

# AMERICAN SONGBOOK

BRIGHT STAR CHILDREN'S THEATRE, LLC \* BRIGHT STAR TOURING THEATRE

## Music in America!

Music and its importance in our civilization date back to the dawn of man. Music has played many roles throughout history as a device for storytelling, entertainment, warfare and so much more.

In creating this production, one of the most exciting things for us was to dig into our nation's history and discover what songs were heard as America was built up. From the sailing songs and Old English hymns that were brought here with the early English settlers to the powerful role of music in the Civil Rights Movement, America's musical history is rich and timeless.

We hope this production engages your young audiences to reflect on the role of music in their own life and within the context of our nation. It's interesting (albeit scary) to consider future generations celebrating the contributions of artists like Justin Beiber and Miley Cyrus. Everywhere we've been and everywhere we'll go is always better told with music!



## Mapping American Music

The United States has such a rich musical history because our country is a melting pot, a place where different cultures, ideas, theories and beliefs are blended together.

Above, there is a map of the world. Below are just a few of the places people came from to create different styles of music in the United States. Place a dot on the map for every location which influenced the development of American music.

### THE MANY BIRTHPLACES OF AMERICAN MUSIC

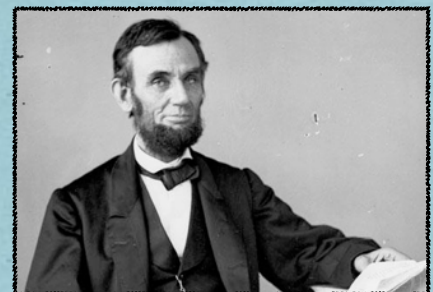
-IRELAND -THE UKRAINE -AFRICA -THE AMERICAN SOUTH -  
SCOTLAND -CENTRAL AMERICA -JAMAICA -FRANCE  
-THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS



Many Native American songs were used for ceremonial purposes; such as, weddings, wars, and religious services. They were passed down for many generations, and were thought to have originally been performed by gods or deities.



"Work Songs" were often sung by American slaves as a way to escape hardship and communicate with each other. These songs helped develop later genres of music like Gospel, Blues, Jazz, Rock & Roll and Hip Hop.



Music is an important part of daily life, even if you are the President of the U.S. Abraham Lincoln enjoyed opera so much that he was known to attend performances, even in war time. He said it helped him clear his mind.

## WHAT MAKES A SONG A SONG?



**Tempo:** The speed at which a piece of music is played. This is related to the rhythm or beat of a song. What instruments are used to keep tempo? How can you keep tempo without any instruments?

**Lyrics:** The words that make up a song. Often, this is divided into a chorus (part of the song that gets repeated) and verses. Do all songs have lyrics? If not, how do they get meaning across to the people listening?

**Melody:** An organized pattern or sequence of tones with various pitches. Often, this is the most recognizable part of a song. If someone says a song is a "catchy tune," they might be talking about the melody of the song.

## Music Facts!

Francis Scott Key, who wrote the Star Spangled Banner, was originally a lawyer.

Hip Hop is a musical form that began with spoken word poetry in large cities like New York.

Musicians who play in a military band have to go through the same initial physical and combat training as soldiers.

The Blues is a truly American musical form. American slaves developed this musical form before music could be recorded.

# MUSIC Makes the World GO



## FUN ACTIVITIES!

#1 Break students into groups and give each group a genre of American music to study. Then create a timeline of American music as a class based on when genres emerged and why. Examples of genres to study:

-Bluegrass, Big band, Ragtime, Country, R&B, The Blues, Folk, Jazz, Rock & Roll

#2 Tell students to research their favorite musical artist and present that artist to the rest of the class. What are their influences and inspirations? What style of music do they perform? Where are they from and how does that effect their sound?

#3 Have students choose a popular or well known song and change the words to create a fun new song. This song could be about a current event, about a day in their lives at school or about a role model. Encourage them to use humor and lots of creativity!

## QUICK QUESTIONS...

1. What songs that are historically significant did we leave out of the play/ which songs would you add?

2. What was your favorite song in the play and why?

3. If there was a song about you, what style of song would it be?

4. If you were a songwriter, what American hero would you write about?

5. Many musical genres have been influenced by other cultures coming to America. Can you name some musical styles that reflect this?

# "Popular" MUSIC

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## MUSIC & TECHNOLOGY

Technology has greatly affected the way we make and listen to music today. Now, we can literally hold music in the palm of our hands. In the time of songs like 'Yankee Doodle Dandy', sometimes the only way to hear music was to sing it together. Can you think of anywhere we still sing songs together? Do you think it's easier for songs to become popular today?

## CREATE YOUR OWN SONG

You don't need fancy recording equipment to make music. People have been creating music for centuries using their voices, bodies and everyday items.

In groups of three or four, create a miniature song (1 minute or less)

## AROUND CAMPUS



*Make your own Castanets! Have students help you bring in the supplies. Small cardboard pieces rounded off on the ends, old bottle caps and some paint, markers, stickers or glitter and you've got a fabulous new set musical instruments!*

\* Share your favorite SONG! Have each student find a song they want to share 30 seconds of to the class and then give a 1-minute report on the history of the song, who wrote and performed it and why they love it so much.



that you will perform for the class. Use only yourselves and items around you to make the song. Suggestions: hands, feet, pencils, pens, notebooks, desks, floor.

## WHAT MAKES A SONG POPULAR

The songs you heard today say something important about our culture. They are about American

heroes, turning points in our history and overcoming struggles.

Make a list of three songs you think will be remembered from your generation and why. Do they say something important about this time in America? Is the artist especially unique? Does it have a catchy tune? What significance does it hold?

## FAMOUS QUOTES: ALL ABOUT MUSIC.



"If music be the food of love, play on."  
-William Shakespeare



"Music doesn't lie. If there is something to be changed in this world, then it can only happen through music"  
-Jimi Hendrix



"Where words fail, music speaks."  
-Hans Christian Andersen



"Music should be your escape."  
-Missy Elliot



"Without music, life would be a mistake."  
-Friedrich Nietzsche

### GROUP ACTIVITY!

Create a list of topics or events, cut them up and place them in a hat. Then divide students into small groups and have them select a topic. Students will decide on a rhythm to sing their song to and keep that rhythm by clapping their hands. Then they will improvise a song one line at a time by taking turns going around the circle. The challenge is to create a story and song that makes sense while keeping the rhythm!



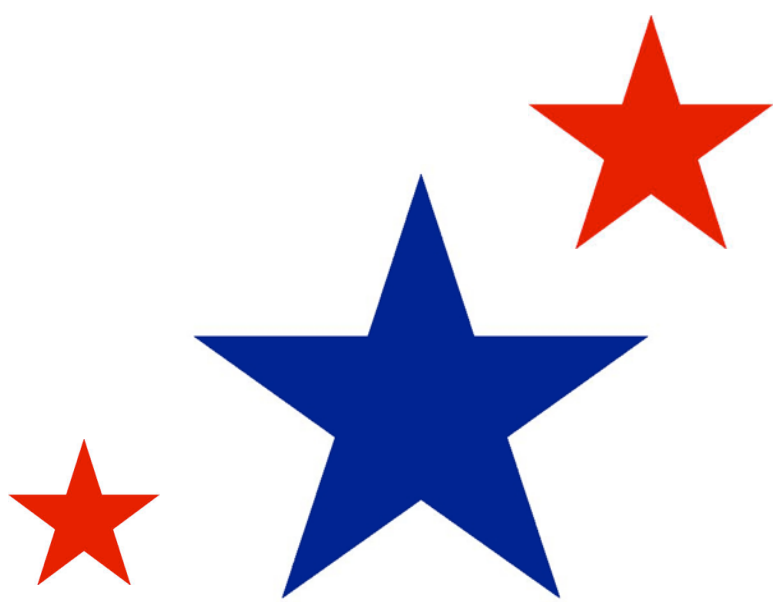
# Make Connections!



Draw a line matching the song you heard from *American Songbook* on left with the time period or movement the song is associated with on the right. *Some time periods will be matched with more than one song.*

- 'Yankee Doodle Dandy'
- 'Follow the Drinking Gourd'
- 'Home on the Range'
- 'We Shall Overcome'
- 'Shenandoah'
- 'The Star Spangled Banner'
- 'Over There'
- Abraham Lincoln's Campaign Song
- 'Rosie the Riveter'
- 'Party in the USA'

- Revolutionary War
- The American Frontier
- World War Two
- Pre-Civil War/Time of American Slavery
- World War One
- Contemporary
- The Civil Rights Movement





## YOU CAN DO THIS TOO!

**Where to start:** All of our actors started out playing and telling stories when they were young -then they decided to study acting in school. Now they are pros! Here are some ways you can start doing theatre right away!

**In School!** Does your school have plays or musical performances? This is a great place to start.

**In Your Community!** Many towns have community theaters or local acting groups. See if you can try out!

**Start Something!** If your school doesn't have a drama club or a theatre club, talk to your favorite teacher about how you might be able to start one.

**At Home!** Get together with friends, cousins, brothers and sisters and make your own play. You can make up plays based on your favorite books and stories. Invite family and friends to see your performance.

**Try new things and do your best at them!** There are lots of jobs in the theatre besides acting. There are people who paint the sets, make costumes, write plays and more. Get the most out of your art, music and English classes. You can use all of these things to be a live theatre pro!

## Before, During and After the Play...



### BEFORE YOU SEE THE PLAY...

Attending the theatre is very different from watching TV or going to the movies. For one thing, the actors are real people who are performing right then and there. They can see and hear everything that happens in the audience. Because of this, YOU are an important part of the play and its important to do your job as an audience member well. Here are some tips before you see the play.

1. Please be quiet and respectful so everyone else around you can hear what's happening and so the actors can do their job.
2. If something is funny, it is okay to laugh!
3. The actors may ask you to participate. Don't be afraid to respond, ask a question or volunteer!
4. Keep your hands to yourself and your eyes up front.
5. If you like the play, be sure to clap at the end.
6. Have fun! Enjoy yourself!



## After seeing the Play...

Write your own review of the play! A review is a way of telling your thoughts about a play, movie or book. Consider the following when you are writing your review.

*What was your favorite part? Who was your favorite character? Can you summarize the play in your own words? If you had written this play, would you have done anything different? Would you recommend this play to a friend? Name one new thing you learned from watching this play!*

## FUN FACTS ABOUT THEATRE!

After a play is over and everyone goes home, there is always a light left on backstage. It's called a ghost light!

The oldest play that is still around was written by an Ancient Greek named Aeschylus. It's almost 2500 years old!

The longest performance on stage ever was over 23 hours long! It happened in New Jersey in 2010.

William Shakespeare is a famous play writer. He wrote 37 plays and is still quoted by many people.

There are 157 million google pages that mention him--the most of any famous person ever!

In theatre, it's considered bad luck to tell an actor, "Good luck" before a performance. Instead, you're supposed to say, "Break a leg!"

# Everything about the Theatre!



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

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

## 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 even around the world.
4. We watch over 1200 actors audition before we cast our season.
5. We offer dozens of 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!

**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 or read something from it.

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

**The Process of a Play:**

1. Actors audition
2. Directors cast the show (that means they choose actors)
3. The directors and actors rehearse the play (that means they practice it).
4. A team of people works on building the set, costumes and props.
5. The play opens (that means it is performed for the first time)!

Were there other terms that came 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 many schools, museums, theaters and community events 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.

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

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

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:

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