2017-18 Season Classroom Companion

Ensemble Español

Too Hot to Handel

Alvin Ailey
We are so excited to welcome you and your students to our National Historic Landmark theatre in downtown Chicago for a memorable performance experience. Before you walk through our doors, we invite you to use this Classroom Companion to prepare for the show.

In the pages that follow, you will find ways to encourage and guide your students to ENGAGE with the performance and participate in activities that CONNECT the performance to what they’re learning in class. You’ll also find ways to help inspire your students to CREATE their own unique art!

We hope that this experience does not stop after the performance, and continues beyond the walls of the theatre to actively encourage your students to immerse themselves in artistic culture.
**WHAT IS MUSIC?**

**MUSIC (n):** Vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion.

“Jazz speaks for life. The Blues tell the story of life’s difficulties, and if you think for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music, only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph. This is triumphant music.” — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**A NOTE TO TEACHERS:** The Auditorium Theatre annually presents *Too Hot To Handel* in celebration of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The piece encapsulates Dr. King’s notion of “Beloved Community” as many unique voices join together each January to create one beautiful sound. As a piece of music, *Too Hot To Handel* is a jazz-gospel reimagining of Handel’s *Messiah* — a classical masterpiece that, by its nature as an oratorio, draws inspiration from religious themes. This Classroom Companion aims to provide you with tools to guide your students in exploring the historic connection between the civil rights movement and the music of American religious communities, as well as the roots of Dr. King’s message of “Beloved Community” and how this message remains relevant today.

As you watch this performance, encourage your students to:

**NOTICE**

Pay attention to how the artists interact with each other. How do the individual musicians work together within a full orchestra? How do the soloists interact with one another and with the choir? How does the conductor guide the performers through the performance? Where else do you see people working together to achieve a common goal? What “give and take” do the musicians bring to the stage in order for each performance to be a success?

**HEAR**

Listen to the dynamics used by the musicians to guide you through the story. How does the change in volume impact the audience’s experience? What about different tempos? These are tools that musicians, as well as orators such as Dr. King, use to invoke emotions and express meaning throughout their art.

**SEE**

Look at the diversity that exists among the performers and the instruments they use! This is a group of performers that represents the entire Chicagoland and Detroit area, with members from different backgrounds, race, religions, and ages — each with unique talents for different instruments. Every sound is absolutely necessary to the performance! All of the performers on stage are tied together by the common piece of music they have gathered to perform, and by the fact that they believe music can inspire, empower, and unite people. Is there anything missing from this ensemble? How would the piece change if one of these elements (for example, the choir or the trumpet section) were not present?
George Frideric Handel, born in 1685, composed his most famous work, the *Messiah*, in 1741. Despite modest initial reaction, the oratorio gained fame and became one of the best known choral works in Western music. (An oratorio is a large-scale musical work for orchestra and voices, typically a narrative on a religious theme, performed without the use of costumes, scenery, or action.)

Over 200 years later, Marin Alsop, Gary Anderson, and Bob Christianson wanted to create a fresh feel for the *Messiah*. They sought to do this by fusing jazz, gospel, rock, and funk music styles with the classical score, hoping to create a piece that encouraged the audience to be actively involved in the performance. The show you’re about to experience is the result of that collaboration!
You may know that Dr. King spoke about the concept of a “Beloved Community” and dreamed of a future when people from all backgrounds would come together for a common purpose. You may also know that he was a Christian minister, drawing lines directly from the Christian Bible in some of his speeches. Since oratorios such as the Messiah pull from religious themes, their lyrics are also drawn directly from the Christian Bible. And since Too Hot to Handel is directly based on Handel’s Messiah, you can actually find phrases that appear both in Dr. King’s speeches and the lyrics of Too Hot! These common quotations and phrases, such as “every valley shall be exalted,” highlight the search for social equality and justice that was pivotal to the Civil Rights Movement that Dr. King worked for throughout his life.

Additionally, the joining-together of each unique voice of the choir and orchestra for a common purpose is a small but mighty reflection of our own “Beloved Community” here in Chicago. Consider the many unique and different voices in your classroom.

- In what ways do you use the strengths of each individual voice to benefit your classroom community?
- What is the common purpose or goal of your classroom community?
- What similarities can you draw between coming together as students in a classroom community every day, and the musicians in the performance coming together as a musical community for each show?
RELIGION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Although the Civil Rights Movement was not aligned with any particular religion or set of beliefs, people from many different religious backgrounds were involved in the organizing and leadership of the movement. Explore a brief history of this below, and check out the provided web resources to further explore the connection!

**In the 1950s:** Leadership and activism of the Civil Rights Movement shifted from elite organizations in the north (who focused mainly on legislative changes) to southern communities (who focused on direct action). This movement was supported financially and intellectually by major religious denominations from across the country. These included, but were not limited to, Christianity and Judaism. Many African American churches served as the meeting spaces, training grounds, and sources of inspiration for those “on site” in the movement.

**In 1957,** the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was created to harness the organizing power of black churches to conduct nonviolent protests for civil rights reform. Dr. Martin Luther King was the first president of the SCLC.

The influence of Dr. King’s background as a clergyman can be seen in many of his writings and speeches. Historians have noted that King “cherished the great hymns of the church, particularly those that spoke to the ethic of service, and to be involved in changing the quality of life of human beings.” As an example, Dr. King’s well-known “I Have a Dream” speech directly aligns with some of the lyrics in “Every Valley” from Too Hot to Handel. Have your students look at the two texts and see if they can find similar verses and lines!

**QUICK FACT:** Dr. King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance.

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We recommend these sites for more information on the role religion played in the Civil Rights Movement:


VOICES OF THE MUSICIANS

THE MANY MUSICIANS
You will see a variety of musicians working together on stage during this performance. Learn about each type of musician, then see if you can pick them out during the performance!

THE CONDUCTOR
Unifies the performers. She will set the tempo, execute clear beats, shape the sound of the ensemble, and control the pace. Who does the conductor remind you of?

WIND INSTRUMENTS
Used to create music using the vibration of air, usually created by the musician blowing into the instrument.

Look up these wind instruments, then see if you can find them on stage: saxophones, horns, trumpets, and trombones.

STRING INSTRUMENTS
Make sound by vibrating strings by either plucking or drawing a bow across them.

Look up these string instruments, then see if you can find them on stage: electric guitar, electric bass guitar, bass, violin, and viola.

THE TOO HOT CHOIR
Comprised of diverse singers from the Chicagoland and Detroit areas. Choirs are made up of sopranos (the highest part for women), altos (the lowest part for women), tenors (the highest male part), and bass (the lowest male part). The singers work to blend their voices into a unified sound.

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS
Create music by striking one object with another.

Look up these percussion instruments, then see if you can find them on stage: timpani, drum kit, jazz piano.

SOLO VOCALISTS
Featured singers during a performance.

You will recognize these singers because they will sing alone, as well as improvise and scat. How does each soloist add his or her unique style to the performance?
“I HAVE A DREAM” ACTIVITY
Dr. King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech contains a powerful message about diversity and community. Discuss these concepts with your students — What is community? What is diversity? What communities are they a part of at school and what do those communities look like? What communities are they a part of outside of school and what do those communities look like?

Next, have your students think of their “dream” and illustrate, in a drawing or painting, one small thing they can add to one of their communities to help make that community a better place.

**TEACHERS: We would love to include your students’ art in our “Change Quilt” lobby display! Feel free to mail a copy of your students’ final pieces to:

Auditorium Theatre
ATTN: Creative Engagement
50 E Congress Pkwy
Chicago, IL 60605
SLAM POETRY ACTIVITY
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the power of his voice to inspire change. Many pieces of history and stories are passed down to younger generations through spoken word.

In the 1990s, slam poetry sparked an interest in poetry, not only as written word, but as performance. A poetry slam is a competition in which people perform poetry aloud, strengthening the written word with carefully rehearsed dynamics, tempo, tone, and emphasis. It is an art form with equal focus on the written word and how it is delivered. Most slam poets memorize their poems, which typically address some of the most important issues of the day.

This activity will give your students a chance to write a small piece of their own slam poetry!

1. Have each student select a community they are a part of — anything from their neighborhood, to their family, to a club or sports team they are involved with.
2. Have the student brainstorm words they associate with the SOUNDS of that community.
3. Ask students to circle three sounds from their list they most enjoy, and to underline two sounds they wish they could change.
4. Next, have the students use one or more of the selected words as inspiration to write a poem about their selected community. Encourage them to use these words as tools to respond to the prompt: “These are the sounds of my community...” Their words should paint a picture for the audience. If a student chooses to focus on the sounds they wish they could change, challenge them to use their poem to paint a picture of how that change could happen.
5. After they have completed writing the poem, put the students in pairs and have them practice reading their poem to a peer. Things to have them think about: What tone of voice do you want to use? What is your emotion? Which words are the words you want to say the loudest? Where do you want to take pauses in your speaking? Make sure they are critically thinking about how they want to speak their poem.
6. Give the students a chance to perform their poem.

**TEACHERS: We would love to include your students’ poems in our Too Hot Poetry Contest! Winners are selected from across the city to perform their piece on the Auditorium Theatre stage before a Too Hot to Handel performance! ENTRY DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 15, 2017.

Mail (or email) a copy of all entries, including the student’s name and email, and a teacher contact’s name/email/phone number to:

Auditorium Theatre
ATTN: Creative Engagement
50 E Congress Pkwy
Chicago IL 60605

OR
atre-education@auditoriumtheatre.org
THEATRE ETIQUETTE
Here’s what to expect when you come to the show!

BE ON TIME! Be prompt, as walking in late is distracting and takes away from your theatre experience!

SAY NO TO CELL PHONES! When in the theatre, it is important to devote your entire attention to the performance. Taking pictures or using social media during a show is distracting to you and to those around you! Remember, you’ve come for the performance, so let yourself get lost in the experience.

DON’T BE AFRAID TO SHOW YOUR REACTIONS! One of the unique things about live performance, especially Too Hot to Handel, is that the performers and musicians are there in the same room with you! They pick up on your energy and it feeds their performance. So if you are enjoying something, don’t be afraid to applaud! If you think something’s funny, it’s okay to laugh! And it’s even okay to dance in your seat a bit, so long as you stay seated and don’t bother the folks sitting next to you!

BUT DON’T TALK DURING THE SHOW! Save your thoughts for post performance discussions! Because talking during the performance disturbs fellow audience members, having conversations afterwards are highly encouraged. Take note of all of your personal comments and share them with your friends after the show!

STAY CALM AND SIT STILL! Avoid leaving in the middle of the performance, because this is considered disrespectful! Use the restrooms during an intermission or before the show begins. Of course if it’s an emergency, let your teacher know!

KEEP THE AUDITORIUM CLEAN! The Auditorium Theatre is 128 years old. We must ensure that this historic landmark is taken care of. Food and drink can damage the theatre. Instead of eating during the show, enjoy a pre or post performance meal!

Why do people come to the theatre?
• Entertainment
• Social Change
• Education
• Enjoyment

Why are you coming to the theatre today?
RESOURCES

BOOKS
• Jazz by Walter Dean Myers, illustrated by Christopher Myers
• Jazz: My Music, My People by Morgan Monceaux
• MLK: Journey of a King by Tonya Bolden

ONLINE:
• “What’s Your Life’s BluePrint?” (Dr. Martin Luther King) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmtOGXreTOU
• http://www.folkways.si.edu/say-loud-african-american-spoken-word/struggle-protest/article/smithsonian

MULTIMEDIA:
• Two “sets” of recordings of the sermons and speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — “A Knock at Midnight” (sermons) and “A Call to Conscience” (speeches) allow students to hear Dr. King’s speaking style and also come paired with companion books of the text.
• Jazz music: http://www.jazzradio.com
CONNECTION TO CURRICULUM

LANGUAGE ARTS: Take a close look at the language used in Handel’s *Messiah*, in Dr. King’s speeches, or in a speech of another historic figure you admire. Explore the writer’s use of various aspects of the English language (rich adjectives and adverbs, imagery, syntax, and formatting of the words) to create impact. Try using some of these tools as you write your own original work.

SOCIAL STUDIES: Explore leaders of other movements that have taken place in our country’s history (along with the Civil Rights Movement). How have the leaders of these movements used spoken word to further their causes? How (if at all) do these movements still impact us today, and where do you think there is more work to be done?

MATH: Explore note values and time signatures in music. These directly affect the tempo and feeling of a piece of music, and are based in fractions of a whole. How can you shift the equations of these signatures to change the way a piece of music sounds? Teachers, you can find more information on what a time signature is and the value each note holds at http://www.dummies.com/art-center/music/piano/common-music-time-signatures/.

SCIENCE: Ask students to discover the mechanics of how the various instruments used in this piece — from the piano to the human voice — create sound. Can they create their own instrument using the same tools and methods?

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO YOUR STANDARDS?

COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS FOCUS ON THE PERFORMANCE AS A “TEXT”

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO YOUR STANDARDS? (continued)

P21 PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST LEARNING SKILLS

Learning and Innovation Skills: A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration
• Think creatively
• Work creatively with others
• Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution

Life and Career Skills
• BE FLEXIBLE: Incorporate feedback effectively, dealing positively with praise, setbacks, and criticism. Understand and negotiate diverse views to reach workable solutions.
• BE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS: All programming challenges students to explore and expand their own learning in the connected areas.
• INTERACT EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHERS: Both the teamwork and the attendance at the performance teach students to know when it is appropriate to listen and to speak, and to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

NATIONAL CORE MUSIC ANCHOR STANDARDS ADDRESSED

ANCHOR STANDARD 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
Essential Question: How is a piece of music or musical performance understood?

ANCHOR STANDARD 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
Essential Question: How is a musical performance interpreted?

ANCHOR STANDARD 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
Essential Question: How does music deepen our understanding of ourselves, other knowledge, and events around us?
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