

PRICELESS

A MUSICAL REVUE THROUGH THE MUSIC OF BLACK HISTORY HISTORY

# FREEDOM SONGS

BRIGHT STAR TOURING THEATRE/ BRIGHT STAR CHILDREN'S THEATRE, LLC

## The Music of Black History

Music has long played such an important role in American culture and history. And yet, perhaps no single population has provided bigger influence on American Music than the African American Community. Bluegrass, Jazz, The Blues, Spirituals--so much of our musical identity as a nation can be traced to this rich heritage.

**"THE BLUES TELL THE STORY OF LIFE'S DIFFICULTY...THIS IS TRIUMPHANT MUSIC!"**  
--DR. MARTIN L. KING, JR.

Our desire to educate audiences on this significant part of our history has led us to create this production. This 45-minute production features the talents of two accomplished, professional singers as they trace the highlights of these various musical genres in a kind of timeline revue. We hope that you sit back and enjoy learning about the evolution of music!



## Activity Ideas: Song Sampler

### ONE:

Listen to musical clips of a banjo and an African kora. Are there similarities you can find in their musical styles? (YouTube is always helpful :)

*internet.*) Can you hear similarities between the different genre's & Styles?

### THREE :

What's a song that could play a significant role in your own generation and the struggles facing Americans today?

### TWO:

Listen to early styles of music--  
(*sample songs are on every corner of the*



**BLUES:** From African American communities at the end of the 19th century. Blues generally refers to the 'blue devils' of melancholy and sadness. Beale Street in Memphis is an area thought to have refined the musical style.



**JAZZ:** A musical style that began in the beginning of the 1900's in Southern Black communities. It draws on African and European traditions with a strong emphasis on improvisation.



**SPIRITUALS :** Religious songs inspired from enslaved Africans in America. Often used for religious purposes some contained hidden meanings like 'Wade in the Water'.

## FUN FACTS



**Marvin Gaye:** Left music for two years to audition for the Detroit Lions Football Team.

**Mamie Smith:** First African-American artist to make a blues record.

**Nat King Cole:** First African American to host a television program, in 1956.

**Ella Fitzgerald:** First African American Woman to win a Grammy.

**Run-DMC:** The first rap group to appear on Rolling Stone or on television!

# Work Songs: Soundtrack to Labor



## WORK SONGS: FROM AFRICAN ROOTS TO SPIRITUAL AND FIELD SONGS

This genre of music grew out of the rhythmic songs that were formed to accompany repetitive work in agricultural and field work. Rooted in 'call and response' and African song traditions this genre developed in the 17th and 19th centuries. Interestingly, this format of call & response eventually found it's way into spirituals and gospel traditions.

Work songs were used by African Americans working on railroad crews and were led by a lead singer whose job was to raise the spirits of those workers and coordinate their work. It not only served to inspire and motivate, but also played a big role in setting a pace for the work.

In our production the song, Hoe Emma Hoe, is an example of a work song!

## Musical Genres & Birth Years!

Easily linked back to Black Musical styles!

*Not a Complete List, by any means!*

Genre	Birth Year
Spirituals	Early times!
Rhythm & Blues	1900's
Jazz	1920's
Rock & Roll	1950's
Folk	1960's
Hip Hop	1970's

## Activity Idea:

Critical thinking: Why do we often turn to music in times of hardship and struggle, what role does music serve in uniting people in need?

## #'S

Ella Fitzgerald Album Sales: (in millions)

# 40

Billie Holiday died at the age of

# 44

Motown Record Company founded in Detroit:

# 1959

# Music as Protest

## Older Grade Activity

...

Songs have played significant roles in our history--helping provide soundtracks to the Civil Rights Movement and other periods of struggle. Have your students listen closely to some of the songs from this period and try to decipher the real intent and meaning behind them. Here are some ideas, but please be aware some of them are much more intense than others:

This Little Light of Mine (1920)  
Adopted as a Civil Rights Anthem.

Times They Are A Changin' (Bob Dylan)

Blowin' in the Wind (Bob Dylan)

We Shall Not Be Moved

Alabama (John Coltrane) This orchestration piece was written following the bombing in Birmingham that killed four young girls.

A Change Is Gonna Come (Sam Cooke)

## DID YOU KNOW?



1520 Sedgwick Ave in The Bronx, is considered to be the birthplace of Hip Hop. In August 1973, the form began at a house party thrown by DJ Kool Herc.



Did you know that the Banjo is an instrument that grew out of African roots? Based upon a similar instrument called the 'kora'

## Activity IDEA!

Did you know that musical instruments can come from anywhere and anything. Dating back to the beginning times of American History--people would often craft musical instruments out of found objects. Are

there things around your classroom that could be repurposed to carry a drum beat or help with another such sound. Consider putting together a band using only found objects--like the early Southern bluegrass groups that would play washboards and jugs. (Have fun and bring ear plugs)

## TEACHERS: DID YOU KNOW?



Singer Josephine Baker was offered to lead the American Civil Rights Movement following King's death? She declined. But tirelessly fought against racism, adopting 12 multi-ethnic orphans--whom she referred to as the 'rainbow tribe!'



Ella Fitzgerald won a contest to perform at the Apollo Theatre (1934) and had decided to dance for her routine. When an amazing dance duo closed the act she grew incredibly nervous and at the last minute opted to sing. Two years later she recorded her 1st album.

In 1942, Billboard started a separate list of hit records by African-American musicians called the Harlem Hit Parade. In 1945, it was changed to 'Race Records.' And in 1949, changed to 'Rhythm and Blues Records'

# Select Songs from the Show!

...

THIS SHOW FEATURES SONGS THAT CREATE A KIND OF TIMELINE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH MUSIC. PLEASE NOTE THAT OUR SHOWS EVOLVE EACH YEAR WITH THE STRENGTHS OF OUR PERFORMERS SO NOT ALL OF THESE SONGS MAY BE IN THE VERSION OF THE SHOW YOU'LL BE SEEING.

**Yes We Want Our Freedom:** Song popular during the American Civil Rights Struggle by Cleo Kennedy & Carlton Reese.

**Funga Alafia:** This West African welcome song--essentially means 'You are welcome with open arms!' It's still sung today!

**Hoe Emma Hoe:** Traditional call and response work song. Songs like this were used to regulate the pace of work.

**Wade in the Water:** First published in 1901. This song was a supposed favorite of Harriet Tubman and is rumored to contain advice for escaping slaves.

**Steal Away:** Published in 1862 and composed by a man named Wallace Willis, this song is a Gospel standard.

**Swing Low, Sweet Chariot:** This song earned a reputation as an Abolition song with the Jordan River in the lyrics--said to refer to the Ohio River (or the separation of slave and free states). It made a resurgence in the 1960's as a song of the Civil Rights Movement and was even sung at Woodstock in 1969 by Joan Baez.

**Didn't my Lord Deliver Daniel:** This song relates the American slave experience to the Hebrew slaves of ancient Egypt. It's lyrics offer hope to the enslaved people of America.

**Follow the Drinking Gourd:** This song is considered a 'Map Song' as it's brimming with hidden meanings, encouraging slaves to follow the North Star towards Freedom. In the song, The Drinking Gourd, refers to the Big Dipper.

## **Nobody Knows the Trouble I've**

**Seen:** Spiritual in classification, this song was later recored by Louis Armstrong, Marian Anderson and others.

**Beale Street Blues:** This song was composed in 1916 by W.C. Handy. Beale Street has a history as the main entertainment area for the African American community in Memphis, Tennessee. It was popularized after appearing in a 1919 musical revue on Broadway.

**The Maple Leaf Rag:** Copyright registered in 1899! This early Ragtime composition was written by Scott Joplin and became the model for Ragtime Music. It earned Joplin the nickname, 'King of Ragtime.'

**The Entertainer:** 1902 classic Ragtime hit written by Scott Joplin. This song returned to the charts in 1973 when it was used as the theme for the movie The Sting.

**Yankee Doodle Dandy:** Written in 1904 for the George Cohan Broadway musical Little Johnny.

**Easy Living:** This is a 1937 Jazz Standard.

**Summertime:** 1935 George Gershwin song from the opera Porgy and Bess. Gershwin began working on the song in 1933--attempting to create his own spiritual style.

**Good Golly, Miss. Molly:** 1958 hit recorded by Little Richard--inspired by a phrase he had heard by a Southern DJ.

**Oh Freedom:** Post Civil War freedom song, popularized during the Civil Rights Struggle.

## **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me**

**Around:** Traditional song used by the Civil Rights Movement in Albany, GA.

**We Shall Not be Moved:** This traditional American Folk Song was adapted in the 1930's for activists working towards Civil Rights.

**We Shall Overcome:** Adopted from an early gospel song, this song became the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955-1968. This song of struggle has since been used all over the world.

## Other songs mentioned in the show:

**The Great Pretender:** First Recorded in 1955 by The Platters.

**Cupid:** 1961 Hit single written by Sam Cooke

**R-E-S-P-E-C-T:** First recorded in 1965 by Otis Redding the song is best known for it's Aretha Franklin hit!

**ABC, 123:** 1970 hit by Jackson Five

**All the Single Ladies:** Beyonce hit released in 2008.

# Everything about the Theatre!



**A mini-van is our hip and favored mode of transportation for touring the country!**

...

## THEATRE VOCABULARY!

**Actor:** The people on-stage performing the play.

**Backdrop:** The background for the play.

**Props:** Anything that an actor holds while on-stage--a cane, book or rubber chicken.

**Downstage:** the area closest to the audience a long time ago stage were built at angles.



**Upstage:** The area away from the audience, like the back wall of the a stage.

**Director:** The person who told

## Facts about us!

1. Did you know we're owned by an Emmy winning actor?
2. Our actors average 1,000 miles a week traveling the country to entertain young audiences.
3. Our programs have been seen in almost every corner of the country and around the world.
4. We watch over 1200 actors a season audition, before we cast our season.
5. We offer dozens and dozens different shows a season from Black History to anti-bullying and literary classics.
6. We toured Moscow with performances of our Aesop's Fables.
7. We're based in Asheville, NC.

## ABOUT US!

Founded in 2003, Bright Star Theatre tours the nation offering high quality, affordable programs to every imaginable venue. We've had countless engagements at the National Theatre, Toured to Moscow and are so grateful to be in your very school today!

the actors where to go while they were on-stage and helped them create the characters they would play.



**Costumes:** The wigs, clothing and glasses that the actors wore to help flush out their characters .

**Auditions:** How an actor gets a role is by auditioning, they may have to interview, pretend to be a character from the play, read something from it, etc.

**Set Designer:** The person who decided what should be on the background and who painted or created it.



Were there other terms that came up in the show or from the experience of seeing the live play that you'd like to learn more about?

## BRIGHT STAR THEATRE

Bright Star Touring Theatre performs across the country from Boston to Burbank and virtually every school, museum, theatre, community event in between. Each Season our shows run the gamut from Black History to anti-bullying, from literary classics to biographical shows. Our shows are available throughout the year for any event in any part of the world.

## FREEDOM SONGS

Created by Bright Star Touring Theatre Lead Authorship carried out by David Ostergaard, All Rights Reserved.

Learn more about this show, this company & our whole Season:

[www.brightstartheatre.com](http://www.brightstartheatre.com)

## FREEDOM SONGS

Made it's Debut in January 2014  
National Tour

We want every show to be special and remarkable for our audience. Please feel free to connect with us at anytime to tell us about your experience:

[David@brightstartheatre.com](mailto:David@brightstartheatre.com)