



Lesson Plan:
Design Your Performance

Grade Level
5-8

Objective

Understand the role of aesthetics and style in the performing arts.

National Standards for Arts Education

Content Standards: Music

- Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances
- Standard 8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Content Standards: Visual Arts

- Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Time

Two class sessions, and individual time out of class

Background

Over the course of a career that spanned six decades and took her from humble beginnings in Havana, Cuba, to acclaim as a world-renowned artist, **Celia Cruz** became the undisputed Queen of Latin Music. Combining a piercing and powerful voice with a larger-than-life personality and stage costumes, she was one of the few women to succeed in the male-dominated world of *salsa* music.

Celia Cruz was a dynamic performer who invigorated her audiences with her signature voice. The way she looked on stage was part of the performance—she selected her dresses, shoes, and wigs carefully to project an image.

Materials

- *¡Azúcar! The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* exhibition website, americanhistory.si.edu/celiacruz
- Images of **Celia Cruz** performing (attached)
- Music clips from the website or from CDs
- Assortment of different types and colors of paper and fabric swatches

Lesson

Warm-up

If possible, prepare students by taking them to a theatrical or music performance or show videotapes of performances of other artists. Discuss what makes a successful performance. Does it have to do only with what the performer is singing, or also with what the performer is wearing, and with body movements and facial gestures, and the mood created through the performance?

Explain that **Celia Cruz's** performances are an example of how multiple elements (music, costume, staging, dance movements) come together to create a dynamic experience for the audience. Have students look at images of her performing. What kind of clothing is she wearing? Is it plain or brightly colored? Is it shiny or dull? Does it look like it moves? What kind of shoes is she wearing? What does her hair look like?

Student Activity

Have students think about designing their own performance. If they were singers or musicians, what kind of music would they perform? What image would they want to portray? What kind of clothing and shoes would they wear? Why? What would the stage look like? What kind of mood would they want to set with the audience? Have students write a one-page description of their performance, including all the elements mentioned here.

Using their written descriptions and available craft materials such as an assortment of papers and/or fabric swatches, students should create a set and costume design for their performance, including clothes, shoes, hairstyle, staging, etc. They can start with a blank piece of paper, and draw or collage their designs. When they are finished, have students share their designs with each other in small groups.



Courtesy of Omer Pardillo-Cid

Celia Cruz performing in Havana, Cuba in the 1950s.



Photo by Bernardo Tapia, courtesy of Omer Pardillo-Cid

Celia Cruz performing at Madison Square Garden, New York.