
In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta

~ Study Guide ~



Sitar Fusion

Anwar Khurshid
Geneviève Beaulieu
Demetri Petsalakis

Presented in association with Prologue to the Performing Art

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About the Artists

Hailing from Pakistan, **Anwar Khurshid** speaks Urdu, Pushtu, Punjabi, and Persian, and has a working knowledge of other regional languages, including Arabic. He has been immersed in the culture, and understands the intricacies, nuances, common elements and differences within the regions. Trained as an Indian classical musician, he has studied and analyzed the great masters' compositions and composed his own. He has been collaborating with numerous musicians representing different genres and cultures and has performed internationally. One of Anwar's aims is to collaborate with as many diverse artists as possible. Anwar's innovative collaborations create music transcending categorization.

Geneviève Beaulieu is an interpretive dancer from Québec. She has studied Indian classical dance forms (Odissi) and contemporary movement practices (Improvisation and Integrated Dance). She combines these to express emotions, tell stories and interpret poetry. Geneviève's dance is like poetry in movement. She is currently working with Propeller Dance, an integrated dance company based in Ottawa. Geneviève and Anwar have been collaborating for 14 years, presenting Indian classical music and dance as well as their own creations. Together they explore the themes of love, nature, and social justice in poetry and the arts.

Originally from Athens, Greece, **Demetri Petsalakis** performs in a variety of styles with a focus on Greek and Middle Eastern lutes. He plays a variety of string instruments, including guitar, oud, lyra, and baglama.

They come together as *Sitar Fusion*, an eclectic gathering of internationally acclaimed artists promoting cultural diversity and understanding through music and dance. Through the magic of Anwar Khurshid's sitar, Geneviève Beaulieu's interpretive dance, and Demetri Petsalakis' oud and lyra, they take their audience on an unforgettable journey across the sea.



About the Production

Summary:

Through captivating music, dance, and narrative, Anwar Khurshid and Geneviève Beaulieu will dramatize the travels of the great medieval traveler, Ibn Battuta, as documented in his book, *Rihla*. Ibn Battuta was an educated Berber from Morocco, a country in North Africa. He left home at a young age to perform an Islamic pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca, and continued walking 120,000 km to far-off countries. He travelled through Morocco, East Africa, West Africa, modern day Palestine/Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Bulgaria, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, India, China, and Indonesia. With the help of the students, Anwar and Geneviève will trace his route, showcasing the languages, cultures, stories, and songs of the regions he visited.

Format:

This 50-minute show includes nine short selections of vocal and instrumental music from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, followed by a brief Question and Answer period. Each piece includes an engaging introduction and an interactive component, encouraging students to participate through story, song and dance.

Program:

1. India (Urdu): *Lab be aati hai dua ban ke (A Child's Prayer)*

The show opens with a musical setting of an Urdu text by the Persian poet, Allama Iqbal. The piece was immediately accepted as a school assembly song in India and Pakistan, and is sung there to this day. The song aptly expresses the desire for knowledge and self-development that the young Ibn Battuta felt when he left his native land of Morocco. Geneviève will teach the students eye and hand movements and expressions related to the text:

*My desire comes to my lips in the form of a prayer:
May my life be like that of a candle,
May the darkness in the world disappear because of me;
Because of my lustre it is bright everywhere.
May I beautify my country the same way as a flower beautifies a garden,
May my work be to stand up for the poor
And to take care and love the weak.
God save me from evil and guide me along the path of goodness.*

2. Lebanon/Palestine/Israel (Arabic): *Bint El Shalabiya*

This song is about a girl from the town of Shalabiya. It describes her beautiful almond eyes as she thinks of how her beloved wooed her by singing to her under a pomegranate tree. Originally recorded by Lebanese singer Fairuz, *Bint El Shalabiya* is a traditional Lebanese and Palestinian folk song that is reputed to date back to 1901:

*The pretty girl with almond eyes
I love you from the bottom of my heart, you're my eyes*

*Near the bridge my love awaits
To let you down, my love, was never my intention
You appear in the distance, but my heart is wounded
Days are on my mind, and the memories come and go
Under the pomegranate tree, my love spoke to me
He sang to me songs, oh my eyes, as he wooed me*

3. Turkey, Greece (Greek): *Nina Nai Nai*

Turkish music was influenced by a migration of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gillani in the 15th century. He brought music, art, food, and language from India over to Turkey. This song is special because the Greek people have adopted the song and dance. *Nina nai* is an expression, like saying “Opa!” Greeks have a social dance called *tsifteteli*. Both of these terms appear in the lyrics. The students will be invited to clap and sway as the song is being sung.

*Get up and dance, so I can see you become happy.
Dance the Turkish tsifteteli!
Nina nai! Nina nai!
I will sing to you again.
Shake your body!
We only live once in this illusion;
We must enjoy ourselves a bit.*

4. Afghanistan, Pakistan (Pushtu) *Shinaware la vangina (The Sound of the Water)*

Again this is a uniting song from both Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is a very peaceful melody from a war-torn region, from which many immigrant children in Canada originate. The students will call, “*loye shay*” as they show the movement of the water with their hands:

*In this river the water flows,
Making the sound, “shinaware la wangina.”
Eyes can talk;
Talk to me through eyes.*

5. India, Pakistan (Sindhi) *Ho Jamalo*

Ho Jamalo is a song that celebrates the arrival of a local folk hero, Jamalo Khoso Baloch, in the middle of the 19th century. He was sentenced to be hung by the British and asked to drive the untested bridge of Sukkur in return for freedom. He was successful, and was subsequently freed. The song was originally written by Jamalo’s wife, and Anwar has rewritten the lyrics to frame the immigration experience for a Canadian audience. The students are invited to sing *Ho Jamalo* during the song.

*A place where there is true, beautiful freedom,
Where everyone is respected,
The prince of countries:
We have arrived safely in Canada.*

6. India, Pakistan (Punjabi) *Lai Beqadran Nal Yari*

Punjabi people are often considered generous, lively, sensitive, and forgiving. This is a light-hearted song celebrating good friendships that last for years and never break. The students will be invited to clap to keep the rhythm during the uplifting song.

*I made friends with unappreciative people
My friendship with an unappreciative person
It broke off with a crack, just like a stick.*

7. India (Instrumental) *Maharaja*

India has many classical dance styles which are all used to tell stories. This particular dance was inspired by the Art Gallery of Ontario's 2010 exhibit, *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts*. This exhibition featured artifacts and artwork depicting the opulent lifestyles of India's great kings over the last three centuries. This dance tells the story of an Indian Maharaja (King) entering a village on his elephant, followed by his veiled Maharani (Queen). After the procession, the Maharani removes her elaborate jewellery and longs for the freedom of a commoner, as symbolized by a kite flying outside her window. Geneviève will teach the movements of the elephant, the veiled Queen and the flying kite.

8. India, Sri Lanka (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam)

Sargam, Konokol, Bol, Jugalbandi

Oral tradition is a deeply rooted and ancient learning method that is a uniting element in an otherwise culturally split and divisive India. Musicians all around the world have started learning Konokol (the Eastern language of rhythm), Sargam (the Eastern equivalent of solfège), and Bol (the North Indian language of the tabla). Anwar will teach the students the building blocks of this oral tradition through a playful call-and-response interchange called *Jugalbandi*.

9. China *Weaving a Flower Basket*

Ibn Battuta's travels extended far beyond South Asia, as he journeyed through Eastern Europe and Russia all the way to China. His encounter with a holy man in a cave helps students to see that cultural connections can span vast distances, and Anwar draws the students to distant lands through this joyful Chinese folksong.



Glossary

Berber

The Berbers are an ethno-linguistic group indigenous to North Africa.

Bol

Derived from the Hindi word *bolna*, which means to speak, the bol is a mnemonic syllable. The bols are used in Indian classical music to define the rhythm.

Hajj

An Islamic pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. This journey should be done at least once in the lifetime of an adult Muslim.

Jugalbandi

In Indian classical music, it is a performance featuring two musicians.

Konokol

The art of performing percussion syllables vocally in Indian classical music.

Lyra

A stringed bowed musical instrument from Greece.

Maharaja

The title of a great ruler or king in India before the independence of the country in 1947.

Maharani

The wife of a Maharaja.

Mudras

From Sanskrit, it means seal or gesture. The mudras are hand gestures used in Indian classical dance.

Oud

A short-neck, pear-shaped stringed instrument used in Persian, Greek and Turkish music.

Palki

The carriage in which a woman is being transported. For example, a Maharani in colonial times or a bride on her wedding day.

Qazi

Means judge in Arabic.

Raag

A melodic framework based on scales. Raags have evolved over time through tradition and practice. Each raag is associated with the time of the day or some with seasons. There are emotions and moods associated with raags. Ascent and descent of notes is defined. There is also an emphasis on certain notes in raags around which the melodic structure is centered.

Sargam

The singing notes in Indian classical music Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Da Ni Sa, like the solfège: Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, Do.

Sitar

A plucked-string musical instrument mainly used in Indian classical music. It is considered to be hundreds of years old.



Lyra



Oud



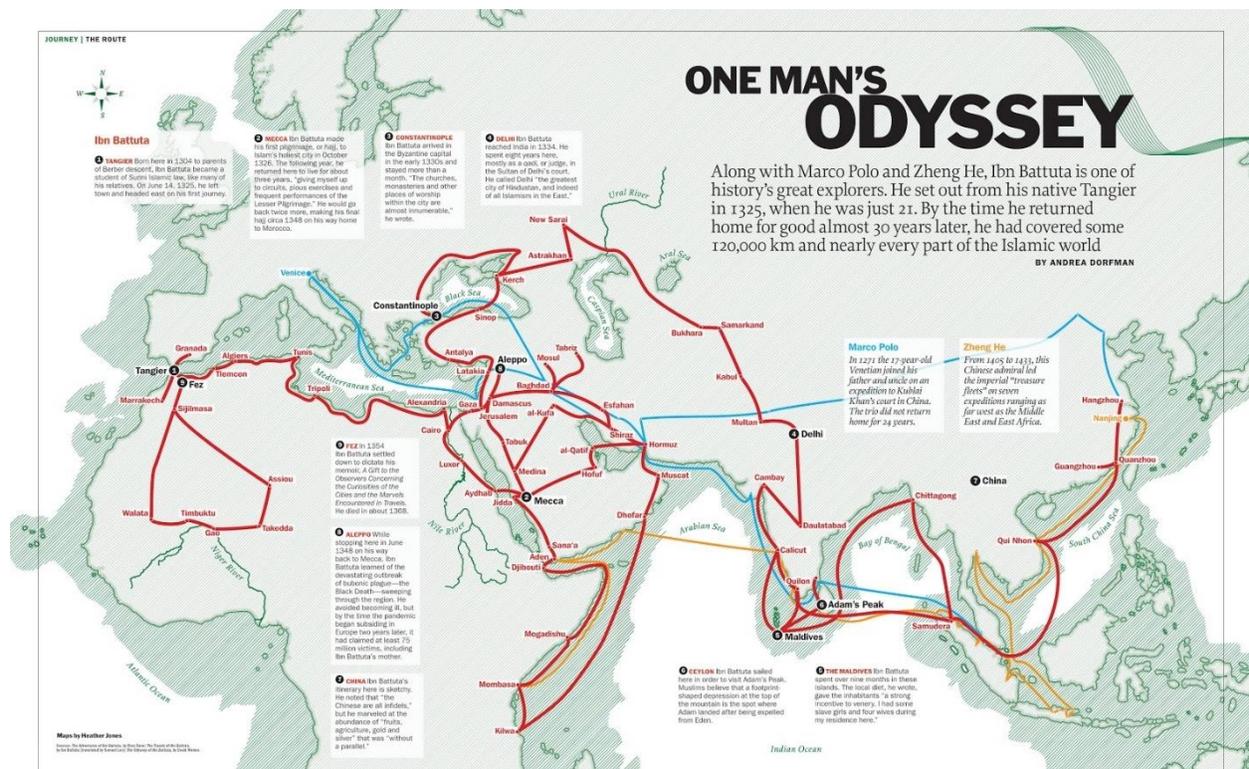
Sitar



Themes, Background, and History

Social and Cultural Themes

This project demonstrates that we can all learn and enjoy music from various cultures and pride ourselves in identifying with them. It also shows the distinctive and the common aspects of different cultures. Despite Canada's commitment to multiculturalism, the accomplishments of Muslims in travel, science, medicine, art, and architecture are often overlooked. While the adventures of European explorers are well known, few students are aware of the 120,000-kilometre journey of Ibn Battuta, an African-born Muslim of indigenous descent. This project is a small effort to bring pride back to the children of the immigrant families who don't find much to take pride in or relate to in the mainstream media's current portrayal of the Muslim world. Children listening to music from their region of origin will be able to identify and relate to it as their own, and listeners from other traditions will begin to recognize the connections between music of different times and places, developing a sense of kinship with previously unfamiliar cultural expressions.



Historical Background

Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta was born in Tangier, Morocco, on February 24th 1304. He was a Berber who was educated as a judge. He left home at age 21 to perform the Islamic pilgrimage called *Hajj*. He got hooked on travelling and ended up walking 120,000 km to far off countries. He travelled through Morocco, East Africa, West Africa, modern day Palestine/Israel,

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Bulgaria, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, India, China, and Indonesia. Over almost 30 years, he covered nearly every part of the Islamic world. He wrote a book called *Rihla* in Arabic in which he describes the stories of his travels.



Ibn Battuta (1304-1368)

Music and Dance Concepts

Indian Music

Indian classical music consists of forms called *raags* which are based on scales and have evolved over time through tradition and practice. The concept of *raag* is similar to the concept of *dastgah* in Persian music; *maqam* in Arabic music. Thus, there are common *raags* between Arabic, Persian and Indian music. Indian classical music has its basis in folk music of Sindh, Punjab, Bengal, etc. There is a divide between North and South music forms. The performance displays the commonalities of these types of music as well as their specificities.

Indian Dance: A Storytelling Form

In this performance, the story of the travels of Ibn Battuta is told through music and dance. The dance being presented is based on Indian Classical Dance. India has many classical dance forms. They all use a collection of symbolic hand gestures (*mudras*) and facial (*bhavas*) and body expressions (*rasas*) to tell stories. They have a very strong theatre-drama component. Historically performed in temples, the dance dramas mainly depict various gods enacting stories of Hindu mythology. Geneviève uses the idioms of Indian classical dance to tell the story of Ibn Battuta. The interpretive dance that she performs is also based on contemporary dance. In contemporary dance, improvisation serves as an exercise to create new dances. Improvisation is the process of creating movement spontaneously by exploring through the body a variety of emotions, ideas,

shapes, and dynamics. During the performance, Geneviève will demonstrate some simple dance movements and invite students to learn and emulate them during the dance.



Curriculum Connections

The Ontario Arts Curriculum encourages students to experience the arts in their own lives, and to consider their role in the lives of people around the world throughout history. Through the arts, students are encouraged to participate actively and intuitively in meaningful cultural explorations. *In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta* supports the Arts curriculum expectations at every grade level, particularly those related to the cultural expressions characteristic of different communities, times, and places. Similarly, the Ontario Social Studies curriculum encourages students to develop their sense of identity in both local and global contexts, and to understand how people around the world have related to one another throughout history. This project addresses these broad themes, and also applies directly to the study of Local and Global Communities and Celebrations (Grade 2), Early Societies (Grade 4), Heritage and Identity (Grade 6), and Global Settlement Patterns (Grade 8).

Arts Curriculum Connections

The Ontario Arts Curriculum encourages students to experience the arts in their own lives, and to consider its role in the lives of people around the world throughout history:

Through study of the arts, students learn about some of the diverse artistic practices, both traditional and contemporary, of a variety of cultures. They learn that they are part of a living and changing culture. They also learn to appreciate the similarities and differences among the various forms of artistic expression of people around the world. The arts offer students unique opportunities to engage in imaginative and innovative thought and action and to develop the ability to communicate and represent their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in numerous ways. (p. 3)

Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts focuses on the students' awareness and understanding of how the various arts and art forms have developed in various times and

places; of the role of the different arts in students' own lives and in the local, national, and global communities; and of the social and economic factors that influence how the arts are perceived and valued. This component also encompasses the study of contemporary media and art forms. It is intended to help students understand that the arts are an important means of recording and expressing cultural history and identity and are also an essential aspect of living for all people. (p. 14)

The arts themselves can be regarded as “texts” or commentaries that reflect, record, celebrate, and pass on to future generations the personal and collective stories, values, innovations, and traditions that make us unique. (p. 4)

Through the arts, students are encouraged to participate actively and intuitively in meaningful cultural explorations. Using authentic music from around the globe in an engaging, interactive format, *In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta* supports the general aims and the specific expectations of the Ontario Arts Curriculum at every grade level.

Moreover, the project teaches students that we can use dance (facial expressions and movements) as a language to express emotions and tell stories. Students can identify the variety of roles played by the dancer. They can note the use of space and shapes, identify elements from their environment and nature depicted in the dance. It also familiarises the students with different dance forms, mainly Indian classical dance, contemporary dance and other folk dances (from Lebanon and Greece).

Social Studies Curriculum Connections

The Ontario Social Studies curriculum encourages students to develop their sense of identity in both local and global contexts, and to understand how people around the world have related to one another throughout history:

Students develop a sense of who they are by exploring their identity within the context of various local, national, and global communities in which they participate. Students develop their understanding of where they came from by studying past societies, analysing connections between the past and present, and exploring the contribution of past societies to Canadian heritage (p. 10).

In meeting this objective, teachers are urged to “select topics, resources, and examples that reflect the diversity in the classroom” (p. 16), and are encouraged to invite community partners into the school to “provide expertise, skills, materials, and programs that are not available through the school” (p. 17). Teachers are also encouraged to “find opportunities to bring [ELL] students’ languages into the classroom, using parents and community members as a resource” (p. 41).

In the Footsteps of Ibn Battuta supports the general aims of the Social Studies program at every grade level. Through the performance, students will be able to identify countries of personal or familial significance and locate them on a map. They will see the similarities and differences between communities in different parts of the world, some social organization, cultural practices through history, how they may differ from Canada today.



Activities

The general discussion questions and activities below can be modified for use at any grade level. Advanced discussion questions are also included, based on some of the more complex social and cultural issues raised in the curriculum documents. Some of the activities and questions refer to the *Maharaja* portion of the show, which you can read about in detail in the *Resources* section of this document.

Pre-show Questions

- What is an explorer? Can you name any famous explorers? Where did they go? What did they see?
- Have you ever travelled to another country? What was it like? Are there places you would like to explore some day?
- What would it be like to travel around the world on foot, without a phone or GPS?
- What kinds of music and dance do you experience with your family? Have you ever experienced music or dance from another part of the world? What did you think?
- Have you ever heard of Ibn Battuta? Why do you think he is less well-known than someone like Christopher Columbus?
- Who has heard the following musical instruments before: sitar, oud, lyra?
- Who has seen a dance performance before? What style of dance was it? What kind of movements do you remember?
- Do you take dance lessons? What style of dance?
- How can you tell stories through dance (hand gestures, facial expressions, costumes, etc.)?

Pre-show Activities

- Watch a documentary or read a book about Ibn Battuta's travels (see *Resources*).
- Compare different forms of travel literature (guidebooks, brochures, blogs, etc.).
- On a large classroom map, highlight students' countries of origin, places they have travelled, and/or places about which they are curious.
- Take a survey of languages spoken by students at the school.
- Watch or learn simple folk songs, stories, and/or dances from some of the places Battuta visited (see *Resources*).
- Make a list of world instruments students have seen or heard. Introduce instruments that will be featured in the show. How are they the same? How are they different?

What to watch and listen for during the performance:

- The dancer's facial expressions (happy, sad, proud, scared)
- The dancer's hand gestures. What do they represent?
- The costumes worn by the dancer (including jewellery, ankle bells)
- The movement changes when the music change (speed, mood)
- Identify the instruments being played and where they came from
- How the rhythm changes, how the melodies make you feel.

Post-show Questions

- Did anyone recognize any languages, songs, or places from their own experiences? Did anyone see or hear anything that was different from what they had experienced before?
- What was the most interesting part of the show for you? Why? What are you curious about? What did you not like? What inspired you? Do you have questions for the artists that you did not get to ask?
- Can you name the instruments used in the performance?
- Can you show a gesture, movement that you remember seeing? What does it mean?
- Can you name the countries visited by Ibn Battuta? Which one was your favourite and why?
- If we went on Battuta's journey today, what would we see? What might be the same? What might have changed?
- What does it mean to be an explorer today? Do you think there are still places that have not been discovered?
- How do music and dance help us to express and understand our cultures?
- Which part of the performance did you have trouble understanding?

Post-Show Activities

- **Social Studies:**
 - Add Battuta's travel destinations to the classroom map you created before the show. Where is there overlap with our own experiences? Are there places we wouldn't have considered without seeing the show?
 - Research the places on Battuta's route:
 - Each person/group describes the geographical characteristics of a different region
 - Compare Battuta's destinations with each other, and/or with a Canadian community
 - Investigate ways in which these regions have changed or stayed the same since Battuta's time
 - Investigate means of transportation in different regions and time periods
- **Language:**
 - Research the origins of English words that come from languages Battuta would have heard on his travels. For instance, the following terms are all derived from the Arabic language: adobe, alchemy, chemistry, alcohol, algebra, algorithm, assassin, average, benzene, boron, candy, coffee, cotton, henna

- **Creative Writing:**
 - Travel writing: Write your own brochure, guidebook, article, or blog about a place you have visited
 - Speculative fiction: Imagine you are an explorer setting out on an expedition to a new land. Describe your experiences.
 - Historical fiction: Write a story from the perspective of Battuta or one of the people he encountered.
 - Poetry: Write a collection of poems in the style of Iqbal or another Eastern poet (see *Resources*)
 - (Auto)Biography: Write the story of Battuta’s life from his or another person’s perspective
 - Write Battuta’s life story as a series of blog posts or journal entries
 - Write Battuta’s life story as it would appear on social media today (e.g. create a Facebook page with a profile, status updates, friends lists, photo albums, comments, etc.)
 - Create a living timeline or wax museum in which each person/group represents a different stage of Battuta’s life/journey
 - **Personal reflection:**
 - Reflect on the show or on selected passages from Battuta’s writings
- **Math:**
 - Calculate the distances traveled on Battuta’s journeys. How many footsteps would he have taken?
 - Research the contributions of Arab mathematicians and navigators in the Middle Ages (e.g. circumference of the earth, algebra, astronomy, etc.)
- **Fine Arts:**
 - Create an artistic representation of a traditional poem or song, using visual art, drama, dance, music, film, poetry, etc.
 - Create an artistic representation of the story of the Maharaja (see *History through the Arts: Exhibiting a Story through Music and Dance* in *Resources*)
 - Alternately, visit a related exhibit at a local museum (or select similar historical images from a print or online source), and create your own story based on what you see
 - Create a class art gallery or museum exhibit, and invite other students to come for a tour. Each student must be prepared to tell visitors about the significance of his/her artifact or performance. Discuss how the choices of the curator influence the message of the exhibit, and the response of the visitor.
 - Create an exhibit of Battuta’s travels, or of one of the ancient civilizations he visited (see *Resources* for further ideas)
 - Create an exhibit of today’s art/culture as it might be viewed 500 years from now in a museum

Post-show Questions (Advanced)

- What would it be like if we could not use words to communicate? Could art replace spoken/written language?
 - “In developing their understanding of the world, young children respond to gesture and movement before they react to the spoken word. They understand and explore the use of sound before they learn to speak. They draw pictures before they form letters. They dance and role-play stories before they learn to read.

- Gestures, movement, sound, and images are symbol systems for forms of thinking and communication that allow children, as students, to formulate ideas and express observations and understandings.” (Ontario Arts Curriculum, p. 54)
- Spend an hour or a day without words, and reflect on the experience.
 - How do art and culture influence one another? How does culture travel? Did the creation and transmission of the arts change as explorers like Ibn Battuta interacted with new people groups? Can you give examples? How has the transmission of culture changed in the information age?
 - “Knowing something about the context in which a work was created can shed valuable light on the meaning of signs and symbols used in the work. The arts not only reflect social reality but contribute to its creation; people shape and are shaped by cultural interactions and works.” (Ontario Arts Curriculum, p. 27)
 - Geneviève is a French-Canadian dancer who takes Indian Classical Dance and uses it to create her own unique style. How do you feel about this? Is an art form still authentic if it is performed by people from outside the originating culture? Should people have the freedom to modify traditional music and dance, or should the arts be preserved in their original forms? How do traditional art forms evolve into contemporary expressions?
 - “Emphasis should be placed on understanding that dance is continually evolving and that innovations develop alongside or out of traditional forms or practices.” (Ontario Arts Curriculum, p. 15)
 - What is the role of the arts in preserving history? What will today’s art forms tell future generations about our lives?
 - “The arts themselves can be regarded as “texts” or commentaries that reflect, record, celebrate, and pass on to future generations the personal and collective stories, values, innovations, and traditions that make us unique.” (Ontario Arts Curriculum, p. 4)
 - Is there a connection between art and character?
 - “Through interacting with various works of dance, drama, music, and visual arts, including multimedia art works, students deepen their awareness and appreciation of diverse perspectives. They can empathize with the characters in a dance work, a drama, a song, or a visual art work, and can imagine what it would be like to be in the same situation as these people. They can identify common values, both aesthetic and human, in various works of art, and in doing so, increase their understanding of others. The arts can also encourage students to be responsible and critically literate members of society and citizens of the world. (Ontario Arts Curriculum, p. 4)
 - What is the role of perspective in the transmission of history? What is the relationship between “exploration” and “conquest”? How might different groups of people remember the same events and interactions?
 - “The expectations encourage students to explore issues related to personal identity and community concerns as they interact with increasingly complex and/or challenging media. . . Exploration and communication of multiple perspectives and points of view should be emphasized. . . ‘Whose perspective is missing? Why do you think it has been left out? How do you feel about that? What words might you give to this voice?’” (Ontario Arts Curriculum, Grade 7)
 - Anwar and Geneviève composed and arranged much of the material for today’s show themselves. Read about their artistic process in the Additional Culminating Exercise below, and compare it to your own or that of other artists you have studied.



Resources

Museums and Galleries

- [Aga Khan Museum](#) (Toronto): extensive museum highlighting Islamic art and culture throughout history
 - [Educational programs](#) for children
 - [Exhibitions](#)
 - Store (includes many relevant books and resources for children)
- [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) (Toronto)
 - Archives contain a blog and some information about the 2010 [Maharaja exhibit](#) (including a picture of [A Woman Flying the Kite](#))

Books

- **Classroom Music and Dance Resources**
 - [Games Children Sing](#) series (Various authors: Alfred Publishing): authentic singing games from various countries, including India, Japan, Malaysia, and China
 - [The Singing Sack](#) (Helen East): authentic, interactive folk songs and stories from around the world
 - [Let's Go Zudie-O](#) (Helen MacGregor/Bobbie Gargrave: A & C Black, 2002): creative dance and music activities from around the world, including music from India and China
- **Historical Resources**
 - [The Travels of Ibn Battutah](#) (Tim Mackintosh-Smith, Pan MacMillan, 2003): an abridged, English translation of Battuta's *Rihla (Travels)*
 - [The Amazing Travels of Ibn Battuta](#) (Fatima Sharafeddine, Anansi, 2014): A children's story book about the life of Ibn Battuta
 - Many other biographies of Ibn Battuta are available for both children and adults

Educational Articles

- [Ibn Battuta: Muslim Travelling Judge](#): Khan Academy article about the life of Ibn Battuta
- [Ibn Battutah](#): Britannica Kids article about the life of Ibn Battuta (offered at three different reading levels)

Videos

- [The Man who Walked Across the World: The Adventures of Ibn Battuta](#): 3-Part BBC documentary travelogue of Battuta's travels presented by Tim Mackintosh Smith. These 60-minute episodes are intended for an adult audience, and contain *references not suitable for children*. However, teachers may wish to watch the series for background information, and select short clips to incorporate into lessons.
 - [Part 1: Wanderlust](#)

- [Part 2: Magicians and Mystics](#)
- [Part 3: Trade Winds](#)

Artist websites

- [Sitar Fusion](#): Anwar Khurshid's official website
- [Demetrios Petsalakis](#)
- [Geneviève Beaulieu](#)

Other Arts Resources

- [Moroccan Association of Ibn Battuta](#): Hosts festivals and offers other resources to promote awareness of Ibn Battuta
- Poetry resources
 - [Iqbal Poetry](#) (translated)



Additional Culminating Exercise:

History through the Arts:

Exhibiting a Story through Music and Dance

Introduction

For this culminating task, the class will work together to produce an exhibit similar to the one that inspired some of the music in the show. Students will recreate various elements of life in Imperial India through music, drama, visual arts, and/or dance. Grade 4 Arts, Social Studies, and Language curriculum links are included at the end of this document; however, this activity may be adapted for use at any age level.

The Story

During the show, Anwar and Geneviève use music and dance to share a simplified story from the life of the great Indian Sultan Mohammed bin Tughluq Shah:

Sultan Mohammad Shah liked to display power and wealth. He would have huge processions and parades. He would travel on an elephant. In this story, the Queen is part of the parade, but she has her face covered with a veil so no one can see her. The town crier showers money on people to get them to come out and greet the king. After the procession, the queen goes to her quarters and removes her fancy jewellery. She wishes she could be free like all of the other people in her kingdom. The Queen sees a girl flying a kite. The kite becomes a symbol of freedom and the queen dreams of flying in the open sky.

Here, Anwar and Geneviève share their artistic process in creating the music and choreography for the story:

In 2010, Geneviève Beaulieu and I were asked to create a music and dance piece for the Art Gallery of Ontario's exhibit, [Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts](#). This exhibition featured artifacts and artwork depicting the opulent lifestyles of India's great kings over the last three centuries.

The creative process started with the inspiration Geneviève and I received from soaking up the exhibit. We visited the exhibit before the opening and spent hours and hours looking at the relics, art, and historical content. The articles were displayed in five rooms, wherein a couple of films were shown of the Maharaja arriving on an elephant, followed by his Queen, the veiled Maharani. A town crier announced the arrival and showered people with coins. There was a section of the Maharani's rich garb and heavy, gold jewellery. One particular painting, [A Woman Flying the Kite](#), caught our attention. We discussed the exhibit together before composing the music and dance.

We composed a poetic and artistic narrative of a Maharaja visiting the town. The town crier announced his visit and enticed people by throwing coins at them. The time of day, mixed with the excitement of the crowd, required a certain sweetness in the notes, so I composed all five sections of the music in Raag Madhuvanti. Madhuvanti translates loosely to "honey-laden tune."

Anwar goes on to describe in detail the six sections of the Maharaja piece that he and Geneviève created to perform at the AGO exhibit. He offers social, cultural, and political insights that add further depth to his artistic expression. These complex themes, and their artistic context, offer rich opportunities for discussion in the upper grades. In the lower grades, teachers may simplify the story as they see fit:

The first piece, "The Gathering," shows an artistic offering of flower petals that starts with a circular movement around the stage (metaphorically, around the town). The music and dance both depict a certain exuberance and a gusto to inspire the people, and to give them a sense of pride in being the subjects of the great Maharaja. Ironically, the people being urged out of their homes were the very people who had been taxed to the bones by the very same Maharaja. The sad eventuality of the coin shower was the culmination of the money going back into the coffers of the King.

The second piece, "The "Maharaja Arrives," is meant to show the magnificence and power of the Maharaja on his elephant, metaphorically implying that anybody who comes in his way would get crushed. Many of his subjects had been physically, emotionally, and economically crushed in order for the Maharaja to gain power and attain his current status. We watched the video of a Maharaja in the display and matched the music and tempo. The piece is composed in Jhaptal (5+5 beats) and mimics the elephant's swaying body in its awkward gait.

The third section, "The Procession," depicts the king's wife, the Maharani, on her "palki" (a palanquin, or sedan). As was customary, women of nobility, whether they were Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, covered their faces, so the Queen remains veiled as she follows the King. This subservience of women is an awkwardness that we depict ironically both in the music and dance.

“Maharani at Night” conveys the Queen’s reflections after the proceedings, when she returns to her quarters at the end of the day. Tired after a needless display of opulence, she feels the weight and pressure of being a Queen. Her sumptuous clothes, her lavish quarters, and her jewellery of heavy gold are physical and metaphorical burdens. The confines of the rich palace become a gilded cage, and she feels suffocated by its loneliness. The piece makes a reference to the plight of women, and to women’s liberation. She takes off these garments and jewels sorrowfully.

“Quest for Freedom” is inspired by a simple tableau. Right across from the AGO’s glass display of the Maharani’s garb was a tiny miniature painting of a lady flying a kite. It was as if the Maharani was caged and was looking wistfully at the “little” woman -- a simple woman dressed in white, happy and carefree. The Maharani yearns for freedom and for the simple pleasures of life that come with it. That freedom is the very desire that Indians have felt for centuries. Our people have been attacked by Aryans, Greeks, Arabs, Persians and others. Indians often wonder why Alexander is considered “The Great.” Of course, how can we forget -- the British are our favourite conquerors of all time. That quest for freedom is a part of the Indian psyche. This piece shows the inner turmoil of the constant quest for freedom. The Maharani now becomes the symbol of her people looking at the happy woman flying the kite. The music carries undertones of hope that this freedom may be achieved. The movements are strong and assertive, suggesting that something is about to happen.

“Freedom,” the final piece, is about the Maharani’s people achieving liberty. In a symbolic ending, the Maharani flies off like a bird, signifying the spirit and soul surging high with the lightness of joy and liberty. The music uses the fast strumming patterns (jhaala) on sitar to achieve this effect.

Geneviève and I performed Maharaja at the AGO throughout the period of the exhibit, thus bringing to life the historic artifacts and the people who once handled them. We continue to perform this work in cultural and academic settings throughout the province.

The Task

Anwar’s music and Geneviève’ dance for *Maharaja* is available on [Youtube](#) for further listening and discussion. Students may re-enact the story through drama and dance, or they may create their own musical accompaniments using classroom instruments, vocal sounds, or electronic media. Each group may represent a different part of the story, or one group may tell the entire story, while the other groups express their learning in different forms. For instance, the visual arts may be incorporated by having students illustrate the story through drawing, painting, collage, or sculpture. The story may be told from a different character’s perspective, or it may be reimagined in another setting. The students may recreate the artifacts (garments, jewellery, coins) and artwork (paintings) from the original exhibit, and then combine the display with an oral presentation and live performance for a school or community audience.

Elements to Include:

- Characters:
 - King
 - Queen

- Town crier
- Townspeople
- Animals
- Woman with kite
- Settings:
 - Town square (Imperial India)
 - Palace (Imperial India)
- Events:
 - Scene 1: The Gathering
 - Scene 2: The Maharaja Arrives
 - Scene 3: The Procession
 - Scene 4: Maharani at Night
 - Scene 5: Quest for Freedom
 - Scene 6: Freedom
- Artifacts:
 - Coins
 - Garments
 - Jewellery
 - Artwork
 - Maps
 - Other items from the daily lives of the characters in the story
- Discussion of social issues:
 - Inequity based on class or gender
 - Definitions of freedom
 - Current and past political systems in India and elsewhere
 - Effects of colonialism

Grade 4 Curriculum Links:

Arts:

A1.2 use dance as a language to explore and communicate ideas derived from a variety of literature sources

A1.3 use narrative form to create short dance pieces on a variety of themes

A2.1 demonstrate an understanding of how the language of dance can clarify and highlight ideas, images, and characters from familiar stories

A3.1 describe, with teacher guidance, how forms and styles of dance reflect people's different social and political roles in various communities, times, and places

B1.1 engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on exploring drama structures, key ideas, and pivotal moments in their own stories and stories from diverse communities, times, and places

C3.2 demonstrate an awareness, through listening, of the characteristics of musical forms and traditions of diverse times, places, and communities

D1.2 demonstrate an understanding of composition, using selected principles of design to create narrative art works or art works on a theme or topic

D1.3 use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings

D3.1 describe how visual art forms and styles represent various messages and contexts in the past and present

D3.2 demonstrate an awareness of a variety of art forms, styles, and traditions, and describe how they reflect the diverse cultures, times, and places in which they were made

Social Studies:

A3: demonstrate an understanding of key aspects of a few early societies (3000 BCE–1500 CE), each from a different region and era and representing a different culture

A3.2 demonstrate the ability to extract information on daily life in early societies from visual evidence

A3.3 describe significant aspects of daily life in two or more early societies

A3.6 identify and describe some of the major scientific and technological developments in the ancient and medieval world

A3.7 describe how two or more early societies were governed

A3.8 describe the social organization of some different early societies

Language Arts:

1.8 identify the point of view presented in oral texts and ask questions about possible bias

2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form

2.7 use a variety of appropriate visual aids to support or enhance oral presentations

