

ExxonMobil

DISCOVERY SERIES



Afrique En Cirque with Cirque Kalabanté



THE
HOBBY
CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

2026-2027 Season 5th Grade Curriculum Guide

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About the Performance

Cirque Kalabanté

Kalabanté Productions was created by Yamoussa Bangoura, a multidisciplinary artist of Guinean origin. Yamoussa's dream was the founding of a school of circus arts and to direct his own multidisciplinary company specializing in the African arts. Yamoussa first became interested in the Circus Arts as a young man growing up in Conakry Guinea in the 1990s. He studied the circus performers he saw on European TV and practiced on the beach and dirt around his home. He also studied the Nyamakala tradition of circus, practiced by the Fula people of West Africa. He eventually joined Guinea's original circus company, Circus Baobab, with whom he toured Africa and Europe.

In the early 2000's, Yamoussa was recruited to come to Canada with Cirque Eloize, a Montreal based Canadian cirque company. While in Canada he also performed with Cirque du Soleil and Cavalia (cirque with horses). In 2007 Yamoussa realized his dream and opened his own company, Kalabanté Productions in Montreal, Canada. He recruited many of his family members to join the company, including his twin sisters, brothers, and cousins.

Show Teaser 



**SCAN
ME!**



Afrique en Cirque is a show by Yamoussa Bangoura, inspired by daily life in Guinea. This performance shares the beauty, youth, and artistry of African culture. A colorful show vibrating with high energy, it represents strength, agility, and life's joys of young Africans.

Students will see our acrobats execute gravity defying moves, breathtaking contortion, and brilliant dance choreographies, all while learning about the culture & traditions of Guinea, and hearing stories of resilience and overcoming hardships. Welcome to the universe of Kalabanté Productions and prepare for an unforgettable journey.



About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts opened to the public in 2002 in downtown Houston, at the edge of the city's renowned Theater District. The district is home to several major performing arts organizations, including Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, Performing Arts Houston, Theatre Under The Stars, DaCamera, and Alley Theatre. Located beside Tranquility Park and one block from Houston City Hall, the Hobby Center was named in honor of former Texas lieutenant governor and Houston businessman William P. Hobby Jr. after his family foundation made a significant contribution to the project. The Hobby Center was built on the site formerly occupied by the Houston Music Hall and Sam Houston Coliseum, both of which were demolished in 1998. Today, the Hobby Center includes three performance spaces designed specifically for theater, music, and live performance experiences:

- **Sarofim Hall** is a 2,650-seat proscenium theater designed to accommodate large-scale touring Broadway productions and major live performances. Resident companies include Theatre Under The Stars and Broadway Across America. The hall's design combines grandeur with theatrical elegance. Golden latticework frames the space, while multi-storied gold-leaf columns stand in contrast to deep midnight-blue walls. Overhead, the Joe and Lee Jamail Celestial Dome Ceiling features twinkling fiber-optic stars arranged to mirror the Texas night sky.
- **Zilkha Hall** is an intimate 500-seat "jewel-box" theater, a term used to describe smaller performance spaces designed with rich detail, warmth, and close audience connection. Home to many of Houston's local arts organizations, the hall features excellent acoustics, deep-rose tones, and walnut wood accents across two seating levels.
- **The Founders Club** is an intimate live music venue with cabaret-style seating. Guests may purchase tables of four or be seated with others, creating a social and relaxed atmosphere. The series features both local performers and nationally recognized artists in a format not commonly found in Houston. Concerts span a variety of genres, including Broadway songbook, jazz, and world music.

ExxonMobil DISCOVERY SERIES

The ExxonMobil Discovery Series is the Hobby Center's flagship education program, welcoming 5th grade students from across Houston to experience live performances by local and touring artists. Aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the series brings dance, music, and theater to life in ways that connect directly to what students are learning in the classroom. Every performance is free—including transportation—and includes curriculum materials and artist Q&As that deepen the experience.

For the 2026-27 school year, the Hobby Center is thrilled to be partnering with 22+ school districts to serve nearly 50,000 5th graders.

Special thanks to lead underwriter ExxonMobil and generous supporters: Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, Elkins Foundation, George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, The John M. O'Quinn Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, H-E-B, Vivian L. Smith Foundation, and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Theater Etiquette

Before you come to the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Please take some time to talk with your students about what to expect. Going to a live performance is a group experience unlike any other, and many students are more familiar with going to the movies or sporting events. Please help them prepare for what they'll see and how they should act. Other things to Keep in Mind: Make sure your students use the restroom before they leave school or at the theater before the show. If you get up during the performance, you may miss the best part! The performance runs approximately one hour long with no intermission. In entering or exiting the theater, safety is the primary concern. Please follow instructions from the house managers and ushers in taking your seats.

Going to a performance is different than going to a movie:

- This production is performed live. The performers can see, hear and react to the audience!
- Audience members can show the performers when they appreciate their performance! If something is funny, you can laugh! If the performers are doing a great job, then you can clap!
- Sometimes, the performers will ask you to participate by singing or clapping; please do not talk unless the performers ask you to!
- At the end of the show, the performers will bow. This is called a curtain call. If you really loved the show, you can give them a standing ovation to show that you appreciate their hard work!
- School clothes are appropriate, but some people like to dress up to go to the theater. Just make sure you are comfortable.

Going to a performance is the same as going to a movie:

- The lights dim before the performance begins and the theater stays dark during the show.
- Audience members are expected to stay quiet in their seats during the performance.
- Audience members may NOT take any pictures or video during the performance. (This is distracting to the performers and other audience members and this show contains copyrighted artistic material.)
- All cell phones and other electronic devices should be powered OFF or put on SILENT as soon as you enter the theater.

VISIT RESTROOM BEFORE - NOT DURING.

ARRIVE EARLY.

QUIET & SEATED DURING SHOW.

NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS DURING SHOW.

PHONES OFF/SILENCED.

RESPECT THE SPACE & OTHERS.

LISTEN & ENGAGE.

APPLAUD APPROPRIATELY.

Vocabulary

- **Acrobat** – A performer who uses strength, balance, flexibility, and coordination to perform difficult physical movements.
- **Agility** – The ability to move quickly, smoothly, and with control.
- **Audience** – The people who watch a live performance.
- **Balance** – Keeping the body steady and stable while standing or moving.
- **Choreography** – The planned movements and dance steps performed during a show.
- **Coordination** – Using different parts of the body together smoothly and effectively.
- **Culture** – The traditions, beliefs, arts, and ways of life shared by a group of people.
- **Ensemble** – A group of performers who work together to create a performance.
- **Force** – A push or pull that can change an object's motion.
- **Gravity** – The force that pulls objects toward the Earth.
- **Guinea** – A country in West Africa whose music, dance, and traditions inspired *Afrique en Cirque*.
- **Kora** – A traditional West African string instrument often played during celebrations and storytelling.
- **Momentum** – The motion an object or person has while moving.
- **Performance** – A live presentation of music, dance, theatre, or other artistic work for an audience.
- **Percussion** – Musical instruments that create sound by being struck, shaken, or scraped, such as drums.
- **Perseverance** – Continuing to work toward a goal even when something is difficult.
- **Resilience** – The ability to recover from challenges and keep moving forward.
- **Rhythm** – A repeated pattern of sounds or beats in music.
- **Stage** – The area where performers present a live performance.
- **Stage Manager** – The person who helps organize rehearsals and makes sure everything happens at the right time during a performance.
- **Strength** – The physical power needed to lift, support, or move the body.
- **Teamwork** – Working together with others to achieve a common goal.
- **Tempo** – The speed or pace of music.
- **Tradition** – A custom or celebration that is passed from one generation to the next.
- **Trust** – Believing that others will support you and do their part.

PRE-SHOW

DISCUSSION

Culture & Curiosity

- What can a live performance teach us about a place or culture that a textbook cannot?
- How do music, dance, and movement help people celebrate important moments in their communities?
- What clues might help you learn about another culture without anyone speaking?



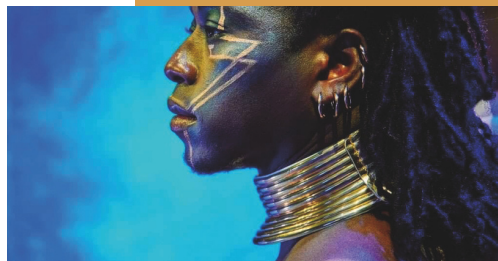
Teamwork & Perseverance

- Why is trust important when people work together to accomplish something challenging?
- Think of a time when practice helped you improve at something. What changed?
- What qualities do you think performers need besides strength or athletic ability?



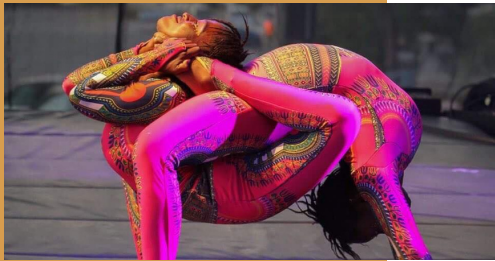
Watch Like a Scientist

- What examples of force, motion, balance, or gravity do you think you will observe during the performance?
- How might rhythm help performers stay together during difficult movements?
- What details will you watch for to help you understand the story being told?



PRE-SHOW

ACTIVITIES



Predict the Show

Based on the title *Afrique en Cirque* and what you know about Guinea, predict what you will see, hear, and experience during the performance. After the show, revisit your predictions!

Movement Without Words

Stories can be told without speaking. Working with a partner, use only facial expressions and movement to act out an emotion or idea such as courage, celebration, teamwork, or determination. Can your classmates identify the message?

Discover Guinea

Locate Guinea on a world map and learn how music, dance, and celebration are part of everyday life and cultural traditions. As you watch the performance, look for examples of how the artists share their culture through movement, rhythm, costumes, and live music.

Rhythm Challenge

Create a simple rhythm using claps, snaps, or classroom-safe objects. Practice repeating your pattern with a partner, then discuss how musicians and performers use rhythm and timing to stay together during a live performance.

Career Exploration

A live performance takes more than talented performers. Explore careers such as acrobat, musician, stage manager, lighting designer, costume designer, and sound engineer. Which career interests you most, and what skills would you need to be successful in that role?

PRE-SHOW

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

Worksheet - Discover Guinea: Culture in Motion

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 MAP THE CULTURE

Guinea is a coastal country in West Africa.
What can geography help us understand about a culture?



Capital: Conakry



Languages: Soussou, Malinké,
Peul & French



Atlantic coast

2 RHYTHM, DANCE & CELEBRATION

In Guinea, celebrations may include a special rhythm, dance, or song.
Match each tradition to its purpose.



Mendiani

•

• Honors hardworking farmers



Konkoba

•

• A celebration shared
by children



Yoliolio

•

• A dance traditionally
performed by girls



3 CULTURE DETECTIVE

Artists share culture through what we see, hear, and feel. Predict what you may notice in *Afrique en Cirque*.

I MAY SEE



I MAY HEAR



I MAY FEEL





WHY DO TRADITIONS MATTER?

How can music, dance, and stories keep a culture strong?

PRINTABLE ACTIVITY



Worksheet: Meet Yamoussa—From Dream to Stage

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 WHO IS YAMOUSSA?

Yamoussa Bangoura grew up in Conakry, Guinea, in West Africa. As a child, he discovered traditional dance and percussion. After watching circus performers on television, he practiced acrobatics with friends near the beach. His curiosity and hard work eventually took him from Guinea to stages around the world.



CONAKRY,
GUINEA



MUSIC &
DANCE



ACROBATICS

Underline one detail that surprises you. Why did you choose it?

2 PUT HIS STORY IN ORDER

Number the events from 1 to 4 using the biography above.

☐


He practiced acrobatics near the beach.

☐


He performed on stages around the world.

☐


He discovered traditional dance and percussion.

☐


He watched circus performers on television.

3 WHAT HELPED HIM GROW?

Circle three qualities Yamoussa may have needed to turn an interest into a career.

CURIOSITY

COURAGE

PRACTICE

DISCIPLINE

CREATIVITY

PERSEVERANCE

Choose one quality. How can it help you reach one of your own goals?

4 LOOK AHEAD TO THE SHOW



Based on what you just learned, what parts of Yamoussa's childhood or culture might inspire Afrique en Cirque?

☐ Music and rhythm

☐ Dance and movement

☐ Acrobatics

My prediction: _____

FIFTH GRADE

TEKS Alignment

ELAR & READING- §110.7

TEKS: 5.6(F), 5.7(G), 5.9(F)

Student Learning Connection:

Students interpret meaning through music, movement, expression, rhythm, and visual storytelling.

Science -§112.16

TEKS: 5.1(A), 5.5(A), 5.7(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students observe balance, momentum, gravity, body control, and how forces work together during acrobatic performance.

Mathematics - §111.7

TEKS: 5.4(H), 5.6(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students identify symmetry, geometric shapes, repeated movement patterns, timing, and spatial relationships throughout the performance.

Social Studies - §113.16

TEKS: 5.21(A), 5.24(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students explore how music, movement, traditions, and celebrations reflect the culture and daily life of Guinea.

Health - §116.17

TEKS: 5.1 (B), 5.3(A), 5.5(B)

Student Learning Connection:

Students recognize how teamwork, self-discipline, perseverance, and responsible decision-making contribute to personal growth and success.

Fine Arts -§117.119

TEKS: 5.2(A), 5.3(A)

Student Learning Connection:

Students experience how artists communicate ideas, emotions, and cultural traditions through live music, movement, and performance.

FIFTH GRADE

STAAR Alignment



RLA

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Reading Comprehension,
Vocabulary, Author's Craft,
Composition, Inquiry & Research*

Student Learning Connection

Analyze how music, movement, and visual storytelling communicate meaning without relying on dialogue. Make inferences, identify themes, and support ideas with evidence from the live performance.

Mathematics

STAAR Reporting Category:

*Geometry & Measurement,
Patterns and Algebraic
Relationships*

Student Learning Connection

Observe symmetry, geometric shapes, repeated movement patterns, timing, and spatial relationships throughout the performance. Apply mathematical reasoning to recognize patterns and precision in choreography and acrobatics.

Science

STAAR Reporting Category:

Force, Motion, and Energy

Student Learning Connection

Observe how performers use force, gravity, balance, momentum, and coordinated movement to complete acrobatic skills safely. Explain how these scientific concepts work together during a live performance.

FIFTH GRADE

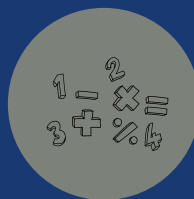
Curriculum Connections



English Language Arts

In The Classroom

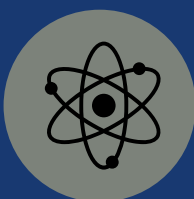
Explore how stories can be told through music, movement, and visual expression instead of dialogue. Students can make inferences, identify themes, analyze how performers communicate meaning, and support their ideas with evidence from the performance while practicing speaking, listening, and written response skills.



Mathematics

In The Classroom

Observe how performers use patterns, symmetry, geometry, timing, and spatial relationships during choreography and acrobatics. Students can identify repeated movement sequences, recognize geometric shapes, and discuss how mathematical precision contributes to a successful performance.



Science

In The Classroom

Investigate how force, motion, gravity, balance, and energy work together during acrobatic performance. Students can observe how the human body uses coordination and controlled movement to perform challenging skills safely while applying scientific concepts learned in the classroom.



Social Studies

In The Classroom

Discover the culture, traditions, and geography of Guinea through music, dance, and storytelling. Students can explore how artistic traditions reflect daily life, strengthen communities, and preserve cultural heritage while comparing celebrations and customs from around the world.



Health / SEL

In The Classroom

Reflect on how teamwork, perseverance, resilience, and self-discipline contribute to success both on and off the stage. Students can discuss how trust, communication, and responsible decision-making help individuals work together, overcome challenges, and achieve shared goals.

Discussion



Culture & Celebration

- What did you learn about the culture and traditions of Guinea through the performance?
- How did music, dance, and movement help celebrate everyday life?
- Why is it valuable to experience art from cultures around the world?

Teamwork & Perseverance

- How did the performers demonstrate trust and teamwork?
- What examples of perseverance or discipline did you notice during the performance?
- What lessons from the performers could help you in school, sports, or everyday life?



Movement & Storytelling



- How did the performers communicate ideas without using many words?
- Which movement or performance moment told the strongest story? Why?
- How did music, rhythm, and choreography work together to create meaning?

Wonder & Reflection

- What moment from the performance surprised or impressed you the most?
- What new idea, tradition, or skill did you learn?
- If you could ask one performer a question about the show, what would you ask?



POST-SHOW Activities

Reflective Writing

- **My Greatest Takeaway**

Write a journal entry about the moment that stood out most during *Afrique en Cirque*. Explain what you learned about Guinea, teamwork, resilience, or the performing arts, and why that moment was meaningful to you.



Movement & Performance

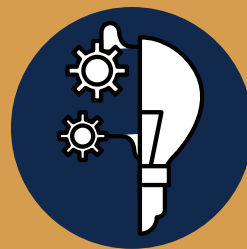
- **Tell a Story Through Movement**

Working with a partner or small group, create a short movement sequence that communicates a theme from the performance—such as celebration, courage, teamwork, or perseverance. Use only movement, facial expressions, and rhythm to tell your story without words.

Create Design

- **Design the Perfect Performance**

Create a poster or stage design for your own cultural performance. Include costumes, music, lighting, and movement that celebrate a tradition or community that is important to you. Explain how each design choice helps tell your story.



STEAM Challenge

Build a Strong Foundation

- Using classroom materials such as index cards, cups, blocks, or paper, build a structure that can support the greatest amount of weight. Compare your design to the human pyramids and balancing acts from the performance, and explain why a strong foundation is important.

Career Spotlight

- **Behind the Curtain**

A live performance depends on many careers beyond the performers. Research a career such as an acrobat, musician, stage manager, lighting designer, costume designer, or sound engineer. Describe the responsibilities of that job and explain how it contributed to the audience's experience during *Afrique en Cirque*.



POST-SHOW PRINTABLE ACTIVITY

YOUR JOB: MAKE THE SHOW HAPPEN

A Deeper Dive into Performing Arts Careers

Imagine you are joining the AFRIQUE EN CIRQUE team.
Choose a career, solve a backstage challenge, and plan your path.

Name: _____ Date: _____



1 CHOOSE YOUR ROLE

Choose the job that best matches your interests.

☐

ACROBAT
movement & physical skill

☐

MUSICIAN
rhythm & live sound

☐

STAGE MANAGER
organization & leadership

☐

LIGHTING DESIGNER
mood & visual focus

☐

COSTUME DESIGNER
clothing & character

☐

SOUND ENGINEER
audio & technology

I chose _____ because _____

2 SOLVE A BACKSTAGE CHALLENGE

Choose one challenge. Explain what your career professional would do.

☐

A costume piece tears five minutes before the show.

☐

A microphone stops working during a musical number.

☐

Two performers are not ready when it is time to enter.

My role in this situation: _____

My first action would be: _____

I would need help from: _____

Why teamwork matters here: _____

3 BUILD YOUR CAREER TOOLKIT

Select four skills your career requires. Add one of your own.

☐ CREATIVITY
 ☐ COMMUNICATION
 ☐ FOCUS
 ☐ TEAMWORK

☐ PROBLEM-SOLVING
 ☐ PRACTICE
 ☐ TECHNOLOGY
 ☐ TIME MANAGEMENT

☐ MY OWN: _____

SKILL	HOW IT HELPS	HOW I CAN PRACTICE IT

4 FROM SCHOOL TO STAGE

What school subject, club, hobby, or activity could help prepare you for this career?

What is one question you would ask a professional who does this job?

★ CAREER CONNECTION

One skill I already use that could help behind the scenes or onstage is:



YOU'RE THE ARTS CRITIC

Observe • Interpret • Evaluate

An arts critic does more than say, 'I liked it.' A strong review explains how artistic choices shaped the audience's experience.



Name: _____

Date: _____

1 ZOOM IN ON ONE MOMENT

Choose one moment from AFRIQUE EN CIRQUE that you remember clearly.

Sketch the moment or describe what happened.

This moment happened when _____.

It stood out because _____.

2 ANALYZE THE ARTISTS' CHOICES

Choose two artistic elements that shaped this moment.

☐ MOVEMENT

☐ MUSIC

☐ RHYTHM

☐ LIGHTING

☐ COSTUMES

☐ SPACING

ARTISTIC ELEMENT	SPECIFIC EVIDENCE I NOTICED	EFFECT ON THE AUDIENCE

★ ARTISTIC ELEMENT = a choice artists use to communicate an idea or create an effect.

3 MAKE A CLAIM

C CLAIM — What idea, feeling, or message did this moment communicate?

E EVIDENCE — What did you see or hear that supports your claim?

R REASONING — How does that evidence support your interpretation?

4 WRITE YOUR MINI REVIEW

Headline: _____

The performance was effective because _____.

One artistic choice that strengthened the show was _____.

I would recommend AFRIQUE EN CIRQUE to _____.

MY RATING



Circle or shade your rating.
Then make sure your review explains it.

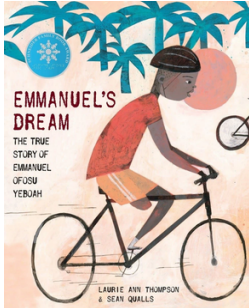


CRITIC'S CHALLENGE

Replace one general word such as *good*, *fun*, or *cool* with a precise arts word.

FIFTH GRADE RESOURCES

Books



"Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah" by Laurie Ann Thompson

Shares the true story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah, whose determination and advocacy helped change how people view disability, inspiring readers to persevere and make a difference.



"The Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music" by Margarita Engle

Tells the true story of a young girl who challenged traditions to pursue her love of drumming, showing how courage and determination can create opportunities for others.

Websites

Force and Motion for 5th Grade



Educational videos that help students explore forces, motion, and the ways objects move and interact in the world around them.

Link: [Force and Motion](#)

Introduction to the Kora Instrument



Introduces students to the kora, a traditional West African string instrument, and explores its unique sound, history, and cultural significance.

Link: [Kora Intro Video](#)

African Drumming for Students



Explores African drumming through rhythm, music, and cultural traditions from across the continent.

Link: [African Drumming](#)

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thehobbycenter.org/education

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**Let us know what you think.
Please take our survey!**



**[Post-Show
Student Survey](#)**



**[Post-Show
Teacher Survey](#)**