Study Guide

Acoustic Africa

Wednesday, October 18, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall
About Cal Performances and SchoolTime

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrates 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our SchoolTime program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. Teachers have come to rely on SchoolTime as an integral and important part of the academic year.

Sponsors of Cal Performances Education and Community Programs

Cal Performances’ Education and Community Programs are supported by Berkeley Community Fund, California Arts Council, California Savings Bank, Citigroup Foundation, City of Berkeley Civic Arts Program, East Bay Community Foundation, Robert J. and Helen H. Glaser Family Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, McKesson Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The San Francisco Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, Western States Arts Federation, The Zellerbach Family Foundation.
Welcome

October 1, 2006

Dear Educator and Students,

Welcome to SchoolTime! On **Wednesday, October 18, 2006, at 11:00 a.m.,** you will attend the SchoolTime performance **Acoustic Africa** at Zellerbach Hall on the UC Berkeley campus.

Habib Koité of Mali and Dobet Gnahoré of Ivory Coast will perform at SchoolTime. Both these artists use their music to respond to social and political turmoil in their West African homelands. They each take elements of their traditional musical forms, while fusing traditional and contemporary instrumentation and ideas.

This study guide will prepare your students for their field trip to Zellerbach Hall. Your students can actively participate at the performance by:

- OBSERVING how the musicians use their instruments
- LISTENING to the lyrics and the mood of the music
- THINKING ABOUT how culture and ideas are expressed through music
- REFLECTING on the sounds, sights, and performance skills experienced at the theater

I look forward to seeing you at Zellerbach Hall!

Sincerely,

Laura Abrams
Director
Education & Community Programs
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Top to Bottom: Vusi Mahlasela from South Africa; Habib Koité from Mali in West Africa; and Dobet Gnahoré from the Ivory Coast in West Africa; Putumayo World Music cover for the Acoustic Africa album featured on this tour.
1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, so that you can be seated at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering can be heard throughout the theater—so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show appreciation by applauding Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action onstage Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers Performers use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, the artists feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!
Guiding Questions:

- What role does music play in African society and in African history?
- What is the relationship between music and social change?
- How have artists used their art to effect social or political change?
- What are some of the important social and political concerns in Africa?

*Acoustic Africa* features a performance of contemporary African music, political messages and inspiration. The full evening concert highlights the music of Vusi Mahlasela, Habib Koité and Dobet Gnahoré, three African performers who are musicians and social activists. **Habib Koité** and **Dobet Gnahoré** of West Africa will perform for the *SchoolTime* show. All these artists write and perform music inspired by their cultural roots, and each has made an effort to be true to their own region’s musical heritage. While other African superstars of the 1980s and 1990s made music using synthesizers, these artists have encouraged a return to acoustic music, where lyrics and meaning are more important than a synthesized rhythm.

*Acoustic Africa* helps audiences learn about and understand some of Africa’s most important social concerns. In the 1980s and 1990s, many parts of Africa underwent great social and political change.

This concert is part of a world tour and is coordinated with the release of a new album also called *Acoustic Africa* (Putumayo World Music), which features the music of Vusi Mahlasela, along with Habib Koité of Mali and Dobet Gnahoré of the Ivory Coast—all social activists as well as musicians. Koité seeks to create a pan-Malian culture, bringing an end to inter-tribal conflict, and Gnahoré sings about her hope for peace in the war-torn Ivory Coast. Part of the proceeds from album sales will go to charities that assist African countries.
Guiding Questions:
♦ How have artists used their art to effect social or political change?
♦ What is the relationship between music and social change?

Habib Koité is a guitar player from Mali in West Africa. He comes from a long line of musicians and griots, spiritual figures within tribes of West Africa who traveled to villages reciting poetry, singing songs of praise, and sharing family histories. His ancestors were the keepers and purveyors of oral histories, which were traditionally shared through stories and music. His grandfather played the kamele n’goni, a traditional West African instrument with four strings that is similar to a ukulele or lute. Koité was the first person in his family to break away from traditional Malian art forms and play the guitar.

Koité first planned to become an engineer, but an uncle recognized his musical talent and insisted he enroll in the National Institute of Arts, a music school in Bamako, Mali. He was very successful in music school. He became the conductor of a school band and was hired as a guitar teacher after he graduated. In 1988 he formed his own band called Bamada, a nickname for people living in Bamako that means “in the mouth of the crocodile.” Koité and Bamada won several musical prizes, which gave him the money to record two songs and to go on tour outside of Africa.

Habib Koité’s guitar style is different from the style of other guitar players. For example, he plays on open strings (without pressing his fingers down on the instrument’s fingerboard) as one would play on a kamala n’goni. He tunes his guitar to the pentatonic scale, a five-note scale that is similar to traditional African music. He also plays in a style that sounds like blues or flamenco music. Koité even plays his own version of danssa, a popular rhythm from his native city. His version, which he calls danssa doso, combines danssa with ancient Malian hunter’s music, called doso.

Bringing together the many regional musical styles of Mali is Koité’s greatest goal. He says, “In my country, we have so many beautiful rhythms and melodies. Many villages and communities have their own kind of music. Usually, Malian musicians play only their own ethnic music, but me, I go everywhere. My job is to take all these traditions and to make
something with them, to use them in my
music.” This merging of Malian music is
particularly important to Koité because
Mali is currently divided by ethnic tensions
between northerners and southerners.
He believes that Malians will become
more unified if they share a national
culture in addition to individual ethnic
cultures, and hopes to create music that
will appeal to all people of Mali.

Koité is also interested in blending
tradition and the future together in his
music. He integrates traditional Malian
music with blues, jazz, rock, and Latin
music. The musicians in his band play
traditional African instruments like the
*balafon* (African marimba), *tama* (talking
drum), and *kamala n’goni* in addition to
the electric bass, drum set, and harmonic.
However, he tries to play traditional
instruments in new and different ways.
While he is interested in blending Malian
and Western traditions, he still fears
that Malian culture will be lost to the
influences of the rest of the world.

**Dobet Gnahoré** is the youngest of the
musicians featured in Acoustic Africa—23
years old. The daughter of a professional
percussionist, she grew up in the Ivory
Coast in West Africa. Her performing arts
career began with studies at a pan-African
arts school, where she studied many art
forms, but focused on dance. Today, her
performances include dance as well as
singing and percussion.

Because she studied at a pan-African
school, she learned about many styles of
African music and is interested in bringing
different types of African music, as well as
Western music, into her repertoire.

In 1999, Gnahoré met a French
guitarist who was interested in African
music. The pair formed a band and spent
two years touring in France. During
the time Gnahoré was away, however,
the political situation in the Ivory Coast
worsened when the peaceful government
was overthrown by a military coup, and
she decided not to return.

The struggles of her country have
inspired Gnahoré’s songs. Her first
album, called *Ano Neke*, (”Let’s Create
Together”) recalls a time when the Ivory
Coast was open to different people and
different cultures. This album reflects
music styles from many cultures and
many different languages. It tries to
break down barriers between people.
Her album includes musical styles from
Mandingue traditions, the Congo, the
Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Ghana, and even
from Zulu choirs. In addition to guitar
and vocals, Gnahoré’s performances
feature traditional instruments like the sanza (narrow strips of metal or bamboo attached to a sound box, that vibrate when plucked), balafon, and bongos; two small drums attached to each other, which are played with the hands and make a high-pitched sound.

Gnahoré’s songs also reflect her own feelings. For example, the song *N’sielle* means “I’m Tired.” Gnahoré explains that in it she’s “talking to the nation, I’m telling the politicians that I’m tired of seeing blood pouring, tired of seeing people disappear.” Gnahoré is also interested in including the struggles and emotions of other groups of people in her music. Gnahoré says, “I believe in a war without weapons,” and “I believe in the people’s struggle. I’m dreaming of peace and that life will begin again and hope will return to the youth.”

**Vusi Mahlasela** is a singer and guitar player, percussionist, composer, arranger, and band leader from South Africa. He grew up in Mamelodi Township, an area of South Africa that has produced poets, artists, and musicians and is considered a creative center of the country.

In South Africa, music and singing are a vital part of the culture. There are songs for everyday struggles, as well as songs for special occasions like the birth of a child. Music also became an important part of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Mahlasela’s love of music started at a young age. He sang constantly, and at age ten he created homemade instruments and formed a band with his friends. He learned to play guitar on an instrument he made out of tin cans and fishing line.

In 1976, Mahasela learned about the Soweto Uprising, an incident during which black South African school children took to the streets to march against the mandatory teaching of Afrikaans, the language of the white minority. Police fired on the crowd, killing around 200 black South Africans. After this event, Vusi began to write songs addressing social and political themes. He often performed at political rallies, and also joined a poetry group called Ancestors of Africa. The police harassed him on a regular basis because of his activities during the difficult time of apartheid. Since then, he has promoted forgiveness and reconciliation through his music.

Mahlasela’s music was featured in *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, a film about the role of music and song during apartheid. His contributions to South African music have been so significant that he was nicknamed “The Voice.” According to “The Voice,” music gives people “hope and encouragement and takes away frustration.” He says, “Other people have weapons; we’ve always had our music.”

[Vusi Mahasela will perform at the evening Acoustic Africa show, but is not available for the SchoolTime performance]
About the Art Form

Guiding Questions:
♦ What role does music play in various African societies and in African history?
♦ How is music from Africa distinct from other musical traditions from around the world?

African Musical Traditions:

Music is a central part of African society. In fact, it is so connected to daily life that some African languages do not even have an exact noun that means “music.” Music is a form of recreation and entertainment, but more importantly, it has social, ritual, and ceremonial functions. Much of traditional African music is related to myths, legends or folklore, and making music is a primary way many African societies connect to the spiritual world. For example, the Minianka tribe in Mali, uses music and drumming as a sacred act of communal healing. Other West African cultures connect with and appeal to their ancestors through music. Dancing is another way Africans connect spiritually with music. African children play musical games that help prepare them for adulthood; music helps them learn about tasks like fishing, hunting, and wedding and funeral rituals.

Traditional African music is thought of differently than music from the West. African music incorporates many different sounds, including the sounds of nature and of human speech. Traditional musicians create music to express life through sound.

What does the music sound like?

African instruments vary from region to region. Instruments are created using the natural resources available in a particular area. For example, drums are more popular in the forested regions of West Africa, where there is more wood available, than they are in the savannah areas where there are few trees. Wind instruments also vary greatly—some are made from animal tusks or horns, where others are made from shells or gourds.

Musical styles also vary by region, due to differences in language. Most African languages are tonal, meaning high and low pitches change the meanings of words, and because much African music is based on speech, these tones can be heard in the singing. Some instruments are even tuned in a way that their music becomes understandable language. For example, the tama, or talking drum, is tuned to mimic human speech.
Other differences exist between the music from different regions of Africa. For example, on the West Coast of Africa, music uses “hot rhythm,” a style in which musicians play patterns against one another that pulse at different speeds, the leader’s singing overlaps with the chorus. In Central Africa, musicians use a variety of instruments and play in many musical styles. Music of the East and North is influenced by Islam. Some of the Pygmy tribes even use a vocal technique that is similar to yodeling.

All regions of Africa have musical elements in common. Similar rhythmic patterns are found throughout the continent, and singers generally create harmony by singing the 3rd, 4th and 5th notes of the scale. There is no written form of traditional African music because it is difficult to write down the subtle pitches and tones using a Western musical staff. Some people fear that traditional African music will become extinct because it is not written down.

Instead, it is passed on verbally from generation to generation. Cultural information that is passed on this way is referred to as oral culture or oral tradition. This is most common in societies that do not have a system for writing. In some societies, oral traditions were written down after writing systems were developed. Folk tales are another example of oral culture.

Percussion instruments are the most commonly used instruments in Africa. These include drums, rattles, friction sticks (sticks that are rubbed together to make a sound), bells, sanzas, and xylophones. In some regions, drums are so important, they are considered equal to men. Because of this belief, women are ordered to treat drums with respect, as they would treat a man. In some African countries, women are not allowed to touch drums at all! However, in other regions of Africa, the melody of a song is more important than drumming.

**African Music has Influenced the World**

Because European countries colonized Africa, and Africans were sent overseas as slaves to the United States and the Caribbean, African music has influenced and been influenced by other musical traditions. The Calypso music of the Caribbean, for example, was influenced by African work songs. The American banjo is based on the West African gourd guitar, and African music influenced many elements of American Jazz, including polyrhythm (many rhythms within the beat), call and response singing, and instruments that make sounds imitating human speech. African music was influenced by the music of other cultures. Music brought by colonizers and slaves to South Africa from Europe (Germany, England and Holland), India, and China affected the music of the region, and the sounds of Islamic music had an impact on North African music.
About Africa

Guiding Questions:
• What are some concerns that Mali and Ivory Coast have in common?
• What features make each region described here distinct?

Africa is a continent located south of Europe and to the west of the Middle East and Asia. It is the second-largest continent in the world, and is made up of 53 independent countries. The continent features deserts, rainforests, wildlife preserves, and grasslands, and is home to nearly 700 million people. Africa is very diverse—over 1000 different languages are spoken, and each country has distinct cultural traditions.

About Mali

Mali, a country in West Africa, is now one of the world’s poorest nations, although it was originally the center of ancient empires. In the 1800s, Mali was conquered by France. It became independent in 1960. Since then, Mali has suffered difficult times, including drought, rebellions, a coup, and 23 years of military dictatorship. In 1992, Mali’s first democratically-elected president took power, ending years of dictatorship.

Although much of Mali’s land is barren, the country grows its own food in the fertile land surrounding the Niger River. Mali is also one of Africa’s largest cotton producers.

Mali has many different ethnic groups,
including the Bambara (the largest group), the Songhai, Mandinka, Senoufo, Fula, and Dogon. These groups share different cultures and traditions, and there is often conflict, especially between northern and southern populations. In the early 1990s, the army stopped a rebellion over land and cultural rights by a northern nomadic tribe. Despite these sporadic problems, Mali is relatively peaceful.

Many of the stars of African music, including singers Salif Keita and Rokia Traoré, and blind fusion duo Amadou and Mariam, are from Mali, and they are featured in an annual music festival called The Festival in the Desert.

**About the Ivory Coast**

The Ivory Coast, once a French colony, gained independence in 1960. There are more than 60 different ethnic groups in Ivory Coast. For over thirty years after independence, it was known as a place with a well-developed economy and religious and ethnic harmony. This peaceful time ended in 1999 when the government was taken over in a coup. The ousted president encouraged hatred of northern Muslims—the region and religion of his political enemy. Other groups, including those with parents born outside of the Ivory Coast, were also discriminated against. The conflict grew violent, and in 2002 northern Muslims led an armed rebellion to protest against discrimination. This further divided the country. During the years of conflict, many citizens have fled the country.

Currently, rebels lead the north and the government controls the south. Although the fighting has ended, the Ivory Coast is still tense and the two groups have not reached a peace agreement. The United Nations is working with the Ivory Coast to make peace.

Even so, the Ivory Coast has emerged as one of the most technologically and economically advanced countries in West Africa; essential to the entire West African music industry. The capital Abidjan offers recording studios, nightlife, and a diverse cultural milieu from which many African artists, including Salif Keita, Mory Kante, Mone Bilé and Sam Mangwana, have launched global careers. The closest thing to a national Ivorian music style is zouglou, a dance oriented style of music that first evolved in the 1990s. It started with students from the University of Abidjan and has since spread elsewhere, including to Burkina Faso, Cameroon and...
Gabon. This music uses humor to depict anything that goes wrong in society.

About South Africa

South Africa was colonized by European settlers, including the Dutch, Germans, and British. Until 1994, a minority population of European descent ruled the country. This minority was so concerned about staying in power that it devised a system that separated the races and forced Black Africans to move from their homes. This system is called apartheid. The government harassed and even killed its opponents, and it took nearly a century to end apartheid in South Africa.

In 1994 a new South African government was elected, with Nelson Mandela as president. This signaled the end of apartheid, and the beginning of reconciliation. Although apartheid has ended, its after-effects are still affecting the country. There is widespread poverty, as well as high unemployment and high crime rates.

South Africa also has high rates of HIV infection. The current government is working to solve some of these problems by encouraging Black economic advancement, leading anti-poverty programs in Africa, and providing free treatment drugs to citizens infected with HIV.

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has had three successful democratic elections, and people have had more say in solving the country’s problems. Although poverty is a big problem amongst many of its people, South Africa currently has the strongest economy in Africa.
Learning Activities

Songs and Social Activism

Discussion and Activity:

Songs are an important part of social activism in many regions of Africa. The artists of Acoustic Africa make music in response to the particular social and political conditions in their homelands.

Many American songwriters have been similarly inspired. Read the lyrics songs with social messages (see lyrics below). Discuss: Can you guess the meaning of each song? What do you think the singer or songwriter is trying to say? Can you think of other songs you know that are related to social concerns?

What are important concerns in American society, or in your city or neighborhood? Using a familiar tune, write some lyrics to help raise awareness of this issue. If you are feeling bold, get the whole class to sing along!

We are the World, Hall and Oates

There comes a time when we need a certain call
When the world must come together as one
There are people dying, oh, and it’s time to lend a hand to life
The greatest gift of all

We can’t go on pretending day by day
That someone, somewhere will soon make a change
We’re all a part of god’s great big family
And the truth, you know love is all we need

Well, send them you your heart so they know that someone cares
And their lives will be stronger and free
As god has shown us by turning stone to bread
And so we all must lend a helping hand

(Chorus)
Whoa, there’s a choice we’re makin’
We’re savin’ our own lives
It’s true, we’ll make a better day
Just you and me

When you’re down and out
There seems no hope at all
But if you just believe
There’s no way we can fall

Chorus:
We are the world
We are the children
We are the ones who make a brighter day
So let’s start givin’
There’s a choice we’re makin’
We’re savin’ our own lives
It’s true, we’ll make a better day
Just you and me

Down by the Riverside

I’m gonna lay down my sword and shield,
Down by the riverside
Down by the riverside
I’m gonna lay down my sword and shield,
Down by the riverside
Study war no more

I ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
I ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more

I’m gonna walk with that prince of peace,
Down by the riverside
Down by the riverside
I’m gonna walk with that prince of peace,
Study war no more

I ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
I ain’t gonna study war no more,
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more

I’m gonna lay down that atom bomb
Study war no more

I ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more
Ain’t gonna study war no more

Social Issues: Compare and Contrast

Discussion:

Poverty, AIDS, racial inequality, and fighting between rival tribes or ethnic groups are all problems in different countries in Africa. Discuss: How are these problems similar to or different than problems we face in the United States?

Music as Learning Experience

Discussion and Activity:

African children often play musical games to learn about how to perform adult tasks or participate in adult rituals.

Some song titles include: “Music for Chopping Down a Tree” and “Music for Before the Harvest.” Children’s songs address topics like fishing, hunting, grinding maize, and attending funerals.

Can you think of examples of this in your own culture? (Some ideas include: learning the alphabet through the ABC song, songs for preschoolers that begin, “This is the way we. . . .”)

Choose a current event or community concern.

How can you talk about this event or concern through music or a game? Develop a song or game to teach about this concept and present it to your class. Be sure to include movement.
Afrikaans: the language spoken by the white minority in South Africa

apartheid: an official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against non-whites

balafon: African instrument similar to a marimba

bongos: two small drums attached to each other, which are played with the hands and make a high-pitched sound

coup: a sudden and decisive change of government illegally or by force

danssa: popular rhythm from Keyes, Mali
danssa doso: musical style invented by Habib Koité, combining danssa music and doso, ancient music of Malian hunters
discrimination: unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice

ethnic: belonging to or deriving from the cultural, racial, religious, or linguistic traditions of a people or country

griot: A spiritual figure within tribes of West Africa who travel to villages reciting poetry, singing songs of praise, and sharing family histories

kamele n’goni: a four-stringed West African instrument similar to a ukulele or a lute

meter: number of beats per musical measure

military dictatorship: the form of government in which absolute power is exercised by the army

minority: a group differing, esp. in race, religion, or ethnic background, from the majority of a population

oral culture: cultural information that is passed on verbally rather than written down

oral tradition: cultural information that is passed on verbally rather than written down

pentatonic scale: a musical scale consisting of five notes

sanza: an instrument consisting of narrow strips of metal or bamboo attached to a sound box. This instrument is played by plucking the strips

social activists: vigorously engaged support a cause or rally against another.

staff: lines on which Western music is written

tama: a talking drum, or drum that is tuned in such a way that its sounds mimic human speech

tonal: the use of high and low pitches to symbolize different meanings
California State Standards

Music Grades K-12

1.0 Artistic Perception
Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Music
Students read, notate, listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

2.0 Creative Expression
Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music
Students apply vocal and instrumental musical skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They compose and arrange music and improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments, using digital/electronic technology when appropriate.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music
Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.
Role of Music
3.1 Describe the social functions of a variety of musical forms from various cultures and time periods (e.g., folk songs, dances).
Diversity of Music
3.2 Identify different or similar uses of musical elements in music from diverse cultures.
3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
Responding to, Analyzing and Making Judgments about Works of Music
Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses.