

# School Matinee Series Study Guide

2019/20



## Sankofa Danzafro

*The City of Others*

**Hopkins Center  
for the Arts**  
at Dartmouth

Wed, Sep 25, 10 am



# Welcome to the Hop

A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

## Theater Etiquette

When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas.

Be aware and use quiet voices. Remember that live theater differs greatly from watching television or movies or attending a sporting event. Live performers can hear and see you and are easily distracted by any talking or moving around in the audience. Since even the smallest sounds can be heard throughout the theater, it's best to be quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation!

Important to remember: Backpacks, food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking any photos is strictly prohibited. Hats off! It is respectful to remove hats during your time in the theater.

## Information for Teachers

**Prepare**—review this study guide for context that will help your students engage with the performance. Check in with the Hop if you have any questions or concerns about content. Read the email that accompanies this guide—Hop staff often request details about your visit including how many buses you'll be bringing and what accommodations you need.

**Arrive**—arrive 30 minutes prior to start time to allow time for Hop staff to check you in and escort the students to their seats. Hop staff will ask you for a headcount of students. Please review our bus policy before arrival: [hop.dartmouth.edu/online/plan\\_a\\_successful\\_visit](http://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/plan_a_successful_visit)

**Lunch**—sometimes we are able to offer a space for schools to eat bag lunches following the show. Check the email that accompanies this guide to confirm. If staying for lunch, please confirm with Hop staff one week prior to show. The day of the show, please bring lunches in boxes or tubs labeled with the school's name. Hop staff will take lunches to the lunch space and escort school group there following the show. **Schools are responsible for calling their own bus back to the Hop when they are ready to leave.**

**Ticketing Policy**—no tickets are issued for school matinee performances. Seating placement for each school group is determined by Hop staff. Please let them know if you have a seating request or accommodation; we do our best to keep each school group seated together. Payment is required 30 days before the performance regardless of whether all students are able to attend on the day of the show—please feel free to bring extra chaperones or school staff to fill any empty seats.

**Photography**—though photography by the audience is prohibited, the Hopkins Center may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or other promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please let Hop staff know.

**The Show Must Go On!**—we do not cancel events due to school closings for inclement weather. Performances will only be cancelled if the artist is unable to reach the theater. Schools will be notified by phone if this occurs. We do not issue refunds for performances missed due to school closure. Please contact Hop staff if you find your school unable to attend for this reason.

This study guide was created by Kate Adams. To download copies of this and other guides, visit [hop.dartmouth.edu/study-guides](http://hop.dartmouth.edu/study-guides)

## Enjoy the Show!

The Hopkins Center's mission is to ignite and sustain a passion for the arts within Dartmouth and its greater community and to provide the core educational environment for the study, creation and presentation of the arts.

## Did You Know?

- The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
- The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.
- In The Moore Theater, the area over the stage, called the "fly loft," is 63 feet tall.



## About the Show

Through movement vignettes, *The City of Others* unpacks the racial undercurrents of Colombia, a country home to Latin America's second largest population of people of African descent. People of different backgrounds and **cultures**, with different ways of understanding the world, coexist in a limited space—which can mean inequity, hostility, and solitude, but also connection.

Witness the dreams, tensions and resistance in the Afro-Colombian dance and music of this powerhouse company. Drawing from **capoeira**, **contemporary dance**, hip-hop and African forms, Sankofa Danzafró creates on stage a city in which everyone matters, a city not of discrimination and **marginalization** but of positive coexistence.



*Sankofa Danzafró performing The City of Others*

## About the Artists

“Sankofa,” meaning “to return to the root,” is more than a word, it’s an African philosophy that proposes that the past is a keyhole through which to view the present, and to be able to consider the future. Through various pedagogical projects and creative works, Sankofa Danzafró has sought to build a bridge between Afro-Colombian peoples and the African continent.

The company uses Afro-Colombian culture’s ancestral roots in the creation process, which results in works that begin with the roots of African dance yet develop through the framework of the daily, traditional and contemporary. Sankofa’s works are a combination of poetic dance built on the ideas of social bonding, personal growth and the positioning of local cultures in the national dynamics.

The company has performed in Brazil, France, Peru, Spain, Jamaica, Burkina Faso, Canada, Uruguay, China and the United States and has been awarded the 2008 National Dance Award by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia for the work *San Pacho...Blessed!*



*Sculpture of Sankofa figure*



*Sankofa Danzafró performing The City of Others*

# Contextual Background

## What does Sankofa mean?

Sankofa is often associated with the proverb, “Se wo were fī na wosankofa a yenkyi,” which translates as: “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten.” Another image for this is a bird with its head turned backwards taking an egg off its back. This symbolizes taking from the past what is good and bringing it into the present in order to make positive progress through the benevolent use of knowledge.



*Gold statue of a Sankofa*

## What’s Happening in Colombia Right Now?

The peace accord that halted a half-century of violent conflict in Colombia has reached a critical juncture. With the population almost evenly split over the terms of the 2016 agreement and a new government led by the party that opposed it, analysts and political figures see sustainable peace as increasingly endangered. The danger arises from divergent priorities and viewpoints on how to proceed with the deal.

The issues include disagreements over justice for victims and perpetrators, commitments on land reform, reintegration of former combatants, reparations, and the question of whether the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are living up to the pledges in the peace settlement.



Rights defenders, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders, and other community activists face threats and violence. Violence associated with the armed conflict has forcibly displaced millions and impunity for serious abuses remains a serious concern.

*Partial map highlighting Colombia and Venezuela*

## Fun Fact

In the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, wizards from the Durmstrang school display some capoeira moves.



*Two men performing capoeira*

## Pre-performance Discussion Questions

- Do you think dance is a good medium for learning? Why or why not?
- Do you dance?
- Are you familiar with the concept of “cultural appropriation”? What makes this topic difficult to understand and discuss?
- What is culture? What is the difference between youth culture and adult culture? Where do you see youth culture in your community? Do you think adult culture overpowers youth culture, or vice versa?

## Post-performance Discussion Questions

- How did you see the different dance styles portrayed on stage? Were there moments you wanted to get up and dance?
- Did the performance teach you anything about Afro-Colombian culture? What might you still have to learn about Afro-Colombian traditions? Why is it important to learn them?
- Do you think dance is a good medium for telling stories about race, gender and culture? Why or why not?
- When did the performance resemble capoeira-style dance more than hip hop? Did it appear in certain situations?

## Learning Activities

### Movement Vocabulary (grades 6–12)

Divide students into groups of three or four. Have the groups choose a situation they wish to represent in movement. Ideas could include: walking someplace where you don't feel safe, eating a delicious meal, falling down on a patch of ice, getting caught at something you aren't supposed to be doing, keeping a secret, etc.

Have each individual within the smaller groups create a shape, gesture or position to make with their body that reflects the theme in some way. Have each individual teach their motion to the others in their group. Each group should find a way to connect each individual's contribution, by moving from one position into another, so that each dance “word” is connected into one longer “phrase” or “sentence” of movement.

Give each group an opportunity to present to the rest of the class, without using any words. Have the audience describe what they saw, and what they think the small group was trying to represent. Have the members of the smaller groups share what they were representing, and how they felt their movements showcased the event, feeling or theme. Could the audience pick out the individual words from the phrase? Did the phrase represent a change (in time, emotion, character) or was it one unified representation of the theme?

**Extension:** This activity can be adapted for many contexts as a way to harness students' kinesthetic intelligence. Rather than choosing from a random collection of ideas to express through movement, explore themes in literature, scientific concepts or leadership skills by creating movement phrases that express key ideas.

## Be a Choreographer (grades: 6–12)

Materials: Paper and pencils

- Give each student a clean sheet of unlined paper and a pencil with an eraser.
- Ask students to draw a 3"x3" square in a corner of the page.
- Ask students to draw in the square a shape or gesture that they remember from the performance.
- Have students imagine that the whole sheet of paper is a stage. Using the shape or gesture they have drawn, ask students to create a pattern on the page that one dancer might create moving across the stage. Ask students to indicate on the page when the dancer is moving quickly, slowly, etc.
- On the back of the page, ask students if they would have music play during their piece. Why or why not? What type of music would they choose? Why? What would their dancers wear? Why?

## Super Power: Fighting Stereotypes (grades 9 – 10)

Pose the question to your class: what are the stereotypes of your community? Think in small terms—your school, your street, your village—as well as larger ones—your state, your country: How do others assume you will talk and act in each of these settings?

Ask the class to compile a list of stereotypes that they may have experienced or witnessed. As a class, discuss the negative effects of these stereotypes. How do stereotypes and judgments made by others shape the way we think about ourselves and our identities? How does this affect the way we see and interact with the world? Consider if there are any positive impacts from stereotypes.

Think of people you know who defy the stereotypes you have listed. How could a person change someone's perception of a stereotype? Ask each student to pick one stereotype to focus on, and find an example of someone who defies it. Choose a creative way to share that story. Students might create a poster, a video, write a short story or create a movement piece that demonstrates the power of defying stereotypes.

## Vocabulary

**Contemporary dance:** a style of expressive dance that combines elements of several dance genres including modern, jazz, lyrical and classical ballet.

**Culture:** the customs, arts, social institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

**Marginalization:** treatment of a person, group or concept as insignificant or peripheral.

**Capoeira:** a system of physical discipline and movement originating among Brazilian slaves, treated as a martial art and dance form.



# Resources

**Read more about Sankofa and their work at:**

[www.elsieman.org/artist-roster/sankofa-danzafro](http://www.elsieman.org/artist-roster/sankofa-danzafro)

# References

[hop.dartmouth.edu/events/sankofa-danzafro-sms](http://hop.dartmouth.edu/events/sankofa-danzafro-sms)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sankofa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sankofa)

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