

# Study Guide

## NOBUNTU:

### *Africa Up Close*



# Show Description

---

In this interactive education concert, **Nobuntu** introduces students and teachers to the unique cultural qualities of Africa- the music, stories, traditions, and dances. Through performance and explanation, students are given an authentic and inside look at how important music and dance is to the African culture, how these art forms are passed from generation to generation, and the deep meaning found in these songs and dances.

The ensemble represents a new generation of young African women singers who celebrate and preserve their culture, beauty, and heritage through art. The ensemble's mission is the belief that music can be an important vehicle for change, one that transcends racial, tribal, religious, gender, and economic boundaries.



# Show Bios and Roles

---

Nobuntu, the female **a cappella quartet** from Zimbabwe, has drawn international acclaim for its inventive performances that range from traditional Zimbabwean songs to Afro Jazz to Gospel. The ensemble's concerts are performed with pure voices, augmented by minimalistic percussion, traditional instruments such as the **Mbira** (thumb piano) and the **Magavhu** (leg rattle), and organic, authentic dance movements.



Nobuntu was nominated for Best Musician of the Year at the Zimbabwe International Women Awards in London in 2015 and are currently a two-time winner for the Best Imbube Group at the Bulawayo Arts Awards 2017 and 2019. In the last few seasons, the quartet has performed at festivals and concert halls in Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic and throughout the African continent. The ensemble was a huge critical success at “Trans-Vocal” in Frankfurt and “Voice Mania” in Vienna. Their first tour to Canada, in 2016, included performances in Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria.

# Show Bios and Roles

---



The word **Nobuntu** is an African concept that values humbleness, love, unity and family from a woman’s perspective. The ensemble represents a new generation of young African women singers who celebrate and preserve their culture, beauty, and heritage through art. The ensemble’s mission is the belief that music can be an important vehicle for change, one that transcends racial, tribal, religious, gender, and economic boundaries.

Back at home, Nobuntu holds a number of community initiatives, one of which is The Nobuntu Pad Bank where they gather sanitary pads for young women in the arts in underprivileged communities.

Nobuntu has released three recordings – *Thina* in 2013, *Ekhaya* in 2016 and *Obabes beMbube* in 2018. The group has made dozens of television and radio appearances throughout Africa and Europe promoting these recordings and the culture of their homeland.

*Members of Nobuntu include Thandeka Moyo, Zanele Manhenga, Joyline Sibanda, and Duduzile Sibanda.*

# Additional Context



- The name "Nobuntu" mashes the prefix "no," which means "mother" in Ndebele with the word "**ubuntu**," which, though it does not have a direct English translation, is an umbrella term that encompasses kindness, respect, love, humility, and the goodness of humanity.
- **Mbube** is a bass-heavy a cappella genre that is typically dominated by male singers like the internationally famous Ladysmith Black Mambazo.
- The *mbira dzavadzimu* is the national instrument of the Shona people and is considered the "voice of the ancestors".
- When *mbira* is being played, it is almost always accompanied by **hosho**.
- When a large colonial movement swept through Zimbabwe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many native people were displaced from their sacred ancestral lands and the hearts of their culture. Music is a way many Zimbabwean natives keep connected with their cultures and traditions.
- Music has the power to influence how people behave. It can evoke certain moods, feelings, and states of mind in people. It is a universal language that can connect people to their past and spread messages.
- The lyrics of Zimbabwean musicians mostly contains encouragement of upholding good social values in the family and society as a whole, some lyrics are about love.
- The Republic of Zimbabwe is a country in Southeast Africa.
- Nobuntu is from the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe.

# Supplemental Activities

---

## Let's Write Uplifting Poems!

### Part 1

**Step 1:** Write a list of rhyming words, cut them out, and drop them in a hat or jar of some sort.

**Step 2:** Brainstorm uplifting themes\* with your class to be the focus of their poems.

*\*Examples can include: kindness, respect, love, humility, and the goodness of humanity (the meaning of Ubuntu) or others such as community, joy, peace, etc.*

**Step 2:** Have each student pick one word from the hat/jar.

**Step 3:** Instruct them to write short poems\* of four to eight lines utilizing the word.

*\*Poems can follow many rhyme schemes such as: AABB, ABAB, ABBA, or AAAABBBB.*

**Step 4:** When they're done, invite students to share their poems with the class.

### Part 2

**Step 1:** Break students into groups of 4.

**Step 2:** Give each group 2 words.

**Step 3:** Instruct each person in the group to write 2-4 lines of poetry including at least one of the group's word.

**Step 4:** When they're done, invite the groups to the front of the class to share their poems with the class.

For an extra bonus, teachers can play jazz, instrumental gospel, or even music by Nobuntu while students write. Once they're done, if students want to share their poems to the beat of the music, that could be fun.

# Vocabulary

---

**A Cappella** — music performed by a singer or a singing group without instrumental accompaniment

**Hosho** — dried gourds with seeds inside them typically played in pairs - one in each hand.

**Magavhu** — leg rattles tied to the ankles or the whole lower leg used during traditional music performances

**Mbira** — traditional Zimbabwean thumb piano.

**Mbube** — a bass-heavy a cappella genre that is typically dominated by male singers

**Nobuntu** — an African concept that values humbleness, love, unity, and family from a woman's perspective

**Quartet** — a group of 4 people playing music or singing together

## Pre and Post Show Discussion Questions

### Pre-Show Discussion Questions

1. What different moods and emotions do you experience as a result of music?
  2. Can you name any music artists that focus primarily on encouraging and loving messages?
  3. What are some examples of cultural music you've heard or experienced in this country?
- 

### Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. How did the music make you feel?
  - a. Were there any specific songs or moments that made you feel that way?
2. Nobuntu's music draws inspiration from the Jazz and Gospel music genres. Were there any moments where those genres' influence stood out to you?
3. Nobuntu is a minority group in their genre – meaning there aren't other women *Mbube* groups known on the global stage. What kind of experiences do you think they have as the only woman group of their kind? What are the pros and cons?

# School Day Matinees

---

***Hip Hop Nutcracker*** (all grades) - *waitlist*

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

***Doktor Kaboom: Under Pressure!*** (grades 3-8)

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

***The Collaboration Festival: A Celebration of the African Diaspora*** (grades K-8)

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Thursday, February 13, 2025

***Ballet Folklórico de México*** (grades 5-12)

Thursday, March 6, 2025

***Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!*** (grades PreK-2) - *waitlist*

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Friday, April 25, 2025

***360 All Stars*** (all grades) - *waitlist*

Wednesday, May 14, 2024

Thursday, May 15, 2024

***123 Andrés*** (grades PreK-2)

Friday, May 16, 2025

Scan for more information





# Professional Development Workshops

---

## Curriculum Connections for Visual Arts in the Early Childhood Classroom

Saturday, November 9, 2024—for Early Childhood Educators  
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

## Why Movement Matters

Saturday, December 14, 2024—for K-12 Educators  
ACT 48 Credit Available

## STEAM Stage: Math and Engineering through Performing Arts

Saturday, February 8, 2025—for Early Childhood - 2nd Grade Educators  
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

## Developing Authentic STEAM Experiences in the Classroom

Saturday, March 8, 2025—for K-12 Educators  
ACT 48 Credit Available

## Connecting to the Community

Saturday, April 12, 2025—for Early Childhood and K-12 Educators  
ACT 48 Credit Available

## Visual Arts and Social-Emotional Learning

Saturday, May 10, 2025—for Early Childhood and K-12 Educators  
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

Scan for more information

