Sewam American Indian Dance Company

School Show Study Guide from the Artist

Luther Burbank Center for the Arts
Tuesday, October 22, 2019
About the Artist:

Sewam American Indian Dance Company specializes in the dance and culture of the United States Plains Indian tribes. Members have performed to critical acclaim throughout the western United States, including educational venues, veteran’s homes, convalescent homes, and most notably at the 1984 Olympic Games and the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

Edwardo Madril is a member of the Pascua Yaqui tribe of Southern Arizona and Northern Sonora Mexico. He is an active member of the Native American community and a representative of his culture as a dancer, singer, teacher, playwright and filmmaker. For over 25 years, his involvement and commitment to native heritage has provided him with the opportunity to share a wealth of information amongst diverse communities.

Madril has included the presentation of residencies in Bay Area schools, working with students and encouraging the development of appreciation and respect for American Indian dance, music, culture, history, art and sign language. He is currently teaching classes in American Indian studies at San Francisco State and was a three-year recipient of the California Arts Council Artist-In-Residence grant.

As a dancer and educator, Madril has performed throughout the western United States, including the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and World Arts West’s arts education program People Like Me. As a playwright and filmmaker, his works have been presented on stage in San Francisco at such venues as The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and The Brava Theater. His short films have been accepted and featured in American Indian Film Festivals in San Francisco, Oklahoma and South Dakota since 2004. He has worked on films with other independent film directors and is currently working on his first full-length feature film as a writer/director.
About the Program:

Native dancing and music represents a beautiful expression of Native American heritage. It is one of the most meaningful ways in which such heritage is presented to contemporary society, Indian and non-Indian alike. Every song, dance and gesture illustrates a part of Native American heritage as a people with roots in the distant past. Through the singing, dancing, drumming, and colorful regalia, the spiritual and symbolic aspects of humanity are reenacted. Although many of the dances are social, they are also steeped in spiritual significance.

In this program, students will be introduced to some of the most popular and rare Native American dances. Origins and meanings of each dance will be discussed. There will be an opportunity for participation in the exciting Friendship Dance.

Program Goals:

- To build awareness and appreciation for Native American culture both past and present.
- To leave students with a deep and positive impression of the rich dance traditions of the Native American Plains Indians.
- To encourage students to reflect and take pride in their own culture and traditions.

Preparation for the Performance/Follow-Up Activities:

1) Geography/Social Studies:
   - There are three nearly 500 distinct tribes in the United States. Between these tribes and those of Canada and Northern Mexico, the languages, traditions and dances differ greatly. Look at a map of the United States and identify which tribes live or lived in which states. There are probably some students with Native American ancestry. Do they know which tribes or where they lived?

2) Life Skills:
   - Lead students in a discussion about stereotypes. Today, Native Americans live like everybody else does in the 21st century. Some customs have become associated with all Native American tribes. For instance, although the Plains Dances have been popularized through Powwows, not every Native American tribe held the custom of Pow wows. (The term “Powwow” probably derives from the Algonquian word “Pauau”, meaning, “a gathering of people”.) Here are some myths to dispel: Indians do not tap their mouths and make a “whooping” sound. Not all Indians lived in tipi’s. Indians don’t say “How”.
3) Social Studies/Environmental studies:
- The environment plays a significant role in the development of a culture. It determines available food sources, affects clothing, shelter and belief systems. Research some of the Plains Indians tribes (look at the resource list) and differentiate between the customs and lifestyles of different tribes. What effect might geography or environmental factors have had on the customs of those tribes. How would people live in the snow of the Northwest coast verses the desert of the Southwest? The mountains and lakes of the West verses the marsh and grasslands of the Southeast? How would they build their homes? What would they eat? What celebrations do you think they would have and why?

4) Music/Dance
- Make up a dance or a song that reflects your environment such as your classroom, your city or your hobbies.

REMIND students that they will be an audience at a live performance. LEAD students into discussion of their job as audience members, i.e. listening, responding, using their “mind’s eye”.

Vocabulary:

Sewam: Pronounced “say-wahm”; means flower.
Bustle: A cluster of feathers that are attached to a person’s back
Drum: An instrument used by many Natives, representing the heartbeat
Grand entry: A procession of all dancers in a Powwow into the arena or arbor.
Regalia: Personal attire worn by a dancer. Not a costume.
Roach: Porcupine hair headgear worn by male dancers
Modified from a curriculum guide by Young Audiences of Northern California for Four Winds American Indian Dance Group.

Bibliography:
Drumbeat...Heartbeat, Susan Braine, 1st Ave. Editions
Native North America, Larry J. Zimmerman, Little, Brown
Native American History, Judith Nies, Ballantine
Exiled in the Land of the Free, Oren Lyons (and others), Clear Light Publications

Publications:


Bay Area Resources:
San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival
World Arts West
Fort Mason Center, Landmark Building D
San Francisco, CA 94123-1382
415-474-3914
www.worldartswest.org

American Indian Contemporary Arts
23 Grand Avenue, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
415/989.7003
www.cominguptaller.org/profile/pr04multi.htm

Intertribal Friendship House
523 East 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94606
510/452.1235
http://bapd.org/ginise-2.html

International Indian Treaty Council
Information Office
2390 Mission St. Ste 301

American Indian Educ. Projects
1950 Mission Street, #12
San Francisco, CA 94103
415/241.6229 & 415/241.6230

Oakland Unified Schools
Office of Indian Education
Harper Building
314 East 10th Street, Room 5
Oakland, CA 94606

South & Meso-American Indian Info. Center
P.O. Box 7829
Oakland, CA 94601
510/534.4882 - Administration Office
510/834.4263 - Abya Yala News
http://saiic.nativeweb.org/
Marin Museum of the American Indian
2200 Novato Blvd.
Novato, CA 94947
415/897.4064

American Indian, Alaska Native & Native Hawaiian Program at Stanford University
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/641.4482
www.treatycouncil.org/

Old Union Clubhouse, Rm #12
524 Lasuen Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-3064
650/725-6944