

ZUNZUN

La Selva Canta

Art Form: Music
Style: Traditional
Culture: South American

MEET THE ARTIST:

Since 1996 the musical duo **ZunZun** has celebrated the environments and cultures of the Americas through music. Their lively musical performances engage audiences and bring audience members on stage to be a part of the show. They play over 25 different instruments from various regions of North, Central, and South America. ZunZun performs for over 100,000 family and student audience members each year sharing laughter, music, and a joyous respect for the natural world. They have been recognized with awards from Bravo Television, i-parenting Media Awards, Calabash Ethnic Arts Awards, and Children's Music Web Awards. Most recently ZunZun wrote *Vuela: An Américas Symphony* with a commissioned grant from the Irvine Foundation which premiered in performance by the Santa Cruz County Symphony to celebrate their 50th Anniversary. Always lively, always keeping all of the audience engaged and active, ZunZun uses music to create an atmosphere of joy and celebration to be remembered by all.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

ZunZun has spent many years in the endangered rainforests of the Americas discovering a vast array of sights, sounds, stories and songs; now this musical duo helps audiences celebrate these discoveries. Using a variety of folkloric instruments, storytelling and comedy, *The Musical Rainforest - La Selva Canta* evokes vivid aural landscapes to illuminate the tales and legends presented. Students participate and sometimes play instruments as they learn about the importance of protecting these irreplaceable world treasures, our rainforests. Songs are performed in a mixture of Spanish/Portuguese and English.



PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Imagine you are in a land that is near the equator, the waist of the world. The temperature averages 78 °F, and it rains practically every day, bringing from 45 to more than 200 inches of rain each year. If you look up, a beautiful green canopy grows high above you (sometimes almost 150 feet); if you look down, a lush layer of leaves, fruit, seeds, young plants and branches covers the ground. If you stand still and listen, you'll hear wind rushing, leaves rustling and animals calling. If you look around, you will see a magical emerald world filled with an astounding variety of animals, amphibians, birds, reptiles and insects. This land is the the rainforest, the rich garden that circles the middle of our planet.

Rainforests exist on about 7% of our planet surface, but within them live more than 50% of the creatures and plants. Scientists believe that there remain many more species of plants and animals to be studied, and no doubt many new species to be discovered as well. Almost half of the rainforests in our world are in the Americas: the Amazon basin alone has almost 2 million square miles. The coastal areas of other South American countries also have rainforests, including Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, Brazil and southern Mexico, including Chiapas.

Rainforests aren't just beautiful vacation destinations. They also provide economic benefits (food crops and materials for industry: dyes, resins, oils, fibers) and health benefits (many rainforest plants are used to make medicines to treat diseases such as heart disease or cancer). In addition, they keep our planet healthy by providing clean air and regulating weather around the world. Sadly, people are destroying the rainforests, along with the animals and plants that live within them. Many countries and conservation groups (World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy) are trying to preserve the forests by creating protected areas and educating the public. If they are destroyed, rainforests will be lost to us forever. Helping people understand why the forests are so important to our world is what ZunZun shares in their performances.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What did you learn about rainforests? Why are they so important to our planet?
- Which instrument or sound was your favorite? Explain to the class which one you liked and why.
- Which of the songs was your favorite? Why?
- When you closed your eyes and listened, were you able to imagine you were in a real rainforest? Which sound was most convincing? (bird, rain, thunder.)
- Which of the stories you heard would you most like to retell to another person? What part of the story or song was your favorite?
- What kind of materials were used to make the instruments? How did the various instrument sounds differ from one another?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - SCIENCE:

Every ecosystem in our world is unique -- deserts, mountains, forests, tropical islands, etc. Each has special plants, wildlife and characteristics that define it. Select a specific type of ecosystem; research and discuss the special characteristics that exist in that area -- is there rushing water? Lots of rain? Wind? Dry sand? Rustling leaves? Imagine and recreate the sounds that might occur by using objects in your classroom. Crinkling paper can sound like leaves or fire, voices become bird sounds or animal calls, many hands rubbed together can sound like wind, fingers snapped or pencils tapped sound like drops of rain.

Break into groups and ask each to create their own "soundscape" of an ecosystem. Assign each member of the group a sound. Set the sequence and length of each sound, which sounds will be heard together and which will be heard alone. Present your soundscape to the class as they listen carefully with their eyes closed. After each soundscape, observers should answer the following questions:

Where were you?
What did you hear that told you where you were?
What did you like the most?
What would you change?

- Legend:
- ☉ Artistic perception
 - ❖ Creative expression
 - ▶ Historical & cultural context
 - ⇒ Aesthetic valuing
 - * Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ☉ Many of the instruments played by ZunZun were made out of materials found around the rainforests of the Americas. Examine your own surroundings to see if you can find an object with which you can create a unique sound or musical instrument. How many ways can you play your instrument? What do the sounds remind you of? See if you can make an instrument out of recycled material (paper, cup, plastic bottle, metal can).
- ❖ Write a story that uses sound effects as a way to help the listener feel they are "in" the story. Include both location sounds (wind, water, car horns, barking dogs) and movement sounds (footsteps, slamming doors). Present your story to the class, making sure to include the sound effects you have selected.
- ▶ Imagine you can travel back in time and see how your neighborhood has changed over the centuries. Draw a picture of your neighborhood or city today. Now draw pictures of how your neighborhood might have looked during the Stone Age, about 10,000 B.C. Imagine what life was like -- deep forests, many animals, fewer people; no electricity, no transportation, no supermarkets. Discuss what we have gained over the years. What has been lost?
- ⇒ Music is reflective of the land and people that create it. If your class were a colony of explorers traveling to a new land, what kind of music would you want to carry with you? What kind of instruments? What new kind of music do you think your class might create together? Make a list on the board of instruments played or favored by the class, and see what kind of an orchestra you would have in your new land. Try to imagine and list new sounds you might add to improve the music you would create.
- * Using a map or globe, locate the areas referenced in the musical stories presented by ZunZun. How far away are those areas from your city? If you wanted to travel there, what kind of transportation would you need to use? How long would it take to get there?



SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Albert, Toni. *The Remarkable Rainforest: An Active-Learning Book for Kids*. Trickle Creek Books; March 1996.

<http://www.zunzuntunes.com>
<http://ran.org/>
<http://www.savenature.org/>