

**Alliance
Theatre**

Education

STUDY GUIDE: BASURA

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BASURA

A NEW MUSICAL

Music & Lyrics by

Book by

Directed by

Choreography by

Music Supervision, Orchestrations,

and Arrangements by

Music Direction by

Dramaturgy by

GLORIA ESTEFAN AND EMILY ESTEFAN

KAREN ZACARÍAS

MICHAEL GREIF

PATRICIA DELGADO

ALEX LACAMOIRE

CYNTHIA MENG

KEN CERNIGLIA

May 30 - July 12, 2026
ALLIANCE THEATRE COCA-COLA STAGE

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Pictured: Zack Calderon, Kevin Del Aguila, Dario Alvarez, Jaci Calderon, Michelle Zink-Muñoz, Nathan Diaz, and Isabel Gonzalez

Standards

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

CONTENT AREA	GEORGIA	NEW YORK
Theatre	TA4.CN.1.a Connect theatre experiences to life experiences and other content areas.	TH: Cn10.1.4.a Identify the ways drama or theater work reflects a community or culture.
Music	ESGM4.CN.2.a Perform and respond to music from various historical periods and cultures.	MU:Re7.1.4.a Demonstrate and describe how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.
World Languages (Spanish)	MLE4.CU1 Students demonstrate an awareness of perspectives, practices, and products of the cultures where the target language is spoken.	Standard 4 - Relating Cultural Practices and Products to Perspectives: Learners use the target language to identify, describe, and explain the practices and products of the cultures studied, as well as the cultural perspectives they suggest.
English Language Arts	4.P.EICC.3.d Summarize and visualize sections of the text to maintain understanding.	4R2: Determine a theme or central idea of text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize a text.
Social Studies	SSIPS5 Identify main idea, detail, sequence of events, and cause and effect in a social studies context.	3.4 Each community or culture has a unique history, including heroic figures, traditions, and holidays. 3.4b Arts, music, dance, and literature develop through a community's history.
Science	S3L2.b Explore, research, and communicate solutions, such as conservation of resources and recycling of materials, to protect plants and animals.	3-5-ETS1-1 Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that includes specified criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.
Health	HE4.1.h Describe ways to promote a safe and health community environment.	Standard 2 - A Safe and Healthy Environment: Acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment.

NOTE: BEST ENJOYED BY AUDIENCES AGE 8+

Contains minor explicit language; briefly illustrates drinking alcohol; addresses themes related to sex, poverty, death, grief, gang violence, drug use, crime, and incarceration

Standards

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CONTENT AREA	GEORGIA	NEW YORK
Theatre	TA7.CN.1.a Compare and contrast theatre with other art forms.	TH:Cn11.2.6.a. Analyze two different versions of a drama or theater work to determine differences and similarities
Music	MSGM7.RE.1.e. Recognize characteristics of musical elements in music which represent diverse genres and cultures (e.g. special instruments, call-and-response, uses of music).	MU:Re7.2.6.b. Identify the context of music from a variety of genres, cultures, and historical periods.
World Languages (Spanish)	MLC.CU1 Develop an awareness of perspectives, practices, and products of the cultures where the target language is spoken.	Modern Language Standard 5: Use the target language to compare the products and practices of the cultures studied and their own.
English Language Arts	7.P.EICC.3.d Summarize and visualize sections of the text to maintain understanding.	7R3: In literary texts, analyze how elements of plot are related, affect one another, and contribute to meaning.
Social Studies	L6-8RHSS6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).	Standard 2 – World History (Intermediate): Know the social and economic characteristics, such as customs, traditions, child-rearing practices, ways of making a living, education and socialization practices, gender roles, foods, and religious and spiritual beliefs that distinguish different cultures and civilizations
Science	S7L4.c Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence for how resource availability, disease, climate, and human activity affect individual organisms, populations, communities, and ecosystems.	MS-LS2-1. Analyze and interpret data to provide evidence for the effects of resource availability on organisms and populations of organisms in an ecosystem.
Health	HE7.1.d Analyze how the environment can impact personal health.	Standard 2 – A Safe and Healthy Environment (Intermediate): Understand the need for personal involvement in improving the environment.

Standards

HIGH SCHOOL

CONTENT AREA	GEORGIA	NEW YORK
Musical Theatre	TAHSMT.CN.2.b. Examine the role and influence of musical theatre in various historical and contemporary cultures.	TH:Cn10.1.HSI.a. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas and personal beliefs affect a drama or theater work.
Orchestra	HSBO.RE.1.d. Listen to and/or watch professional ensembles and discuss critical expressive elements of their performances.	MU:Cn11.1.E.HSI.b. Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas, and individual beliefs affect a musical work.
World Languages (Spanish)	MLC.CU1 Develop an awareness of perspectives, practices, and products of the cultures where the target language is spoken.	Modern Language Standard 5: Use the target language to compare the products and practices of the cultures studied and their own.
English (Multicultural Literature & Composition)	11.P.EICC.3.d Summarize and visualize sections of the text to maintain understanding.	9-10R3: In literary texts, analyze how complex and/or dynamic characters develop, interact with other characters, advance the plot, or develop a theme.
Sociology	SSSocIC1.d. Evaluate the impact of global stratification and inequality on global relations.	Standard 2 – World History (Commencement): Investigate the various components of cultures and civilizations including social customs, norms, values, and traditions; political systems; economic systems; religions and spiritual beliefs; and socialization or educational practices
Science	SES5.e Construct an explanation that describes the conditions that generate extreme weather events (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes, and thunderstorms) and the hazards associated with these events.	HS-ESS3-1. Construct an explanation based on evidence for how the availability of natural resources, occurrence of natural hazards, and changes in climate have influenced human activity.
Health	HEHS.1.c Analyze how the environment and personal health are interrelated.	Standard 2 – A Safe and Healthy Environment (Commencement): Recognize hazardous conditions in the home, school, work place, and community and propose solutions to eliminate or reduce them

Synopsis

Basura: A NEW MUSICAL



*Pictured: Emily and Gloria Estefan
(Music & Lyrics)*

The inspiring true story of finding music in unlikely places. Eleven-time Grammy Award® winner GLORIA ESTEFAN — whose music has sold over 100 million records worldwide — has shaped generations through song. Now, she joins her daughter and acclaimed singer-songwriter Grammy Award® nominee EMILY ESTEFAN, to co-write the music and lyrics for *Basura*, A POWERFUL AND BOLD NEW MUSICAL INSPIRED BY THE TRUE STORY OF PARAGUAY’S RECYCLED ORCHESTRA, where young artists turn scrap material into instruments and music into possibilities. This world premiere musical continues Estefan’s global legacy — proving that music can rise from anywhere and change everything.

Based on the award-winning documentary film “LANDFILL HARMONIC,” the new musical carries the sound of Paraguay’s Recycled Orchestra farther than anyone could have ever imagined. *Basura* is AN UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEY OF RHYTHM, RESILIENCE, AND HOPE — a radiant, heart-swelling reminder that even in the most unlikely places, you can build something beautiful.

BASURA is directed by the Broadway stage visionary MICHAEL GREIF (*Rent*, *Dear Evan Hansen*), written by National Latino Playwriting Award-winner KAREN ZACARÍAS (*Native Gardens*, *Destiny of Desire*). Grammy Award® and Tony Award® winner ALEX LACAMOIRE (*Hamilton*, *In the Heights*) is the musical supervisor, orchestrator, and arranger. Tony Award® winner PATRICIA DELGADO (*Buena Vista Social Club*) is the choreographer and KEN CERNIGLIA (*Hadestown*, *Newsies*) is the dramaturg.



Pictured: Karen Zacarias (Book)

Setting

Time and Place

Basura is set in “Cateura [kah-TEH-oo-rah] – a riverside community in the shadow of a landfill on the outskirts of Asunción, the capital of Paraguay – circa 2010.”



Cateura is a small riverside community located on the outskirts of Asunción, Paraguay’s capital city. The area is built around one of the country’s largest landfills, and houses nearly 40,000 families. Established in 1984, the landfill became both a workplace and home for many families living in poverty. Residents known as *gancheros* sort through the garbage to collect recyclable materials such as plastic, metal, and cardboard to sell for income. Because of the proximity to the Paraguay River, constant flooding and pollution have created serious health and environmental challenges for the community. Despite these challenges – the community is recognized for its creativity, resilience, and strong sense of hope.

Asunción is Paraguay’s capital and largest city. Founded in 1537, it is one of the oldest cities in South America. Asunción is located alongside the eastern bank of Paraguay river and contains government buildings, universities, businesses, flowering parks, historic colonial architecture as well as modern skyscrapers. According to the 2022 Paraguayan Census, Asunción has 462,241 inhabitants, while its metropolitan area (known as Greater Asunción) exceeds 2.3 million inhabitants, making it the most densely populated area in Paraguay, and also the most productive as it concentrates 70% of the National GDP.



Distance Between Cateura and Asunción

Cateura is located just south of central Asunción, roughly 7–10 miles (11–16 km) away. Although geographically close, the two places present very different living conditions and environments.

What Was Happening in 2010?

In 2010, Paraguay was recovering economically after a recession in 2009. The country experienced strong growth driven largely by agriculture, especially soybean exports. At the same time, many communities continued to struggle with poverty and inequality, especially in areas surrounding Asunción such as Cateura.

Activity: Scenic Design

The Classroom (Page 1 of 2)

Objective: In the role of a collaborative scenic design team, students will carefully examine an excerpt from *Basura* to gather clues about one significant scenic location (the classroom) and create a visual concept for the stage.

Essential Question: What should the classroom look and feel like on stage?

Script Excerpt:

Scene One – CLASSROOM – morning

(A small, weathered classroom in a community center. It's neat but not clean. The floor shows evidence of how the elements invade every inch of Cateura, even indoors. A cracked window lets in a little air, not enough. Nambi's best friends – BLANCA, a tough cookie, and SOFÍA, a boy-crazy people pleaser – enter and check out wobbly plastic and metal chairs, making sure they're sturdy. They aren't. Kids in Cateura have to be resilient and non-precious like that.)

BLANCA

What's your problem? I'm here, aren't I?

SOFÍA

Tranquila, this is for your own good.

BLANCA

Oh Sofia, like you're not looking for any excuse to get away from those crying babies.

SOFÍA

There's gotta be more for me than washing my nieces' fifty diapers every day—

BLANCA

Dream on, *chiquita*.

Script Clues:

EVIDENCE FROM THE SCRIPT (WORD OR PHRASE)	INTERPRETATION (HOW WILL YOU ILLUSTRATE THIS?)
1.	
2.	
3.	

Activity: Scenic Design

The Classroom (Page 2 of 2)

Scene Design Team

Group Member Names:

Mood & Atmosphere

Circle any words that describe the FEELING of this setting.

HOPEFUL CROWDED CREATIVE NOISY JOYFUL WORN-DOWN
COLORFUL DANGEROUS BUSY PEACEFUL CHAOTIC INSPIRING

List additional ideas: _____, _____, and _____.

Rendering:

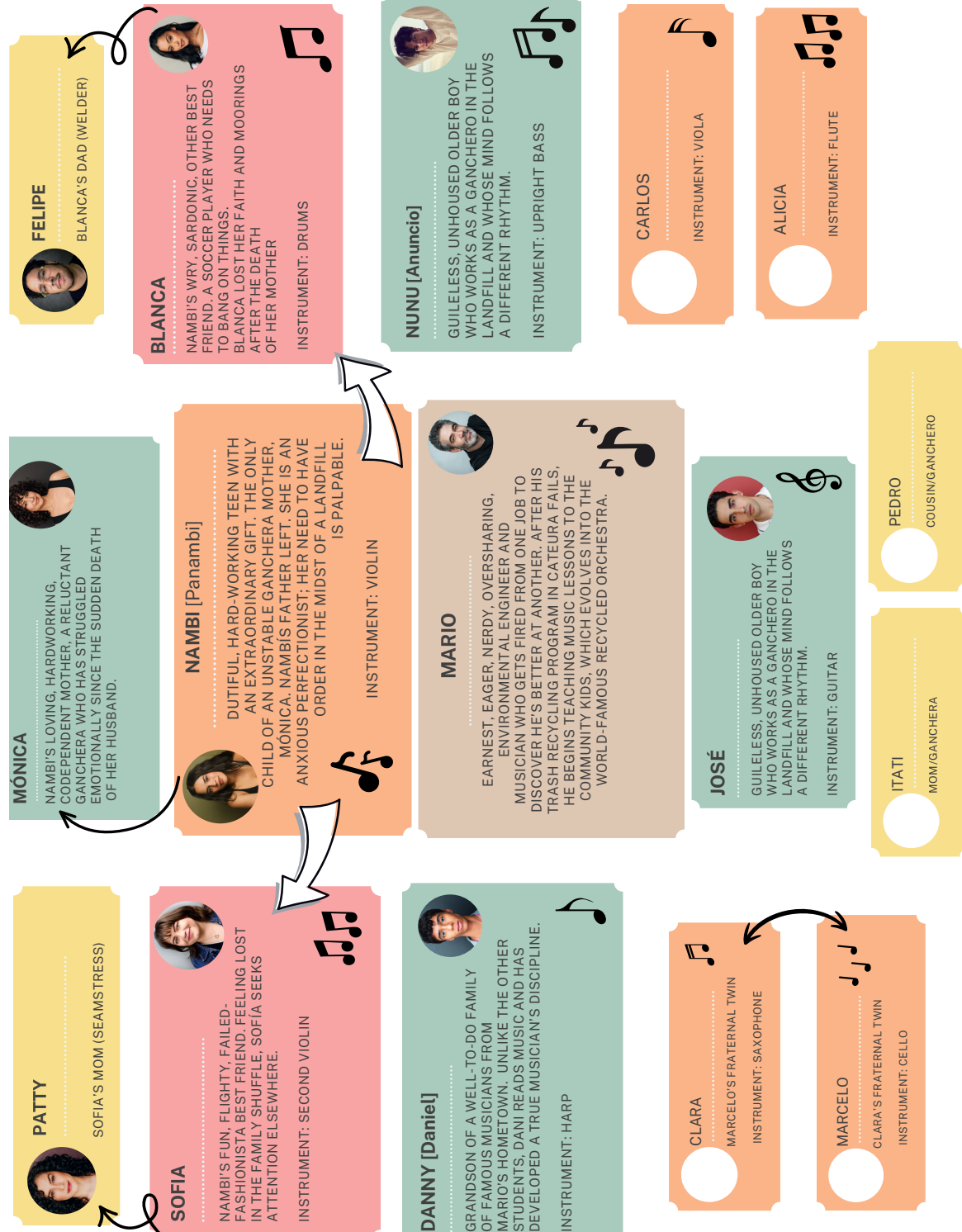
Sketch your vision for the set below, considering design details such as color & texture.

Optional Challenge - add one of the following to your design:

- A recycled-material set piece
- A lighting cue
- A projection or backdrop idea
- A costume color palette that matches the scenery
- A transition idea between scenes

Characters

Relationships & Instruments



Activity: The "I Want" Song

Analyze "I Wanna Run"

About the "I Want" Song

The "I Want" song is a musical number sung by the protagonist early in the first act of a show, allowing the character to explicitly state their deepest desires and the primary goal that will drive their arc throughout the show. "Part of Your World" (The Little Mermaid), "The Wizard and I" (Wicked), and "My Shot" (Hamilton) are great examples of this classic musical building block.

Context

After her first music lesson, Nambi experiences a happiness that she hasn't known since before her Dad passed away. The violin Nambi was assigned reminds her of the classical music her father used to play, and it seems like the universe is telling her that this is her moment. "I Wanna Run" explores her self-discovery, passion, and purpose – which may also require compromise.

LYRICS	WHAT DOES THIS REVEAL ABOUT NAMBI?
I WANNA RUN, I WANNA FLY. THERE'S GOTTA BE MORE THAN JUST GETTING BY. I WANT THE WORLD HERE IN MY HAND. I WANNA DECIDE JUST WHERE I SHOULD LAND.	
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D FEEL SO ALIVE. THE MOMENT I PLAYED, I WAS HYPNOTIZED. MY VISION'S CLEAR, NO CLOUDS ABOVE. IS WHAT I'M FEELIN' WHAT THEY CALL LOVE? COULD THIS BE LOVE?	
AM I DREAMING? WHAT JUST HAPPENED? WHAT'S THIS FEELING I DON'T RECOGNIZE? MUSIC WHISPERS, SHOULD I FOLLOW? HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO COMPROMISE WHAT I MUST DO WITH WHAT I WANT TO. JUST COINCIDENCE, OR A BLESSING FROM THE SKIES? IT FEELS POSSIBLE.	
I WANNA RUN, QUIERO VOLAR, LIKE WHEN I WAS DANCING CON MI PAPA. A JOYFUL SPIN, A MOONLIT TWIRL, THE DAY I WAS BORN, I WAS DADDY'S GIRL.	
THEY MAY ALL SAY YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL. IF I CAN DREAM BIG, I'M NOT THINKING SMALL. MY VISION'S CLEAR, NO CLOUDS ABOVE, EXCITED TO FACE WHATEVER COMES.	

The Recycled Orchestra of Cateura



Pictured: THE RECYCLED ORCHESTRA OF CATEURA

The Recycled Orchestra of Cateura (*La Orquesta de Instrumentos Reciclados de Cateura*) is one of the most inspiring musical stories of the 21st century. It was born in the Bañado Sur community of Asunción, Paraguay, a neighborhood built around the city's main landfill. The Cateura landfill, created by the municipality in 1984, sprawls over 50 hectares and serves as the primary dumping ground

for the Paraguayan capital. For the thousands of families who live nearby, it is both a workplace and a way of life, many earn their living as waste collectors (catadores), sifting through the garbage for sellable materials.

The Orchestra's origin traces to Favio Chávez, a musician and environmental technician who came to Cateura to work on waste management. Moved by the children he saw growing up in the community, he offered informal music lessons. When demand for lessons exceeded the supply of donated instruments, Chávez turned to local craftsman Nicolás "Cola" Gómez, a skilled carpenter and former waste worker, who crafted instruments entirely from landfill materials: violins made from oil drums, cellos from gasoline cans, flutes from water pipes and bottle caps, guitars from discarded forks and dinner table legs. The group's motto became a rallying cry heard around the world: "The world sends us garbage, we send back music."




The program traces to around 2002, and by the end of 2012, its story went viral internationally. Since then, the young musicians of Cateura have performed in Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, the United States, Japan, Norway, Germany, Palestine, and beyond, sharing stages with artists including Stevie Wonder, Metallica, and Megadeth.

In 2016, the Orchestra was the subject of the award-winning feature documentary *Landfill Harmonic*. Today, its music school provides free weekly instruction to 300-400 students from the Cateura neighborhood, with a mission of keeping young people in school, developing creativity, and opening doors to a better future. As a testament to the orchestra's global reach and the transformative power of its model, youth music programs inspired by the Recycled Orchestra have since been established in Brazil, Burundi, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Spain.



Pictured: FAVIO CHÁVEZ

Featured Instruments

<i>Section & Instruments</i>	<i>Basura Characters</i>	<i>Recycled Orchestra Images</i>
Strings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CELLO -GUITAR -HARP -UPRIGHT BASS -VIOLA -VIOLIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -MARCELO -JOSÉ -DANI -NUNU -CARLOS -NAMBI & SOFÍA 	
Percussion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -DRUMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -BLANCA 	
Wind		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -FLUTE -SAXOPHONE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ALICIA -CLARA 	

Activity: Build a Recycled Orchestra

Objective

Students will create a Recycled Orchestra to improvise musical soundscapes inspired by themes from *Basura*.

Materials

Various found objects and recyclables for instrument creation, such as rubberbands, straws, bottles, balloons, strings, cups, bowls, pitchers, PVC pipes, paper tubes, dried beans or rice, tape, scissors. Tape and other items for connecting materials.



Agenda

Introduction

- Introduce or reflect on the production of *Basura*
- Who is the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura?
- Who is Gloria Estefan?
 - ◇ Listen to a couple of popular Gloria Estefan songs
 - ◇ Unpack any themes or emotions in the music

Creation

- Allow time for students to create recycled instruments
- Encourage the development of (3) sections - strings, percussion, and wind – as well as creativity and innovation!

Improvisation

- Arrange students into (3) sections
- Improvise soundscapes illustrating these themes:
 - ◇ STRUGGLE – music can rise from adversity by working with what you have
 - ◇ CREATE & CONQUER – even in the most unlikely places, you can create something beautiful
 - ◇ POSSIBILITY – show the world what you're made of

Soundscape Tips:

- ✓ Find and maintain a steady beat first, and create from there
- ✓ As the conductor, control the volume of each section to ensure all groups can be heard
- ✓ Challenge students to make each piece sound different and distinctive as the theme shifts

Vocabulary

English Words – in order of appearance

<i>Word (part of speech)</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>How it appears</i>
Sardonic (adjective)	Disrespectful, scornful	BLANCA – (f, 16) – Nambi's wry, sardonic, other best friend.
Guileless (adjective)	Innocent, naïve	NUNU [Anuncio] – (m, 19) – Guileless, unhoused older boy
Talisman (noun)	An object that acts as a charm to avert evil or bring good fortune	...the violin as talisman “pulls out” his secret fear
Ecstasy (noun)	Overwhelming delight beyond reason or self-control	She's in love, in ecstasy...
Trance (noun)	A sleeplike state of stupor or daze	NAMBI finishes the note, opens her eyes, released from the trance.
Refined (adjective)	Free of impurities, cultivated	Ah, your father, so refined... always listening to classical music...
Ominous (adjective)	Foreshadowing evil or misfortune	It feels ominous.
Collateral (noun)	Property pledged by a borrower to protect the interests of the lender	...and the conservatory demanded collateral.
Drought (noun)	Prolonged period without rain	No, but the drought... we just really need rain.
Heirloom (noun)	Something special handed down through generations	DANI plays his heirloom Paraguayan harp.
Inchoate (adjective)	Only partly formed, incoherent	...the melody morphs into a song that reflects their simple, inchoate, but potent feelings...
Potent (adjective)	Strong, powerful	
Debris (noun)	The remains of something broken or destroyed	BLANCA and NICOLÁS sort through debris in their home.
Bona Fide (adjective)	True, real, authentic	You have a birth certificate! You are a bona fide Paraguayan now!
Obligation (noun)	A commitment that one is bound to	I'M FIRST CHAIR, IT'S MY OBLIGATION
Buckles (verb)	To collapse, yield under pressure	MÓNICA has a total breakdown, crying for the first time and finally buckles.
Giddy (adjective)	Lightheartedly silly and/or joyful	...the STUDENTS and MARIO find their seats, giddy.

Vocabulary

Spanish Words – in order of appearance

<i>Word (part of speech)</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Basura (noun, feminine)	Trash, Garbage	bah-SOO-rah
Gancho (noun, masculine)	Hanger, Hook	GAHN-choh
Saludo (noun, masculine)	Greeting	sah-LOO-doh
Dinero (noun, masculine)	Money	dee-NEH-roh
Estrellas (noun, feminine, plural)	Stars	ehs-TREH-yahs
Chuchi (adjective, informal) Colloquial, Rioplatense slang	Upscale, Fancy	CHOO-chee
Belleza (noun, feminine)	Beauty	be-YEH-zah
Tranquila (adjective, feminine)	Calm, Tranquil (expression: It's ok, Calm down)	tran-kee-lah
Chisme (noun, masculine)	Gossip	CHEES-meh
Chócalas (exclamation)	Literal: Strike them [hands] (expression: High five, Give me five)	CHOH-kah-lahs
Telenovela (noun, feminine)	Soap Opera (very dramatic)	teh-lu-noh-VEH-luh
Músicos (noun, masculine, plural)	Musicians	MOO-see-kaws
Sinvergüenza (adjective or noun, feminine)	Literal: Without shame (expression: Scoundrel, Shameless person)	seen-behr-GWEHN-sah

Vocabulary

Spanish Phrases and Lines – in order of appearance

<i>Phrase (contextual notes)</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Ser tan bellas (Infinitive phrase)	To be so beautiful	Sehr tahn beh-YAHs
Quiero volar (Verb phrase, often used to express extreme hopes)	I want to fly	KIEH-roh voh-LAR
¡Ay, che Dios! (Exclamation, "che" in Rioplatense slang sometimes used like "dude, bro, or man")	Oh my God!	eye-cheh-DYOHS
¡LA VIDA! (Exclamation, sometimes used like "Such is life")	Life	Lah VEE-dah
mi amor (term of endearment)	My love	Mee ah-MOR
¿Ah, sí? (Rhetorical question, often skeptical or ironic)	Oh yeah?	AH SEE

<i>Line (contextual notes)</i>	<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
Che patrón es un mbore de mierda! ("mbore" is Guaraní-influenced slang)	That boss is a piece of shit!	Che pah-TRON ehs oon m-BOH-reh deh MYEHR-dah
SÓLO ESPERANZA Y UNAS CHANCLETAS (Poignant, minimalist image)	Just hope and flipflops.	SOH-loh ess-peh-RAHN-sah ee OO-nahss chahn-CLEH-tahss
¿UN PEDACITO DE LA MALETA? (Diminutive "pedacito" indicates tenderness and irony)	A little piece of the suitcase?	Oon peh-dah-SEE-tho deh lah mah-LEH-tah
LO QUE ME QUIERO LLEVAR NO ENTRA (Thematic line about loss and departure)	What I want to take doesn't fit.	Loh keh meh kyeh-roh yeh-var noh en-tra
LOS CHICOS TIENEN QUE COMER. (Imperative/declarative, urgency of survival)	Those kids have to eat.	LOHS CHEE-kohs TYEH-nehn keh koh-MEHR
¿Y QUÉ ME VOY A LLEVAR? (Question about departure/loss)	"What am I taking with me?"v	Ee KEH meh voy ah yeh-VAHR

Vocabulary

Guaraní Words and Phrases – in order of appearance

Word or Phrase (contextual notes)	English Translation	Pronunciation
Kuñatai (noun, affectionate and familiar)	Young woman	KOON-yah-tye
Iporãmbaite (reassuring)	Everything's fine	ee-po-RAHM-by-teh
AHATÁ AJÚ! (informal, everyday use)	I'll be right back	AH-HAH-tah AH-hoo
JAHÁ (command, invitation, energetic)	Let's go	jah-HAH
JA'ÚMINA! (social, convivial, often said over sharing tereré)	Let's drink a little	jah-OO-mee-nah
JAJOTOPATA (farewell, formal and warm)	Goodbye	yah-yo-to-pah-tah
OîMA	Enough	oh-EE-mah
EGUAHE PORÃ (Greeting, traditional, on arrival)	Welcome	eh-gwah-HAY poh-RAH
AÑETE HA UPÉICHA (affirming expression, validating, agreeing)	It is true and that's how it is	ah-ñeh-TEH ha-oo-PAY-chah
TOIKÓ LA OIKOÁ (expresses relaxed acceptance of challenges)	Come what may, Whatever happens, happens	toy-KOH lah oy-KOH-ah
JAJOHÉCHA PEVE (farewell, warm and communal)	See you later, Until we meet again	HA-ho-HE-cha PEH-veh

About: Guaraní (Indigenous Language)

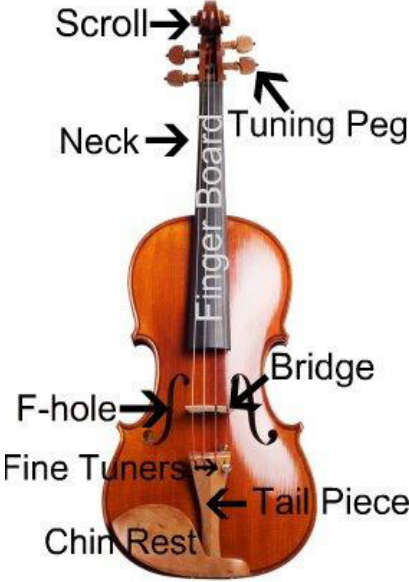
Guaraní is one of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in the Americas and holds a deeply unique place in the history of South America. It belongs to the Tupí-Guaraní language family and has been spoken in the region of present-day Paraguay and surrounding countries.

History:

- Early 1600s: Jesuit missionaries studied and transcribed the language
- 1770: King Carlos III of Spain issued a royal decree to "extinguish" indigenous languages, but Guaraní survived largely because women kept it alive in the home
- 1992: Upon the return of democracy, the constitution officially recognized Guaraní
- 2010: a Languages Law further required all public officials to learn it
- Today: Approximately 70% of Paraguayans speak Guaraní daily, and about 90% speak Jopara, a fluid, natural blend of Guaraní and Spanish that reflects the country's lived bilingualism.

Terminology

Music – in order of appearance

Word or Phrase	Definition or Description	How it Appears
Major Chord	Three musical notes (a root, a major third, and a perfect fifth)	Notes are also about how you feel. Chords can be too. A major chord feels fuller.
Minor Chord	The darker version of its major counterpart – three musical notes (a root, a minor third, and a perfect fifth)	A minor chord feels more like— Like something has been lost...
Do Ti La Sol Fa Mi Re Do	A solfege naming the notes in a major scale	STUDENTS: (LA TI DO DO TI LA SOL FA MI)
Violin Parts (Bridge, F-Holes, Knobs, Turning Pegs, Neck)		<p>The bridge. It's called the bridge. We'd have to figure out how to cut the F-holes.</p> <p>And these could be the knobs??</p> <p>Tuning pegs!</p> <p>And try to imagine a neck... like the one on my guitar.</p>
First Violin	The lead in an orchestra, responsible for guiding the ensemble's musical expression	Nambi... YOU'RE OUR FIRST VIOLIN...
Riff	Improvise	The MUSICIANS riff on a famous Paraguayan tune.

Paraguayan Food

Paraguayan cuisine is a living expression of the country's two-culture heritage, the indigenous Guaraní and the Spanish colonial, layered over centuries of immigrant influence. The Guaraní people were expert cultivators of corn, cassava (mandioca), sweet potato, and peanuts, and beef is central too – Paraguay has one of the highest beef consumption rates per capita in South America. Paraguayan food is hearty and deeply communal, built around slow cooking and the ritual of eating together.

<i>Food (Pronunciation)</i>	<i>Image</i>
<p>Empanada (em-pah-NAH-dah): A beloved street food, Paraguayan empanadas are half-moon pastries of flaky dough (typically fried) filled with savory ingredients. Classic fillings are beef, chicken, and cheese-and-ham, though vegetarian versions are also common.</p>	
<p>Tereré (teh-reh-REH): Paraguay's national drink, a yerba mate served cold – the perfect solution for the country's hot, humid climate. Sharing tereré is a daily social ritual of warmth, trust, and belonging.</p>	
<p>Chipa guasú (CHEE-pah gwah-SOO): A savory corn cake baked in a clay oven (tatakuá) – a beloved comfort food made with corn, eggs, cheese, milk, fat, and salt, it has a soft, slightly creamy texture, somewhere between polenta and cornbread. The name comes from Guaraní: "chipa" refers to foods of this corn-and-manioc dough type, and "guasú" means large.</p>	
<p>Yuca (YOO-kuh): Known in other parts of the world as cassava, yuca (called mandioca in Paraguay) is a starchy root vegetable that is boiled and served as a side dish the way potatoes are elsewhere, as well as ground into flour for dozens of preparations. It forms the base of chipa bread, mbejú flatbread, and payagua mascada patties.</p>	
<p>Sopa Paraguaya (SOH-pah pah-rah-GWAH-yah): Despite its name ("Paraguayan soup"), this dish is a dense, savory corn cake made from cornmeal, cheese, eggs, onion, milk, and fat. Legend has it that it was born from a happy accident: a cook preparing a soup for President Carlos Antonio López in the mid-1800s added too much corn flour, and the president loved the result.</p>	
<p>Asado (ah-SAH-doh): More than a meal, asado is the art of slow-grilling meat, primarily beef, though pork, chicken, and sausages (butifarras, chicharón trenzado) all appear, over wood embers or a parrilla (grill). In Paraguay, the weekend asado is a sacred ritual of family and community. More than a meal, asado is the art of slow-grilling meat, primarily beef, though pork, chicken, and sausages (butifarras, chicharón trenzado) all appear, over wood embers or a parrilla (grill). In Paraguay, the weekend asado is a sacred ritual of family and community.</p>	

Professions

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How it Appears</i>
Apprentice	one who is learning by practical experience under skilled workers a trade, art, or calling	Nunu, which is me. I became an apprentice for the best guitar maker in South America.
Conductor	the leader of a musical ensemble	And I used to dream of conducting the National Symphony in a tuxedo...
Cook	a person who prepares food for eating	I also cook at a Paraguayan restaurant – my sopa is the best!
Environmental Engineer	workers using engineering disciplines in developing solutions to problems of planetary health.	I am Mario Sánchez. I'm an environmental engineer.
Gancho	a landfill worker who collects recyclable materials with a hook	We call ourselves gancho.
Hair Stylist	a person whose occupation is the cutting and arranging of hair	Becoming a hairdresser is very challenging.
Housekeeper	one employed to manage the domestic duties involved in maintaining a house	MY MOM CLEANS HOUSES IN ASUNCIÓN TO MAKE DINERO
Music Educator	one who teaches the art of music	We'll start with the basics. Can you follow this rhythm?
Musician / Músico	a composer, conductor, or performer of music	¡Músicos! Did Mario just call us 'musicians'?!?
Paramedic	a highly trained healthcare professional who acts as a first responder to provide advanced emergency medical care at the scene and during patient transport to a hospital	I'm Clara. I'm training to become a paramedic.
Sanitation Driver	one who drives a large vehicle and collects trash or recycling from cans and dumpsters on a set route	I am Carlos. I drive a dump truck
Welder	a person who unites metallic or plastic parts by heating and allowing the metals to flow together	My dad is a welder.

Allusions

Musical

Johann Sebastian Bach: a composer of the Baroque era, he is considered one of the greatest composers of all time.



National Symphony: Founded in 2004, the National Symphony Orchestra of Paraguay is the official orchestra of the Paraguayan state.



Ode to Joy: The final movement of Ludwig Van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, which includes a full chorus singing the lyrics to the poem, "An die Freude" ("Ode to Joy") by Friedrich Schiller.



Phil Collins: a multi-Grammy winning British singer, songwriter famous for his work with the band Genesis as well as a robust solo career.



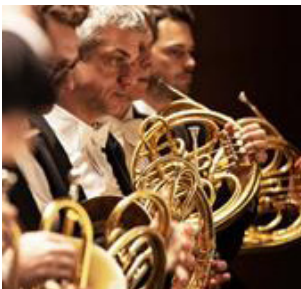
Rush, Metallica and Judas Priest: Heavy metal bands popular in the late 1970's and 1980's.



Stayin' Alive was a hit song on the album Saturday Night Fever by The Bee Gees, a popular pop-rock band from the late 1970's.



Vienna Philharmonic: the prestigious and selective orchestra housed in Vienna, Austria. Only a member of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra can join.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: an 18th century Austrian composer widely thought to be one of the greatest composers in Western music.



Allusions

Cultural or Religious



Bahía Negra:

A remote district in northern Paraguay made up of wetlands, rivers, and dense forests.



God, Flood, Ark:

References Genesis 6-8 of the Old Testament in which Noah, a follower of God, is told by God to build a large boat (ark) to save his family and animals for an impending giant flood.



Lapacho tree:

the national tree of Paraguay. It blooms vibrant flowers in the summer months. The trunks are dense and resistant to rot and make great building materials.



Vanna White:

is the co-host of the popular game show, Wheel of Fortune. She started on the show in 1982 as the luxurious model presenting letters on the large puzzle board.

Note: this appears as a brief reference in a stage direction - "(PATTY appears with a finished cello made of tin, à la Vanna White, but cooler, and coarser, and Paraguayan.)"



World Environmental Expo in Río de Janeiro:

Refers to the Forum on Social Entrepreneurship in the New Economy held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

Natural Disaster

Flooding



Flooding can have devastating effects on any community, causing irreversible damage to houses, roads, schools, and businesses, forcing families to evacuate and sometimes lose everything they own.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), flooding can disrupt access to food, clean water, electricity, healthcare, and transportation for weeks or even months after the water recedes.

Flooding also has devastating effects on communities emotionally and economically. Families lose jobs, children miss school, and people often experience stress, anxiety, and trauma after repeated disasters.

According to Harvard's ReVista magazine, the Cateura landfill sits only a short distance from the river and faces a "continual threat of flooding." Despite this, the community often responds with resilience, helping rebuild homes, share resources, and support recovery efforts together.

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine you are a director working on depicting an emotional, climactic scene with a devastating storm and flood.

How would you illustrate...

- Thunder, lightning, wind, and rain?
- Water gushing in to a home?
- Furniture rising with the flood water and floating away?
- A character swimming to survive?
- The walls and roof of a home collapsing "like a deck of cards"?

2. Imagine you are a friend and/or neighbor to somebody who has experienced tremendous loss because of a flood.

How could you possibly support their access to...

- Food?
- Clean water?
- Shelter?
- Transportation?
- Emotional support?

International Air Travel

Imagine Your First Flight Ever...

(MÓNICA waves and exits. Music continues as scene shifts to the airplane cabin, where the STUDENTS and MARIO find their seats, giddy. Maybe PATTY is there as band mom. Imagine your first flight ever...)

PURSER (V.O.)

Bienvenidos. Good morning. Bem vindo a bordo. This is Flight 347 to Río de Janeiro. On behalf of the captain and the crew, we'd like to welcome on board some special guests making their first flight... the Orchestra of Recycled Instruments of Cateura!

(Cheers.)

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever traveled on an airplane?
 - If yes, what do you recall about the experience at the airport and on the flight?
 - If no, how have you seen air travel depicted in the media (TV, film, social media, etc.)?
2. International travel requires a valid passport (an official document issued by the government to verify an individual's identity and citizenship) and sometimes a visa (another document – typically stamped or glued into a passport – that grants legal permission to enter a foreign country). In *Basura*, we meet Sofía, who shares that she does not have a birth certificate, which means it will be very difficult for her to obtain a passport for international travel. “My mami and papi were working without papers in Argentina when I was born. And when we snuck back home to Paraguay, there was no record of me. Officially, I don't exist. I am nobody,” she says.
 - Imagine you worked incredibly hard to achieve a goal. How would it feel to know a barrier like this could stand in your way?
 - Sharing this type of information requires bravery and trust. How would you respond to Sofía if she was your best friend?
3. Some airlines charge a fee for luggage and baggage. Imagine you are travelling with (3) friends using (1) suitcase – this means you have a quarter of the space to pack everything you need for your trip.
 - What would you prioritize bringing?



NO ROOM TO WASTE
INSIDE A QUARTER-SUITCASE.
FILL EVERY CRACK
IN THIS PACKING PUZZLE.

Pre-Show

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be resilient? Share an example (from your own life or from the world around you) in which you demonstrated or encountered resilience.
2. What are your favorite after school snacks?
 - Have you ever attended an event because you knew there would be snacks?
 - ◇ If so, what was served – and did it make the program worth attending?
 - ◇ If no, which snacks would guarantee your participation in the future?
3. “Who are you, and why are you here...?”
 - How would you answer this enormous question about your identity and purpose?
4. Share your Top 3 favorite musical artists.
5. What is your greatest gift (natural talent)?
 - How did you discover it?
 - What do you plan to do with it?

Post-Show

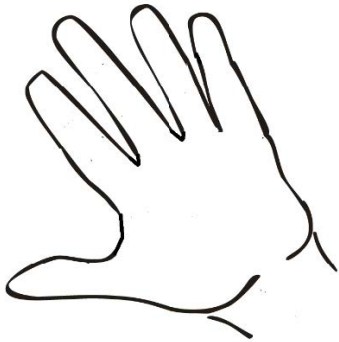
Discussion Questions

1. Scan the room. What specific objects do you see that resemble pieces of instruments?
2. In *Basura*, the role of first violin is described as the group’s compass and leader. What characteristics and actions did Nambi exhibit that make her a strong fit for that job?
3. After their first performance, the Recycled Orchestra gets “Five thousand views!” Keeping the setting in mind (circa 2010), how do you think social media contributed to the group’s success?
 - What would it feel like to go “viral” like that?
4. At the end of the show, Nambi tells her mother that “you are the strongest person I know.”
 - Why is this moment so meaningful – what journey have these characters been on?
 - Who is the strongest person you know, and what would you like to say to them?
5. How would this conclusive Seven Years Later monologue look for you?

iHOLA, ATLANTA! MY NAME IS _____ AND I HAVE BEEN A _____ FOR SEVEN YEARS.
I FEEL SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE _____ BUT I STILL STRUGGLE WITH _____.
REGARDLESS, I AM CONTINUALLY INSPIRED BY _____.

Journal Prompts

1. Learning in Five Steps



In *Basura*, Mario explains how learning music comes in 5 steps. Using his hand, he illustrates these steps as:

- Pinky Finger – Curiosity
- Ring Finger – Interest
- Middle Finger – Desire
- Index Finger – Commitment
- And then there is a gap before the Thumb – “This is where life can intervene and people give up and fall away,” he says. But this is also “where your curiosity, interest, desire, and commitment” become wrapped up into – Opportunity (“if you can commit and take the leap”)

Apply the 5-step framework for learning to something you love (it does not need to be music).

- Explain which steps you have personally experienced, and what that was like.
- Explain which steps remain ahead of you, and what you think that will be like.
- Unpack the gap before the Thumb – in what ways could life potentially intervene for you?
- Agree or disagree – do you find Mario’s framework helpful?
 - ◇ Which parts speak to you?
 - ◇ Which parts would you tweak?

2. Transformational Educators

Part 1: How would you describe Mario as an educator?

- Include a few specific examples from the show that illustrate his approach and commitment to teaching – and, if helpful, revisit the passage below.

Part 2: Have you ever had a transformational educator?

- Share that teacher’s name and a few specific examples from your time together that left a meaningful mark on you.

MARIO

Raise your hand if you’ve ever seen the ocean.

(No one raises their hand.)

MARIO

I want you to see the ocean. I want you to get on a plane and go to another country and play for people who speak another language. You deserve beauty. Especially now. You deserve possibility. You deserve to represent Paraguay.

Landfill Harmonic

About the Documentary (2015)



Pictured: INSTRUMENTS

Synopsis

Landfill Harmonic follows the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura, a Paraguayan musical group that plays instruments made entirely out of garbage pieces found in the landfill where their community is settled.

When their story goes viral, the orchestra is catapulted into the global spotlight. Under the guidance of idealistic music director Favio Chavez, the orchestra must navigate a strange new world of arenas and sold-out concerts.

However, when a natural disaster strikes their community, Favio must find a way to keep the orchestra intact and provide a source of hope for their town. The film is a testimony to the transformative power of music and the resilience of the human spirit.

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Pictured: FESTIVALS (AFI)

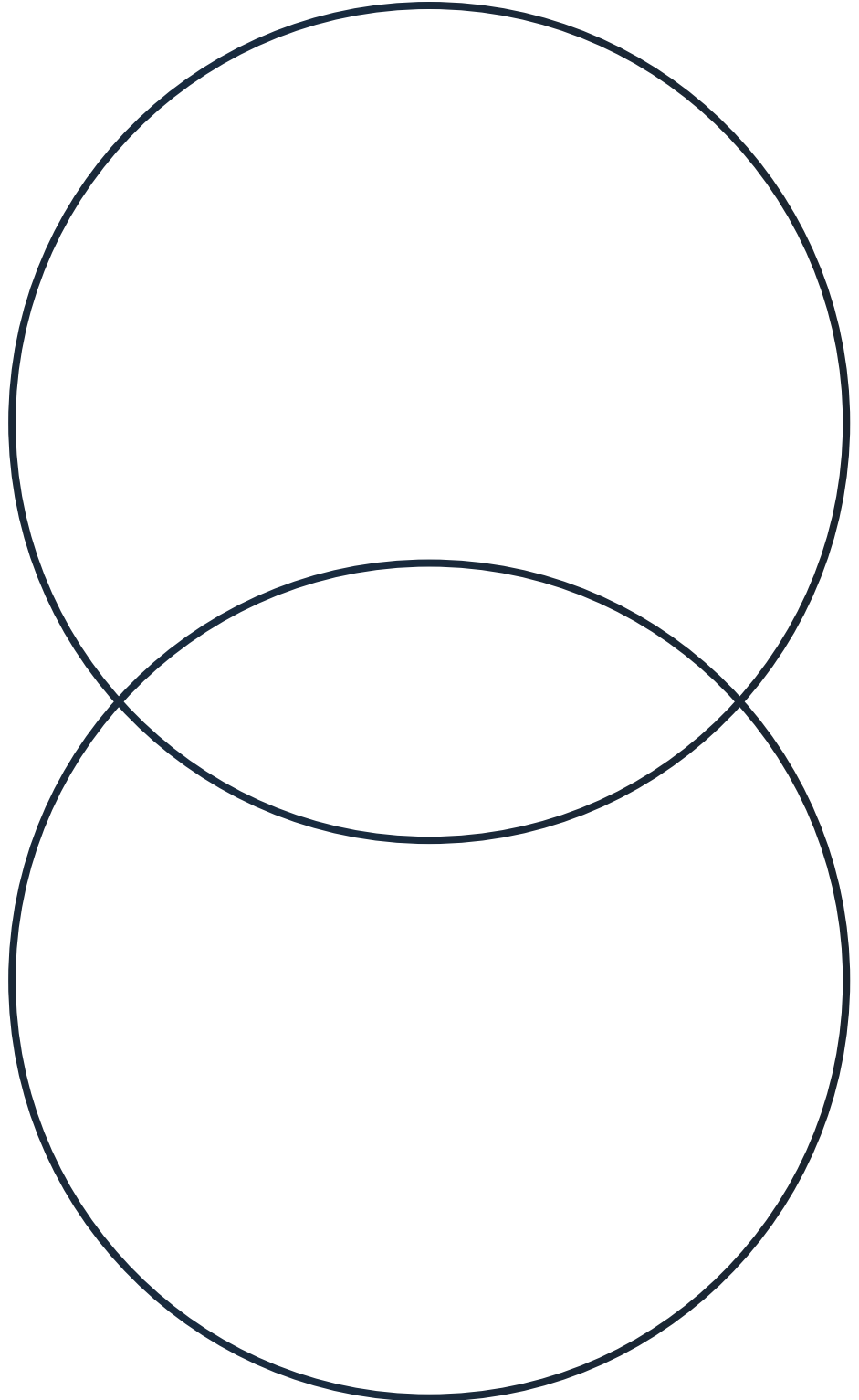
Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/122542602> | Film: iTunes, Amazon Prime Video, Vimeo on Demand

Activity: Compare/Contrast

Documentary vs. Musical



landfillharmonic



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