about in the performance?	Visual & Performing Arts - Dance: 1.1.2.Pr4b **OR** Anchor Standard 4 Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Cr1a **OR** Anchor Standard 1 Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Pr6b **OR** Anchor Standard 6 **SEL**: Self-Awareness
R	Reflect	Give students a moment to think about their answer to the discussion question you introduced in the experience section. Then allow them to share their response out loud with the class. Next, have students reflect on the skill set of the performers they saw in the show. Go around the class and have each student fill in the following statement: "I can already _____ like the performers did, but I can't _____ yet!" After everyone is done, remind them that with enough time and practice, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to.	Reflect on the themes of acceptance and diversity by leading a class discussion surrounding the following questions: 1. Which instrument made you the most curious? Which instruments were similar to ones you already knew and which were different? 2. What other cultural aspects vary amongst countries and regions (i.e. food, dress, language)? 3. Share a song you learned when you were very young. How did you learn this song? Do you think children in other places also learn songs like these? Introduce the term folk song and inform students that these songs are different all over the world. Choose a familiar American folk song for listening and singing along from the Resources section. Then, play one of the songs from *Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey*.	Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Pr4a **OR** Anchor Standard 4 Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Re7a **OR** Anchor Standard 7 Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Re7b **OR** Anchor Standard 7 Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Cn11a **OR** Anchor Standard 11 Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills: 9.4.2.GCA:1 **SEL**: Social Awareness
F	Focus	Use this time to review the vocabulary section and complete the activity sheets.	**Click here for SchoolTime Activity Sheets**	Visual & Performing Arts - Music: 1.3A.2.Cn11a **OR** Anchor Standard 11
O	Originate	After reviewing the vocabulary, write a class poem about the performance, where each student adds a line. Once the poem is complete, read the poem as a class three times, with each student saying the line they wrote. Before each repetition, give them a prompt to inform how they deliver the line (i.e. say it like you're excited, scared, sleepy, angry, etc.)		**Visual and Performing Arts** Anchor Standards 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10 **SEL** Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making
R	Rehearse	Have each student draw their own picture inspired by the show and their class poem. As they are working, use this time to walk around and ask them each about what they are drawing, the materials they are using, and what inspired them.		**Visual and Performing Arts** Anchor standards 1, 2, 7, 8, 10 **SEL** Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making
M	Mix it all together!	Allow each student to present their artwork and discuss why they drew what they did, giving them an opportunity to express themselves visually and verbally. Between presentations, allow two or three students to describe their reactions to the artwork that was presented. Encourage them to use phrases like "It reminded me of_____" or "It made me feel_____" rather than describing the art as good or bad. Once everyone is done presenting, put the artwork up on the wall with the class poem to complete your students' poem gallery.		**Visual and Performing Arts** Anchor standards 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 **SEL** Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making

educational standards

Anchor Standards

Anchor Standard 1
Generating and conceptualizing ideas

Anchor Standard 4
Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work

Anchor Standard 6
Conveying meaning through art

Anchor Standard 7
Perceiving and analyzing product

Anchor Standard 11
Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding

Visual & Performing Arts

Dance: 1.1.2.Pr4a
Perform planned and improvised movement sequences, with variations in direction (e.g., forward/backward, up/down, big/small, sideways, right/left, diagonal), spatial level (e.g., low, middle, high) and spatial pathways (e.g., straight, curved, circular, zigzag), alone and in small groups.

Dance: 1.1.2.Pr4b
Perform planned and improvised movement sequences, with variations in tempo, meter, and rhythm, alone and in small groups.

Music: 1.3A.2.Cn11a
Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Music: 1.3A.2.Cr1a
Explore, create and improvise musical ideas using rhythmic and melodic patterns in various meters and tonalities.

Music: 1.3A.2.Pr6b
Perform appropriately for the audience and purpose.

Music: 1.3A.2.Pr4a
Demon1strate and explain personal interest in, knowledge about, and purpose of varied musical selections.

Music: 1.3A.2.Re7a
Demonstrate and explain how personal interests and experiences influence musical selection for specific purposes.

Music: 1.3A.2.Re7b
Describe how specific music concepts are used to support a specific purpose in music.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills

9.4.2.GCA:1

Articulate the role of culture in everyday life by describing one's own culture and comparing it to the cultures of other individuals (e.g., 1.5.2.C2a, 7.1.NL.IPERS.5, 7.1.NL.IPERS.6)

Social Emotional Learning Competencies

Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making



additional resources

NJPAC
About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

NJPAC's Arts Education programs
njpac.org/arts-education

NJPAC's David G. Berger Master Class Series
njpac.org/berger

Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey Activity Sheets
njpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/OranEtkinTimbalooloo_ActivitySheet.pdf

Instruments
Instruments | Dallas Symphony Orchestra
dallassymphony.org/community-education/dso-kids/listen-watch/instruments

Sound samples | Philharmonia
philharmonia.co.uk/resources/sound-samples

Unique Instruments from around the World | Kids Co.
kidscompany.org/unique-instruments-from-around-the-world

Musical journeys: Instruments of the world | BBC Bitesize
bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zc6xs82#ztjcqyc

Let's Go Luna! - Carmen's World Orchestra | PBS KIDS
pbskids.org/games/play/carmens-world-orchestra/87272

Musical Instrumentation Resources | PBS Learning Media
ny.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/the-arts/music/musical-creation-participation-and-performance/musical-instrumentation/?rank_by=recency

Instrument Spotter's Guide | The Kennedy Center
kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/music/instrument-spotters-guide

Oran Etkin and Timbalooloo
Timbalooloo Music Charity
timbalooloo.com/home

About Oran Etkin |Timbalooloo Music Charity
timbalooloo.com/about#about-our-founder

Timbalooloo Children's Jazz Workshop Presented by Oran Etkin
youtube.com/watch?v=Lo3diOJkRRc

Timbalooloo Training Website
timbaloolootraining.com/

Timbalooloo YouTube Channel
youtube.com/@Timbalooloo

Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey
Finding Friends Far From Home: A Global Journey Trailer | Oran Etkin
oranetkin.bandcamp.com/album/finding-friends-far-from-home-a-journey-with-clara-net

Music in World Cultures Resources | PBS Learning Media
ny.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/the-arts/music/society-and-history-of-music/music-in-world-cultures/?rank_by=recency

World Music and Dance | Living Room Learning
centerforworldmusic.org/world-music-in-the-schools/living-room-learning

Musical Explorers Map | Carnegie Hall Kids
kids.carnegiehall.org/musical-explorers

People in Your Neighborhood: Conductor | Sesame Street
youtube.com/watch?v=MJ4UGtDLLYc

Peter and the Wolf | Maestro Classics
maestroclassics.com/peter-and-the-wolf?srsltid=AfmBOoowGyeG0Pmofn_i4kX3VOSMOI3ci4pim1UkiZIeuUn6z10GlS0w

Peter and the Wolf | 2022 OrKIDstra Concert
youtube.com/watch?v=fO4aZzS7jn4

Folk Songs

Classic Kids Folk Songs | YouTube
youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4cpbJiOEdInF7F-qItoReqD5nBVgpLp_

Lesson Plans | Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
folkways.si.edu/lesson-plans

American and Multicultural Folk Song Lyrics | Songs for Teaching
songsforteaching.com/folk

Songs to Grow On | Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4h7cOhe79loPqpL3_Inq3iza1R1HxAUx

Carnegie Hall Playlists | YouTube
youtube.com/@carnegiehallkids/playlists



bring the arts to 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.

arts training for students

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 our immersive 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

FMKF F.M. KIRBY FOUNDATION · M&T Bank · MERCK FOUNDATION · Prudential Foundation · Turrell Fund · VICTORIA FOUNDATION · rediscover jersey arts · Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Generous support provided by The Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc., The Arts Education Endowment Fund in honor of Raymond C. Chambers, Jennifer A. Chalsty, Judy and Stewart Colton, Toby and Leon Cooperman, Mimi and Edwin Feliciano, The Izzo Family, Don Katz & Leslie Larson+, McCrane Foundation, Inc., care of Margrit McCrane, The MCJ Amelior Foundation, Albert+ and Katharine Merck+, NJ Advance Media, Pershing Square Philanthropies, David & Marian Rocker, The Sagner Companies/The Sagner Family Foundation and an anonymous donor.

+ deceased