

# BALLET FOLCLÓRICO DO BRASIL

**Art Form: Music and Dance**

**Style: Traditional**

**Culture: Brazilian**

## MEET THE ARTIST:

*Joselito "Amen" Santo*, the dynamic Artistic Director of **Ballet Folclórico do Brasil**, was born and raised in Bahia, Brazil. With over 25 years of experience in the African-Brazilian performing arts, he is an accomplished martial artist, dancer, musician, choreographer and teacher. Mr. Santo first came to the U.S. in 1986 to perform at Carnegie Hall. After teaching internationally and performing in venues such as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Village Gate and Wolf Trap, he moved to Los Angeles. In 1990, Mr. Santo founded the Brasil Brasil Cultural Center, providing a base for his dance company and the Capoeira Batuque: Ginga Bahia. Mr. Santo has garnered many honors, including his induction into the International Martial Arts Hall of Fame. His company has been applauded for "serving as a bridge between ancient and contemporary dance" by juxtaposing the sacred and joyous, the old and new.

## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

This energetic program teaches about Brazilian culture, celebrating its multicultural dimensions through dance and music. When Brazil was a Portuguese colony (16th--19th centuries), Africans were brought to work as slaves on the sugar plantations and in the gold mines. Their music, dance and beliefs kept their spirits alive. A *samba*, the most popular dance in Brazil, is accompanied by the *agogô* (double metal bell), *pandeiro* (tambourine), and *surdo* (bass drum) instruments. The spirit of "Carnivale," the biggest Brazilian festival, is expressed through *Maculelê*, a dance that originated in the 18th century sugar plantations. The performance begins with the *Limpeza*, a dance performed at the beginning of a *Candomblé* ceremony that honors ancestors and the *orixás* - spirits of the natural world. *Congolê*, a dance performed by the women, shows many popular Afro-Brazilian folkloric steps. The *Berimbau*, a one-stringed instrument of Angolan origin, accompanies a song, followed by the exciting *Capoeira*, initially a form of self-defense disguised as a dance.



## PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, and it covers almost half of South America. The Atlantic Ocean touches its northern and eastern coasts, and ten neighboring countries share borders with Brazil. Brazilian geography is divided into five distinct regions: The North includes the infamous Amazon River basin; the Northeast includes tropical beaches and dry countryside, and the Southeast contains forests and the Pantanal wetlands. Brazil's current capital is located in Brasilia in the South East region. The country's southern region includes grasslands, farms, and the country's largest waterfall called Iguazu.

Its history can be traced back to the many Native American nations that first lived in what is now called Brazil. In the early 1500s, Brazil was colonized by Portugal. It remained a colony until it gained its formal independence in the nineteenth century (1822). Millions of Africans from different countries were forced to labor building the new country, yet Brazil was the last country to formally abolish slavery in 1888. During the 1900s, the country struggled to emerge from the colonial period and build a new republic. While important steps were taken to build a democracy, Brazil fell prey to a military dictatorship that squelched public participation in the 1960s. Even today, when formal democratic institutions have been restored, corruption remains a problem in governance.

Portuguese is the official language of Brazil, yet the country is most famous for its ethnic and cultural diversity. Brazilian culture and language is influenced by its rich diversity as a crossroads for different African, European, Native American and Asian communities. The vitality of these different cultural currents can be felt in Brazil's music, dance, beliefs, and cuisine.

Brazil still has many difficult challenges ahead. It is struggling to overcome serious problems of poverty, illiteracy, poor health care, and inequality. This is now the task of the next generation to translate its natural and cultural resources into a more positive future.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What impressed you most about the performance? Give reasons why.
- Describe some video game images or popular dance moves that have a connection to capoeira.
- What is unique about the Bahia region of Brazil?
- Can you demonstrate any of the dance steps shown in the *Congole*?
- What was the original purpose of the *Capoeira*, the dance done by slaves?
- Describe one of the instruments you saw today. Do you remember its name?
- Were there parts of the performance you want to know more about? Where can you find additional information? (Internet, encyclopedia, books, videos)

## FRAMEWORK FOCUS - HISTORY/SOC STUDIES:

Bahia was the first capital of Brazil, followed by Rio de Janeiro, which was replaced by Brasilia in 1960. The people of Brazil are a fusion of three main groups: indigenous people, Portuguese and African. Each group has made cultural contributions to Brazil, but in the Bahia region there is a strong African heritage that is reflected in the religion, music and dances. During the time of slavery, and even after it was outlawed, the slaves who escaped formed communities called *quilombos*. These were places where the *Capoeira* dance was used to defend against those who would oppose their freedom. The *Capoeira* is a style of fighting from Africa by Negroes of Angola in the 1500s, in which they used hands, feet and head-butting. When performed, it was flowing and graceful as a dance. Even though it was legally abolished until the 1950s, *Capoeira* continued to flourish.

Research slavery and follow the journeys made by slaves to different parts of both North and South America. Everywhere Africans went, they brought aspects of their culture with them. Make a chart of all the things you can find in both South and North America that have their roots in Africa, such as *Capoeira*, blues, rock n' roll, peanuts, yams, etc.

Legend:

- Artistic perception
- Creative expression
- Historical & cultural context
- Aesthetic valuing
- Connections, Relations, Applications

## ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- Review the "About the Performance" section with the class. Write the names of the dances, instruments, and music on the board and have the class pronounce them. Then ask if they can describe each dance, instrument and type of music played.
- Get a cassette or CD of Brazilian music (suggestions below). Ask the class to stand near their desks or in an open space and move to different pieces. How does the rhythm of the music make them want to move? Begin by moving specific body parts, such as head, shoulders, arms, hips, legs, then use the whole body. Does the music suggest movements that are strong or relaxed? Free or bound energy? Big or little? Percussive, sustained, bouncy, vibratory or swinging? Ask students to try moving with a partner.
- Look at a map of South America and locate Brazil. Locate its capital, Brasilia, and the city of Rio de Janeiro. Then find the area of Bahia, which might also be called Salvador. Identify the countries that share a border with Brazil. Which South American countries do not share a border with Brazil?
- Write your impressions of the performance, jotting down words and simple phrases. Then select one aspect that you found interesting and describe it in great detail (costume, music, movements, background information, etc.). Share these with the class.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY/DISCOGRAPHY/WEBLINKS:

- Atwood, Jane. *Capoeira: A Martial Art and a Cultural Tradition*. Resen Publishing, New York: 1999. (Middle School)
- Corona, Laurel. *Brazil: Modern Nations or the World*. Lucent Books, San Diego: 2000 (Elementary School)
- da Silva, Benedita with Medea Benjamin. *Benedita da Silva: An Afro-Brazilian Woman's Story of Politics and Love*. Food First, San Francisco: 1997. (High School)
- CDs:  
Sambeiro (1999) and *Musicas de Capoeira* (2001). Order through the Brasil Brasil Cultural Center at [www.capoeirabatuque.org](http://www.capoeirabatuque.org).

## VOCABULARY: BALLET FOLCLÓRICO DO BRASIL

<i>Afoxé:</i>	An Afro-Brazilian rhythm played in <i>candomblé</i> and <i>carnaval</i> groups such as Filhos de Ghandi, named after the East Indian peacemaker Mahatma Ghandi.
<i>Agogô:</i>	Double metal bell of Nigerian origin played in Brazilian ritual and popular music.
<i>Atabaque:</i>	(ah-tah-BAK-kee) A hand drum used in <i>capoeira</i> and <i>candomblé</i> music.
<i>Batuque:</i>	A word used to describe Afro-Brazilian music with strong percussion and rhythmic dance.
<i>Berimbau:</i>	A stringed bow instrument of Angolan origin played percussively with a stone or coin ( <i>dobrao</i> ) and a stick ( <i>vaketa</i> ). A gourd held against the player's belly serves as an acoustic box that resonates the sound.
<i>Candomblé:</i>	(kahn-dom-BLAY) An Afro-Brazilian belief system that honors nature, family and the ancestors.
<i>Capoeira:</i>	(cap-WAY-dah) Afro-Brazilian martial art that involves dynamic movement, traditional instrumentation, call and response singing and ritual.
<i>Caxixí:</i>	A woven basket shaker (i.e. musical instrument).
<i>Iyá:</i>	Mother in the Yoruba language. Bahians often combine the Portuguese "Mae" and the Yoruba "Iya" and say "Mae-iyá" for mother.
<i>Limpeza:</i>	A cleansing ritual dance.
<i>Limpar:</i>	The Portuguese verb "to cleanse."
<i>Maculele:</i>	A rhythmic stick dance developed in Santa Amaro.
<i>Orixàs:</i>	(or-ee-SHAHS) African deities representing the many positive forces of nature and humanity.
<i>Pandeiro:</i>	A tambourine played rhythmically with the fingers and palm.
<i>Tamborin:</i>	A small pandeiro played with a stick.
<i>Quilombos:</i>	Maroon communities of freed people founded and directed by people of African origin who escaped from slavery in Brazil.
<i>Samba:</i>	Brazil's most infamous popular music and dance that highlights syncopated rhythms and steps with accents in unexpected places.
<i>Surdo:</i>	A metal bass drum.