



EDUCATORS GUIDE

Antonio Rocha: A Slave Ship Called Malaga

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 7 - 12.

Supported by:



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About This Guide

Use this guide to help your students anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience. This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 7 - 12.

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The great thing about the arts is that they can often evolve to meet their context. That means that many of the activities shared are flexible to a lot of different contexts depending on how you choose to frame them in your class. We know that you all are experts on your classroom and your students and so we invite you to use these lessons and activities as guideposts and adapt them to fit your classroom management style, range of student ability, and time constraints.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ICON KEY



ENGLISH
LANGUAGE ARTS



PERFORMING
ARTS



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
LEARNING



SOCIAL STUDIES



THEATRE



VISUAL ARTS

Educators, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email offstage@portlandovations.org or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

We want to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.

Introducing the Performance

It is often helpful to share some context with your students before they attend a live performance. Many of them may be unfamiliar. We've included some information below to help you prepare your students to see the show.

About the Performance

A Slave Ship Called Malaga is a tour de force performance by award-winning, and world-renowned storyteller Antonio Rocha. Using his entire body and voice, Antonio sings, narrates, produces realistic sound effects, and mimes his way through this poetically toned historical tale told from the perspective of the ship. The story vividly explores the reality of the middle passage, and the impact of the slave trade then and now through Antonio's relationships to Maine and Brazil, his homeland. Each performance is followed by a moderated conversation.

About the Performer

Antonio Rocha (pronounced Haw-shah), originally from Brazil, came to the USA in 1988 to study mime with Tony Montanaro on a grant by an exchange organization called Partners of the America. Antonio is the President of the Maine Chapter of this organization.

Since the early 1990s, Antonio has performed his unique fusion of mime and spoken word—using vocal technique and realistic sound effects—from Maine to New Zealand, covering 20 countries across 6 continents and 43 states across the USA. Antonio has many recordings, a picture book, and is a two-time TEDx presenter. Amongst his many awards received, he has earned the coveted Circle of Excellence Award by the National Storytelling Network for his “exceptional commitment and

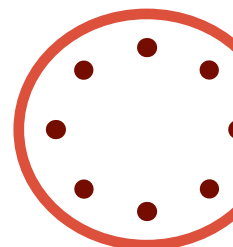


Being an Audience Member

An audience member is a part of a larger community - an audience - and you all work together to create your theatrical experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting.

As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?



Essential Questions

What was The Malaga?

The Malaga was a 183 ton brig built in a shipyard owned by Joseph Badger in Brunswick, Maine, in 1832. A few years after launch, the ship found itself a part of the Transatlantic slave trade, despite the 1808 law that prohibited the importation of enslaved people from Africa. Eventually Malaga arrived in Brazil in 1845 and was chartered by a Portuguese slave trafficker named Manuel Pinto da Fonseca who lived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Ship was then equipped with more platforms in her cargo hold in order to accommodate more captives. Malaga was used then to bring captives from Africa straight to Brazil until 1848. At times Malaga would carry close to 900 captives. Malaga was a very small brig.



A map illustrating the route of the Malaga.

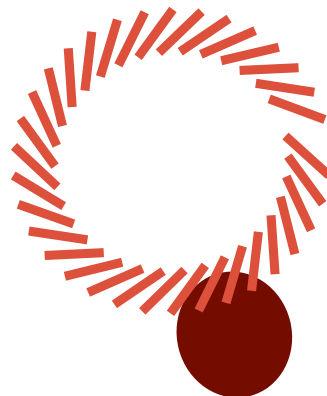
What is Antonio Rocha's connection to The Malaga's story?

In October 2021, Antonio was a resident artist at Indigo Arts Alliance in Portland, Maine where he developed A Slave Ship Called Malaga with funding from the Maine Arts Commission and The New England Foundation for the Arts, as well as consulting support from Smithsonian Scholar Dr. Kate MacMahon and the books about slavery written by award-winning Brazilian author, Lourentino Gomes.



Antonio's process of creating a historical story is to first feel connected to it. A story well told is a story that first resonates with the teller. This particular story is also very personal to the performer for his ancestry on his father's side is of African descent. His full name is Antonio da Rocha Vieira Junior. Rocha Vieira is a name that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Since these are Portuguese names, they do not represent Antonio's African ancestors, but those who bought them once they landed in Brazil and were sold into slavery. The slave owner would give their last name to the slave as a sign of ownership.

Antonio Rocha has recently done his African Ancestry DNA analysis, and discovered that his African ancestry hails from the Benga and Kota people located currently in the country of Gabon. It is important to bear in mind that in the time of slavery, there was no such a country in Africa. Countries have become the result of independence from European Colonies after they invaded the African continent in order to extract the riches of the land.



How was *A Slave Ship Called Malaga* created?

With lots of research. After doing a lot of reading, Antonio then had to select the information that is most important to deliver in a 30 minute performance. As Antonio was researching the historical facts, he realized that most of the story should be told from the point of view of the ship. By doing so, the most delicate and horrendous aspects of the slave trade could be discovered by the boat and explained to the boat by Antonio.

Once he decided on his story, Antonio began to map it out. Antonio does not sit and write a story. He writes the important facts on sticky notes called story triggers: simple notes, one to two sentences, stating either a historical fact or a mime sequence. Then he places them on a large sheet of paper on the wall. He keeps on adding the notes and moving them around as he finds necessary. Once Antonio feels that a sequence is ready, he then performs the sequence and times it. More notes are stuck to the wall, or removed, or simply moved to another section of the arc, then he performs again. Little by little, a series of images—not words—follow. These are either narrated verbally or through mime, then, after a while, it is ready to be premiered.

When the story is told for the first time, it begins to take shape, for now we have a key element added to the mix—the audience. Where do they laugh? Where do they go into complete silence? This new set of information sets a new rhythm. If necessary, more information can be added, some taken away, and so the story deepens and creates its own groove in the mind of the performer.

Want to try Story Triggers with your class? Check out the activity on page 12.



What is mime?

Mime is a theatrical performance of physical eloquence that uses gesture and movement to express a situation or story. It is also the profession of the artist performing it. The mime artists use techniques to convey elements of a story like action, character, and emotion using only gesture and movement. Mime, besides being an artistic discipline in its own right, it's also an important element of various theatrical performances. Mime plays an essential role in many historical theatrical traditions, including Indian Natya, Japanese Noh, and Italian Commedia Dell'arte.



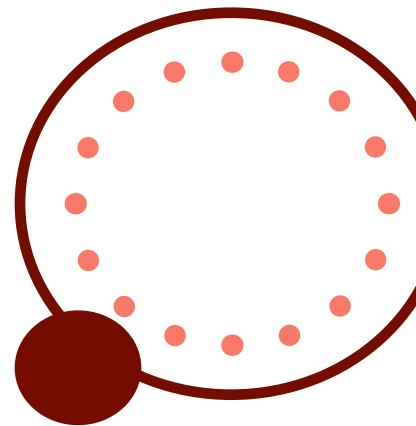
Commedia dell'arte troupe I Gelosi in a late 16th-century Flemish painting



Antonio uses only mime for some of his performances, but mostly when speaking as a storyteller, he incorporates mime as an element to create atmosphere, evoke emotions and advance the plot with non verbal transitions. With the Malaga performance, he aligns mime well with the movement of the ship, invoking images of water and sails, and recreating the building of the ship itself. Antonio weaves together all the pieces of a particular sequence—mime, spoken word, and sound effects—to create a historical, yet poetic, performance arc.

What is the Storytelling Industry?

While storytelling is an important part of how humans communicate with one-another, it's also a thriving industry. Professional storytellers like Antonio use voice, gesture, music, mime, and puppets to tell stories in festivals, classrooms, and performance venues all over the world. Online venues like the MOTH and TED talks bring professional storytelling into homes. The oldest storytelling festival in the United States, the National Storytelling Festival, happens yearly in Jonesborough, Tennessee. It has existed for over 50 years and features artists from around the world.



PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities that expand on the essential questions, topics, and themes of *A Slave Ship Called Malaga*.

Glossary

Share these words with students prior to the performance so that they have a shared vocabulary of how to talk about what they watched..

BRIG: A ship with two square-rigged masts.

PEÇA (PE-SAH) DA INDIA: A unit of sale--how strong, young captives (often teens), were referred to by their monetary trading value.

CAPTIVE: A 21st century way to refer to a person held against their will before being sold into slavery. This term draws an important distinction: enslaved people did not come from Africa, people from Africa were captured, and captives were sold into slavery.

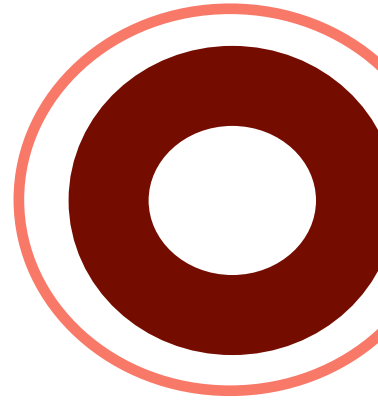
KOTA AND BENGA PEOPLES: Bantou ethnic groups from the northeast region of Gabon in Africa. Antonio Rocha has DNA that relates to the Kota and Benga peoples.

RIO DE JANEIRO The city where the ship Malaga arrived in 1845. Rio was Brazil's second capital and also the capital of a state bearing the same name. Antonio Rocha grew up in Rio de Janeiro.

GUANABARA BAY: A large bay located in Rio de Janeiro.

SAMBA: A music genre and dance that originated in Afro-Brazilian communities. It is widely popular during Carnival.

CARNAVAL: An annual festival in Brazil held for four to five days before Ash Wednesday (like Mardi Gras in the United States). Rio's Carnival is the largest of its kind in the world, according to Guinness World Records.



ACTIVITY: Pull the Rope

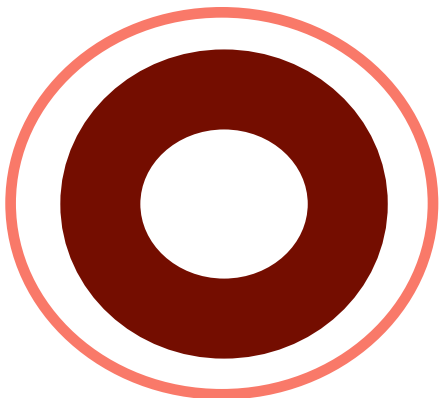
Mime is an important part of Antonio's storytelling. Practice these skills with your class before you see the show with Antonio's help. [Use this youtube video](#), Mime Illusions for Storytellers, recorded by Antonio himself, to learn the basics of mime and practice a few classic mimes: pulling the rope and opening doors, gates, and windows. Antonio will help you learn how to focus your eyes and position your hands for specificity in your miming.



What to Look for When You Watch

Storytellers like Antonio have many tools and strategies they use to tell clear, compelling stories. They use their voice, body, and the space around them to invoke places, people, and events. Here are some key themes and storytelling methods to look for as you watch the performance:

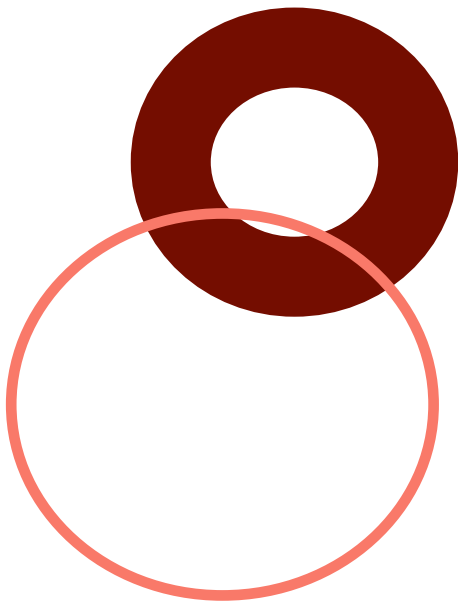
- The connection between the words Antonio says and the way his body moves. Are his gestures and movements large or small? Fast or slow? How do his movements shift as the story shifts?
- The amount of space Antonio uses in each part of the story. Note when his body takes up a lot of room, and when his movements are contained to a small space.
- The non-verbal sounds Antonio makes. How do these sounds help to tell the story?
- The way Antonio marks the beginning, middle and end of the story. What techniques does he use to help audience members follow each moment and plot point?



POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What was memorable to you about this performance? What new information did you learn? What would you like to learn more about?
2. Antonio Rocha shares the story of the ship Malaga from a very specific perspective—the connection between the story and his own life. What perspectives are histories commonly told from? How does perspective impact our understanding of our own history?
3. How does *A Slave Ship Called Malaga* offer insight on Maine's connection to the trade of enslaved peoples?



ACTIVITY: Perspective Web

Use this drama-based strategy to reflect on the performance with your class after the show. Perspective web invites participants to offer individual thoughts, and consider how those thoughts are connected. You will need a ball of yarn or string for this activity.

1. Begin by gathering the group into a seated or standing circle, and ask the group to consider one thing that sticks with them after watching *A Slave Ship Called Malaga*. It might be something they learned, an especially funny or sad moment, or a question the show inspired. Give participants a minute to think about their responses.
2. Begin the perspective web by repeating the statement and answering it (as a model). Unravel a few feet of yarn and toss the ball to another participant across the circle, holding on to the end.
3. The participant with the ball of yarn will now answer the prompt, unravel more yarn, and toss the ball to someone else, holding on to a piece of the yarn to maintain the web.
4. Continue tossing the yarn around the circle until everyone has shared and you've created your perspective web.
5. Reflect together on the connections between ideas shared in your web. What do you collectively know and wonder now that you didn't know or wonder about before?

[Learn more about Perspective web here.](#)

ACTIVITY: Story Triggers

Antonio creates his stories by writing key moments and plot points on post-it notes. Use this story-telling strategy with your class. You will need post-it notes for this activity.

1. Begin by selecting a theme or topic for the story. It could be something they've learned in class, a news article, an urban legend, a piece of family history, etc. You can choose either to assign topics or to allow students to choose their own. Help students identify 1 or more sources on their topic or theme.
2. Hand each participant (or group) a stack of post-it notes. Invite them to write key moments or ideas from their research on the post-it notes. These post-it notes will become the story triggers. Remember, story triggers should be short, a sentence or phrase.
3. Review the story triggers and select the story trigger that will be the beginning (the inciting incident), the middle (the climax), and the end (the resolution). Place these in order.
4. Select one or two story triggers that will be the rising action. Place them between the beginning and the middle.
5. Select one or two story triggers that will be the falling action. place them between the middle and the end.
6. Decide which story triggers will be read aloud and which will be performed as gestures. Practice performing the story using these story triggers. what worked? what felt confusing? Revise the story by changing the words, the gestures, and/or selecting different story triggers.
7. Perform the final story for the class.



Portland Oventions, founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Oventions collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Oventions Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

Land Acknowledgment

Portland Oventions’ programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi’kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

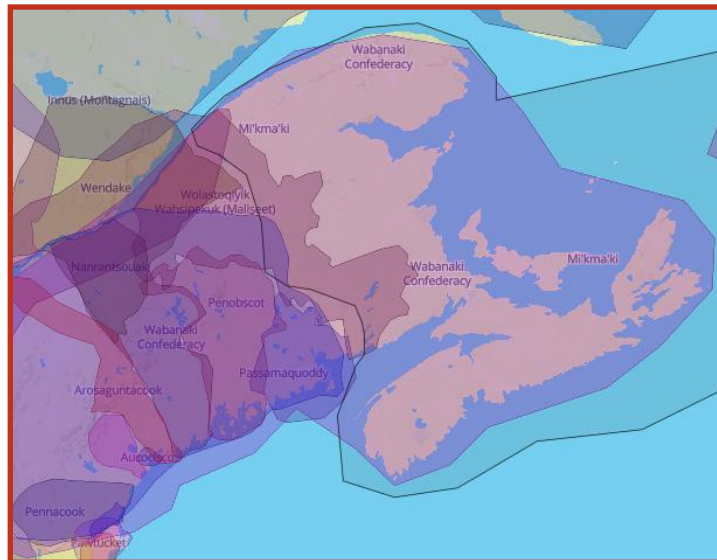
We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine’s Indigenous communities through the following organizations

[Abbe Museum](#)

Maine’s premier museum dedicated to indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

[Maine-Wabanaki Reach](#)

A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.



Native-Land.ca

Created and written by Antonio Rocha & Liz Schildkret
 Designed by Katie Day
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We want to know what *you* thought about the performance. You can write your answers below or draw a picture on the back of this page. Thank you!

PERFORMANCE: Antonio Rocha: *Slave Ship Called Malaga*

SCHOOL NAME: _____ **TEACHER NAME:** _____ **GRADE:** _____

YOUR NAME: _____ May we use your name when we share your comments?
Yes__ No__

What did you like about *Commanding Space*? Why did you like that part?

What was something that you learned during the performance?

What would you like to tell other kids about *Commanding Space*?

What types of performance would you like Portland Oventions to offer in the future? (Feel free to share what type of art you are interested in (theater, dance, music), what cultures you might like to see, what topics the art might connect with, or specific artists.)

Please take a few moments to fill out this survey after you attend the performance. You can also fill it out [online here](#). Your response provides valuable insight on the impact, accessibility, and relevancy of the School-Time Performance Series and will allow us to improve and strengthen the program. Thank you.

PERFORMANCE: Antonio Rocha: *Slave Ship Called Malaga* – Spring 2023

TEACHER NAME: _____ **GRADE(S) OF STUDENTS:** _____

SCHOOL NAME: _____ **CITY/TOWN:** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

1. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate *A Slave Ship Called Malaga*?

- Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

3. What made this a valuable experience for your students? (If it wasn't, what can we do better?)

4. What was your primary reason for choosing to bring your students to *A Slave Ship Called Malaga*?

- I wanted my students to experience the performing arts.
 The performance topic fit with my curriculum goals.
 The date and time of the performance fit our schedule.
 The ticket price is affordable.
 Other (please specify):

5. How did this live performance connect to or enhance your curriculum?

6. Did you use the Educators Guide provided by Portland Ovation before or after attending the performance?

- Yes No

7. Why or why not?

8. What improvements could we make to the Educators Guide to serve you and your classroom better?

9. How would you rate the following components of attending the School-Time Performance?

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Reserving & paying for tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication about the day of the performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrival at the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departure from the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. What types of performances would you like to bring your students to in the future? (Feel free to share art forms, topics/themes, specific artists, etc.)?

11. A number of generous individuals and organizations make it possible for Portland Ovation to offer these School-Time Performance tickets at extremely discounted rates. Is there anything you'd like them to know in terms of your experiences or its impact on your students?