

# EDUCATIONAL NOTES FOR VALANGA KHOZA

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## Introduction

Valanga Khoza dedicates his show to the memory of Rholihlahla Nelson Mandela who dedicated his life to the struggle of equality amongst all people.

Valanga spent a lot of his life fighting for the freedom of indigenous South Africans. As a young student he protested and joined marches across the country, which led to Valanga's exile. He became a refugee in the camps of Swaziland and later, Mozambique. His activism continued with ANC underground, who provided his path to the USA and eventually Australia. Valanga has continued to educate students throughout Australia about the human side of refugees and their plight, using stories of humor and wit. Valanga and his wife Andrea are active in teaching students about the positives of diversity and inclusiveness in Australia.

Valanga and Andrea intend to continue to educate Australian audiences about the culture and music of South Africa through storytelling and music.

Who was Nelson Mandela?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgQBoXsrx8w>

See MEMEZA perform Rainbow Song, written about Nelson Mandela with a singer/songwriter from Canada

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvsxXE5Gv4I>

## Project aims

Teachers are encouraged to design activities that allow students to engage with:

- Understanding art's relationship to community building and self expression
- Evaluating key figures and events in South Africa's history, in particular Nelson Mandela, Apartheid, 1976 Soweto Uprising and to develop an understanding of the significant role of music and dance in the social context of South Africa's history
- Being an audience member at a performance of a South African artist, specializing in traditional and contemporary songs and stories
- Working with professional African artist and experiencing traditional African songs, rhythms, languages and cultural traditions in a workshop situation

- Exploring the geography of the South African region and discovering the significance of this region within Africa and the Globe
- Developing skills in choral singing, music appreciation, rhythmic complexity and performance
- Exploring themes of cultural diversity, cultural identity, community and to develop skills and behaviour necessary for inter-cultural dialogue

## South Africa

The Republic of South Africa is located at the southern tip of the African continent. South Africa was declared a **republic** in 1961, claiming independence from the British Commonwealth. **Nelson Mandela** became the first black president of the country in 1994, bringing an end to the violent struggle to abolish the ruling system known as **Apartheid**. He was a leader of great integrity, who brought extraordinary change to the country that became known as the **Rainbow Nation** during his leadership.

**Valanga Khoza** originates from one of South Africa's largest black communities in of Johannesburg, Alexandra. Alexandra is alive with a vibrant energy and rich in diverse cultures and political history. Alexandra was designed to segregate the black communities during the apartheid era, but the resilience and spirit of the people triumphed and brought them together, making it the home of South African freedom music.

## Kruger National Park

Kruger National Park was established in 1898 to protect the unique animals of South Africa. It is almost 2 million hectares in size and is home to a large diversity of animals. Some of the animals living in Kruger National Park include elephant, lion, buffalo, leopard, hippopotamus, zebra and black and white rhino. There are also many birds, fish and unique vegetation. Most of these animals are endemic to South Africa and their unique habitats cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Every year, tourists from around the world visit Kruger National Park to photograph and watch the animals.



Elephant family in Kruger

## Rondavel

Many people live in rondavels, the traditional houses found throughout South Africa. A family can live in several rondavels located close together with a fence surrounding them similar to the one in the photo.



Valanga and Andrea's homestead in Limpopo Province, South Africa

Rondavels are usually round in shape with a thatched roof and can be built in different sizes. Rondavels are made of locally found materials such as sand, soil, mud, straw, and sometimes dung to make the walls. Tree limbs and grasses are used to make the thatched roof. The rondavels in this picture have no power lines and no main water pipes. Some of the more modern rondavels have access to running water and electricity and/or amenities.

## South African Food

Porridge is the staple dish in South Africa and can be served in different ways at different times of the day. In the morning it is served as "soft porridge". Other ways of cooking porridge include "sour porridge" or "hard porridge" and it is served with different types of meat stew, vegetables or beans. South African porridge is made of maize flour and is eaten by hand.

## Rain Queen

The Rain Queen comes from a mountainous area of Limpopo called Modjadji. She is of the Lobedu people who are related to the Suthus. Only a woman can be a ruler of this Queendom. When the season is dry and there is not enough rain for the crops to flourish, the Rain Queen performs a ceremony which brings rain. She is very humble but very powerful. International leaders, like Queen Elizabeth, have paid her homage, visiting her traditional homestead.



Queen Modjadji

## Dances, Storytelling and Singing

### Gumboot

Gumboot dancing developed in the mines of South Africa. During the Apartheid regime, black South African men were forced to work in the mines. This was dangerous work. The mines were dark and the miners were made to wear chains around their ankles. When the mines flooded, it was cheaper to provide the workers

with knee high gumboots rather than draining the mines. All workers were given gumboots and this became their uniform. The miners were not permitted to talk to each other while working, so they developed a language of slapping their gumboots and shaking the chains around their ankles. This form of communication was energetic and rhythmic and allowed the miners to communicate and entertain themselves. In South Africa today, this rhythmic and energetic language has become a popular musical genre in everyday life.



Memeza performing Gumboot dance

## Tribal dances

The people of South Africa have their own languages, songs, dances and cultural traditions. Tribal dances are often performed at important events in the community such as a wedding, the birth of a child, when a war is won, or when a king takes over the kingdom. Dancers wear costumes specific to their tribe and they are made of animal skin, traditional cloth and beadwork.



Memeza performing traditional Zulu dance

## Pantsula

Pantsula was developed by the tsotsis or street people in South African townships. It was originally a distinct style of dance, fashion and lifestyle. The dance has grown in popularity among the youth culture and is no longer unique to the tsotsis. The Pantsula dance is performed to the beats of Kwaito music. The impressive footwork and high energy dance moves are played out with a competitive spirit. In South Africa, the streets set a theatrical backdrop for the Pantsula, expressing the joy, anguish and issues of the townships, in elaborately coded choreography.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT-TdQXYdU>

## Storytelling

Storytelling has always played a major role amongst all indigenous South Africans. Evenings in villages would be spent around fires with elders telling stories. These stories would be a way of imparting knowledge and information as well as ways of behaviour and respect within the community. Animals and humans interacted through talking and playing intrigue against each other. Children's eyes would be wide open as their minds were being transported by the storyteller. These evenings were always looked forward to with anticipation.

# Freedom Songs

Singing is an important part of everyday life in South Africa. During Mandela's time of imprisonment, many artists sang Freedom Songs dedicated to Mandela. This showed that people were in support of him and that he wasn't alone in this fight for freedom. Freedom Songs had an overall significant role in South Africa's liberation struggle – "the melodies, harmonies, chants and cries". Freedom Songs lifted and encouraged the spirits of those who fought Apartheid, and have been widely known and appreciated by the masses of oppressed Africans during their years fighting for freedom. Therefore, Freedom Songs played a vital role in helping to win South Africa's new democracy.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yrtK4K-GMg>

# The Instruments

## Congas

The congas originated in Africa but were later transported to Cuba and have become a prominent instrument in the Afro-Cuban music tradition. The congas are often played as a set of two or three drums. Each of the drums in the set is tuned to different pitches. The masterful drummer can produce a wide variety of sounds from the congas by using different parts of the hand to strike the drum and combining this with the different tones of the tuned drums.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvk9emKdy08>

## Djembe

The djembe originated in West Africa and has become a core instrument in many musical traditions across the African continent. The drum is goblet shaped, the membrane is traditionally made of goat skin and is played with the drummers hands. The drummer can produce a language of sounds by using different parts of the hand, fingers and palms. There are three basic tones that are produced by striking the skin's surface at different locations, starting at the rim and moving to the centre of the drum.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYY4WhdlS2c>

## Kalimba

The kalimba is an instrument made of long metal keys attached to a wooden soundboard. The metal keys are played with the musicians thumbs to produce a sound. The longer the metal key is, the deeper the pitch. The kalimba is often played inside a carved out gourd which acts as a resonator, amplifying the sound. There are many different versions of the kalimbas found through out Africa and are known by different names. Some of these names are the mbira, karimba, sansa, or the thumb piano.



## Guitar

Guitar has played an important role in South African music. Very few people could afford to buy a Western guitar. They therefore made their own by using oil tin containers and discarded wire. The guitar lines are very distinct especially in maskanta, mbaqanga and msakazo music. You can hear the guitar playing high intricate lines in the introduction and then weaving throughout the singing.



# Shijororo

The shijororo (jaw harp) is a travelling instrument due to its portability. As people travelled from place to place, their only form of transport was walking. They entertained themselves by playing as they walked long distances.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnMXzCGNPSo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnMXzCGNPSo)



## Suggested activities and discussion topics

- Create a PowerPoint presentation that explores an aspect of South Africa's history, geography or socio-economic fabric. Some suggested topics include the installation and abolition of Apartheid, the life of Nelson Mandela, the location of the Limpopo region and the cultural traditions of its people, and South African society in the 21st century.
- The following words are commonly used when describing African music. Find the meaning of the words or expressions and identify them in the performance.  
**Ululation, call and response, bell patterns, cross rhythms, Gospel music, traditional music, talking drums, melody, harmony, unison, rhythm, repetition, solo, accompaniment.**

- Compare the materials used to make rondavels with the materials used to make your home. List ways in which the houses differ. What is an 'eco house'? Compare the materials used in an 'eco house' with the rondavels in South Africa. Research **alternative power**, and its popularity in Australia.

- Try making porridge with maize flour

## **Breakfast porridge (maize meal porridge)**

Breakfast porridge is a smooth maize meal porridge served with milk, usually with a little sugar or even butter.

### **Ingredients**

- 3/4 to 1 cup maize meal
- 1 cup of cold water
- 3 cups boiling water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon butter

### **Method**

1. Boil water and salt in a pot with a lid.
2. Mix maize meal with cold water.
3. Stir into the boiling water.
4. Simmer for at least 30 minutes with the lid on.
5. Add a dollop of butter.
6. Serve with milk and sugar or honey.

**Tip:** soak the maize meal and cold water overnight to reduce cooking time.

## **Further resources:**

### **DVD**

#### **Amandla- A revolution in four part harmony**

directed by Lee Hirsh

A documentary depicting the role of music during the fight against Apartheid