

## ArtSmart 2015 CURRICULUM GUIDE

**Name of Assembly:** LINDA TILLERY AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE CHOIR

*“What makes our concerts fun for kids is that they can really get involved in the music. We teach them rhythms, get them singing, clapping and dancing so it feels more like a party than a concert.”*



### **Bio:**

Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir is a Grammy © nominated, percussion driven, vocal ensemble whose mission is to preserve and share the rich musical traditions of African American roots music. Their music is rooted in the deep south and strongly connected to their West African and Caribbean origins. This mission is pursued through academic research, review of historical recordings, documents and video footage and most importantly - live performance. Performing together since 1992, the Cultural Heritage Choir creates dynamic rhythms and sparkling energy on stage. Their vocals are lush and vibrant, their lyrics are poignant and uplifting. Through stick, song, dance and story, the CHC transports the audience to a place in time when the roots of American popular music, were just being sewn by the "involuntary immigrants" from Africa's western regions. Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir, have become world renowned for their breathtaking performances and commitment to the authenticity of African-American roots music. The groups first collaboration with veteran performers Taj Mahal and Eric Bibb entitled "Shakin' A Tailfeather", was nominated for a Grammy (1997) and their second collaborative effort "Hippity Hop", received a Parents Choice Award (2000). The group's next recording "Say Yo' Business" (2003), was nominated for a California Music Award. The CHC's most recent titles are "Still We Sing, Still We Rise" (2010) and "A Retrospective" (2012) Currently, the Cultural Heritage Choir is: Linda Tillery, Rhonda Benin, Tamala Brown, Elouise Burrell, Bryan Dyer and Simon Monserrat.

## **About the Program:**

Students will join Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir in a unique opportunity to learn, sing and feel the music that developed through the songs and rhythms of the African Diaspora. Participants may learn African- American Spirituals, Field Hollers, Work Songs, Children's Play Songs, Ring Shouts, Gospel and music from the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. Students will learn in depth how the African diaspora has influenced music and dance throughout the Americas and participate in making rhythms, singing, and clapping to the beat. The Cultural Heritage Choir is known for teaching audiences how to approach singing with the ears, the eyes, and the heart.

## **Objectives:**

- To enthrall students with the music and song of the many faces of the African diaspora.
- To demonstrate the connection of cultures influenced by this diaspora, as witnessed in the effortless collaboration between these performers from different cultural traditions.
- To understand how rhythm can connect us in unexpected ways.

## **Preparation:**

### **1.) What is the African Diaspora?**

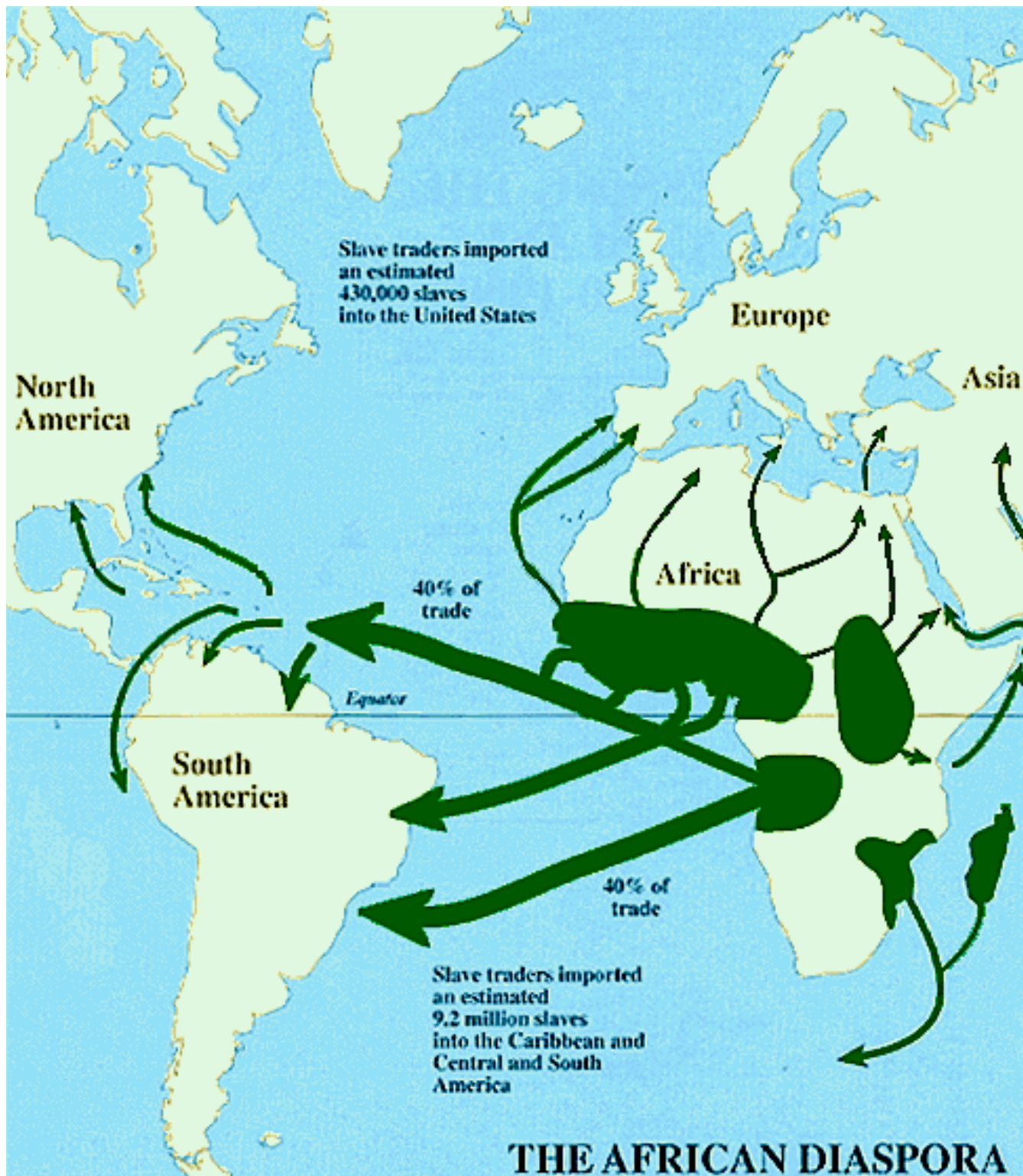
The **African Diaspora** is the diaspora created by the movements and culture of Africans and their descendants throughout the world, to places such as the Americas, (including United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America) Europe and Asia . The majority of the African diaspora are descended from people taken into slavery, with the largest population living in Brazil. In recent years they include a rising number of voluntary emigrants and asylum-seekers as well. More broadly, the African diaspora comprises the indigenous peoples of Africa and their descendants, wherever they are in the world.

### **2.) Identifying the African Diaspora**

Teachers can discuss with their students the African Diaspora, starting with the slave trade. Find the West Coast of Africa on a map and follow the paths of trade to the New World. Emphasize all the places Africans were taken, and the cultures they mingled with (i.e. other settlers or immigrants, and native populations).

- Can students identify 3 countries in the African Diaspora? (ex. Haiti, Brazil, United States)

### Map of the African Diaspora



### **3.) Discuss how culture changes over time, using some of these Ideas & Activities.**

These activities encourage students to incorporate some of the ideas from the show into their own experience.

#### **A. Family Traditions**

Curriculum Areas: Science / History & Social Studies / Language Arts / Art & Music

In the program, you can discover the variety of cultures that contribute to the global music of the diaspora Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir performs. Students can uncover the roots of their own family music and dance traditions.

- Where did you grow up? Where did members of your family (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles) grow up? Where were they born? Where did your ancestors come from originally? When did they come to this country? What were their occupations? What kind of music or dance traditions did they have? Where did they practice them? At weddings, funerals, social gatherings?
- Discover the path of migration of your family. Where in America did your ancestors arrive? How often has your family moved? What kinds of social songs did your relatives do in the different places, in different generations?

#### **B. Rhythm Awareness**

Curriculum Areas: Mathematics / Art & Music / Physical Education

From a heartbeat to a drumbeat, from a handclap to the layers of hands, feet and voices in a classroom symphony, rhythm creates a whole new language for students. Rhythm awareness develops concentration, reinforces thinking and counting skills, and creates harmonic group interaction.

- Start with the downbeat – this is the beat you would normally clap or step on with most music. Add the upbeat – the beats between the downbeats. When we count the beats ( 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), the upbeat is counted as the “and” (1 and 2 and 3 and 4, etc.). Now only clap the upbeat. Practice clapping, then walking, in tempo, then half-time (exactly half as fast, or on every other beat), then double-time (exactly twice as fast, or on the both the downbeat and the upbeat). Use skipping steps, running steps. Have one person clap the downbeat while their partner claps the upbeat.
- Do a call and response with clapping rhythms. Use any part of your body to produce the rhythms. Divide the group into two and have them pass rhythms to each other. What parts of your body make sound?

## C. Comparing Music Genres

Curriculum : History & Social Studies / Language Arts / Art & Music

The music of the African Diaspora is diverse, from African-American Spirituals, to Call and Response songs, to Gospel. Different genres of music have some very different qualities from what students may normally hear at home and on the radio or recorded CDs.

- Have students listen to a variety of music within a particular genre, i.e. rap, classical, bluegrass, gospel, etc, and identify themes within each genre. Explore similarities and influences between genres.

### **Vocabulary:**

**A Capella** - singing without the accompaniment of instruments.

**Call and Response** - a traditional style of singing in Africa and elsewhere, where a call is given, and may change, but the audience knows the response and sings it back.

**Cajón** - a wooden box played as a hand drum, from Cuba and Peru. The instrument was originally crates on the docks, empty after ships brought the merchandise to shore, and are now made with different woods and thicknesses to produce toned drums. Sometimes made with snares.

**Clave** – The clave is a percussive musical instrument consisting of two sticks that are struck together. The pattern played on the clave is the skeletal rhythmic foundation that underlies much of Afro-Cuban music and other music of the African musical diaspora, including pop and rock music in the United States.

**Conga** – Drums used in much of Afro-Cuban music as well as Latin Jazz. Usually played in pairs with differing tones, the congas are originally related to the Ngoma drum from the Congo in Africa. A conga line is a dance done while playing, singing and parading.

**Log Drum** - found throughout West Africa, sometimes called a slit drum. Made from only a log, hollowed out, but closed on the ends, with one or more slits in the drum, giving it a tone. The different sizes, thicknesses and woods provide varying tones.

**Spirituals** – Religious songs associated with African-American Christians of the Southern US, derived from a combination of European Hymns and African musical elements. Developed by slaves in the early days of the United States, spirituals are songs of hope, freedom, struggle, and the strength of an oppressed people.