



# SISAI: EXPLORING THE ANDES THROUGH MUSIC

*Art Form:* Music

*Style:* Traditional

*Culture:* Andean

## *Technical Needs*

- ❑ Electrical outlets
- ❑ A level performance space 10' x 15' or larger

## *Meet the Artist*

**Sisai** founder Jose Muenala learned to play flutes as a boy, inspired by the elders who continue the rich musical heritage of his people. From his self taught beginnings on Andean mountainsides to performing for over 16 years at hundreds of venues across the U.S., Jose and Sisai have remained dedicated to pursuing a true traditional sound. They have produced four recordings which reflect their dedication to maintaining and furthering native culture.

The continuation of ancient Andean indigenous culture is an intrinsic and vital element of **Sisai**. Born into a strong traditional community where customs and culture dictate so much of life, members experienced music as the voice of culture, a part of everyday life, a part of the most sacred times in life. The ability to share that voice and culture with all people, and the artistic expression involved are reasons for the group's longevity.

Joys and sorrows of life are felt and expressed through music. Music is a universal language easily accepted and understood, and through our performances we have seen over and over again the way in which it reinforces the bond of humanity that we all share. Sharing our culture through music has always been a positive experience for us. We are also inspired by the artistry involved in music, and the way that music constantly opens up new ways to understand and interpret it as one grows in life.

Our world has “gotten smaller” in that we have so much diversity all around us. Many people are unable to fully understand the beauty of our distinct human cultures, customs and beliefs. Helping others experience and accept diversity as a positive part of life has become part of what we do. Respect and reverence can be taught. Cultural education, which in itself promotes peace and understanding between people, can do more for our world and our future than any other single endeavor. In becoming parents ourselves, our work with children takes on an even more poignant role, as we believe respect between people and true respect for one’s self is the basis for all future peace.

### *About the Performance*

This show takes the audience on a journey through Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador on a musical and cultural exploration guided by musicians born and raised in Otavalo, Ecuador. The members of **Sisai** proudly convey their unique indigenous culture through song, legend and glimpses into Andean life. This quartet invites students to participate by clapping to the rhythm of a sanjuanito, joining in a dance to celebrate the harvest, and trying traditional Andean percussion and wind instruments, such as zampoñas.

Ancient flutes still echo through the Andes Mountains, and the heartfelt and joyful sounds easily resonate with children today, sparking imagination and transcending cultural borders.

### *Contextual Information*

Aesthetic education provides a child the opportunity to be introduced to and learns about a subject through true, human and tangible objects, visions or sounds that are beautiful to them and create an impression and sense of peace and wonder. Those feeling of peace, wonder and curiosity can then foster a love for learning. These experiences build upon one another as children gain a broader sense of the world. Our music is able to spark that imagination and curiosity, and also bridge gaps that may be felt between cultural or racial divides by creating beauty through sound. Our music is relevant to a distinct culture, and by exposing a child to it they in turn can internalize it, and consequently relate to it more closely. We have seen children from all cultures recognize the beauty of Andean music. Some of our happiest times have been to think, as we have the children dance in a traditional circle or play our instruments during our presentation, that one day they may reach out to a person of another culture with more understanding because of the connections they have made with our music and culture that day.

## Vocabulary

**Andes Mountains:** The world's largest exposed mountain range. These mountains run along the western coast of South America through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador.

**Quichua:** Language spoken in the Andean regions of Argentina, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru.

**Antara:** Similar to the pan flute, this wind instrument carries the melody in music. Each pipe in the set is blown individually.

**Chajchas:** Dried goat or sheep hooves traditionally worn on the feet for dance. The hooves are gathered and accompany the beat of the drum.

**Charango:** A small South American stringed instrument of the lute family, which typically has 10 strings. It is traditionally made with the shell of the back of an armadillo, though today is mostly made of wood. Its high-pitched sound is featured in rhythm and in solos.

**Drum:** The traditional Andean drum is large, creating a deep, low sound. It is made of wood and traditionally covered with sheep skin on one face and goat skin on the other.

**Quena:** Many times the lead flute, this instrument has a powerful and clear sound.

**Zampoñas:** An ancient musical instrument also known as the pan flute or pan pipe, which consists of 5 or more pipes gradually increasing in length. These ethereal-sounding wind instruments often play the melody of a song.

**Chuntunqui and Taquirari:** Rhythms originating in Bolivia.

**Huayno:** Rhythms from Peru.

**Sanjuanito:** Rhythm that originates in Ecuador.

## More

For more information, visit [www.sisai.org](http://www.sisai.org)