

Jorge Arce



Afro-Caribbean Workshop Curriculum Guide

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Program Description

Jorge will give audiences of all ages an opportunity for a unique multimedia exploration of Puerto Rican and Afro-Caribbean culture. The theme will be "respecting cultural diversity."

Jorge will bring music, dances, lore, stories and history handed down for over two centuries. The workshop includes slides, maps and over 25 percussion instruments from the Caribbean.

Audience involvement is keystone to workshops given by Jorge with participants joining in on drums, rhythm instruments, stories and dances.

Background and Profile on Jorge Arce

Jorge Santiago Arce was born in BÉlgica, a working class neighborhood of Ponce, Puerto Rico. Ponce is a city well known for its rich cultural traditions and is characterized by the emergence and evolution of important Afro-Caribbean music and dances such as the "Bomba," "Plena" and "Danza." Half of Jorge's family comes from San Antón, mainly a black community known for the African tradition of the Bomba music; the other half comes from the music tradition. His life in the "barrio" BÉlgica was filled with the Plena music. This experience, among other things, has contributed to his creativity and curiosity. In addition to being an actor, dancer, singer, and performer, he is also a cultural historian and researcher.

Jorge Arce's early exposure to the Bomba and Plena in Puerto Rico, helped him to establish a direct relationship with the Cepeda Family in the early 1970's. He was able to include them in television, record and theater productions. In 1979 he wrote, performed, directed, and choreographed the musical-theater piece "Melodía en El Caño," in which the leader and choreographer of the Cepeda's Family ensemble, Petra Cepeda, played a leading role.

This piece, broadcast as a TV special, was later recorded in the album "Tierra, Tierra" (Arto Max Records TFS 620 -1980) by Hacienda Punto en Otro Son, a renowned group of which Jorge Arce has been a member since 1978. It has been used as reference material in schools in Puerto Rico as well as in public school systems in the United States connected to the Puerto Rican community. Two more recording projects in which Arce was involved were: "Del Caribe al Brazil" (Musicaribe LP M001-1986), and "Morivivi" (Disco Punto HPLP-001-1981). Both included Don Rafael's compositions. In all of them, the participation of members of the Cepeda family as guest musicians was very important.

Arce toured the United States from 1975 to 1982 as an actor and musician. Since moving here in 1983, it has been Arce's responsibility to expand the Bomba and Plena through workshops, classes, residencies programs and performances at school sites, festivals, parent and community organizations, and universities, thus becoming one of the most important cultural liaisons to the Puerto Rican community in this area. After completing his educational program at Boston Conservatory in 1985, where he majored in Musical Theater, he decided to share his experiences with youth and children and to learn more from the community of people who best knew the traditions of his native culture.



Arce conceived Humano in 1987 as a result of an invitation to perform at the Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center in Chicago. About the same time, he became the coordinator of a successful cultural program in an human service agency and gained valuable experience leading cultural projects in schools and the community. He then rejoined the community as an artist and, by combining the elements of tradition with community and cultural awareness, Humano was born.

Jorge Arce received his Master of Education Degree from Harvard University in 1994. Arce is listed in Who's Who, 1984-85. He has received numerous awards, including: the Cardinal Cushing Center Award for Outstanding Services to the Community 1987; the Alianza Hispana Recognition for Outstanding Contributions to the Continuing Growth and Success of the Hispanic Community 1991; the Mayor's Recognition to Outstanding Contributions to the City of Boston, 1991; and the Massachusetts House of Representatives Recognition for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts, 1991. His musical group Humano was awarded the Boston Music Award for Outstanding Latin Act, 1990. His cultural workshops and performances were programmed at more than 1000 schools, universities and educational centers. As a result of his experiences, his article "Bomba and Plena / African Retention in Puerto Rico" was written. It has been edited by Dr. Beverly Anderson, University of Connecticut, and was published by Calaloux Publications, N. Y.

BOMBA AND PLENA:

AFRICAN RETENTIONS IN PUERTO RICO

Jorge Arce

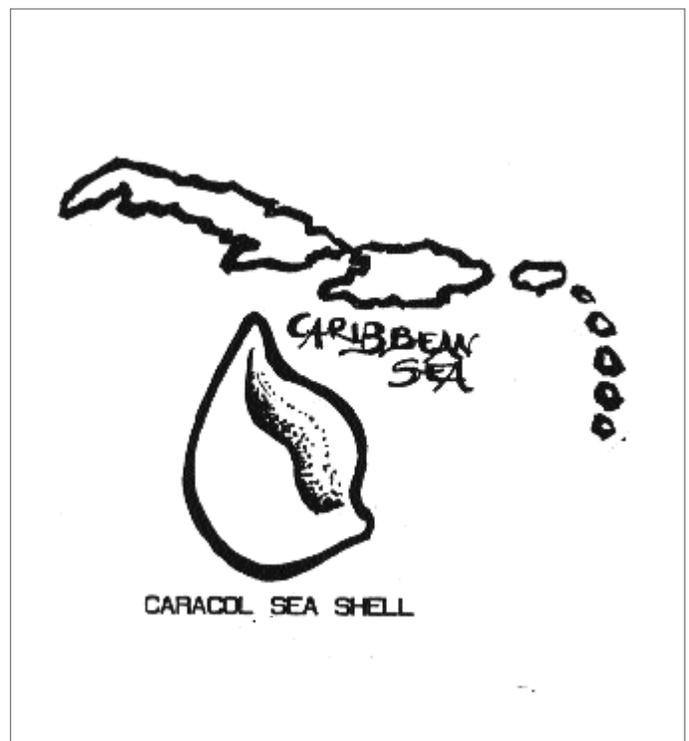
When slavery was established in the Americas during the sixteenth century, the slave owners never suspected how much the practice would influence the cultural life this area. The many numbers of tribes brought from the African coasts joined the already subjugated Native Americans and adopted portions of their culture. At the same time, they reinterpreted and adopted a great portion of their masters' culture. In the Caribbean region the process of integration in which the African element became predominant was the wellspring of what is now called Afro-Caribbean culture.

The Americas had been settled by peoples from Asian countries perhaps millennia before what is referred to as the European discovery. The three main cultural groups extant in the late fifteenth century were the Inca in Peru, and the Aztec and Mayans in Mexico, each of whom had long since developed an advanced

civilization displaying a language, writing, and sophisticated learning in the sciences as well as a functioning economy and a social and political structure.

In the Caribbean region the main native group was the Taino who derived from the Guarani and Aruaco tribes in Brazil. They immigrated through the islands close to Venezuela, and some of them settled there. Others continued north to Boriken (the native name given to Puerto Rico), Santo Domingo and Cuba. The natives living in the islands close to Venezuela were known as Indios Caribes. The region in which they were established and which is located south of the Major Antilles (formed by Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba) has been designated as the Caribbean sea, deriving from Caribe, a native word.

It was not difficult for the African people brought to the Caribbean to integrate, and their presence transformed the natives' culture, especially in Puerto Rico where evidence was found of the integration. The descendants of Africans and slaves born in Spain, known as Ladinos, fought together with the natives against the Spanish slavers in 1511. It was a confrontation in which the native population was almost exterminated. During the conquest period, a native woman named Yuisa, who was a chief or cacique of a tribe, married a Ladino named Francisco Mejia in the area of Loiza, now a predominantly black town in northern Puerto Rico. After African slavery was completely established in 1518, the fugitives who escaped to the interior of the island mixed with the remaining natives and with numbers of other groups



Musically speaking, the Africans found the maracas (a native instrument) very like the Yoruba chekeres and other African instruments with a similar sound. Another native instrument, the guiro, was easily adopted by them. During the sixteenth century African people were brought first to the Caribbean and then to the rest of the North American continent. To avert rebellions, such as the 1511 rebellion, the masters separated members of tribes so they could not communicate in their own languages. There ensued a parallel dispersion of linguistic, musical, dance forms and instruments.

This explains why a Puerto Rican can learn the rock-derived dance and music forms so easily, especially when we take into consideration that rock is mainly African influenced. Marshall and Jean Sterns (1966) wrote in *The Jazz Dance*, "The music was a throwback, or rather a dilution by white musicians of the third kind of music recorded for the Negro market . . . Known originally as 'race' in the 1920s, then 'rhythm and blues' in the 1930s and 1940s. . . . The twist was employed long ago in Africa and by the Negro folk in the South . . . was used in 1913 routine of a dance called 'Ballin the Jack' . . . blues shouters of the twenties used it . . . and in the twenties was inserted during the break-away . . . of the Lindy."

The Africans were forced to learn a new language, but they never excluded their own. They learned their masters' dance and music forms but then introduced their own elements into it. More importantly, they were made to profess a new religion, but they then injected it with their own concepts and musical elements blending in a few native elements. This process became the foundation of Afro-Caribbean culture.

The great variety of music and rhythms of the Afro-Caribbean region originated in the diverse tribes and cultural groups brought from Africa. In Cuba, from the Congo-Bantu, Yoruba and from other groups came the rumbas and the comparsas. Together with the Spanish influence there emerged the son and the habanera with its variations that include son montuno, danzon, son guaracha, son guajira, and so on. More modern variations are the songo and the salsa, the latter inspired by the Cuban son and commercial-

ized in New York during the 1970s. In Haiti we find, among others, the Haitian meringue (or compa) and ritmo de palos, the latter developed on the border between Domingo and Haiti.

The Santo Domingo or Dominican merengue is one of the best known music forms in Latin



America. In the Virgin Island (which include former Dutch, French, and English Islands, also known as the Minor Antilles or West Indies) the calypso, soca rhythms and others appeared. Jamaica, a former English possession and also part of the Major Antilles produced reggae music and dance. In Puerto Rico African elements appear in such music forms as the danza (derived from the European country dance and the Cuban habanera) and country music. But bomba and plena, manifest the strongest African influence.

(From "Bomba and Plena" *African Retention in Puerto Rico*, by Jorge Arce, in Beverly Anderson (ed) *Music of the Caribbean*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1996 . Illustrations: Jorge Arce ©1997)

Suggested Activities *Before the Performance*

1. Locate Puerto Rico and Caribbean Islands on a world map or globe.
2. Discuss the Slave trade with students, pointing out trade routes on a map. Show diagram of the interior of a slave ship.
3. Acquaint students with information found in this guide.

Suggested Activities *After the Performance*

1. Ask class members to imagine themselves as Africans taken from Africa to America and sold as slaves. Have them write about their journey in a journal, a letter, a ballad or poem.
2. Students may prepare a bulletin board display of Afro-Caribbean and Latin-American art.
3. Older students may research Afro-Caribbean and Latin-American achievements in such fields as art, music, science, politics, sports and literature.
4. Ask students to recall games and songs they have learned informally such as “on the playground” or “in the neighborhood”.
5. You may wish to use the following discussion questions:
 - Do you recognize any of the songs or games used in the program? Which ones?
 - Why do you think music was such an important part of the lives of people?
 - What do we learn about people from their songs?
 - How were songs and games preserved or passed onto future generations?

Related Study Topics

Social Studies

Settlement of various groups of people in the Americas

1. Taino & Native American Indians
2. European Immigrants
3. Africans
4. More recent immigration ...

Geography

Students trace own individual ancestry

Art

Students create masks, displays, flags, artifacts, musical instruments and native dress of their ancestry.

Theater

Skits depicting life in country of origin as well as the presentation of music, games, and costumes of each heritage.

Community Projects

International dinner incorporating foods, music, dress, dance and activities indigenous to each culture.

Afro-Caribbean Vocabulary Words for Review

- Cocolo [Ko'kolo]- young people who are opposed to “hard rock.” People who dance mostly “salsa” or Afro-Caribbean rhythm, or sympathize more with “soul rock.”
- Congo ['kɔŋgə] - person originally from Congo, Africa.
- Mandinga [mə'ndɪŋgə] - term used for black skin people.
- Tambor [tæm'bɔr] - drum.
- Tumba ['tʌmbə] - drum.
- Tumbadora [tʌmbə'dɔr] - Afro-Cuban drum.
- Conga ['kɔŋgə] - name used for Afro-Cuban dance and drum.
- Bomba ['bɔmbə] - name used for Afro-Puerto Rican dance and drum.
- Rumba ['rʌmbə] - type of Afro-Cuban music and dance.
- Bongó [bɔn'gɔ] - type of instrument; two small drums joined by a piece of wood.
- Chongo['tʃɔŋgɔ] or Chongolo ['tʃɔŋgɔlə] - nicknames.
- Coco ['kɔkɔ] - palm trees' fruit. Palm trees that were brought from Africa.
- Bembón [bɛm'bɔn] - big lips person.
- Bemba ['bɛmbə] - big lips.
- Gandinga [gæn'dɪŋgə] - pork or beef part.
- Sancocho[sæn'kɔtʃɔ] - stew in which meat and potatoes are combined.
- Mondongo [mɔn'dɔŋgɔ] - pork or beef stripe.
- Ago gó [ægɔ'gɔ] - musical instrument dance.
- Gandul [gæn'dʌl] - green peas.
- Fufú [fu'fu] - witchcraft.
- Baquiné [bæki'nɛ] - funeral celebration to a dead baby.
- Moteté [mɔ'tɛtɛ] - bar or any bundle that you carry.
- Candungo [kæn'dʌŋgɔ] - pail for water.
- Bachata ba'tʃætə] - party, happening.
- Guateque [gu'tɛkɛ] - party.
- Mofongo mɔ'fɔŋgɔ] - type of food. Made from a combination of plantain, garlic and a piece of pork fat.
- Titingó tɪtɪn'gɔ] - quarrel, fight, battle.
- Milonga [mɪ'lɔŋgə] - In Loiza, a town in the North of the Island, the word was used to denominate a type of Bomba dance.

Key Words for Vowels Sounds

Symbols	Key Spelling	Spoken Form
æ	sang	[sæŋ]
E	get	[gɛt]
i	bee	[bi]
ö	saw	[sɔw]
u	tooth	[tʊt]

Other Combinations

1. qu + i or e = [ki or ke]
2. ['] stress following syllable
Example: Baquiné = [baki'ne]
3. tʃ for ch Example: Chongo= ['tʃɔŋgɔ]

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- Daily words and denominations collected by Jorge Arce.
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Ayala Family. Renowned Bomba Music and Dance Ensemble located in Loiza, Puerto Rico.

Baralt, Guillermo. (1985). *Esclavos Rebeldes*. Puerto Rico: (ed.) Huracan.

Carpentier, Alejo. (1980). *La Musica en Cuba*. Mexico: EFE.

Cepeda Family. Renowned Bomba and Plena Dance Ensemble located in Villa Palmeras, Puerto Rico. (Don Rafael Cepeda is considered "El Patriarca" of our Bomba music.)

Franceschi Family. One of the many Bomba and Plena music families located in San Anton, Puerto Rico. (Luisa Franceschi happens to be Jorge Arce's aunt.)

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Orovio, Helio. (1981). *Cuban Music Dictionary*. Cuba: (ed.) Letras Cubana.

Ortiz, Fernando. (1974). *La Musica Afro-Cubana*. Madrid: Ediciones Jucar.

Pedraza, Ramon. Plena and Bomba music investigator, musician, composer, and craft artist located in Villa Palmeras, Puerto Rico.

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Discography

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Haciendo Punto en Son-1975/1986: Punto Final. Dist. Alpha Records, PR.*

Haciendo Punto en Son: Moriví. Disco-Punto. HPLP-00. 1982*

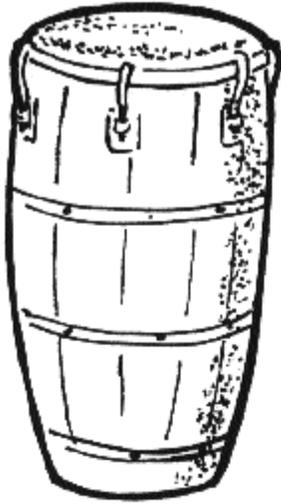
Haciendo Punto en Son: Tierra, Tierra Artomax TFS 620. 1980 *

* Jorge Arce was member and researcher for this performing project. They toured USA from 1978 through 1989.

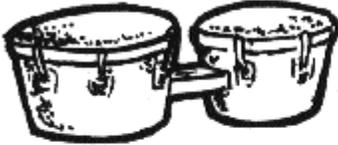
Videography

Almodovar, Ramon. (1980). Film: "The History of Black People in Puerto Rico." For the Colegio Metropolitano of Puerto Rico, Copyright Ang G. Mendez Foundation.
Special Program hosted by Jorge Arce

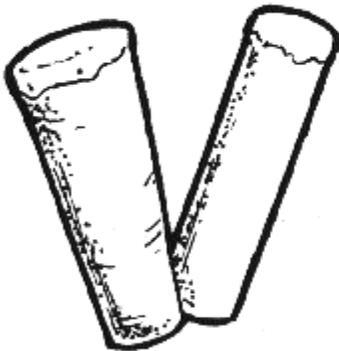
Photographs by Susan Wilson and Candido Ortiz.



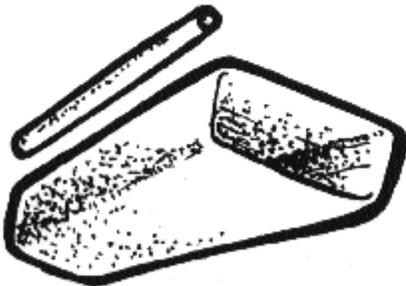
CONGA, TUMBADORA, TUMBA.
CUBA



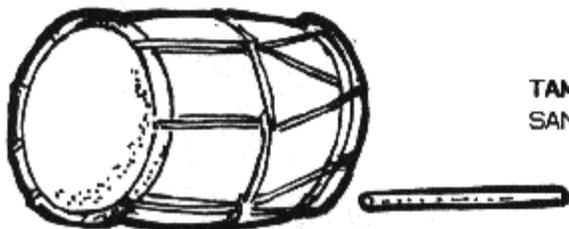
BONGO
CUBA



ATABAL/PALO
Border of Santo Domingo
and Haiti.



CONBELL/CAMPANA
CUBA



TAMBORA
SANTO DOMINGO

Illustrations: J. Arce

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From *Arce, Caribbean Child: A First Caribbean Workbook*

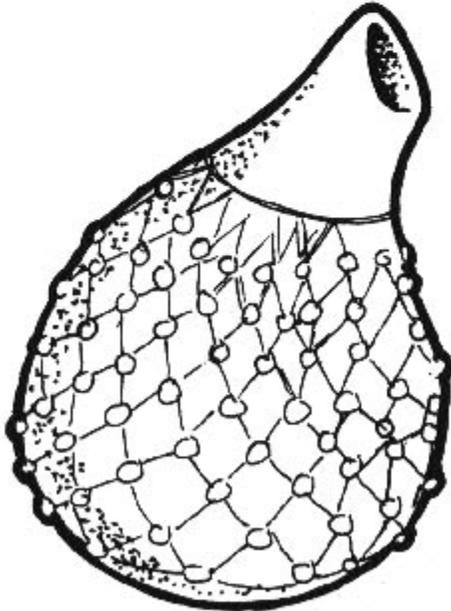


CLAVES
Cuba as well
other countries.



TIMBALES
CUBA

YORUBA ORIGIN
ORISHA RITUAL INSTRUMENTS



CHEKERE
AGBE
AGGIE

BATA DRUMS



IYA-mother



ITOTELE-father



OKO, KOLO-son

FUERTO RICO

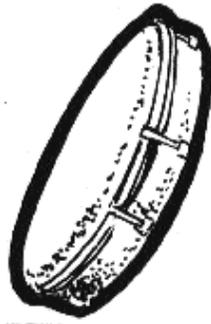
TAINO HERITAGE

AFRICAN INFLUENCE

SPANISH-EUROPEAN INFLUENCE



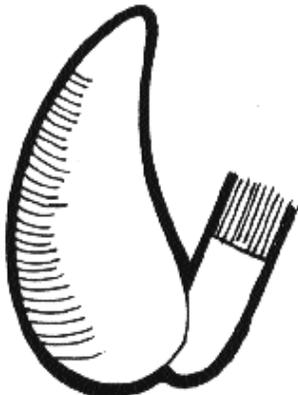
MARACA



PANDERO



GUITAR



GUIRO



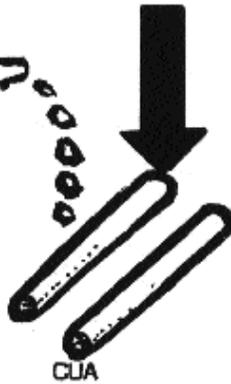
BOMBA DRUM



ACCORDION



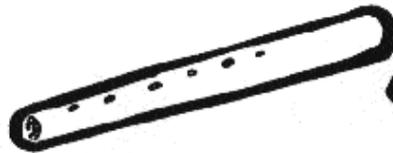
CARIBBEAN SEA
CARACOL SEA SHELL



QUENA



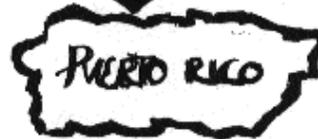
CUATRO
PUERTO RICAN INSTRUMENT



QUENA/FLAUTILLA



AFRICA



PUERTO RICO

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