



**Wil-B** (on right) immigrated to the United States from the Bahamas with his family at the age of 11. He hoped to join the school band to play saxophone, but accidentally was placed in the string program. He grew to love the viola and mastered it as well as the trumpet, drums and bass guitar.

**Kev Marcus** (on left) began playing violin at age 9, with the encouragement of his mother. He and Will-B met while attending the famed Dillard High School of the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida where they were trained in the classical tradition. During their class and practice time they developed firm classic techniques and in free time listened to hip hop and rhythm and blues.

Both Wil-B and Kev Marcus attended college on full music scholarships. Wil-B attended Florida State, and Kev Marcus went to Florida International University

Black Violin was born when Marcus heard the music of violinist Stuff Smith, considered to be the first violinist to use electrical amplification techniques on a violin. His professor sat him down at a lesson and told him to listen. Marcus said Smith's music was "unbelievable", saying "classical violin with soul and fire. I loved it." He passed the music on to Wil-B and together they decided to form a band, calling it Black Violin, named after Smith's eponymous soulful solo album. Inspired by Smith's music, the two realized that they could synthesize all the styles they loved: classical, jazz, R&B, hip-hop, and even reggae and gypsy music.

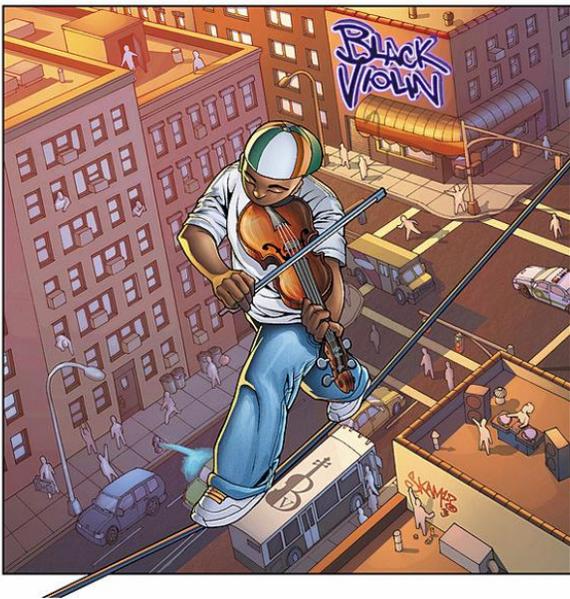
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Along with their DJ, DJ TK, Kev and Will-b have created the ultimate synergy between classical and Hip-Hop music, and through it an incredible opportunity to reach young children. Among their achievements Black Violin clinched the Showtime at the Apollo 2005 Legend title, performed on the same bill with some of the industry's biggest artists and performed at the official President's Inaugural Ball in 2013. They even scored an episode of *CSI; New York*, adapting the finale of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* for an on-screen murder. The two are also avid producers and writers, and have released two albums of original music: "Black Violin" (2007) and "Classically Trained" (2013).

## About Black Violin's Music

One of Black Violin's most well-known works, "**Brandenburg**", "quotes" J.S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 movement 1*, one of six works widely held as the most influential and finest compositions of the Baroque period. (In jazz, performers "quote" musical material by using melodies and ideas from other artists as the basis for their interpretation.) In 1721, Bach presented a series of six concerti to the Margrave of Brandenburg, who then put these great works on the shelf where they sat until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bach wrote each concerto, often requiring virtuosos to play the solos, for a different combination of instruments. No.3 was composed for three violins, three violas, three cellos, and basso continuo, while No. 6 does not use a violin at all!

"**Dirty Orchestra**" utilizes fugues and counterpoints to create a musical narrative.. A fugue is a composition tool in which one instrument plays a short melody, then another instrument echoes the pieces, then another echoes, and so on, with all parts interweaving into each other. Counterpoints in music are two corresponding melodies that are played at the same time.



"**Gypsy**" takes its cue in the Romani musical tradition that has influenced classical music since Bach and Haydn, and particularly Liszt, Dvorak, and Bartok. In turn, the local musical traditions influenced the music and style of the Roma (gypsies) living there. For example, in Spain, they are known for Flamenco. The Roma are a nomadic people, originally from India, and have migrated westward for the past two thousand years (they picked up the name "gypsy" in the 1500's because it was believed they were from Egypt.) Romani music is most associated with the violin, incorporating changes in tempo, slides in notes and pitches, energy and soul.

### What To Expect

Wil-B and Kev Marcus collaborate with DJ TK to create their signature multi-genre sound. Audiences will recognize elements of songs by artists from Puccini to the Temptations, from Coldplay to Johann Sebastian Bach\*. DJ's like DJ TK cut and loop beats to recreate music. They also pause, scratch, backspin, speed up or slow down, and/or delay the music. In its simplest form cutting would involve cutting a few bars of the beat and looping it to create a continuous sound.

In the beginning of the use of turntables, DJs would have two identical records. When the first record finished playing the song's break, or an interlude in the music in which everything stops except the percussion, the DJ stops playing that record and plays the second record at the break. The DJ would set the first record back to the break and play that once the second record finished, and continue this indefinitely.

## Glossary

**Hip-hop music-** a musical genre that began in the South Bronx of New York City in the 1970's. It is defined by four central stylistic elements: rapping, DJ-ing, sampling, and beatboxing.

**Jazz-** a musical art form characterized by blue notes, syncopation, swing, call and response, polyrhythms, and improvisation. Originating in African- American communities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, jazz has been called "the first original art form" to develop in the United States of America.

**Blues-** a musical form created primarily within the African-American communities in the Deep South of the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from spirituals, work songs, field hollers, narrative ballads, shouts, and chants. The genre is characterized by specific chord progressions- most commonly a 12 bar progression.

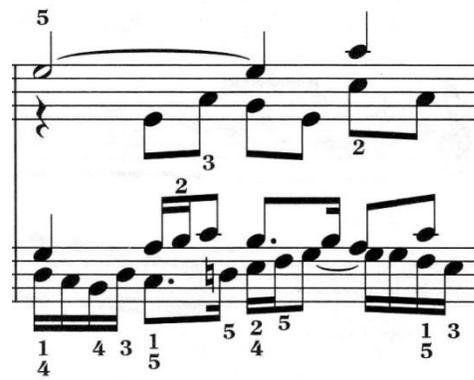
**Classical music-** music, usually European and from the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, following Western music traditions such as fugue and counterpoint.



**Theme-** a melody around which a musical composition is based.

**Fugue-** a composition tool in which one instrument plays a short melody then another instrument echoes the piece, then another echoes, and so on so that all parts interweave with each other.

**Counterpoint-** the relationship between two melodies in a piece of music that fit together harmoniously, but have different rhythms



**Composer-** a person who writes music

**Concerto-** A form of music that features a solo instrument with an orchestra or other ensemble.

**Melody-** a series of notes that form a distinctive sequence

**Musical score-** the written form of a musical composition

**DJ-** "Disc Jockey" someone who uses musical performance techniques, selects and plays music to accompany MCs/rappers, singers or in the case of Black Violin, other musicians.

**Canon-**A type of structure where a theme or melody is introduced, and later the same melody or a variation, is layered on top.

**Ostinato** – A stable and constant repeating rhythm, as in Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*.

## History of Hip Hop

<p><b>1925-</b> Louis Armstrong introduces scatting, a type of vocal improvisation, in his song <i>Heebie Jeebies</i>, which went on to influence beat boxing.</p>	<p><b>1988-</b> DJ Jazzy Jeff and Will Smith (aka The Fresh Prince) win the first rap award at the Grammy's.</p>
<p><b>1930-</b> Nonsense words and singing in a half-talk, are incorporated by Harry "The Hispster" Gibson and Slim Gaillard.</p>	<p><b>1992-</b> <i>Vibe</i> magazine, the first magazine dedicated to hip-hop culture, begins publishing</p>
<p><b>1973-</b> DJ Kool Herc, aka Clive Campbell, deejays his first block party in the Bronx, NYC. He uses two turntables, and creates "breakbeats", laying the foundation for the b-boy dance movement (break boys- dancers who rock out on the dance floor during those breaks).</p>	<p><b>1993-</b> The duo OutKast releases <i>Player's Ball</i> which hits number one on the Billboard Rap Chart.</p>
<p><b>1976-</b> PS 123 in the Bronx is home to the first DJ battle between Disco King and Afrika Bambaataa.</p>	<p><b>1995-</b> Hip Hop represents almost 7% of the entire music industry's income</p>
<p><b>1979-</b> The Sugar Hill Gang releases <i>Rapper's Delight</i>, the first commercial rap record on Sugar Hill Records.</p>	<p><b>1999-</b> Lauryn Hill, member of The Fugees, becomes the first woman to receive 10 Grammy nominations for her solo album <i>The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill</i>, and wins five including Album of the Year and Best New Artist</p>
<p><b>1982-</b>The film <i>Wild Style</i>, co created by Fab Five Freddy and directed by Charlie Ahearn, is released featuring the first full-length account of all four elements in hip hop culture: graffiti, DJ-ing, MCing and B-boying.</p>	<p><b>2002-</b> Hip hop now makes up almost 14% of the music industry</p>
<p><b>1986-</b> Run DMC's <i>Raising Hell</i> goes platinum,  <b>1987-</b> The Beastie Boys' debut <i>License to Ill</i> becomes the first rap album to reach number one.</p> <p>Salt-N-Pepa's hit <i>Push It</i> establishes them as leading female artists in hip-hop music making it the first rap album to do so.</p>	<p><b>2003-</b> For the first time in the history of the United States BILLOBOARD chart, the top ten songs are all by African- American artists.</p> <p><b>2005-</b> 55% of the hip-hop consumer market is white males between the ages of 25-45 with incomes \$40,000 and up, signifying an expansion of the hip-hop market.</p>

**2005** - Black Violin wins the Grand Prize of the "Showtime at the Apollo". That same year they open and perform with Mike Shinoda, The Eagles, Stevie Nicks, Nas, 50 Cent, T-Pain, and at the Billboard Music Awards with Alicia Keys.

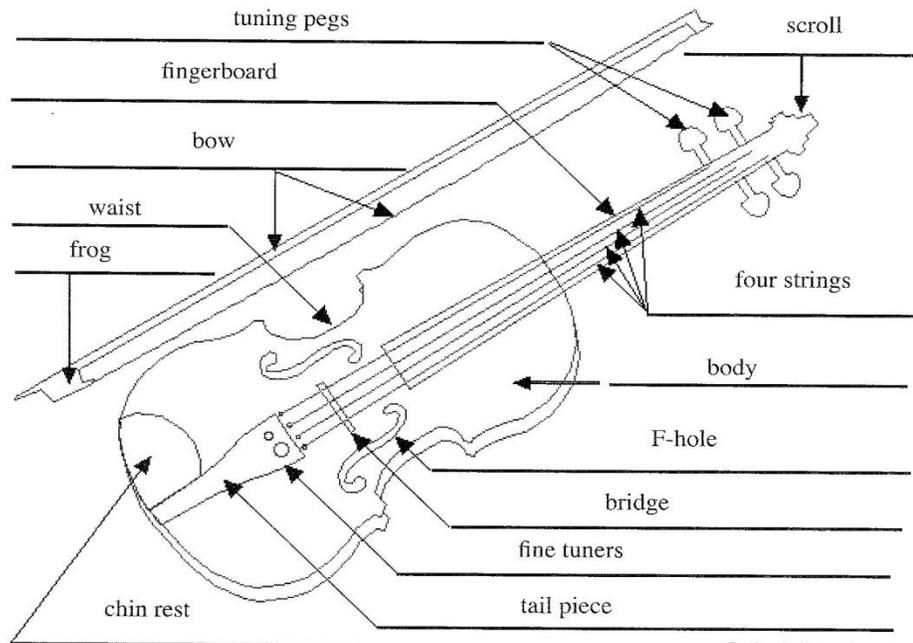
**2008**- Black Violin releases their debut self-titled Album. They perform over 200 shows in 9 countries and 45 US shows including shows at US Military bases in Germany, and for families of troops stationed in Iraq. They open for AKON, Fat Joe, Common, Wu-Tang, and Jay-Z all over the world.

**2013**- Black Violin releases *Classically Trained*, their sophomore album featuring their signature mash up of hip hop and classical music.



Alaska Junior Theater

## The Anatomy of the Violin



EnchantedLearning.com

*The Arts-in-Education Committee of The Performing Arts Center at Purchase College created this Teacher's Guide. Some material was derived from Guides created by The New Victory Theater, NJPAC, and Alaska Junior Theater. We are grateful for the quality of their works and their willingness to share them.*

## Recommended Reading/ Listening

- Top 100 Musicians*, Shallini Sayena, Ed., Britannica Educational Publishing and *Great Musicians*, Robert Ziegler, DK Eyewitness Books. Both cover composers and performer from Handel, Bach, Beethoven to Mahler, Philip Glass, Placido Domingo, Springsteen, Dylan, Michael Jackson, Eminem, and many more. Fully illustrated in color.
- Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers, Holiday House. A journey in poetry through jazz's beginnings to the present day. Beautifully illustrated.
- Who Were the Beatles?*, Geoff Eggers, Penguin Young Readers. Information about each boy's boyhood, the meteoric rise of the band and ultimate parting.
- Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?*, Yona Zeldis McDonough, Penguin Young Readers. Grosset & Dunlop. Mozart's career including a legacy of over 600 works, and personal life, are explored in a vivid cultural history of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe.
- The Cosmo-a Biography of Sun Ra*, Chris Raschka, Candlewick Press. Picture book biography of experimental jazz musician Sun Ra is a Caldecott Prize winner.
- Leonard Bernstein: Conductor and Composer*, Jean F. Blashfield, Ferguson Career Biographies, Ferguson Publishing Co. Checkmark Books. An account of his education, challenges, mentors and career achievements.
- John Coltrane: Jazz Revolutionary*, Rachel Barron, Morgan Reynolds (publisher). Traces the life of the most influential jazz musician of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the evolution of his music.
- Paul Robeson: The Life and Times of a Free Black Man*, Virginia Hamilton, Harper & Row. A chronicle of his life as the son of a runaway slave through tumultuous years in American History.
- Who Was Louis Armstrong?* Yona Zeldis McDonough, Penguin Young Readers, Grosset & Dunlop. Armstrong's passion and genius pushed jazz into new exciting realism. His life spanned a critical time in American music and black history.
- Ellington Was Not a Street*. Ntozake Shange. Simon & Schuster. A poets reflective tribute to the African American community of old. With limited life options they created a movement that changed the world.
- Black Music in America: A History Through Its People*. James Haskins, Harper Collins. A panoramic history of African-American music chronicles the development of black music through the lives of key black musicians.
- Music From Strings*. Josephine Paker. Millbrook. Traces the development of stringed instruments through various cultures.

### Suggested Music

- Michael Jackson, *Billie Jean*
- W.A. Mozart, *Symphony in G Minor K 550 #40,1*
- Sugar Hill Gang, *Rappers Delight*
- Rihanna, *Umbrella*
- Stuff Smith, *Black Violin*

Black Violin's music is available at <http://blackviolin.net> as well as for download on itunes, and streaming on SoundCloud (<https://soundcloud.com/black-violin> )

## Curriculum Standards and Activities Aligned to CCLS

Note: Because the Music CCLS have not been finalized, we have selected other relevant standards.

### Pre Show Activities:

*CCLS W.2 Write explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.*

-Students will conduct research and write an informative essay on topics relating to the violin such as:

- History of the violin
- Explanation of how violins are made
- Explanation of how violins make sound
- Explanation of how the violin is played
- The importance of varnish on acoustic violins
- Influential violinists

-Students will explore different genres, mix them up to create something new and write about what they did to change the genre:

- Choose a recognizable piece of music that your students will know the lyrics to, such as “The Star Spangled Banner of “Umbrella “ by Rihanna.
- Ask the whole class to sing the chorus of the song through a few times.
- Then introduce different genres like Country, Opera, Jazz, Classical and ask the students to sing that same chorus but in the style or variation of that new genre.
- Have students write an explanation of what they did to change the genres.

### Post Show Activities

*CCLS W.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.*

-Students will write an argumentative essay for or against combining different types of music, such as, but not limited to, classical and hip-hop.

-Students will write an argumentative essay for or against their school being more involved in the arts (possible audience: principal/BOE/PTA). The essay should include the benefits of musical study.

*CCLS W.2 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well structured event sequences.*

- Students will write a narrative of their experience at the Black Violin Concert.
- From the perspective of the violin, write a creative narrative about “The Day in the Life of Wil-B’s Violin”, using rich adjectives and verbs to describe sensory details, feelings and emotions.

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