

AFRICAN NGOMA HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

A journey through African music, dance, storytelling, and community

Study guide prepared for Arts on Stage • Maryland

Presented by Kauzeni Lyamba

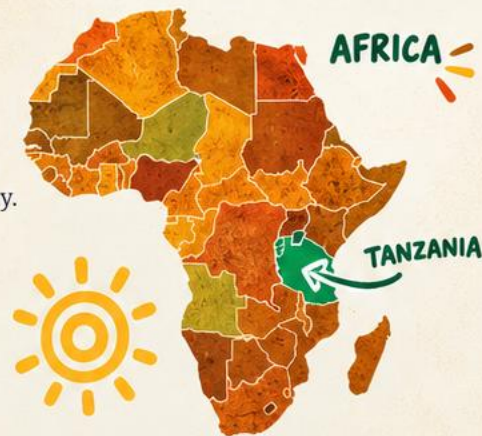
For classroom use before and after the performance



About the performance

AFRICAN NGOMA HOLIDAY CELEBRATION invites students to experience selected African music and dance traditions through movement, song, rhythm, storytelling, and audience participation. The program draws on traditions represented in the original show plan from Tanzania and West Africa, and explores themes of cooperation, creativity, gratitude, respect, and community. Projected images of landscapes, wildlife, cultural traditions, instruments, and community life are planned to support the storytelling.

The title “Ngoma” relates to drumming, music, and/or dance in several Bantu-language contexts; the precise meaning depends on the community and usage. Africa is a continent of many countries and distinct cultures, not one shared tradition.



A note about Kwanzaa and African celebrations

Kwanzaa is an African American holiday established in the United States in 1966 and observed December 26–January 1. It draws inspiration from African harvest traditions and centers seven community principles. Communities across Africa have their own varied harvest, seasonal, and cultural celebrations. The show connects these topics through art without suggesting that Kwanzaa is a holiday traditionally observed throughout Africa.

Learning goals

-  Locate Africa and Tanzania on a map and distinguish a continent from its many countries and cultures.
-  Recognize ways rhythm, song, movement, and storytelling communicate knowledge and bring people together.
-  Identify selected instruments and notice differences in their sounds and roles.
-  Explore how cooperation, respect, creativity, and cultural memory appear in a performance.
-  Compare celebrations respectfully, noticing both shared themes and distinct histories.



Performance highlights

The following descriptions reflect the original program and the changes discussed with Jamie. The final sequence, performers, instruments, and visuals may be adjusted during production.

Performance element	What students can notice
Maasai-inspired opening • Tanzania	Movement, group entrance, unity, and the location of Tanzania on a map.
Ukala • Tanga region, Tanzania	Rhythm and gestures portraying village work and shared responsibility.
Muheme • Central Tanzania	A female-led movement sequence exploring strength, perseverance, and purpose.
Wisdom of the Elders • West African music	Balafon and kora sounds; listening, oral traditions, and call-and-response.
Sindimba • Southeastern Tanzania	Fast rhythmic movement, joyful formations, and communal celebration.
Juma Ndala • Wamatumbi, southern Tanzania	Simultaneous clapping, singing, and dancing; honoring the contributions of a traditional artist.
Sounds of the Earth / finale	Flute and song evoke nature; a group finale celebrates togetherness.



Juma Ndala: featured dance

As described by Kauzeni Lyamba, Juma Ndala comes from the Wamatumbi people of southern Tanzania. The dance honors Juma Ndala, remembered for his contributions as a composer of traditional songs and dance movements. Performers clap, sing, and dance at the same time. Students can listen for how voice and handclaps work together while watching movements that require coordination and cooperation.



Classroom prompt: How does it feel different to clap, sing, and move simultaneously rather than doing each activity alone?

Explore the instruments and sounds

Instrument / sound	Listening focus
Hand drums and shakers	Beat, pulse, repeated patterns, and interaction with dancers.
Balafon	Pitched wooden keys struck with mallets; melody and rhythmic patterns.
Kora	Plucked strings and melodic patterns associated with West African musical traditions.
Bamboo flute and song	Breath, melody, soft textures, and nature-inspired storytelling.
Clapping and body percussion	The human body as a source of rhythm.



Instruments and sounds (continued)

Teacher note: These instruments and scenes appear in the source program; the touring instrumentation and exact live/recorded setup are not yet confirmed.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa

Principle	English meaning	Classroom connection
Umoja	Unity	Help classmates feel included.
Kujichagulia	Self-determination	Describe your own identity and voice.
Ujima	Collective work and responsibility	Share tasks and solve problems together.
Ujamaa	Cooperative economics	Discuss ways communities support local enterprises.
Nia	Purpose	Set a goal that helps others.
Kuumba	Creativity	Make or perform something that improves your community.
Imani	Faith	Consider the role of belief and trust in people and community.



Before the show: classroom activities



1 Find the places | 10–15 minutes

Use a map to locate Africa and Tanzania. Identify East, West, and Southern Africa as regions rather than countries. Ask students what they already know and what questions they want to investigate. For older grades, compare two specific countries using reliable geographic and cultural sources.



2 Build a rhythm | 10 minutes

Clap a simple four-beat pattern and invite the class to answer it. Add a sung phrase, then a step or gentle movement. Discuss what helped the group stay together. Explain that this is a classroom exploration of layered rhythm, not a reproduction of a specific traditional dance.



3 How do we celebrate? | 10–15 minutes

Invite students to share an optional family or community celebration, including its music, food, stories, or gatherings. Compare purposes without assuming that every family or cultural group observes the same customs.



During the show: observation prompts

- What changes when one dancer moves alone and when a group moves together?

During the show: observation prompts

- When do you hear clapping, singing, drums, strings, or flute?
- What is the relationship between the rhythm and the dancers' steps?
- How do the performers communicate without speaking?
- Where do you notice cooperation, creativity, respect, or gratitude?

After the show: grade-band activities

Grades K-2 | Draw and echo

Draw a moment you remember. Describe a sound or movement in one or two sentences. As a class, echo short, teacher-led clapping patterns and practice listening for your turn.

Grades 3-5 | Three-part rhythm

In small groups, create an original sequence with clapping, a short sung phrase, and a simple step. Explain how each person contributed. Label Tanzania on a map and name one tradition featured in the performance.

Grades 6-8 | Celebration comparison

Research one named celebration associated with a particular African community and compare it with Kwanzaa: place, history, participants, purpose, and artistic expression. Include sources and avoid generalizing from one celebration to a whole continent.

Grades 9-12 | Art and cultural memory

Analyze how music and movement can preserve artistic contributions across generations. Use the Juma Ndala segment as a starting point: discuss how naming a dance after an artist may recognize cultural memory. Distinguish the artist's account presented in the show from independently documented historical research.

Post-show discussion

- What did you learn about the difference between a continent, a country, and a cultural community?
- How did Juma Ndala combine clapping, singing, and dance?
- What role did a change in tempo or instrumentation play in telling a story?
- Which moment illustrated a Kwanzaa principle, and what did you observe that supports your answer?
- How can we appreciate an artistic tradition while respecting the community it comes from?

Vocabulary

Term	Student-friendly meaning
Ngoma	A term connected with drums, music, or dance in several Bantu languages; meaning varies by context.
Rhythm	A pattern of sounds or movements over time.
Call-and-response	A musical or spoken exchange between a leader



Vocabulary (continued)

Use these words to better understand the performance and the ideas in this study guide.



Word	Definition
 Harvest	Gathering crops when they are ready.
 Oral tradition	Passing knowledge or stories through spoken word, song, or performance.
 Community	People connected through a place, shared interests, or relationships.
 Heritage	Knowledge, practices, and histories passed through generations.

Optional reflection / exit ticket



One tradition or instrument I noticed:



One example of cooperation or creativity I saw:



One question I want to explore further:



Production note

Gumboot and Limbo are not part of this revised guide.
Juma Ndala replaces the former Gumboot segment.

This study guide is an educational resource, not a
finalized technical rider or cue-by-cue running order.

