

BALLET FOLCLÓRICO DO BRASIL - Phillipos Haile

Dance Workshops

ABOUT THE COMPANY:

This dynamic African Brazilian dance and music company relocated its South American roots to the United States in 1990. Powered by the vision of Artistic Director *Joselito "Amen" Santo*, the ensemble's program of dance, percussion and song involves audiences in an energetic celebration of Brazil's rich cultural heritage. **Ballet Folclórico do Brasil** introduces the public to the beauty and diversity of Latin America through explosive movements and sounds, including the meditative *candomble* dances, the energetic *congole*, the athletic *capoeira* and the rhythmic *maculele* stick dance. The company has been applauded for "serving as a bridge between ancient and contemporary dance," by juxtaposing the sacred and joyous, old and new. Of particular interest is the *capoeira*, a dance which began as a form of self-defense. *Capoeira* was brought to Brazil by the African people who were enslaved and shipped from the Congo and Angola to work in the Portuguese plantations. This aggressive dance form blends fluid floor movements with breathtaking acrobatics and is accompanied by the distinctive sounds of traditional instruments such as the *berimabu*, a stringed gourd, the *agogo* bell and the *atabaque* drum. Abolished by law until the 1950's, this unique African Brazilian art form has become the "dance craze of the 90's" and provides a fascinating example of the resilience of African culture in the Americas.

The company members work regularly as a group and as individuals in film and television, and have performed and taught their art form for educational institutions, museums, theaters and festivals. They have received funding support from state and local groups such as the California Arts Council and the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department.



ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Phillipos Haile was born and raised in South Los Angeles to parents who immigrated from Ethiopia. Living in Los Angeles exposed him to many different cultures, but his parents always reinforced awareness and pride in his African roots. Phillipos saw his first capoeira performance at an African cultural festival at age seven, but didn't know what he was seeing and unfortunately didn't get the chance to find out much later. At the age of eight, he began lessons in several different martial arts and had his first capoeira lesson in a physical education class at age eleven. At fifteen, Phillipos finally found a formal capoeira class and has been practicing the martial arts/dance form ever since. He tours with Ballet Folclórico do Brasil as a performer and teacher and also works at the Brazil Brazil Cultural Center where he is a head teacher in the youth program.

"As my time in capoeira increases I constantly find myself learning more and more. I feel that one can never stop learning and one can never know enough. However, the day a person feels they know it all is the day they stop learning. Whether I become a Master of capoeira one day or not, I know I will still always be a student, and that I can learn something from everyone."

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Workshops with Ballet Folclórico do Brasil are aimed toward increasing students' understanding, appreciation for and knowledge of the music and dance of diverse cultures, specifically the unique blending of African and Latin cultures that characterizes Brazil. As they learn the movements and rhythms to a specific dance, workshop participants will be able to explore the relationship between music and dance and see how the different dance steps and instruments work together, and how they reflect the traditions of the culture that created them. The students' physicality and creativity will be enhanced as they practice the movements of the *maculele*, the *troceno*, or the *Puxada de Rede*. Their musicality will be challenged as they learn about Brazilian instruments like the *berimbau*, the *atabaque* or the *agogo*. Students should be prepared to actively participate and listen carefully as a master teacher from Ballet Folclórico do Brasil shares their knowledge of this fascinating and creative culture.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Please encourage the students to dress appropriately – in clothes that allow them to move comfortably.
- Review students' ideas about dance, specifically folk dance, underscoring the idea that it is a universal social form of expression for many cultures of the world. Discuss the importance of dancing together with others. Where can they use this skill in their lives? What professions utilize the skills learned in a dance class (focus, working cooperatively with others, listening to directions, remembering sequences, etc.)?
- Look at a map and locate Brazil. How far away is it from Africa? How did the African people get to Brazil? Why did they go there?
- The people of Brazil are a fusion of three main groups: Portuguese, African and indigenous, or native people. The Bahia region of Brazil (also called Salvador) has a strong concentration of African cultural influence. Bahia was the first capitol city of Brazil. Look up Bahia and see what you can discover about its history and inhabitants.
- See what information you can find about the following dances: *candomble*, *capoeira*, *congole*, *maculele*.
- See what information you can find about the following Brazilian instruments: *berimbau*, *atabaque*, *agogo*, *pandeiro* and *apito*.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP:

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What were the most important ideas? What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What did they learn about dance? What did they learn about themselves?
- Practice the warm-ups, skills and creative explorations done in class so students can attain more comfort, ability and involvement in movement and dance.