

Studio School

Exiting U Street Metro station at 13th Street, a kaleidoscope of urban images and sounds meets the senses.

STREET SOUNDS and SOUND INTO SCHOOL ***<Keep sound of school low throughout piece>***

A heavy blue door opens into the Children's Studio School. In the hallways, you don't hear Mr. or Mrs. Students call their teachers Baba and Mama, based on an African tradition.

SOUND CLIP: MAMA TRACY AND A STUDENT

"HEY, MAMA TRACY!"

"HEY, GIRL!"

<lead in and out of quote with ambi>

<use tape to come out of the hallway and bring the listener into the studio>

In the first classroom on the right, teacher and sculptor Jose Miguel Cuevas points out one of his student's projects. Mounted high on his classroom wall over a lavender background is an eight-year old's representation of the Sistine Chapel. This version of "The Creation of Adam" is made out of a keyboard, plastic tubing and cotton, but the resemblance to Michelangelo's masterpiece is unmistakable. Baba Jose says he encourages his students to bring their personal interests and artistic creativity into the classroom.

JOSE: Once you have that excitement in the kid, that engagement with what they are doing- from there, it is our job to find the connections between that and the academics.

Engaging the students in a passion for learning was President Marcia McDonell's goal when she founded the school thirty years ago.

MCDONELL: The school was founded upon a philosophy that we hold true today, which is that if children are really provoked and stimulated to think as artists that they have the greatest possibility.

The Babas and the Mamas of the Children's Studio School teach reading and math through music, grammar through sculpture, and writing through poetry. The walls of the main hallway are covered with student art that showcases the school's teaching philosophy. On the left, architectural models made of toothpicks and glue pop out from the wall. On the right, multi-colored African masks stare down at passers-by.

SOUND OF DOOR OPENING

<"Are you ready? Yeah. ARE YOU READY? YEAAH." Bring in hot djembe sound. Walk down for next track but keep low>

Through the green double door on the second floor, music takes over. Tucked away next to the library is Medoune Gueye's studio. A map of Africa stretches from floor to ceiling, and dozens of tan, wooden drums sit in semicircular rows. Gueye, or Baba Dame, is a master drummer. He created a language on the African djembe drum to help his students develop the skills they need to read and write.

SOUND CLIP OF DJEMBE DRUM

<Fade out drum music under next track>

Across the hall, orange cutouts of Louisiana line the space leading to Kweli Smith's studio. Mama Kweli is a jazz singer, and she uses Ella Fitzgerald's music to teach literature and geography.

KWELI: Last year, we did blues opera. We really worked on literary artists like Langston Hughes or Sterling Brown. People write about place in song. You could almost go on Jeopardy with that question.

But, education is no game show, and children's Studio School consistently misses targets in reading and math set by No Child Left Behind. Still, Mama Marcia does not sacrifice her broad educational approach for testing.

MARCIA: Art is the process- it's not the 'what' and the outcome of the product it's that process. If we can develop that creative process in everyone then we would be a greater society.

Unlike other schools, here at Children's Studio School, the arts are not squeezed to make more room in the curriculum. Art *is* the curriculum.

For Intern Edition, I'm Jacqueline Jove in Washington, D.C.