

# Kansas City Young Audiences

## Teacher Program Guide

### African Dance

Artist: Vanessa and Rodney Gibbs

### Workshop Description

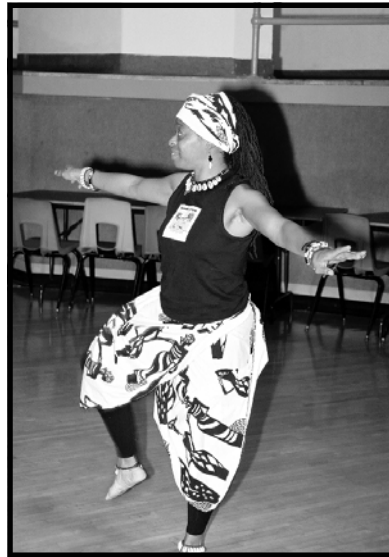
#### Inside this guide:

- Workshop Description
- Educational
- Artist Bio
- Vocabulary
- List of Resources
- Post-Workshop Activities

Contact KCYA for more information on this and other programs.

816-531-4022  
[www.kcya.org](http://www.kcya.org)

African societies express themselves through movement and imagery in the art of dance. Teaching artist Vanessa Gibbs, a principal dancer for *The Traditional Music Society*, teaches students the basic concepts and techniques of West African dance from Mali and Senegal. Students will learn dances that honor kings and queens, celebrate weddings, and begin harvests. They will also learn how African dance is connected to Africa's rich musical traditions.



cities rely on dance to retell the stories of their elders, the legends of their leaders, and the customs of their cultures. In Senegal, the Malinke people dance *Lamba*, the dance of the *Griot* (historian). In Mali, Mandingo girls dance *Lengin* upon reaching their teenage years.

Handed down through countless centuries, these dances reinforce African values and customs through body movement, music, and imagination.

### Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Understand the importance of music and dance to West African society.
- Recognize the value of cooperation in music and dance.

Behavioral:

- Knows how a culture's art works and artifacts reflect its values and beliefs.

Dance:

- Identifies movement elements and skills in performing dance.

#### Special Points of Interest:

In African culture, the *Griot* is the village historian who teaches everyone about their past. It is said that when a Griot dies, a library has burned to the ground.

#### Special REQUIREMENTS:

A large, open space;  
wood floor preferred.

## Artist Bio: Vanessa and Rodney Gibbs

Since 1987, Vanessa Gibbs has taught West African dance. Working with Bird Fleming, she helped found The Traditional Music Society. In 2000, Vanessa traveled to West Africa to continue her studies in West African cultures.

Vanessa, a teaching artist who has taught dance camps for Alvin Ailey, City in Motion Dance Theater, and Kansas City Young Audiences.

In 1987, Rodney Gibbs

began studying West African drums with Bird Fleming. He soon joined The Traditional Music Society where he plays West African drums and other percussion instruments in local schools, churches, and theaters.

Rodney has taught through KCYA since 1996.



Vanessa and Rodney Gibbs

## Vocabulary

**Bamaaya:** a children's dance for the celebration and recognition of harvest, in Ghana.

**Call and response:** The drum riffs that cue the support drummers, singers, or dancers to change their respective rhythms, songs, or dance steps.

**Doun-Doun-ba:** A warriors dance.

**Griot:** A storyteller in western Africa who perpetuates the oral

tradition and history of a village or family.

**Mali:** A country of western Africa. The site of several powerful states, including the Mali and the Songhai.

**Senegal:** A country of western Africa on the Atlantic Ocean. The coast was settled by Wolof and other West Atlantic peoples, while the interior formed part of the medieval empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.

## Post-Workshop Activities

1. Discuss the program you saw today. What role did music and dance play in West African society? Is this similar to or different from the ways we use music and dance in this country?
2. Ask students to imagine their lives without music or dance. What would be different? How would it be different?
3. Create a dance to celebrate a special event in the life of your family: birthday, holiday, or special meal.
4. Compare and contrast African dance to ballet. What do the two forms of dance say about the culture, traditions, and beliefs of Western European and African societies?



## List of Resources

### BOOKS

Songhay (Heritage Library of African Peoples. West Africa) by Tunde Adeleke Rosen Publishing Group; 1st ed edition (September 1, 1996) ISBN: 0823919862

Drums Speak the Story of Kofi, a Boy of West Africa by Marc Bernheim Harcourt; [1st American ed.] edition (June 1, 1972) ASIN: 0152242333

Dances of Africa by Michel Huet Harry N Abrams; (March 30, 1996) ISBN: 0810932288

Africa Dances by Geoffrey Gorer Eland; (March 1, 2004) ISBN: 0907871186