



Mufaro's  
**Beautiful**  
Daughters  
An African Tale

For Educators & Families

**STUDY  
GUIDE**

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# Dear Educators & Parents,

**Black History Month** is a time to solemnly remember those who have fought against inequality and inequity, but **it's also a time to celebrate the spirit and communal strength of the African diaspora.** In presenting *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, a **Zimbabwe-inspired folktale** about kindness and community, SteppingStone Theatre hopes to expand the notion of what stories should be told *by* and *for* people of color.

*"It's a celebration of the best part of the African Experience that doesn't involve historical trauma that we have to relive."* For the director, **Ansa Akyea** (*Ghost of Christmas Past*, *Guthrie's A Christmas Carol*), SteppingStone's latest show isn't your typical fare. A lush adaptation of the **Caldecott Award-Winning book** filled with **brand-new music**, and **jubilant choreography**, Ansa believes *"it stands on its own as a celebration of our best selves."*

## **Big Ideas explored in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*:**

**The Nature of True Beauty**  
**Loving Families Still Fight**  
**The Power of Community**  
**Not everyone is "Good" or "Evil"**

We hope this study guide provides opportunities for inquiry & conversation with the young people you bring to the theatre, and that this guide highlights connections between the play & your curricula. It is our hope that you will use the experience of attending the theatre with your students, and seeing *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, as a teaching tool to further learning. Please feel free to adapt or extend discussion topics and activity suggestions.

***Enjoy the show!***

**The SteppingStone Team**  
SteppingStoneTheatre.org  
651-225-9265

# PRODUCTION SYNOPSIS

The Great King is seeking a Queen worthy of the realm. Mufaro, a respected man from a far away village, journeys to the royal city with his two daughters, certain that one of them will be chosen. Manyara is confident, self-centered, and imaginative, while her younger sister Nyasha is timid, soft-spoken, and kind. Will either sister prove worthy?

Discover that beauty is not the measure of greatness and celebrate Black History Month with SteppingStone's joyous re-imagining of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*.

***Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*** is recommended for ages 5+

**Run Time:** 60 minutes with no intermission

## Welcome to SST

**Where is SteppingStone?** All SteppingStone performances will be presented at our theatre: 55 Victoria St. North, Saint Paul, MN 55104 This is two blocks north of Summit Ave at Holly (just north of Mitchell Hamline College of Law).

**When should we arrive?** Please allow plenty of time to unload your buses or vans, and park. We recommend that you arrive at the theatre 30-minutes before show time.

**Where do we park?** Bus drivers may park and stay with their bus along Concordia (frontage road south of I-94). Busses may not park in front of the building, block the alley, or park along Portland headed westbound, as this is a fire lane. Paid parking for cars and vans is available at the Victoria Crossing Ramp (corner of Victoria and Grand Ave.) There are two handicap accessible parking spaces in our employee lot near the north entrance. Additional unmetered parking is available along the streets surrounding the theatre. Please respect posted parking restrictions.

**Seating for people with special needs:** If you have accessible seating requirements and did not indicate your need when you ordered your tickets, please call our Box Office Manager at (651) 225-9265. Our knowledge of your needs will enable us to serve you better upon your arrival to the theater.

### **SteppingStone Policies**

- The use of recording equipment and cameras are not permitted during the performance.
- Food, drink, candy and gum are not permitted in the theatre.
- Should anyone become ill, suffer an injury, or have an urgent concern, please escort them out of the theater and report to the Box Office attendants.

**How can I prepare for my visit to the theatre?** Discuss audience behavior expectations with students before you attend the performance. Use this study guide to prepare content-specific questions. At a performance, audience members are active participants. Their quiet attention, applause and laughter (both appropriate and inappropriate) are all heard by the young actors on stage and affects the performance in good or bad ways. The best way to show that you're enjoying the show is to listen attentively, laugh when something is funny and clap loudly following a scene or song you enjoyed!

# CONVERSATION STARTERS

## ...On the ride there

- 1.) Not every community is a literal village like the one in our play. It can be a sports-team, a classroom, a club, or anywhere you feel safe and supported. What communities do you belong to? What is it about them that makes you feel included?
- 2.) Have you ever had felt jealous of a sibling or friend? What made you feel that way? How did you handle your feelings or the situation?
- 3.) *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is a story inspired by a folktale from Zimbabwe, a country in Africa. Do you know of any other folktales or stories from the African Continent? Most people don't. Why do you think that is? Where do you think you could learn more about African folktales?

## On the ride home...

- 1.) Mufaro believes that both of his daughters are worthy of marrying the Prince. What kind of Queen do you think Manyara would have been? What about Nyasha?
- 2.) Nyasha went through many tests before she proved herself worthy of becoming Queen. What moments do you think challenged her? If you had been tested, how would you have responded?
- 3.) Nyasha was selected by the Prince because of her kindness. What did her kindness look like? Do you think it was always easy for her to be kind? In what ways, big or small, do you show kindness?
- 4.) *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* has a lot in common with another popular folktale, *Cinderella*. How are the two stories similar? How are they different?

## Want more?!

Did you know SST can ignite theatre learning inside your classroom? Contact us to book a theatre arts residency on empathy-building, cultural competency, or arts integration with your curriculum.

[SteppingStoneTheatre.org](http://SteppingStoneTheatre.org) | 651.225.9265

# A STRANGE MACHINE

(30-minute **pre-show** activity for Grades K-12)

Much of the movement and choreography in the play was devised, or created, by the actors with the aid of a Choreographer. This was done by taking a simple rhythm and layering in new elements to create a more interesting moment of Storytelling.

## **YOUR CHALLENGE:**

*Together with you friends, use these same ideas, outlined above, to create a "machine" of your own invention. Be sure your machine includes movement & sound!*

Everyone stand in a circle. To start, have one person walk into the middle of the circle. This person begins by creating a repetitive movement and sound of their choosing. For example, they may lift their arms up and down, saying "Ding". Be sure to make the movement simple; each person should strive to keep a consistent rhythmic sound & motion.

One at a time, additional people should walk into the circle and "add to" the machine. All participants should be connected in some way (e.g. linked arms or touching feet) and creating their own unique movement & sound. The sound, motion, and connection may compliment or contrast the other "machine parts".

Once you get the hang of it, add additional challenges. "Can you all speed up together?", "Can you slow down?", "What happens if the machine gets sick?", "What does this machine do?"

# THE KING'S KINDNESS CHALLENGE

(Long-term **post-show** activity for Grades K-5)

Nyasha was selected by the King because of her powerful and inspiring kindness. Nyasha's kindness and generosity is demonstrated in small and big ways throughout the play, from allowing the Nyoka (snake) to stay in her garden, to giving away all of her food on her journey into the forest.

## **YOUR CHALLENGE:**

*Impress the King! Make a checklist of kind actions you can do that you believe will impress the King. Start by thinking small, then make your ideas bigger & bigger!*

**"How can I..."** Be kind to myself? Be kind to a friend? Be kind to my family? Be kind in my community?

Make sure you or an adult write-down the acts of kindness you intend to do. *Now, go out and do them!* Give yourself a timeline - can you perform your acts of kindness this week? This month? This year? Be sure to keep track of your progress and check each act of kindness off your list as you complete it.

After each act of kindness, stop to reflect. Write about how it made you feel or draw a picture of your kind action.

**BONUS CHALLENGE:** Use your experiences and reflections to create your own story or play about kindness. What are the character's names? Where do they live? Did they impress the King? How did the characters feel about their deeds?

# ACTIVITIES

Celebrating  
Community &  
Generosity