

THE ROSE ENSEMBLE

THREE FAITHS POST-PERFORMANCE LEARNING/CREATION ACTIVITY

Descriptive Overview

This lesson will introduce adult learners to the intersection of history, culture, and religion in the music of Medieval and Renaissance Spain (12th-15th c.) and explore how music functions as an expressive form of history, culture and religion, shaping ideas and perceptions.

Description of Arts Learning Community

Approximately 200-300 adult learners with no assumed previous experience of the arts activity

Time Required 1 hour

Rationale

Music has served an important role as an expression of human culture throughout history. The period of 12th-15th c. Spain is distinctive because it reveals how musicians of different cultures and faiths influenced one another as a result of the relatively peaceful co-existence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Spain at this time. The lesson not only introduces students to this rich and complex music, whose influence can be felt in music today, but provides a concrete example of ways in which community life is enhanced through cross-cultural interchanges. As a result, it serves a larger goal of promoting cross-cultural understanding and an appreciation for both similarities and differences.

Learning Goals for Arts Learners

- To introduce adult learners to key characteristics of music from Medieval and Renaissance Spain;
- To instruct students on ways in which the music of Medieval and Renaissance Spain reveals evidence of cross-cultural influence;
- To provide learners with an opportunity to perform culturally, melodically, rhythmically and linguistically different examples of vocal music from Medieval and Renaissance Spain
- To engage learners in conversation about the intersection between music, culture, and religion and the potential this offers for promoting cross-cultural and inter-religious understanding.

Learning Activities

Ask learners what ideas and images the words “Medieval” and “Renaissance” bring to their minds. Are these the same images they had before experiencing the musical performance?

- Describe briefly the history and cultures of Medieval and Renaissance Spain and how music can shape our ideas about and perceptions of other periods and cultures.

The women of the Ensemble perform a Latin chant: *Cives caelestis patriae*

Ask learners of what this music reminds them and in what kind of place this music might be performed.

- Explain the use of Latin chant in the Christian faith. Teach learners a Latin chant together, by rote: “*Nicolaus Pontifex*” (Kathy teaches refrain, Jordan sings solo verses, audience sings refrain and is invited to harmonize in parallel 5ths, as led by Ensemble musicians).

The men of the Ensemble perform an *a cappella* Hebrew Chant: “*Mismor L’David*”

Invite learners to identify the language of this song and to share their impressions of this music – how is it similar to and/or different from the Latin chant?

- Explain the use of Hebrew chant in the Jewish faith. In what parts of the word do people speak Hebrew today?

The Ensemble performs a Sephardic Song: “*Porke Yorash*”

Invite learners to identify the language of this song and to share their impressions of this music.

- Explain that the language is Ladino, a mixture of Hebrew and Spanish, and was spoken by people of the Jewish faith (the Sephardic Jews) in Medieval and Renaissance Spain. Describe the expulsion of peoples of non-Christian faith – particularly those of Jewish faith – by the Spanish government in 1492 and draw connections with people today who are homeless as a result of war, famine, or persecution. Read a portion of the Alhambra Decree, issued by the so-called Catholic Kings as a means to expel non-Christians from their kingdom in 1492.

Introduce the musical scale (mode) employed in this piece, which is found in many Jewish songs.

- Teach the scale to learners and have them sing it up and down on a neutral syllable.

David introduces the *oud*, a nearly 3,000-year-old string instrument used in the Middle East, Persia and North Africa and the idea of micro-tones, found in Arabic musical scales.

- Teach the learners to identify the micro tones by singing whole steps, half steps and then quarter-tones, using the *oud* and *vielle* (melodic string instruments) as support.

Teach learners a refrain to an Arabic-language Song: “*Ayyu-hā s-sāqī ‘ilay-ka l-muštakā.*”

Invite learners to share their impressions of this music.

- Explain that Arabic was spoken primarily by people of the Islamic faith in Medieval Spain, but that many Jewish people spoke Arabic as well. In what parts of the world do people speak Arabic today?

Briefly discuss common rhythms in Western culture (3/4 time, 4/4 time, etc.) and invite learners to join in making the primary and secondary sounds in Arabic classical music: DUM and TEK.

- Introduce these sounds on the drum as low and high and then invite participants to tap hands on legs for DUM and clap for TEK. Begin to teach basic combinations of rhythms, gradually increasing the difficulty. Use the learners’ percussion as accompaniment to an instrumental piece: “*Arabaya Taş Koydum*”(Turkish *karşılama* featuring ‘*ud* and percussion).

Tim introduces other percussion instruments, most notably the *riqq* (tambourine).

Explain that the learners have been singing music from Medieval and Renaissance Spain and that we have sung in many languages (name them: Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Ladino), but there is one language left that we haven’t yet sung in and that is Spanish.

- Teach refrain and then perform together: *Hoy Comamos y Bebamos*. Describe how using both European and Arabic instruments on a piece from the Spanish court, along with Arabic rhythms, on a Spanish piece exemplifies how musicians of different cultures and faiths were said to have collaborated and lived in relative peace in the time leading up to the Expulsion.

Explain how all of these instruments, languages, and musical styles existed together for an extended period in Medieval and Renaissance Spain, and how various groups borrowed ideas, forms and designs from each other, even though today we identify them as “Western” or “Middle-Eastern,” “Arabic” or “European.” Draw an analogy with the United States today where there are also many people from different cultures living and working together, learning each other’s languages and sharing/borrowing different cultural elements.

- Invite participants to think about some of the ways we grow individually and as a community by celebrating our cultural similarities and differences. Positively reinforce being bilingual or trilingual by inviting participants to shout out the name of the non-English language they speak, they are learning or want to learn.

Closing: Teach refrain in Ladino to this Sephardic/Abrahamic Song: “*Kuando el Rey Nimród*”