

L. A. MASTER CHORALE

Chamber Singers:

The Musical Journey

Art Form: Music

Style: Traditional and Folk Music

Culture: American & International

MEET THE ARTIST:

Los Angeles Master Chorale makes its home in the celebrated Walt Disney Concert Hall. Recognized as one of Los Angeles' cultural treasures, the Chorale has received accolades for its innovative programming and its commitment to commissioning new works. In June 2008, the Master Chorale received the prestigious Chorus America Education Outreach Award. Grant Gershon has been its music director since 2001, succeeding Paul Salamunovich. The Master Chorale performs about fifteen times per year in its own season, as well as appearing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic from time to time. The *Los Angeles Master Chorale Chamber Singers* are a group of eight singers selected as the finest and most versatile voices from the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Using a school assembly format, the *LA Master Chorale Chamber Singers* present this engaging 45-minute informative performance of different genres of American music as well as folk music from around the world. Countries covered include, the United States, England, Mongolia, Uruguay, Mexico, Brazil, Malaysia, and Kenya. *The Musical Journey* brings to life this musical history in a live performance with interactive activities with the student audience. Important historical facts and musical concepts will be interwoven throughout the performance bringing a relevant standards-based education component to the concert.



PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

The songs presented by the *LA Master Chorale Chamber Singers* represent folk music from many countries and ethnic groups as well as spirituals and marches from the United States. Folk Music, the music of the people, is one of the earliest forms of music. All the great composers have gained inspiration from the music of their people, their "folk," whence this music derives its name. Melodies created by musicians, most of them anonymous, but whose simple and beautiful songs have outlived the passing of generations, brought comfort, healed sorrow, and made for better understanding and brotherhood among the people. In the United States folk music had a popular revival from 1930 to 1950 with singers such as Woody Guthrie, Burl Ives and the Kingston Trio. Influenced by these singers, 1950-1960's artists such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez sang songs of protest and topical songs in local coffee houses. This genre of music still remains popular today with artists such as Sarah McLachlan and James Taylor.

Folk Songs - Learning a song through hearing it sung is the way folk songs are remembered and passed down from generation to generation. This tradition leads to changes made by individual singers over time, which in turn leads to several different versions of the same folk song. The variations may include different

words, sometimes a different subject, changes in melody, the addition of new phrases and changes in the harmony. Although some definitions of folk music maintain that the distinctive element of folk song is the fact that the original composer is unknown, it is also true that many experts prefer to define folk music as that which is created through communal use as a song that is passed from one person to

another. The people who sing them are the "owners and composers."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What impressed students most about the performance?
- Which songs did the students feel were powerful, funny, heartfelt, sad or confusing?
- What were the different countries that the songs came from?
- Ask your students to talk about the songs they listened to growing up. What kind of music was it? Who taught it to them? Do they still sing some of the songs?
- Have your students ever sung in a choir? Have they ever seen a group of singers perform live or on television? What are the important things to remember when singing with other people?
- Ask students to name popular singing groups who utilized choral singing in their music. (Examples could include Backstreet Boys, N'Sync, 98 Degrees, Destiny's Child, The Jonas Brothers). Are there any popular groups now that use choral music?



ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ✧ Using the list of countries the song selections originate from (England, Argentina, Mongolia, Brazil, Malaysia, Bulgaria, Bolivia, Mexico, Indonesia, United States, Kenya), have your students break into small groups and research one of the countries.
 - What are the different cultural traditions?
 - What is the make-up of the people?
 - What type of government do they have?
 - What is the geography?
 - What types of music is the country known for?
 - Are there any instruments that are indigenous to this country?
 - What is its popular style of music?
- Have your students put together a presentation to present to the rest of the class. Ask your students to make posters or banners for their country and bring these to the assembly performance by the Los Angeles Master Chorale Chamber Singers.
- Help students define the four voices they heard in the performance:

Soprano: The highest singing voice for women and children

Alto: The lowest singing voice for women and children

Tenor: The highest singing voice for men

Bass: The lowest singing voice for men

Take a sample song like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and have the boys and girls sing it separately. Was there any difference? Discuss.

- ✧ Demonstrate the idea of the folk song aural tradition by playing a game called "Whisper Down the Lane." Seat students in a line or circle. Ask one student to create and write down a sentence that contains a small story. The student should then whisper the sentence in the ear of the next student. Each student should whisper the sentence to the next student, trying to keep the message they hear intact, word for word. The last student should write the sentence down. Read the original and final sentences out loud. Discuss how the sentence changed and grew during its passage from one person to another.
- Ask students to research folk songs from their own or another heritage. What are the origins of the songs? What do they tell us about the language and history of the culture, the dreams and wishes of the people? What are the musical styles and what instruments are used?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - HISTORY/SOC. SCIENCE:

Read a selection of folk tales, myths, fairy tales or legends from different cultures. (See suggestions below.) What do the stories tell us about people and how they lived? Have students work independently or in small groups to write an original folk tale. Folk tales frequently tell us how something came to be (who put the meow in the cat; why earthquakes happen; why does it snow?) In creating a tale, students should consider: a hero or a heroine with a specific goal; events or characters that thwart his/her progress; and a magical or mysterious element that helps him/her succeed in reaching the goal.

Collection of Folk Tales:

Afro-American Folk Tales by Roger by D. Abrahams

Keepers of the Earth by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac

Best Loved Folk Tales of the World by Joanna Cole

My Grandmother's Stories by Adele Geras

The People Could Fly by Virginia Hamilton

The Rainbow People by Lawrence Yep

Legend:

- Artistic perception
- ✧ Creative expression
- Historical & cultural context
- Aesthetic valuing
- ✧ Connections, Relations, Applications



LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE CHAMBER SINGERS: THE MUSICAL JOURNEY REPERTOIRE & VOCABULARY

Repertoire:

- 1 - *I'm A Train* (England)
- 2 - *Arroz con leche* (Mexico)
- 3 - *Magnificent Horses* (Mongolia)
- 4 - *Wana Baraka* (Kenya)
- 5 - *Balaio* (Brazil)
- 6 - *La farolera tropezó* (Bolivia)
- 7 - *Polly Wolly Doodle* (USA)
- 8 - *Yonder Come Day* (USA)
- 9 - *Shenandoah* (USA)
- 10 - *Washington Post March* (USA)
- 11 - *Battle of Jericho* (USA)

Vocabulary:

- Beat** the regular pulse of music
- Choir** A group of singers who usually sing in parts with several voices on each part.
- Conductor** the leader of a musical ensemble
- Ensemble** French for “together;” a group of musicians that play or sing a piece of music together
- Folksong** A term used to describe music of the common people that has been passed on by memorization or repetition rather than by writing
- March** A processional or military air especially suited to parades, or processions
- Melody** the part of the music you can sing or whistle
- Pitch** the highness or lowness of sound
- Range** all the notes a singer can sing or an instrument can play
- Spirituals** a type of folksong that is based on church music