

Kansas City Young Audiences

Teacher Program Guide

The Old West: Music Magic & Medicine with Professor Farquar

Artist: Sanford Lee

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Performance Description

Across rural America, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the 19th century was the medicine show—a unique combination of divertissement, demagoguery, and ho-kum. Although it is often perceived as a purely American phenomenon, the medicine show's roots can be traced back to medieval Europe.

Professor Farquar will take the audience to a simpler time in the Midwest—before television, radio, cell phones, iPods, automobiles and Nintendos were invented. Students will learn how people entertained themselves and each other and will hear some ballads and authentic regional tunes

of the times.

Professor Farquar recreates the atmosphere, personae, music, magic, and fun of an old-time medi-



cine show, amazing students with demonstrations of illusion, chicanery, and good old-fashioned flim-flam. Students and adults alike will delight in this slice of Americana.

Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Gain an appreciation for the folk music process
- Learn about the simple life-style of the 19th century and its diversions

Standards addressed:

- Understands the broadly defined areas of state and local historical events
- Identifies people, events, time, and place in classroom dramatizations

Special REQUIREMENTS:

Electrical outlet nearby; performance area clean and clear at least 45 minutes prior to performance time

Artist Bio: Sanford Lee

In 1966, while a college drama student in his hometown of Kansas City, Sanford Lee began his entertainment career. When he wasn't involved with a stage production at the newly-formed Missouri Repertory Theater, he was performing as a folk singer at nearby coffeehouses and pubs. Following graduation, Sandy ventured into television broadcasting, producing, and hosting a daily talk show in Columbia, MO for two seasons.

In the decade that followed, he performed at Tiffany's Attic Dinner Theater, toured the

country with a night club act, and appeared in dozens of television and radio commercials. In 1982, Sandy created the character of Simpkin the Foole for the Kansas City Renaissance Festival and became that event's public relations director. He also worked on promotional projects for Disney on Ice and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, but performing was his passion! So in 1987, he created a new persona for himself, Professor Farquar (a 19th-century mountebank). One of the best known variety acts on the circuit today,

Farquar performs more than 300 shows each year.



Sanford Lee

Vocabulary

Ballad: a song that tells a story about a person or event; often passed down from one generation to another orally

Lament: a poem or song that expresses grief or sorrow

Medicine Show: a traveling show at which ointments, pills, tonics, remedies, elixirs, and cure-alls are sold

Mountebank: a huckster who sells patent medicines to the public, appealing to his audi-

ence by means of tricks, stories, and jokes

Pennywhistle: a tin flute-like instrument from Ireland

Sarsaparilla: an early American-made elixir; made from tropical root (root beer) and whiskey; touted to cure all ills

Zany: a clownish assistant to a mountebank, who imitates his master in a ludicrously awkward way

Post-Performance Activities

1. Even though he was an outlaw, Jesse James is considered a "folk hero" in Missouri. He is famous all over the world. Discuss how this may have happened. Research and discuss other regional folk heroes—Buffalo Bill Cody, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Belle Starr, Carrie Nation, George Armstrong Custer. Did their accomplishments justify their elevated status? What contemporary figures might be viewed as folk heroes in the next century?
2. Write one or two new verses to the song "Old Blue", or write an original song about your own pet.
3. Discuss what contemporary songs (pop or country) might become folk songs by future generations (the kind of songs your grandchildren might sing around a campfire).
4. A good folk song has vivid lyrics and tells a good story. Have students prepare a dramatic reading of their favorite contemporary song. Let the class discuss the artistic merits of the lyric.
5. Medicine Shows are a thing of the past, but their influence is around us everyday. What replaced the medicine show? (Hint: they're on television and radio)
6. Learn more about life in the mid-1800s. Read Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series or Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

List of Resources

BOOKS

Lomax, Alan.
The Folk Songs of North America;
Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960

Carson, Gerald.
One For a Man, Two For a Horse (A Pictorial History, Grave and Comic of Patent Medicines);
Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960

Christopher, Milbourne.
Panorama of Magic;
Dover Publications, Inc., 1962