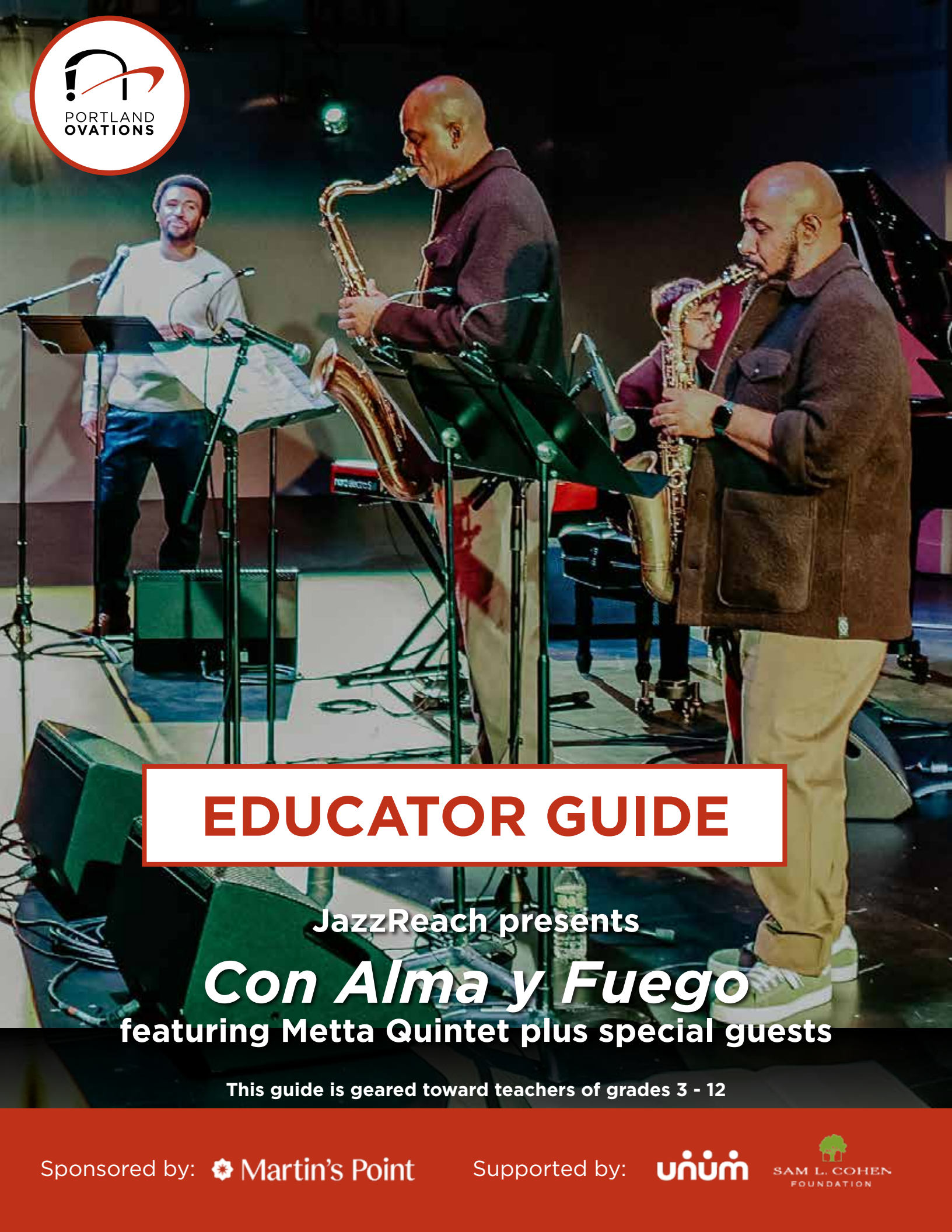




EDUCATOR GUIDE

JazzReach presents

Con Alma y Fuego
featuring Metta Quintet plus special guests

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 3 - 12

Sponsored by:  Martin's Point

Supported by:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

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 3 - 12.

IN THIS GUIDE

3	Introducing the Performance
5	What To Expect
6	Being an Audience Member
7	Essential Questions
10	Pre-Performance Lesson Activities
14	Post-Performance Lesson Activities
18	About Portland Ovation
19	Student Response Form
21	Teacher Response Form

The great thing about the arts is they can often evolve to meet their context. That means 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 you all are experts on your classroom and students, 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.

LEARNING CONNECTIONS

Performing Arts: Music (Jazz, Afro-Caribbean and Latine Music and Rhythm)
Social Studies: Latine History and Culture, Afro-Caribbean History and Culture, African American History and Culture

LEARNING STANDARDS ICON KEY



ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARTS



MUSIC



SOCIAL STUDIES



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LEARNING

Educators, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email eschildkret@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. Read below for more information on the performance you're coming to see.

About The Performance

Featuring sizzling live music by New York's Metta Quintet, captivating video projections, and live narration, *Con Alma y Fuego* (With Soul and Fire) traces the enticing origins and evolution of Latin jazz, highlighting the music of artists such as Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Antonio Carlos Jobim, and Irakere.

With roots firmly steeped in the African American experience, jazz musicians have always been creative, globetrotting explorers in search of new sounds, rhythms, harmonies, and melodies as a means to expand their musical vocabularies and palettes of expression. "Latin jazz," as it is commonly known, is an approach to playing jazz that integrates traditionally American jazz forms, concepts, and sensibilities with rhythms, harmonies, melodies, and instruments from African, Caribbean, and Latin American musical traditions. How has the American experience and the sound of jazz been influenced, enhanced, expanded, and refined by these rich, vibrant cultural heritages? *Con Alma y Fuego* invites students to find out.



About The Company: The Metta Quintet

A cohesive, tight-knit unit of creative jazz artists, the Metta Quintet is fueled by a collective, open-minded musical curiosity and a dedicated commitment to arts education, fostering new audiences, and nurturing young talent.

Through the commissioning of new works and the creation of immersive, live multimedia concert programs for the Main Stage, the Metta Quintet is committed to challenging convention and expanding the boundaries of the live jazz experience.

Learn more about the artists in the Metta Quintet on their website:

jazzreach.org/metta-quintet-bios.html



What To Expect

The Performance

- The Performance is 60 minutes long.
- 6 musicians will perform on drums, saxophones, acoustic bass, and piano.
- A narrator will lead the audience through the history of Latin Jazz.
- The performance includes projections and video.

The Sound

- This is a live, amplified music performance. Drums and other percussion can be loud at points during the show.

The Lights

- General theatrical lighting is used throughout the performance.
- Spotlights may be used to emphasize specific performers as they play.
- The theater may go fully dark at times.

Resources

- Plan your visit to Westbrook Performing Arts Center: portlandovations.org/about/accessibility-westbrook-performing-arts-center/
- Learn more about accessibility at Portland Ovation: portlandovations.org/about/accessibility/



Being an Audience Member

As an audience member you have an important role to play in the performance you're about to see. After all, live performance doesn't happen without an audience. When you see a live performance, you join a community of people, artists and audience members, who all share the same experience in the same space at the same time. Each community is unique and every performance calls for different responses from the audience. Some performances are quiet and thoughtful and need an audience ready to give silent attention. Some are lively and invite clapping, dancing, and singing. Some require active participation. Your job as an audience member is to bring your best self to the community you are part of.

The performers of *Con Alma y Fuego* welcome clapping at parts of the performance you enjoy. Here are some other questions to consider as you imagine how to bring your best self to this 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?



The interior of the Westbrook Performing Arts Center

Essential Questions

What is Jazz?

Jazz is a musical tradition that developed among African American communities in the United States, with New Orleans widely recognized as an early center of its development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jazz grew out of a blend of musical traditions carried by African Americans, including blues, spirituals, work songs, and the rhythms and call-and-response patterns rooted in West and Central African musical traditions, combined with the instrumentation of American brass bands and the harmonic language of European classical and popular music. Because it drew on so many sources, jazz has always been a hybrid, evolving form rather than a single fixed style.

One of the defining features of jazz is improvisation: musicians create melodies and variations in the moment, often building on a song's underlying chord structure or a repeating rhythmic groove. This makes every live performance of a jazz piece different from the last, even when the same musicians are playing the same song. Another defining feature is swing, a rhythmic feel in which notes are played with a loose, forward-leaning pulse rather than strict, even timing. Jazz musicians also frequently use "blue notes," pitches that are bent or lowered slightly from where they would fall in conventional Western scales, giving the music its distinctive expressive quality.

As a constantly evolving art form, jazz contains many influences and has in turn influenced many other musical genres. As jazz musicians toured and collaborated internationally, they absorbed rhythms and musical ideas from other cultures, including the Caribbean and Latin America, and in turn influenced musicians there. *Con Alma y Fuego* explores one important branch of this story: how jazz musicians and Afro-Caribbean and Latin American musicians shaped one another's music over the course of the twentieth century, producing the sound now commonly called Latin jazz.



The late 18th-century painting *The Old Plantation*, possibly depicting African-Americans on a South Carolina plantation dancing to percussion and a banjo



The Bolden Band around 1905

What are the Key Elements of Jazz?

Several core musical elements recur across nearly all styles of jazz, including the Latin jazz featured in *Con Alma y Fuego*. Listen for these elements as you experience the performance:

Improvisation: The practice of creating music spontaneously, in the moment of performance, rather than playing only from a fixed, pre-written score. Jazz musicians typically improvise melodic lines over a song's chord progression or rhythm, meaning that no two performances of the same piece sound exactly alike.

Rhythm and Swing: Jazz rhythm often features syncopation (accenting beats that are not normally emphasized) and, in many styles, a “swung” feel in which pairs of notes are played unevenly rather than strictly on the beat. In Latin jazz specifically, rhythm sections frequently draw on Afro-Cuban and Afro-Caribbean rhythmic patterns, layering multiple percussion parts to create dense, interlocking grooves, sometimes called “polyrhythms.”

Complex Harmonies and “Blue” Notes: Jazz harmony often extends beyond simple major and minor chords to include more complex chord types, and jazz melodies frequently use “blue” notes, pitches bent or lowered from their expected position in a scale, to create tension, longing, or expressiveness.

Call and Response: A musical structure in which one musician or group plays or sings a phrase (the “call”) and another answers with a related phrase (the “response”). This pattern has deep roots in West African musical traditions and remains a common structural device in jazz, whether between two instruments, a soloist and the full band, or a performer and the audience.



Billie Davies, an avant-garde jazz drummer
Photo: Mike A Davies

Whose Music is Featured in *Con Alma y Fuego*?

Con Alma y Fuego highlights the music of several artists who helped shape the sound of Latin jazz over the course of the twentieth century. Here are some brief introductions to the artists who created the music you'll hear in the performance:

Machito (1908-1984): Francisco Raúl Gutiérrez Grillo, known professionally as “Machito”, was an Afro-Cuban bandleader and singer widely credited as a key figure in bringing together Cuban dance rhythms with American big-band jazz arrangements, helping to lay the groundwork for what became known as Latin jazz.

Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993): An American trumpeter and bandleader and one of the founding figures of bebop, John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie is also closely associated with the development of Latin jazz through his collaborations with Cuban and other Afro-Caribbean musicians.

Tito Puente (1923-2000): A Puerto Rican American percussionist, bandleader, and composer known for his work on timbales, Puente was one of the most prominent and prolific figures in Latin jazz and Latin dance music over several decades.

Antonio Carlos Jobim (1927-1994): A Brazilian composer, pianist, and guitarist Antonio Carlos Jobim, or “Tom” Jobim as he was popularly known, was a central figure in the development of Bossa ova. Bossa Nova blended samba rhythms with jazz harmony to create a more intimate musical style. With Jobim as its champion, Bossa Nova (“new trend” in English) rose to international popularity in the 1960s. It had a significant influence on jazz musicians and was associated with social justice movements.

Irakere: A Cuban orchestra known for blending jazz, Afro-Cuban folkloric and religious music, classical music, and rock influence, Irakere became internationally influential in Latin jazz circles in the 1970’s. The orchestra was led by pianist Jesús “Chucho” Valdés (who Portland Oventions presented in Spring 2026), and featured soloists such as clarinetist-saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera and trumpeter Arturo Sandoval.

Want to dig deeper into these artists and their work?
See the activity Artist Spotlight on page 13



Portrait of Machito and Graciella Grillo, Glen Island Casino, New York, N.Y., July 1947
Photo: William P. Gottlieb



Dizzy Gillespie, 1955
Van Vechten Collection at Library of Congress

PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities that expand on the essential questions, topics, and themes of *Con Alma y Fuego*.

Materials: Whiteboard or chart paper, markers, glossary (below)

Jazz and Latin Jazz Glossary



Improvisation: Creating music spontaneously in the moment of performance, rather than reading it entirely from a fixed score.

Syncopation: Placing musical accents on beats or parts of beats that are not normally emphasized.

Swing: A rhythmic feel in jazz in which notes are played with a loose, forward-leaning pulse rather than strict, even timing.

Call and Response: A musical pattern in which one performer or group plays a phrase and another answers with a related phrase.

Blue Note: A pitch that is bent or lowered slightly from its expected position in a scale, giving jazz its distinctive expressive sound.

Rhythm Section: The group of instruments, typically including drums, bass, and piano or guitar, that provides the rhythmic and harmonic foundation of a jazz ensemble.

Clave: A foundational rhythmic pattern in many Afro-Cuban musical styles, often played on a pair of wooden sticks (also called claves), around which other rhythms are organized.

Latin Jazz: An approach to playing jazz that combines traditional American jazz forms and improvisation with rhythms, harmonies, melodies, and instruments from African, Caribbean, and Latin American musical traditions.

Reflection:

- Which of these terms was new to you? Which felt familiar?
- Can you think of music you already know that might use call and response, or a strong rhythmic groove?

ACTIVITY: Call and Response Warm-up



This activity introduces students physically and vocally to the call-and-response structure common to Jazz improvisation and composition. As a warm-up, it gets students thinking, listening, and producing rhythm together. It's a great way to begin a rehearsal before picking up instruments, or to begin a class before deep focus.

Materials: Open space for movement, no additional materials required

Procedure:

1. Explain that call and response involves one person or group performing a short musical or rhythmic phrase (the “call”), which is then answered by another person or group (the “response”).
2. Clap a simple rhythmic pattern (the call) and have students clap it back (the response). Start simple, then increase the complexity of the pattern over several rounds.
3. Divide the class into two groups. Have Group A create a short rhythmic “call,” and have Group B invent their own “response” rather than simply echoing it.
4. Discuss as a class how it felt to invent a response versus simply repeating the call.

Reflection:

- How is call and response similar to or different from a conversation?
- Why might call and response be an especially useful structure in a live, improvised performance?

ACTIVITY: Keep the Beat



This activity builds students' sense of steady pulse and layered rhythm, both central to Latin jazz. It scaffolds with the "Call and Response Warm-up" to create space for students to explore increasingly complex rhythms. On its own, this activity is a great way to introduce new rhythms and encourage students to think creatively and collaboratively.

Materials: None required; optional hand percussion instruments or desks for tapping

Procedure:

1. Have the whole class keep a steady beat together by tapping their laps or clapping at a slow, even tempo.
2. Once the class can hold a steady beat as a group, divide students into two or three smaller groups.
3. Assign each group a different simple, repeating rhythmic pattern that fits together with the others (for example, ask group 1 to clap steady quarter notes, group 2 clap eighth notes, group 3 to clap once every 4 beats, etc.)
4. Have all groups play their patterns together at the same time, keeping the shared underlying pulse steady throughout.

Reflection:

- What made it easy or difficult to keep your own pattern steady while others played something different?
- How might this layering of rhythms relate to what you expect to hear from a full band during the performance?

ACTIVITY: Artist Spotlight



Before the performance, invite students to research one of the artists featured in Con Alma y Fuego so they can listen for their influence during the show. Inviting students to become experts in a topic they'll experience in the performance can help create deeper engagement.

Materials: Access to the Resources section of this guide and/or the library, writing implement and paper (for note-taking)

Procedure:

1. Assign or allow students to choose one artist featured in the performance: Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Antonio Carlos Jobim, or Irakere.
2. Using the linked resources in this guide and other resources available, have students research their artist's musical style, instrument or role, and contribution to Latin jazz.
3. Have students prepare a short spoken or written summary (2 to 3 sentences) to share with a partner or small group.
4. As a class, discuss what these five artists' stories have in common and how their work connects across countries and traditions.

Reflection:

- What surprised you about the artist you researched?
- How did this artist draw on more than one musical tradition in their work?

POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Use these activities to continue exploring after you've seen the performance.

Post-Performance Discussion Questions



1. What moments in the performance stood out to you the most, and why?
2. Where in the performance did you notice call and response happening, either between musicians or between the musicians and the audience?
3. How did the rhythms in the performance make you want to move your body?
4. What did you notice about how the musicians communicated with one another during improvised sections?
5. Where do you hear elements of Latin jazz in the music you like to listen to?



ACTIVITY: Round of Applause-Rhythm Edition



Based on a simple pass the beat game, this activity revisits call and response and rhythmic listening through group clapping, connecting back to what students observed in the performance. As the rhythm becomes more complex, students use their memory and creativity to replicate the rhythm and continue to build on it. This activity can be linked with all the previous rhythm activities to create a full lesson focused on rhythm. It's a great warm-up or brain break.

Materials: Open space for movement, no additional materials required

Procedure:

1. Sit or stand in a circle. One student begins by clapping a short rhythmic pattern.
2. The student to their right must repeat the pattern exactly, then add a new short pattern of their own.
3. Continue around the circle, with each student repeating the growing sequence before adding their own addition.
4. After the game, ask students to identify moments in the performance that reminded them of this kind of rhythmic “building” or “answering.”

Reflection:

- Was it harder to remember the pattern or to invent your own addition? Why?
- How might a jazz musician's memory and creativity work together in a similar way during a live improvised solo?

WRITTEN REFLECTION: Rhythm and Culture Narrative



Invite students to reflect in writing on the connections between rhythm, culture, and history explored in the performance in this guided writing activity. Use this as an opportunity to assess what students learned in the performance, and what elements of the performance stood out to them.

Materials: Paper or journal, writing utensil

Procedure:

1. Ask students to recall a specific rhythm, instrument, or musical moment from the performance that stood out to them.
2. Have students write a short reflection (one paragraph for younger students, up to a full page for older students) describing that moment and what it made them think or feel.
3. Invite students to connect their reflection to the idea, introduced in the Essential Questions, that jazz has always grown through musicians sharing and blending traditions from different cultures.
4. Optionally, invite volunteers to share their reflections aloud with the class.

Reflection:

- How does learning about the history behind music change the way you listen to it?
- What is one question you still have about jazz, Latin jazz, or the artists featured in this performance?

Consider sharing your students' reflections with Ovation!

You can scan and email them to us at offstage@portlandovations.org or mail them to us at 120 Exchange Street Suite, 110, Portland, ME 04101.

Resources

Visit the Metta Quintet and JazzReach on their website:

jazzreach.org/

Explore the Smithsonian Institute's Jazz collection:

americanhistory.si.edu/explore/projects/smithsonian-jazz/education

Read an article by legendary Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis about what is and isn't Jazz:

wyntonmarsalis.org/news/entry/music-what-jazz-is-and-isnt

Learn more about Machito from the National Museum of African American History:

nmaahc.si.edu/latinx/frank-machito-grillo

See Dizzy Gillespie's Trumpet:

americanhistory.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/entertainment-nation/online/dizzy-gillespies-trumpet

See Dizzy Gillespie's portrait at the National Portrait Gallery:

si.edu/exhibitions/dizzy-gillespie-event-exhib-6247

Learn more about Tito Puente:

si.edu/spotlight/latin-music-legends-stamps/tito-puente

Read a Reflection on Antonio Carlos Jobim by Sergio Mendes:

grammy.com/news/lifetime-achievement-award-antonio-carlos-jobim/

Learn more about Irakere:

salsagoogole.com/irakere-was-a-cuban-group-that-developed-an-important-work-in-cuban-popular-music-and-latin-jazz-under-the-direction-of-chucho-valdes/

ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

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, 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.

Created and written by Dr. Liz Schildkret

Designed by Katie Day

© Portland Oventions 2026

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: *Con Alma y Fuego*

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

YOUR NAME: _____ May we use your name when we share your comments? Yes___ No___

What did you like about *Con Alma y Fuego*? Why did you like that part?

What was something that you learned during the performance?

What would you like to tell other kids about *Con Alma y Fuego*?

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.)

We want to know what *you* thought about the performance.
Draw a picture of a part of *Con Alma y Fuego* that you liked. Thank you!



YOUR NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____ TEACHER: _____ GRADE: _____
Please scan and email to offstage@portlandovations.org or mail to Portland Ovations 120 Exchange St Portland, ME 04101

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: *Con Alma y Fuego*

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

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

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

1. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate *Con Alma y Fuego*?

☐ 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 *Con Alma y Fuego*

- ☐ 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?

MAIL RESPONSES TO: Portland Ovation 120 Exchange Street Portland, ME 04101
EMAIL SCANNED RESPONSES TO: offstage@portlandovations.org

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

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Reserving & paying for tickets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication about the day of the performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Arrival at the venue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Departure from the venue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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?