



## **Black American Musicians: Precursors of Jazz**

Curriculum Unit 82.04.06

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### **Introduction**

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The music of James Bland, Gussie Davis, Scott Joplin, and W. C. Handy was well known in 1918, though many were unaware that black men had composed this music. The names of Harry T. Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, and J. Rosamond Johnson were less familiar to the general public except perhaps in New York. Black music has a long history of oral tradition, improvisation, harmonic variety and rhythmic perfection. This music enjoys a certain unique characteristic in its performance and acceptability. This unit traces the course of Black music from the 1900's to the beginning of the jazz age. It was necessary to omit much material because of the time span, while only the very most important events could be described and only the most significant persons or groups discussed. There are suggestions for planning activities at the end of this brief history which will aid in developing lessons in most subject areas with appreciation of the heritage of Black musicians as the primary goal. The section following the music appreciation procedures describes the nature of black expressiveness and procedures to liberate the artist in students through music.

#### **The General State of Music 1900**

"The beginning of the twentieth century brought the promise of new musical developments both in Europe and in the United States . . . affecting both black men and white." For example, not all composers in the United States were writing music in the orthodox European style. Large numbers of musically illiterate black music makers were not aware of the existence of the unorthodox style, and many blacks who could read music were not concerned about it. <sup>1</sup>

The effect of slavery had been to create distant and separate communities of blacks within the larger white communities of the nation, and the emancipation of the slaves did nothing to change this situation. Blacks lived, for the most part, in their own world and developed their own institutions and culture. Rag and the Blues are two of the earliest manifestations of music which was to be heard or understood by whites. Often Black families would forsake basic necessities in order to enjoy the pleasure of a small organ, or harmonium. Pianos were too expensive to purchase by a family for home use. <sup>2</sup>

#### **The Emergence of Rag Music**

"The early rag-musicians were drifters in the Mississippi River Valley and on the eastern seaboard who played piano music in cheap eating places, honky-tonk spots, saloons, and riverside dives—often for meager wages,

sometimes only for tips.”<sup>3</sup>

The fact that few could read music seemed to stimulate rather than deter them in the production of a novel style for piano music. The style of piano-rag music called “jig piano” by some as a natural outgrowth of dance music practices among black folk. In piano-rag music, the left hand took over the task of providing the percussive-like dance rhythm, which the right hand in turn performed syncopated melodies, using motives reminiscent of fiddle and banjo tunes. This style of music for years was the exclusive possession of black communities; suddenly it was snatched from its original habitat, catapulted into the national spotlight and adopted by whites. The partnership of rag with a dance called the cakewalk is how this type of music made its most impressive showing; although the term ragtime was not used to describe the music used for cakewalking until later.<sup>4</sup>

### **Some Early Ragtime Song Writers**

Some early ragtime writers were Cris Smith of South Carolina and Irving Jones of New York. Others were James T. Brymn, Bob Cole, Will Cook, James Europe, Harry P. Gay, Ernest Hogan, J. Rosamond Johnson, Joe Jordan, Cecil Mack, Fred Stone, Charlie Warfield, Bert Williams, and Clarence Williams. One of the most popular ragtime songs on record, “My Ragtime Baby” (1898), was written by a member of this group, Fred Stone.<sup>5</sup>

Other successful syncopated songs include “Cuban Cake Walk” (Brymn); “Bon Bon Buddy” (Will Marion Cook); “Under the Bamboo Tree” (Cole and Johnson) “When the Band Plays Ragtime” (Cole and Johnson); “Didn’t He Ramble” (Cole and Johnson, under the non de ‘plume of Will Handy); “Darktown Is Out Tonight” (Cook); “My Home Ain’t Nothing Like This” (Jones); “Possumala” (Jones); “Wouldn’t That Be a Dream” (Jordan); “Miss Dora Dean” (Bert Williams); and “Good Morning Carrie” (Smith).<sup>6</sup>

Scott Joplin (1868-1917) is generally called the “King of Ragtime”. In his early teens he played piano in honky-tonks of villages and towns in the Mississippi Valley country. Joplin joined a white music publisher, John Stillwell Stark, to popularize his “Maple Leaf Rag” for piano. He also is known for his opera “Treemonisha”, in which Joplin could find no publisher willing to accept.<sup>7</sup>

Other Rag Composers were Thomas Million Turpin (1873-1922), James Sylvester Scott (1886-1938), Scott Hayden (1882-1915), Louis Chauvin (1883-1908), Arthur Marshall (1881-1956), Sam Patterson (1881-?), Joe Jordon (b.1882), and Eubie Blake, who later write a show with Noble Sissle (b.1889) that made music history—Shuffle Along.<sup>8</sup> Eubie recently had a Broadway show which featured many of his songs entitled “Eubie”. The show ran in Philadelphia before coming to New York.

### **Ragtime Performers**

Saint Louis, was a city where its composers were first to win national recognition. In New Orleans, the city’s best rag pianists would gather in the back rooms of Frenchmen’s Saloon after leaving their regular places of employment. Among them were Albert Carroll, Anthony Jackson, Alfred Wilson, Buddy Carter, Sammy Davis, and Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Norton. First rated pianists could be found in other smaller cities of the south. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the southern pianists begin to drift toward Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

### **Other Noteworthy Events in Negro History**

The year 1900 witnessed in the city of Boston the founding of the National Negro Business League. In 1901, Congressman George White delivered his farewell address in the House of Representatives “in behalf of an

outraged, heart-broken, bruised, and bleeding, but God-fearing people; faithful, industrious, loyal people-rising people, full of potential force.”

In 1904, in the city of Atlanta, Ga., Financier Andrew Carnegie brought together a parcel of prominent Negro leaders including Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. DuBois, who discussed the advancement of the “Interests of the Negro Race.” The personal and ideological clash between the two men is evident at the meeting, though there is agreement that the group should press for “absolute civil, political and public quality.” The group showed little fire in advancing familiar proposals for black self-help.

In 1905, in Buffalo, militant Negro intellectuals from 14 states organized the Niagara Movement, (a forerunner of the NAACP) in opposition to the conciliatory policies of Booker T. Washington as expressed in his 1895 Atlanta Speech. Delegates to the convention demanded the abolition of all distinctions based on race. In 1908, the first Negro sorority was founded in New York on the 100th anniversary of Lincoln’s birth. The signers of the original charter of incorporation include Jane Adams, John Dewey, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, William Dean Howells, and Lincoln Steffens.

Matthew Henson, a Negro member of Admiral Peary’s expedition, placed the flag of the United States at the North Pole. In 1910, the National Urban League was founded with Eugene Kickle Jones as the first executive secretary. Alpha Kappa Alpha was the name given the Negro sorority formed in 1908. <sup>10</sup>

Ragtime playing had developed into a classical art thanks to the help of Scott Joplin and others. Along with the death of Joplin, the vogue of instrumentals rags in the classic style came to an end, along with the end of the major ragtime centers which had developed through the years. What emerged was a jazz-piano style of piano playing which derived its distinctions from improvisation.

It is interesting to note that few persons outside the Negro world had the opportunity to hear rag music as played by its legendary figures. The music which they composed was too difficult to be taken home and “tried on the Piano.” <sup>11</sup>

## **The Blues**

The blues is an aural music, intended to take on its shape and style during the performance. Antecedents of the blues were the mournful songs of stevedores and roustabouts (shiploaders), the field hollers of the slaves, and the sorrow songs among the spirituals. Most frequently the blues has a three line stanza, of which the second line is a restatement of the first, and the third line is a contrasting statement. The later may supply an explanation for the question raised by the first two lines, or it may simply provide a philosophical comment upon the situation:

When a woman gets the blues she hangs her head and cries,

When a woman gets the blues she hangs her head and cries,

But when a man gets the blues, he grabs a train and flies. <sup>12</sup>

“Like most Negro folk music, the blues tends to move in duple rhythms and have a syncopated melody. Its musical form parallels the poetic form, generally with an a-a'-b arrangement for the three-line text, each phrase consisting of four measures and the entire song of twelve measures. A blues form could be shortened to eight measures, for each line is typically condensed into a little more than two measures of the four-

measure phrase, allowing for a 'break' at the end of each line, for improvisation on the accompanying instrument (or instrumental ensemble), during which the singer interjects spoken asides such as 'Oh Lordy' 'Yes man.' 'Oh play it', etc. The resulting effect is a call-and response structure, the instrumental improvisation representing the 'response' to the voice's 'call'." <sup>13</sup>

The blues melody derives from the altered scale in which the third, fifth, seventh, and occasionally the sixth degrees are treated very casually, sometimes being lowered at other times being raised to the natural pitch levels of the major scale. <sup>14</sup>

### **Understanding the Blues Through a Singing Approach**

From experiences with jazz and blues tunes, the teacher could invite students to become aware of pitch. They should be taught to match single pitches first, then pitches in combination and at different interval levels. This perhaps could be done with the help of a piano.

Students should be directed in singing the C major scale:

*(figure available in print form)*

*(figure available in print form)*

Emphasis should always be placed on the reiteration of *Do*. Have the class sing the scale again; the other tones of the scale should be related to *Do* in the manner of singing; for example, re, then sing the tone for *Do* again, then sing the tone for *mi*, back to *Do*, then sing the tone for *fa*, then *Do*, and so on in this manner.

Once these tones have been gone over several times, other tonal combinations might be sung to establish their relationship to the tone *Do*.

*(figure available in print form)*

Once the class has learned how to sing the different pitches of the scale, they could be given numerous opportunities to test their newly acquired skill with songs built from scales on which they have been working.

<sup>15</sup>

These exercises in combination with rhythmic exercises will help the class in understanding Afro-American music more fully. With respect to African music, in particular, it is the energizing force of rhythm that is important. The teacher might help students to better understanding of rhythm by clapping to get the feel of rhythm as a pattern of symbols in motion.

*(figure available in print form)*

The teacher may note that while some students seem to develop a pattern by giving stress or emphasis (accenting) to certain beats into groups of threes, others may be clapping in groups of fours, or twos.

The teacher should explain that the clapping or arranging of beats systematically into time-frames called measures gives a feel of meter. The students should learn to distinguish between quarter and eighth note values by clapping exercises like this:

*(figure available in print form)*

After several exercises like the one above, ties can be placed accordingly to create the feel of syncopation.

*(figure available in print form)*

Other exercises could involve the incorporation of classroom percussion instruments such as hand drums, claves, cymbals, etc. The teacher could then divide the class into two groups: Group 1 beats out the patterns

on the drums, while group 2 will clap the rhythm of the beat. For example:

(figure available in print form)

(figure available in print form)

### **Explanation of Musical Terms Used**

*Accent* To place stress upon.

*Bar Line* Vertical lines which divide a staff into measures.

*Blues* A type of music characterized by a twelve-bar standardized harmonic pattern, and utilizes the blue notes of the scale (flat 3rd. and 7th).

*Break* A brief flurry of notes played by the soloist during a pause in the ensemble playing.

*Chromatic Scale* A series of tones going up or down in pitch in half steps.

*Flat* To lower the pitch of a tone by one half step.

*Half Step* The smallest interval between two adjacent notes in Western music.

*Improvisation* The art of composing and performing extemporaneously; freedom to play or sing instantly at will within the harmonic bounds of a composition.

*Interval* The distance from one tone to another tone.

*Measure* A group of beats marked off by bar lines.

*Motive* A recurrent theme in a musical composition.

*Nationalism* An artistic movement dedicated to the promotion of certain national cultures through the use of folk elements and traditions.

*Phrase* A section of a melody usually eight measures in length.

*Pitch* The highness or lowness of a tone.

*Riff* A short phrase repeated over and over again by the ensemble.

*Scale* A series of musical tones going up or down in pitch, according to a specific scheme.

*Scatt Singing* nonsense syllables instead of words.

*Sideman* Any member of the jazz orchestra other than the leader.

*Syncopation* A rhythmic effect produced when the expected rhythmic pattern is deliberately upset by shifting regular accents to weak beats.

*Tie* A curved line which connects two notes of the same pitch.

*Tonal Center* The keynote on which a composition is centered. <sup>17</sup>

It is often difficult to distinguish between the difference between blues and spirituals. Many spirituals convey to listeners the same feeling of hopelessness and despair as do the blues. The spiritual is religious, however, rather than worldly, and it tends to be more generalized in its expression than specific, more figurative in its language than direct, and more expressive of group feelings than individual ones. <sup>18</sup>

No discussion of the origins of the blues would be complete without the mention of William Christopher Handy (1873-1958), who probably was among the first who composed, played and published a steady stream of blues, spiritual arrangements, marches, hymns, and miscellaneous songs. His collections include *Blues: An Anthology* (1941), and *A Book of Negro Spirituals* (1938). His books include: *Negro Authors and Composers of the United States* (1936), *Father of the Blues* (1941), and *Unsung American Song* (1944). <sup>19</sup>

### **Other Events in Black History**

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson refused to appoint a National Race commission to study the social and economic status of Negroes rejecting a proposal sponsored by Oswald Garrison Villard. In 1914, Joel E. Spingarn of the NAACP instituted the Spingarn awards, to be given annually to American Negroes for unique and distinguished achievement. Dr. Carter G. Woodson established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and also launched the *Journal of Negro History*, with himself as its editor in 1915. That same year brought about a revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the South, beginning in Alabama and spreading to Oklahoma, California, Oregon, Indiana, and Ohio. (Membership in the organization reaches four million in the 1920's.) A "Great Migration" began during which two million Southern Negroes moved to industrial centers in the North. In 1917, some 10,000 Negroes paraded down Fifth Avenue in protest against lynchings in the South. The marchers included NAACP leaders W. E. B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson. Two years later, W. E. B. DuBois organized the first Pan-African Congress at the Grand Hotel, and in 1920, Marcus Garvey opened the national convention of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at Liberty Hall in Harlem. The UNIA, a pioneer black nationalist group, reached the peak of its influence from 1920 to 1921. <sup>20</sup>

### **Syncopated Orchestras and Brass Bands**

By the end of the nineteenth century, there were many dance bands and orchestras flourishing all over the country. Many black dance bands were traditionally reserved for employment of all occasions. This went on for a long period of the history of the United States.

Except for some bands in New Orleans, bandsmen were expected to read music and to play the music as written. Bands were frequently called upon to play for funerals, particularly in southern cities. On the way to the cemetery it was customary for the band to play very slowly and mournfully a dirge or a Protestant hymn such as "Nearer My God to Thee", but on the way back the band would strike up a lively ragtime song such as "Didn't He Ramble", or a syncopated march. <sup>21</sup>

Competition was an integral part of life for a bandsman. A town or city expected its brass band to bring back honor from a competition, just like its baseball team. One band would literally play another off the streets by playing louder or more brilliantly or with sweeter tones. <sup>22</sup>

This is a tradition which has been passed down through the years. I can remember being a student at the then predominately black college, Alabama State University, and a member of the "Marching Hornets" band that the competitive nature existed among its' members, of always doing our best in showing off our skills as musicians, bandsman, and in marching techniques. Whenever we performed at half-time, marched in parades, or at pregame ceremonies against such schools as Tuskegee Institute, Tennessee State, Albany (GA) State,

Alabama A&M, and others, there was always the “Battle of the Bands”. There were no special awards given to the bands, but approval or disapproval was left to the intensity of the cheers and applause of the fans watching the performance. Our motto was “The Price of Glory is High.” We were always dedicated to go the “extra mile” to perfect a performance during rehearsals. This motto, according to Dr. Thomas Lyle, Director of Bands, “has been a great inspiration for veteran bandsmen, and has been the key to their success in life.”

In 1914 a group of New York composers, lyricists, and music publishers met and formed an organization to protect the performing rights of copyright owners of musical compositions. It became known as the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP). This meant that such writers who previously had little protection from music pirates, and particularly black composers, would no longer be forced to retire to poverty while others made thousands of dollars on the sale or performance of their music. <sup>23</sup>

The Syncopated Dance Orchestra and Brass bands were the precursors of Jazz. A prominent figure of the generation was Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton (1885-1942), who was a composer, performer, and jazz historian. In Morton two traditions merged; those of the French colored-creoles who were music readers and played in strict style and the African uptown blacks of New Orleans, who were primarily improvisors. Another figure was James Reese Europe (1881-1919). Jim Europe organized a band during the first World War which won international acclaim in Europe and the United States. Jim Europe introduced certain innovations to his music such as writing up to as many as ten or twelve different parts for each group of instruments in his band, giving the music a full and symphonic quality not heard in other bands at the time. Later this music would be called jazz, with the exception of improvisation. <sup>24</sup>

### **Characteristics of Jazz**

Jazz is vocally oriented which emphasizes individualism. The instrumentation, and the instrumentalists themselves, try to recreate the singing style using scooping, sliding, whining, growling, and falsetto effects.

Jazz is written down but its final product will not necessarily sound as though it were written because each performance of the basic material is different and because the players improvise differently each time the music is played. Jazz also uses the call-and response style of the blues, by employing an antiphonal relationship between two solo instruments or between solo and ensemble. <sup>25</sup>

Traditionally the history of jazz begins with a few pioneers of New Orleans and their Chicago-based groups—among them, King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band; Jelly Roll Morton and his Red Hot Peppers; trumpeter Louis Armstrong with his Hot Five and Hot Seven; and clarinetist Johnny Dodds, who made recordings with several of his groups (the Chicago Footwarmers, the Washboard Band, the New Orleans Wanderers, and the New Orleans Bootblacks). During the 1920’s Chicago’s South Side became the capital of Jazz. <sup>26</sup>

Joseph “King” Oliver (1885-1938) was the first jazzman from New Orleans to make a permanent impact on Chicago. One of Oliver’s young proteges was the talented youngster named Louis Armstrong. Oliver played in Chicago at the Gardens and the Dreamland Cafe. By 1920 he had organized his own group, The Creole Jazz Band, which developed into the finest ensemble of its time. Oliver’s career as a bandleader took a turn for the worse because of three reasons, ill health, his best sidemen left the band, and poor management. <sup>27</sup>

Jelly Roll Morton is regarded as the first true jazz composer because he was one of the first to write down his jazz arrangements in musical notation, and he was the originator of a large number of the pieces that became staples in the jazz repertoire. Morton’s career, like Oliver’s, went into decline during the last years of



his life. <sup>28</sup>

Louis Armstrong was born in 1900. His music career began when he sang for pennies on the streets of New Orleans with other children. He learned to play the trumpet at the Waifs Home for Boys. In Armstrong's playing is reflected the best of the great trumpeters who had preceded him and who were his spiritual or actual mentors including: Buddy Bolden's fiery, powerful tone, Bunk Johnson's lighter, sweet tone and imaginative phrasing, and King Oliver's delicate but firm style, with its inventiveness and with variety of tone. It was during the years after 1925, when Armstrong was playing for several bands, that he earned his world wide reputation. <sup>29</sup>

The musician credited with starting the big band movement was Fletcher Henderson(1898-1952). In New York, Henderson fell heir to the tradition established by James Reese Europe which included exciting music and unorthodox instrumentation. During the period of 1924-36, Henderson enlarged his band with the addition of alto and tenor saxophones, clarinets, and tuba to total sixteen players. The result was an original style which led the way for the big bands to follow. <sup>30</sup> The next few years produced a number of Negro big bands led by such men as William "Chick" Webb (1907-39), Jimmie Lunceford (1902-47), Andy Kirk (b.1898), Erskin Hawkins (b.1914), who was guest artist at a homecoming celebration for Alabama State University in 1974, Cab Calloway (b. 1907), Lucky Millinder (1900-66), Don Redman with McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Luis Russell (1902-63), William "Count" Basie(b. 1904), and Duke Ellington (1899-1974).

Chick Webb was among the first to play at the new Savoy ballroom in Harlem—where he reigned over the birth of such Negro dances as the "lindy-hop" and introduced his singing protege Ella Fitzgerald to the entertainment world. Erskin Hawkins's band started out as a college group, the Alabama State Collegians, and made its reputation chiefly at the Savoy. <sup>30</sup>

Duke Ellington was born in Washington, D. C. He organized an orchestra and later moved to New York, where the orchestra became a vehicle through which he expressed his creativity. It came to represent the ideal big "swinging band." Two of Duke's sidemen, trumpeter James "Bubber" Miley and trombonist Joseph "Trick Sam" Nanton became experts in the use of the rubber-plunger mute to give an almost human sound to their playing. In 1939 Billy Strayhorn (1915-67), pianist-composer, joined Duke's orchestra as an arranger. The collaboration between the two men was so close that often neither could identify which part of a musical work was his. By 1970 Duke Ellington had written more than 2,000 compositions. Some of his successful songs are: "Mood Indigo", "In a Sentimental Mood", "Solitude", "Sophisticated Lady", "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart", and "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good". That Ellington was a composer with serious intentions became evident with his recording of such works as "Black and Tan Fantasy"(1932), "Blue Harlem" (1935). <sup>31</sup>

Kansas city became a magnet for black musicians because of its location in the early 1930's. It was the midway point for East-West. A new form of music evolved with the exchange of ideas of musicians who would spend time exchanging ideas while enroute to various destinations. All would join in the playing at the beginning of a number, then each would take his turn at improvising on the chorus, and finally they would all play together again to bring the piece of music to a close. The procedure allowed for any number of visitors to participate in the playing and at the same time allowed the musicians to display their improvisatory skills. The band of Count Basie established itself as an avant-garde group from which other bands borrowed ideas heavily. Among the bestknown record albums of Basie's works are "One O'clock Jump", "April in Paris", "Jumping at the Woodside", "Blues by Basie", and "A Night at the Apollo". <sup>32</sup>

In 1929, the Negro Musicians Association was formed and chartered. It was comprised of a group of black



professional musicians in need of rehearsal facilities. The building is located in the East District of Kansas City, and is used now as a clubhouse, recital hall and museum.

The Mutual Musician's Foundation Building was a center for the development of the "Kansas City Style" of jazz, serving as a second home, training ground, and source of jobs for approximately 90 percent of the musicians who helped create the powerful Kansas city sound of the 1930's, and the 1940's. Many of the nations leading jazz men were or are members of the Mutual Musicians Foundation, Inc., (which was formed in approximately 1917, following the organization of the Musicians union Local #627, named so after pianist Pete Johnson's "627 Stomp") include band leaders count Basie, Bennie Moten, Jay McShann, and George F. Lee. Singer Julia Lee, trumpeter "Hot" Lips Page, tenor saxophonist, Dick Wilson, Hershhal Evans and Lester Young; alto saxophonist, Charlie "Bird" Parker; and drummer Baby Lovett are also members of the Foundation.

## ***SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR MUSIC APPRECIATION LESSONS***

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Here is a brief outline of suggestions of activities and educational experiences that will contribute to the development of a good Afro-American music appreciation program. Adaptations and modifications may be made according to the varying musical background of the class.

### A. Preparatory work assigned previous to scheduled day for listening lessons:

#### 1. Research by class in the following areas:

##### a. *Composer* : Biographical materials, etc.

- (1) General education: schools attended and academic achievements.
- (2) Musical training: teachers and schools (if any).
- (3) Musical activities: positions held and professional endeavors.
- (4) Non-musical experiences: activities participated in outside the realm of music.
- (5) General information about the composer's music.
- (6) Interesting anecdotes concerning composer.

##### b. *Music History* : History of the development of music during the time of the composer.

##### c. *General History and Cultural Accomplishments* :

- (1) Study of the most important developments in

the history of that time, and the achievements of the prominent music figures of the period.

### B. Discussion of the above assignments on the day of listening lesson:

#### 1. Discussion of the composer:

- a. Biographical information about composer.
- b. Composer's contribution to the art of music.
- c. Discussion of composition to be played:
  - (1) Musical form of composition.
  - (2) Program or absolute music.
  - (3) Instrumentation or voice.
- d. Discussion of the conductor and performing group of the recording to be presented.

#### 2. Correlation with other subjects of the curriculum:

##### a. *Social Studies*

- (1) Discussion of the historical background of the period during which the composer

lived.

(2) Report on the geographical location of the composer's place of birth.

(3) Political figures and developments during this period.

b. *Physical Sciences* :

(1) Discussion of famous scientists of the period, and their relationship, if any, to the composer.

(2) Discussion of the fundamentals of acoustics.

(3) Scientific explanation of the principles of tone production of the various musical instruments.

(4) Scientific inventions and discoveries that might have influenced the music of the period.

c. *Literature* :

(1) Assigned readings on famous authors and their writings that were popular during the lifetime of the composer.

(2) Oral reports and discussion about the composer.

(3) Written reports on the composer and his music.

(4) Creative writing of lyrics to musical compositions.

(5) Writing of interpretive essays on musical compositions.

(6) Relating poetic meter to musical rhythm.

d. *Fine Arts*:

(1) Drawing pictures that the music or title suggests.

(2) Painting or sketching a picture of the composer.

(3) Discussion of art and architecture of the period in music history.

(4) For sculpture, creating clay models of musical subjects.

(5) Making a comparison of the art and music forms of the period.

e. *Mathematics* :

(1) Discussion of time signatures and note values in music, and their relationship to mathematics.

(2) Research on the mathematical principles involved in equal-tempered tuning of the piano.

(3) Selection of musical instruments and research on the mathematical dimensions of these instruments.

g. *Physical Education* :

(1) Folk dances (or social dances) from the period of the composer, performed by students.

(2) Calisthenics performed with a musical background.

(3) Discussion of famous athletic events and athletes of the time of the composer. <sup>33</sup>

## Black Expressiveness

Western man has always shown a great attraction for the capacity of blacks to express the entire spectrum of human emotions, ranging from the deepest gloom to the infinite heights of exhilaration. But the white man has a tendency to borrow the effective aspect of black culture, and in the past has done so with a denial of black humanity, manifested in his scathing cruelty towards blacks.

“Black expressiveness” or the reason blacks act the way they act, can be defined as the readiness or predisposition to express oneself in a manner characterized by vital emotionalism, spontaneity, and rhythm. Western society, particularly in America, is gripped by tension, strain, frustration, and other stresses that significantly lowers the quality of life. <sup>34</sup>

When the African people heard music, it was believed that the rhythmic sound synchronized the rhythms of the cells in their bodies and minds. Because music was seen as the link to the force of all things, hearing impelling rhythms placed them in harmony with the rhythms of planets, and other airy bodies, earth, waters, plants, in short, the universe. They thought that this harmony enriched life, giving one abundant health. <sup>35</sup>

Songs embody metaphor, giving shape and dimension to the evocation of the soul or spirit, or the rhythmic force. These songs and other expressive vehicles are functional, as is black art, in that their unity for conveying feeling is obvious and numerous in example. Easing the pain of damaged human spirits and expediting the attainment of joyous states are noteworthy uses. <sup>36</sup>

Some concrete suggestions follow for liberating the artist in yourself and/or in those with whom you work. These were derived from the different ways blacks in the folk culture have used them to increase their survival chances. With reference to all of the advisory suggestions, there is no order or sequence in their use. Frequency and variety are the important factors for maximum effectiveness. Do as many different ones, singularly or together, as often as you can, and be guided mostly by the way you feel.

Whistling, humming, and singing are ways of making contact with feelings and expressing them.

Cultivate your interest in and skills at playing a musical instrument, or create an instrument of your own.

“Signifyin” is particularly useful in expressing feelings of anger and disgust. This can be a monologue or a written attack. Competitive “signifying” can be a substitute for physical sparring if the two participants are of equal verbal agility and the competition is appropriately officiated. <sup>37</sup>

Braggart “rappin” is useful in bolstering feelings of self-esteem. During the 1970’s and 80’s, popular musicians used “rapping” in their recordings.

Coin your own nickname to crystallize your experience of yourself in an emotionally straining situation. The nickname helps you reduce the strain to a manageable size and enhances the process of working through, even though it may initially appear derogatory, downing, or just plain uncomplimentary. Nicknames are useful, too, in interpersonal situations where personal feedback is desirable. In educational situations, particularly in literature involving stories, dramas, or poems with prominent characters, have children give nicknames to characters as a way of communicating understanding of the characters’ personalities, motives, interests, etc.

Do physical exercises to the rhythm of music. The interface of sensual rhythm with the repetitiveness of exercise movements wards off boredom and the physical discomfort often associated with the sterility of

exercise. A beat gives your movements a sharper time and makes the exercise more enjoyable.

Dance along to popular recordings, moving not necessarily to vogue patterned steps but as your own rhythms steer you. Let your body sway as loosely as possible to the music, without effort to guide the movement.

Choreograph your story of emotional troubles. This can be solo movement or you may direct the movement of others to fashion a musical-drama of your being.

### **Promoting Educational Excellence and School Retention**

#### A. General Purpose

To help school-age youth more fully appreciate the liberating value of a good education and realize that ultimate human freedom lies in knowledge.

#### B. Method

Show group members the attitude of the black folk community toward the liberating powers of education as it is reflected in numerous spirituals by having them listen to recordings or sing in unison. The often thinly veiled but profound and deep educational desire and determination for satisfaction thereof is expressed in many of the spirituals. Play recordings, if possible, while the group follows written words of the song. Then have group members share their reflections on resolves that they might wish with respect to their own lives as related to attaining the benefits of a good education.

### **Intended Learning Experiences**

1. To help group members realize that when education is defined as enlightened training for a place in society and for individual personal development, it was highly respected in Africa.
2. To have group members come to a realization that for thousands of slaves the desire for education was intense and that this desire continues in the black community today. <sup>38</sup>

## **NOTES**

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1. Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1971), p. 310.
2. *Ibid* ., p. 312.

3. *Ibid .*, p. 313.
4. *Ibid .*
5. *Ibid .*, p. 316.
6. *Ibid .*, p. 317.
7. *Ibid .*, p. 318.
8. *Ibid .*, p. 325.
9. *Ibid .*, p. 327.
10. Ploski, Herry A. & Daiser, Ernest. *AFRO USA* (Bellwether Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1971), pp. 21-22.
11. Southern. *Music of Black Americans* p. 332.
12. *Ibid .*, p. 334
13. *Ibid .*
14. *Ibid .*
15. Simmons, Otis D. *Teaching Music in Urban Schools* (Crescendo Publishing Co., Boston, 1975), p. 63.
16. *Ibid .*, p. 44.
17. Forcucci, Samuel L. *Let There Be Music* (Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, 1969), pp. 262-270.  
Roach, Hildred. *Black American Music: Past and Present* (Crescendo Pub. Co., New York, 1976), pp. 191-193.  
Rooker, James (ed.). *Making Music Your Own*(Silver Burdett Co., New Jersey, 1968), pp. 277-280.
18. Southern. *Music of Black Americans* p. 336.
19. *Ibid .*, p. 338.
20. Ploski & Daiser. *AFRO USA* pp. 21-22.
21. Southern. *Music of Black Americans* p. 343
22. *Ibid .*
23. *Ibid .* p. 352.
24. *Ibid .*, p. 344.
25. *Ibid .*, p. 379.
26. *Ibid .*
27. *Ibid .*
28. *Ibid .*, p. 380.
29. *Ibid .*, p. 381.
30. *Ibid .*, p. 385.
31. *Ibid .*, p. 386.
32. *Ibid .*, pp. 388-389.
33. Apicella, Anthony J.; Giampa, Attilio J.; & Apicella, Margarita B. *Simplicity in Music Appreciation* (Parker Pub. Co., Inc., New York, 1974), pp. 1-2.
34. Pasteur, Alfred B. & Toldson, Ivory L. *Roots of Soul* (Anchor Press/ Doubleday, New York, 1982), p. 4.
35. *Ibid .*, p. 73.
36. *Ibid .*
37. *Ibid .*, p. 269.
38. *Ibid .*, pp. 270-271.

## Books Recommended for Students

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Bane, Michael. *White Boy Singin' The Blues* (Penguin Books, New York, 1982).

Evans, David. *Big Road Blues* (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1982).

Gerland, Phyl. *The Sound of Soul* (Henry Regery Co., Chicago, 1969).

Glassman, Judith. *The Year in Music* (Columbia House, New York, 1979).

Marris, Middleton; Levitt, Morris; & Smith, Ernest. *The Black Book* (Random House, New York, 1974).

Hurston, Zora Neal. *The Santified Church* (Turtle Island Press, Berkeley, California, 1981).

Lyttelton, Humphrey, *The Best of Jazz II: Enter the Giants 1931-1944* Taplinger Pub. Co., New York, 1982.

Morris, Berenice Robinson. *American Popular Music of the 20th Century* (Franklin Watts, Inc., 1974).

Ploski, Harry A. & Kaiser, Ernest (Ed). *Afro U.S.A.* (Bellwether Pub. Co., New York, 1971).

Turner, Frederick. *Remembering Song* (Viking Press, New York, 1982).

## Books Recommended for Teachers

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Apicella, Anthony J.; Giampa, Attilio J.; & Apicella, Margarita B. *Simplicity in Music Appreciation* (Parker Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1974).

Bessom, Tatarunis, and Forcucci. *Teaching Music in Today's Secondary Schools* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974).

de Lerma, Dominique-Rene. *Black Music in Our Culture* (Kent State Univ. Press, 1970).

Pasteur, Alfred B. & Toldson, Ivory L. *Roots of Soul* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1982).

Mapp, Edward, *Directory of Blacks in the Performing Arts* (Scarecrow Press Inc., Metuchen, N. J., 1978).

Dennison, Sam. *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (Garland Pub., Inc., New York, 1982).

Roach, Hildren. *Black American Music: Past and Present* (Crescendo Pub. Co., New York, 1976).

Simmons, Otis D. *Teaching Music in Urban Schools* (Crescendo Pub. Co., Boston, 1975).

Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans* (W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1971).



## Recordings

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History of Jazz Series (Folkways F J 2801-11)

Includes a performance of Scott Joplin's Original Rags transcribed from the original player-piano rolls.

The Story of Jazz (Folkways F J 7212)

Narrated by Langston Hughes especially for young people but equally rewarding for adults, including excerpts from documentary recordings of ragtime and early blues.

The Eighty-Six Years of Eubie Blake (Columbia C2S-847)

The performer plays old standards.

Traditional Blues (Folkways F A 242102)

Old Rags (Audiophile 49)

Golden Treadury of Ragtime (Audiophile 89-82)

Piano Works of James Scott (Audiophile 76-77)

Piano World os Scott Joplin (Audiopile 72-72)

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