



An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance

Young People's Concerts™ for Schools 2018
Resource Materials for Teachers

Education at the New York Philharmonic

Transformative Musical Engagement

For generations, the New York Philharmonic has been transforming listeners through unforgettable **Young People's Concerts™** and master Teaching Artist workshops, creating enriching opportunities for young artists and providing a deeper understanding of music for all kinds of audiences. Today, the Orchestra remains at the forefront of education — with a New York City focus and a global reach — and the **Young People's Concerts for Schools** are central to the Orchestra's partnerships with schools in New York City and beyond.

Teaching Artists of the New York Philharmonic are known around the world for creating indelible learning experiences through active engagement, sequential curriculum, and inspired performances. Their work has evolved over the past twenty-five years through their experience in New York City's public schools, both during and after school hours. Through **Philharmonic Schools**, Teaching Artists use major orchestral repertoire to teach students and teachers how to listen to, perform, and compose music, preparing them to fully experience concerts in their own school and at the Philharmonic. Partner elementary schools in all five boroughs embrace music as an essential element of the classroom and the school community. Through **Very Young Composers**, students from diverse backgrounds create and notate their own compositions and even hear them performed by Philharmonic musicians — often the full Orchestra — with the help of Philharmonic Teaching Artists, who serve as mentors and scribes. Multiple national communities and foreign countries have established their own versions of Very Young Composers with assistance from the Philharmonic.

Since 1924, the New York Philharmonic has performed innovative, engaging concerts that introduce young people to symphonic music. **Young People's Concerts** use repertory from all eras — including the present day — to help listeners ages six to twelve explore various musical topics. Fun-filled, hour-long **Very Young People's Concerts** combine great music with storytelling and games that unlock children's imagination and talent. And now, **Young People's Concerts Play!** makes **Young People's Concerts** available — for free — to schools and families around the world through an on-demand streaming service with interactive features that enable children to become experts about the music they hear.

To learn more about these and the Philharmonic's many other education programs, visit nyphil.org/education, or go to Young People's Concerts Play! at nyphil.org/yppcplay to start exploring the world of orchestral music right now.

Young People's Concerts for Schools are made possible with support from the **Carson Family Charitable Trust** and the **Mary and James G. Wallach Foundation**.

Additional support is provided by the **Tiger Baron Foundation**, **Muna and Basem Hishmeh**, the **Frank and Lydia Bergen Foundation**, and the **Mary P. Oenslager Student Concert Endowment Fund**. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the **City Council**. New York Philharmonic Teaching Artist positions are funded by **The Susan W. Rose Fund for Teaching Artists**.

This guide has been made possible through an endowment gift from **Lillian Butler Davey**. Major support for Very Young Composers is provided by **Susan and Elihu Rose**. Additional funding is provided by **Muna and Basem Hishmeh**; **Mr. and Mrs. A. Slade Mills, Jr.**; **The ASCAP Foundation Irving Caesar Fund**; the **Solender Family Funds**; and the **UJA-Federation of New York**.

Welcome

to Young People's Concerts for Schools!

The lessons in this booklet work together with the Young People's Concert to enable your students to put their ears to good use in the concert hall. Students will listen closely to distinguish different musical characteristics, just as they read texts closely for detail and evidence in class. They will build skills that open up all kinds of music in new ways. And they will hear the thrilling sound of the full New York Philharmonic.

This booklet is divided into four units, each with its own number of activities. Each activity is presented with an approximate timing, and you can adjust your lesson plan according to your students' background and abilities. Elementary Extensions suggest ways you can take each concept further at the grade-school level or support learning standards in other disciplines. Middle & High School Extensions provide ways you can challenge students at the secondary level or those playing in ensembles.

To help you implement the units presented here, we offer a teacher workshop, during which our Teaching Artists guide you through the lessons. It is important that as many participating teachers as possible attend this workshop.

Expect a dynamic and challenging experience at the concert, where everything will be both live and projected onto a big screen. To make the most of this opportunity, before attending the concert, play the enclosed CD for your students and carry out as many of the lessons in this book as you can. Enjoy the lessons, indulge in listening, and have fun at your Young People's Concert for Schools. See you there!

Theodore Wiprud

Vice President, Education

The Sue B. Mercy Chair

Teaching and Learning in the Arts

The Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts is a guide for arts educators in New York City public schools. The Music Blueprint defines five strands of learning, all addressed in these Resource Materials for Teachers. Through the lessons in this booklet, your students will compose music, develop musical literacy, explore connections with other disciplines, get information about careers in music, and, of course, take advantage of an important community resource, the New York Philharmonic.

In keeping with key elements of the Common Core, the Young People's Concert for Schools and the lessons in this booklet provide a deep dive into two great works. They foster close listening and citation of evidence, using the music as the text. Through the modality of music, they reinforce habits of mind developed in English language arts and math lessons and offer connections with literary and historical texts.

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Young People's Concerts for Schools

All performances and workshops
at David Geffen Hall

Middle and High School Concerts

Wednesday, January 31, 2018
10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

Elementary School Concerts

Thursday, February 1, 2018
10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

Friday, February 2, 2018

11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Teacher Workshop

Monday, October 30, 2017
4:00–6:00 p.m.

Teacher Workshops

Elementary School Teachers
Wednesday, November 1, 2017
4:00–6:00 p.m.

Teachers in Philharmonic Schools

Thursday, November 2, 2017
4:00–6:00 p.m.

The Program

Joshua Gersen conductor

Brooklyn Youth Chorus

Dianne Berkun-Menaker artistic director

Celeste Headlee narrator

Terrance McKnight narrator

Theodore Wiprud host

William Grant Still

Selections from *Lenox Avenue*

Very Young Composers

New Works composed by
students, inspired by Harlem

Duke Ellington

(arr. Henderson and Peress)
Selections from *Harlem*

The Philharmonic's Very Young Composers

Created by composer Jon Deak, the New York Philharmonic's former Associate Principal Bass, **Very Young Composers** enables students from diverse backgrounds to compose music to be performed by Philharmonic musicians. Very Young Composers serves fourth and fifth graders as an after-school program through Philharmonic Schools; middle-schoolers through the **Composer's Bridge** program at David Geffen Hall; and children and teens in countries around the world where the program has been introduced. In every locale, Very Young Composers culminates in the creation of astonishing works that reveal the power of children's imaginations. Every year, more than 100 new children's compositions are played by ensembles of Philharmonic musicians or by the full Orchestra at the Young People's Concerts for Schools.

For more information, visit nyphil.org/vyc.

An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance

Poetry, novels, painting, drama, music, fashion...they all blossomed and converged uptown in Harlem on the tide of the Great Migration. Poets like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, writers like Zora Neale Hurston and James Weldon Johnson, painters like Jacob Lawrence and Lois Mailou Jones, singers like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald: they rubbed elbows in Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s and had a huge influence on American culture at large.

It was the Jazz Age and African-American music proliferated — not just jazz, but also symphonic music. Antonín Dvořák’s open embrace of African-American musical traditions in his *New World Symphony* helped pave the way for new voices. Composer William Grant Still, the grandson of enslaved people, started out as an arranger for bluesman W.C. Handy and by the 1930s was composing symphonies and conducting major orchestras. By then, Duke Ellington had established himself as a singularly inventive pianist and bandleader. His creativity would eventually blossom in major orchestral works as well.

Still’s *Lenox Avenue* (1930) and Ellington’s *Harlem* (1950) offer snapshots of Harlem from different moments. Still’s work was composed in the heat of the Harlem Renaissance while Ellington’s was composed decades after Harlem’s creative energy had spread across the nation and around the world. Both works share Harlem’s iconic gumbo of sounds and styles and offer audiences a look into one community’s astounding contribution to American music.

Between 1933 and 1977, the New York Philharmonic performed 14 of William Grant Still’s works on 34 occasions. But his place in the repertory was not secure, and his works have become rarities on concert programs. Ellington’s music has remained central to the jazz repertory, but orchestral performances are still uncommon. (The New York Philharmonic’s last performances of *Harlem* were in 1999, in an orchestration by Wynton Marsalis.) Despite the promising start of musicians like Still and Ellington in the early 20th century, symphonic composers and performers of color have continued to struggle for recognition, facing even more hurdles than white musicians. Yet Still and Ellington are among the finest musicians America has produced, and students deserve to hear their works and understand their place in American culture.

This year’s Young People’s Concerts for Schools offer students from elementary through high school an opportunity to explore and savor the distinctive sounds and ideas that took flight in Harlem almost 100 years ago. A highlight will be music by the Philharmonic’s Very Young Composers, giving voice to Harlem and other neighborhoods as they experience them today. In the classroom, there are countless ways to extend studies into literature, art, fashion, and drama, and to trace the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on today’s culture.

We invite you to discover a true New York story, as close to us as the A train, as meaningful to us as today’s headlines, and as beautiful as anything you will hear.

Be a part of the Young People’s Concerts for Schools!

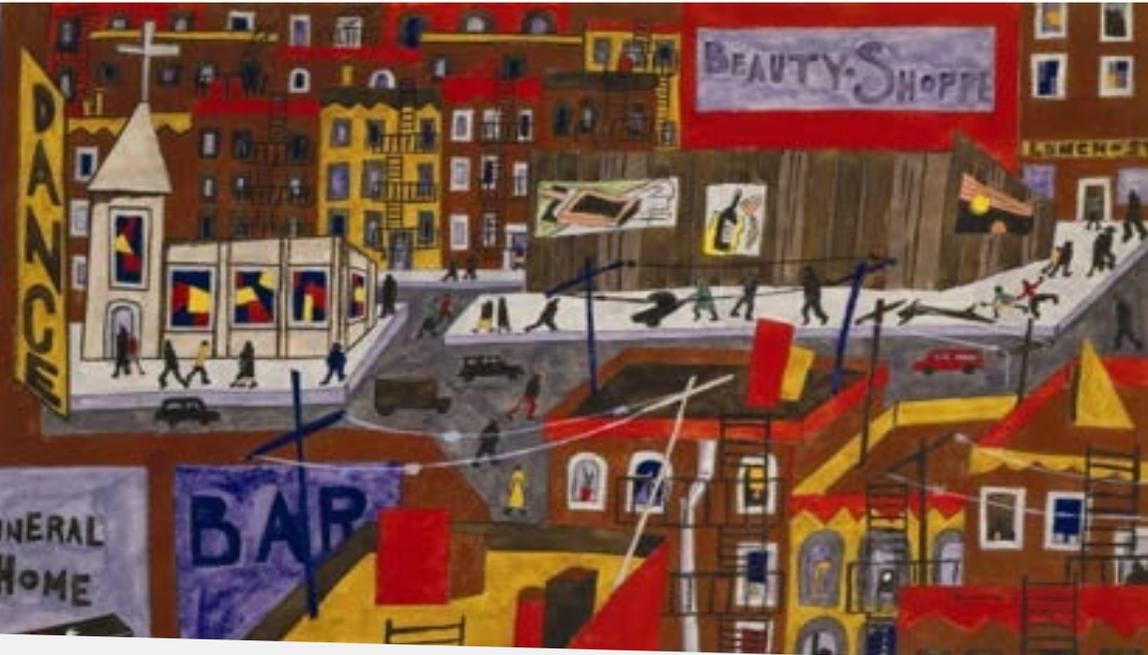
The New York Philharmonic wants to make your students’ take on **An African-American Legacy: The Harlem Renaissance** part of the Young People’s Concerts. Send us images and videos based on the prompts below. Selected content will be shown on the big screen at the Young People’s Concerts.

- **Create a portrait of your community** (ideally, with you in it!), using Jacob Lawrence’s painting *This Is Harlem* as inspiration. Include places and people that give your community a unique identity that makes it special to you. See page 5 for more information. **(Suggested for grades 3–12)**
- **Record new versions of the Harlem Motive**, or your own Community Motive. Use one of the provided rhythm tracks as a background, or create your own rhythmic accompaniment. See page 28 for more information. **(Suggested for grades 3–5)**
- **Create and perform your own “Blues” poem**. Recite it along with the provided 12-bar blues chord progression track, or sing it using your own melody with notes from the blues scale. Ask a friend or classmates to join in adding call-and-response ideas. See page 15 for more information. **(Suggested for grades 6–12)**

Visit nyphil.org/ypcschoools and click on “Concert Submission” to fill out a submission form (remembering to complete the section that gives us permission to exhibit the videos) and to learn how to upload your videos or images.

Unit 1

Harlem, A Creative Community



Jacob Lawrence, *This Is Harlem*, 1934. Courtesy of the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation.

The new Harlem that emerged in the 1920s and '30s was not only a vibrant physical community, but also an electric meeting ground for creative minds. This era became known as the Harlem Renaissance and, like other Renaissance movements throughout history, it was identified by an intersection and blossoming of the arts. Harlem itself inspired a surge of writing, poetry, painting, and music that for the first time shared intimate perspectives on the black experience with a listening America. In 1926, poet Langston Hughes said, "We younger [black] artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame."¹

¹ Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, 1926.

ACTIVITY 1

Take a Walk through Harlem

(15 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

Between 1910 and 1930 more than 230,000 black Americans moved to New York City. Largely driven by a desire for economic security, most of these individuals were part of the Great Migration of black people leaving rural life behind in search of new opportunities in urban centers across America. In New York City, most of these new arrivals settled in the north of Manhattan in a neighborhood called Harlem, largely due to the racist housing and real estate laws and practices of the time that excluded them from other neighborhoods in the city. Despite these restrictions, Harlem inspired an exciting buzz of possibility. Duke Ellington remarked, "It was New York that filled our imagination....Harlem, to our minds, did indeed have the world's most glamorous atmosphere. We had to go there."²

For newcomers to Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance, the neighborhood was a striking place. It hummed with the hustle and bustle of city life, and was full of black people from different backgrounds and an astounding array of places. Many artists of the time, like composer William Grant Still, were inspired to capture that feeling of walking through the neighborhood for the very first time.

Reflect and discuss:

Imagine someone arrives in your own neighborhood for the first time. What might grab their attention first? What might they experience or see that is surprising or unusual? What places would you be sure to tell them to visit? What kind of impression do you think your neighborhood would make?

Lead your students through a walking tour of 1920s Harlem.

Use the following map, on page 6, to share some of the places and people in the community.

ELEMENTARY EXTENSIONS

Do a close examination of Jacob Lawrence's painting *This Is Harlem* on page 4.

What did Lawrence highlight about Harlem in his painting? What ideas from the walking tour do you see captured in Lawrence's art?



Take an interactive tour of Harlem related to a recent MoMA exhibit on Jacob Lawrence.

Visit nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem to find links to the resources referenced above.

Possible Concert Submission

Using Lawrence's *This Is Harlem* as inspiration, create a portrait of your community (ideally, with you in it!). Include places and people that give your community a unique identity that makes it special to you. Submit finished community portraits for a chance to be a part of the Young People's Concerts (see page 3 for more information).

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

Use Google Maps to find some of the Harlem Map locations today, or go there and see for yourself. *How has Harlem changed? What has stayed the same? How do you think the people and ideas of 1920s Harlem influence the people who live there today?*

² Cohen, Harvey G. *Duke Ellington's America*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

1920s HARLEM



1 The Cotton Club (142nd Street and Lenox Avenue)

One of Harlem's most famous nightclubs, the Cotton Club was a whites-only venue that featured many negative images of blacks, including a plantation-themed decor. Blacks were not allowed inside except to work, but many of the most famous black musicians rose to prominence here, including Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Bessie Smith (see Unit 1, Activity 2 for more information).

2 Strivers Row (138th and 139th streets)

Lining two blocks, these townhouses were originally built in the 1890s for wealthy white clientele and weren't permitted to be sold to blacks until 1920. Since then, many of Harlem's most successful people have lived here, including musicians W.C. Handy, Eubie Blake, and Fletcher Henderson.

3 Abyssinian Baptist Church (130 W. 138th Street)

Founded in 1808 by a group of black parishioners who left the racially segregated First Baptist Church of New York, the Abyssinian Baptist Church is famous for its social activism, community outreach, and ministers (including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who was the first black man from New York to be elected to the U.S. Congress).

4 National Urban League (202 W. 136th Street)

One of the first national civil rights organizations, the National Urban League advocated for black migrants and organized black workers in unions across the country.

5 135th Street Branch Library / Schomburg Center (135th Street and Lenox Avenue)

In 1925 the library opened a special collection dedicated to black literature and art. It rose to international acclaim when black scholar Arturo Schomburg donated his personal collection of more 10,000 items — books, manuscripts, etchings, and paintings. After his death, the library was renamed Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in his honor.

6 Augusta Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts (239 W. 135th Street)

Augusta Savage was an accomplished sculptor who created busts of many of Harlem's famous residents. Her studio was a meeting place for many of the best Harlem artists of the time and she later became an activist advocating for equal rights for black artists.

7 Home of James Reese Europe (67 W. 131st Street)

James Reese Europe was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance and a national celebrity: the first to play jazz music at Carnegie Hall and the most famous bandleader of the 1910s. He fought in World War I with a regiment called the "Harlem Hellfighters" and in 1918 became director of the regiment band, bringing jazz to European audiences for the first time.

8 The Apollo Theater (125th Street and 8th Avenue)

A music hall noted for its black performers, the Apollo first allowed black patrons in 1934 — the same year it began its famous Amateur Night contests. Many stars were "born" there, including Ella Fitzgerald, who made her debut at Amateur Night in 1934 at the age of 17.

9 James Van Der Zee Portrait Studio (322 Lenox Avenue)

James Van Der Zee was a photographer who created thousands of portraits of the residents of Harlem in his studio in the 1920s and '30s. His work went largely unnoticed until 1969 when a researcher found his images and featured them in a renowned exhibition called *Harlem on My Mind* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

10 Home of Langston Hughes (20 E. 127th Street)

Langston Hughes was the unofficial "poet laureate" of the Harlem Renaissance and an inspiration to generations of writers and artists. As a young poet, he incorporated blues music into his poetry, publishing the collection *The Weary Blues* in 1926.

ACTIVITY 2

Harlem's Music Nightlife

(10 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

Nightlife was an important part of the Harlem Renaissance, and venues in the neighborhood featured some of the best black musicians, dancers, and entertainers of the era. Many artists, including Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Adelaide Hall, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, and Ethel Waters, became famous through their nightclub performances.

The Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue and 142nd Street was the one of the most famous of these clubs. Duke Ellington's Orchestra played there from 1927 to 1931 and became famous worldwide through weekly Cotton Club radio broadcasts and recordings, bringing jazz and the blues to new audiences and a heightened popularity.



Watch and listen to Duke Ellington, his band, and dancers perform at the Cotton Club.

Find a link at nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem.

How would you describe this music's rhythm? What else stands out to you about the music the band is playing? What are some of the ways you notice the dancers responding to the music? Try listening to the sound only, with the video off, and invite students to create some of their own dance moves to go along!

The Cotton Club's radio broadcasts opened a door for black composers and performers like Duke Ellington and his band to share their music with a wider audience than ever before. But the Cotton Club also kept some doors firmly closed to black people. The Cotton Club was strictly segregated: though many of its biggest stars were black, black patrons were not allowed inside. Wealthy white celebrities came to be entertained while black workers in the clubs were often portrayed using negative stereotypes. For example, Ellington's music was often called "jungle music" and performers were referred to as "savages." Even the name "The Cotton Club," with its reference to southern plantation life and cotton fields, is linked to slavery's past.

Reflect and discuss:

How do you imagine it would feel to be a musician in Duke Ellington's band during the Harlem Renaissance? What would have been exciting? What would have been frustrating? Why might black artists have performed at the Cotton Club, even though it was a segregated venue?



Images from the Cotton Club

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

Harlem nightclubs were a source of inspiration for Langston Hughes who soaked up their sounds and scenes. Compare Hughes's poem, "Harlem Night Club" (1926) to his essay about the Cotton Club, "When the Negro Was in Vogue" (1940). What do you think was the significance of Harlem's nightlife during the Renaissance? What do you think it symbolized for the blacks who lived there, and for the whites who visited? Find links to the Langston Hughes materials cited above at nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem.

ACTIVITY 3

Finding Community and Freedom of Expression

(15 Minutes)

In Harlem, many black artists found an interesting neighborhood and place to live and also something more: an actual community — a place and group of people that gave them a sense of belonging and, in turn, a feeling of pride and the freedom to express who they really were.

Help students reflect on the idea of communities:

What are some places or groups of people that give you a feeling of belonging or freedom? What is it that could turn a “place” into a “community”? What are some communities you are part of, either real or virtual? How does respect play a role in how a community functions? If you could imagine your ideal community, what would it be like?

The black artists of the Harlem Renaissance were intent on expressing the unique truths of their own perspectives — perspectives that had been suppressed, denied, or declared valueless throughout American history. The art being created in the 1920s and ‘30s in Harlem was as diverse as the community of artists making it, that is to say very diverse. What it shared in common was a deep desire to convey how these black artists saw themselves and how they would like to be seen.

Share and discuss the following quote from Langston Hughes in 1926:

“ We younger [black] artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too... If [black] people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, as strong as we know how and we stand on the top of the mountain, free within ourselves.”

What do you imagine the black artists of the Harlem Renaissance were trying to express about themselves through their art? Why do you think Hughes felt it didn't matter if people were unhappy about the ideas black artists were sharing? How do you decide whether someone's thoughts about you, or your actions, are important to consider?

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Help students connect back to books they have read that deal with the issues of fitting in, prejudice, or freedom. *How do the characters in those books help you to understand what Langston Hughes is trying to say? How do those books help you to understand the community of which Hughes was a part?*

Have students enhance their perspective and understanding of Harlem's history through the following children's books:

- *Harlem: A Poem* by Walter Dean Myers, illustrated by Christopher Myers (Scholastic, 1997)
- *Uptown* by Bryan Collier (Henry Holt, 2000)
- *A Song for Harlem* by Patricia McKissack (Viking, 2007)
- *Happy Feet: The Savoy Ballroom Lindy Hoppers and Me* by Richard Michelson, illustrated by E.B. White (Harcourt, 2005)
- *One Last Word: Wisdom from the Harlem Renaissance* by Nikki Grimes (Bloomsburg, 2017)



Visit nyphil.org/ypcschools-harlem for a link to more titles.

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

Extend this idea of fearless individualistic expression to artists of today. *Who are artists you currently admire that embody the essence of Langston Hughes's quote today? What parallels do you see? What differences?*

³ Hughes, Langston. “The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain.”

Unit 2

The Blues



Dennis K. Smith, *The Weary Blues* the painting. Courtesy of Dennis K. Smith.

The blues first emerged in Mississippi in the late 1800s with roots in the songs of black slaves, and later black sharecroppers. As musicologist Robert Palmer explained, “Black American music as it was sung and played in the rural South was both a continuation of deep and tenacious African traditions and a creative response to a brutal, desperate situation.”⁴ During the Great Migration, the blues traveled along with those leaving Southern rural life and expanded its range and influence. With the help of enthusiastic advocates like bandleader W.C. Handy and the advent of the radio, the blues evolved to become part of urban musical culture in cities across the United States by the 1920s.

⁴ Palmer, Robert. *Deep Blues*. Penguin Books, 1986.

ACTIVITY 1

The Blues Scale

(10 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

In the 1920s, the blues was still a radically new and different-sounding kind of music for listeners and musicians living outside the Deep South, where it originated. To many, it wasn't considered "serious" or "appropriate" music to be performed or studied. Often, musicians like William Grant Still and Duke Ellington didn't get to know the blues until after their musical careers had begun, but in their particular cases they both quickly learned to appreciate the beauty of the blues form and its unique musical scale. As Ellington frequently said, there are only two kinds of music, "the good kind, and the other kind,"⁵ and both he and Still worked hard to share with their listeners why they believed the blues was firmly in the category of "the good."

Help students think of encounters they've had with new trends or ideas (for example, styles of music, art, fashion, or food). *How did you react to this new idea — did it make you curious, confused, excited, uninterested, something else? Why do you think new ideas and styles sometimes have a rocky start? What makes a new trend really stick?*

Have students explore and compare three different musical scales:

Classical Minor Scale

Listen to or play the D minor scale below. Sing it using the numbers of the scale degrees written below the notes.



Track 1

D Minor Scale (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

What images come to mind as you hear this combination of notes? If you had to pick one word to describe this scale, what would it be? Are there any notes in the scale that stand out?

Minor Pentatonic Scale

Subtract scale degrees 2 and 6 to get a minor pentatonic (5-note) scale, a series of notes used in many kinds of folk music, including African-American spirituals (explored more in Unit 2, Activity 4). Listen to or play the D minor pentatonic scale. Sing it using the scale degree numbers as written below.



Track 2

D Minor Pentatonic Scale (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

How does this Pentatonic scale sound or feel different from the minor scale? What kinds of music does this combination of notes make you think of? Are there notes that stand out to you in this scale?

⁵ Ellington, Duke. "Where Is Jazz Going?" *Music Journal*, 1962.

Blues Scale

Introduce students to the blues scale by adding in the special “blue note” halfway between scale degrees 4 and 5. Listen to or play the scale, then sing along using the scale degrees written below.



Track 3

D Minor Blues Scale (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Listen to the blues scale again and ask students to make an expression or a pose that shows the feeling they get as the scale moves through the “blue note.” Invite students to describe the poses and expressions they see.

What’s unique or special about the sound of this scale? How does the “blue note” make this scale feel different from the pentatonic scale? If you had to name this scale something besides the “blues scale,” what would you call it, and why?

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

If you have access to pitched instruments, have students compose short 4- or 5-note melodic contours using notes from the blues scale. Experiment with call-and-response playing (explored more in Activity 4) by inviting individuals to perform their musical idea and having the class copy it. As students get comfortable they can explore composing in longer 6- to 8-note phrases. Which melodic shapes grab your ear? Which feel the most natural to play? What kind of feeling do you think these melodic contours have?

ACTIVITY 2

Telling a Story with Blues Poetry

(30 Minutes)

In addition to its unique melodic sound, the blues is a literary art form that features an individual telling a story through song. These are usually stories of struggle and sadness — about money, love, or the injustice of racial inequality — but they also often express a resiliency and determination to overcome one’s challenges. Essayist Gerald Early once said that the blues expresses that “everyone has troubles, but they can be endured.”⁶

Reflect and discuss:

Why is it important to express the way we’re feeling, even if it might be sad or painful? How might music or poetry help people to get through a challenging time?

The blues usually features one person acting as the narrator and telling the audience his or her story. Lead a discussion with your students about narrators and storytelling.

How do storytellers use their voice to keep the listener’s interest? How might a storyteller’s voice change from one moment of a story to the next, and why?

Explore the blues form in poetry.

Langston Hughes was the unofficial “poet laureate” of the Harlem Renaissance and an inspiration to generations of writers and artists. As a young poet, he incorporated blues music into his poetry, publishing the collection *The Weary Blues* in 1926. His blues poems often closely follow the form of a traditional blues song, featuring a repeated line — sometimes with variation — and a concluding third line. The third line often features a twist, which reframes the first two lines in a surprising and sometimes humorous light.

Have students pair up and pass out copies of “Hey!” and “Hey! Hey!” by Langston Hughes.

⁶Early, Gerald. *Daughters: On Family and Fatherhood*. Da Capo Press, 1994.

Ask students to read each poem individually.

Hey!

Sun's a settin',
This is what I'm gonna sing.
Sun's a settin',
This is what I'm gonna sing.
I feel de blues a comin',
Wonder what de blues'll bring?

Hey! Hey!

Sun's a risin',
This is gonna be ma song.
Sun's a risin',
This is gonna be ma song.
I could be blue but
I been blue all night long.

With partners, discuss:

What do you think the poet is feeling in each poem? How are the two poems connected? Why does the poet repeat the first sentence twice? How does the final sentence change the meaning of each poem?

Following this discussion, invite each student to create their own interpretation through a dramatic reading of one of the poems. Some of the questions students might consider as they create their reading include:

What tone of voice would you use, and why? What words might you emphasize? How might you change your voice during the poem — for example, raising or lowering, speeding up or slowing down, pausing, etc. — and why?

Once students have created their interpretation, ask partners to read their poem out loud to each other, or the entire class.

As a class, discuss:

What did we notice about how our voice changed to emphasize different feelings? How did the changes in our voice reflect the pattern, or form, of the poem? How were the readings different for "Hey!" and "Hey! Hey!"?

Compare and contrast students' own readings with a reading of "Hey!" and "Hey! Hey!" by Langston Hughes.

Track 4

Langston Hughes recitations (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Select a few words or phrases from the students' unique text interpretations and set them to music using the notes of the blues scale from Activity 1. Work to closely match the speech rhythm and vocal expression students have chosen in the above activity.

ACTIVITY 3

Blues Form

(15 Minutes)

One of the most defining musical features of the blues is its harmonic structure, or form. While there are several different traditional forms, the most common is the 12-bar blues. In this form, the music is organized into three long phrases, each with four bars, or measures, that are four counts long. The harmonies used in the 12-bar blues are based on just three chords: chords built on scale degrees one, four, and five. In music notation the chords are referred to using Roman numerals, as shown below.

Phrase 1	I	IV	I	I
Phrase 2	IV	IV	I	I
Phrase 3	V	IV	I	I

Listen to the 12-bar blues form:

Track 5

12-Bar Blues (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

After listening to the 12-bar blues form several times, invite students to participate in a few of the following ways:

- Tap along with the pulse. Try using a different form of body percussion for each group of four beats to help students feel the change from bar to bar (for example, tap knees for four beats, head for four beats, snap for four, clap for four, etc.).
- Change body positions or how you keep the pulse to indicate moving from one 4-bar phrase to the next (sit for the first phrase, stand for the second, sit again for the third; clap the pulse for the first phrase, march for the second phrase, sway for the third).
- Draw listening maps with 12 boxes (like the one above) and invite students to follow along with the listening by conducting the movement from box to box.
- Sing along with the chord progression by singing the Roman numerals for each chord in each box ("one, one, one, one; four, four, four, four; one, one, one, one," etc.)

How do the three phrases of the 12-bar blues compare to one another? How do the different chord changes affect the feeling of each phrase? Which phrase feels the most dramatic or interesting to you?

Add recitation into the 12-bar blues form.

Using the text from “Hey! Hey!” practice fitting your recitation into the 12-bar blues form, loosely following the map below.

Phrase 1	I Sun's a risin',	IV This gonna be my	I song.	I
Phrase 2	IV Sun's a risin',	IV This gonna be my	I song.	I
Phrase 3	V I could be blue but I	IV been blue all night	I long.	I

How does combining the text and music change the way you hear or think about what's being said? How do the first and second phrases feel different from one another, even though the text is the same? Why do you think the last two bars of the phrases usually have little or no text? What kind of feeling does that give those “empty” bars?

Listen to another example of the blues form and gather more ideas about how the lyrics and structure fit together.

Track 6

Lead Belly's “Good Morning Blues” (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

ACTIVITY 4

Call-and-Response

(25 Minutes)

While the blues is largely defined by a single person singing, many blues songs feature a second instrument or voice that responds to the primary soloist. This kind of “call-and-response” music is found in many styles and traditions throughout the world. (It can also be found in classrooms when teachers clap a rhythm and students respond.) In the blues, call-and-response patterns likely originated from the tradition of slave work songs, as well as church traditions where a preacher “calls” and the congregation “responds.”

Lead a warm-up discussion with students around the theme of “Call-and-Response.”

Have students imagine being in a conversation with a friend who's describing something that has happened to them. Brainstorm ways students might participate in that conversation. What are some ways you could keep the conversation going? How do you show you're listening? How else could you respond to what your friend is saying? Some possible ideas include:

- Asking a question
- Repeating what you heard
- Adding emphasis
- Disagreeing
- Saying something new

Invite the class to try some examples of call-and-response in a conversation and make observations. *How does the sound or quality of our voice change for each one of these responses?*

Group the class into partners.

Ask one student to give a dramatic reading of the lyrics from one verse of “St. Louis Blues” by W.C. Handy, below (review Activity 2 for suggestions on how to read a blues text and if your class has created their own blues poetry, you may decide to use one of these texts instead). Ask the other student to respond after each line of poetry using a non-verbal vocal sound: this could include humming, singing, or other sounds like moaning, shushing, etc. Students may create sounds that are rhythmic or free). After one reading, ask partners to switch roles.

St. Louis Blues (excerpt)

Feelin' tomorrow like I feel today
If I'm feelin' tomorrow like I feel today
I'll pack my dreams and make my getaway

What are some of the different vocal responses we heard? How do the sounds and shapes of our vocal responses communicate a feeling or emotion without words? How do these responses change the way we hear or understand the meaning of the original text?

Create a musical “Call-and-Response.”

Review some of the blues scale notes from Activity 1, by singing or playing on pitched instruments. As a class, create three or four possible musical responses in the form of short melodic ideas, or riffs, that mimic some of the vocal responses in the previous reading. (It might be helpful to know that these can be quite simple. For example, a couple of notes repeated and played with an interesting rhythm). Write these on the board, using note names or musical notation. Ask a volunteer to read the “St. Louis Blues” excerpt while the rest of the class responds using one of these musical responses. Repeat the reading and experiment with improvising new musical responses in the moment.

How do the shapes of our riffs reflect the sounds and shapes of our vocal responses? How does the unique sound of the blues scale change the feeling or mood of our musical ideas?

Listen to W.C. Handy’s “St. Louis Blues,” sung by Bessie Smith with Louis Armstrong on cornet (a relative of the trumpet), and notice some of the different ways the two musicians use call-and-response in their performances.

Track 7

W.C. Handy’s “St. Louis Blues” (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

What are some of the different ways the cornet responds to the singer? How do these musical responses mimic the sound of a human voice in a conversation? How do these responses change the way we hear the words and music of the singer?

Possible Concert Submission

Create and perform the blues!

- Write one or more stanzas in the form of a blues poem (AAB form). *What is your class feeling blue about? How does your poetry create a new perspective on how we deal with life’s challenges?*
- Perform and record your poetry with the blues harmonic pattern found on Track 5. Students can choose to speak their text or compose and sing a melody using notes from the blues scale. Try experimenting with different ways of speaking or singing the text with the harmonic pattern (this could include trying different speeds, rhythms, or ways of emphasizing certain words). If composing a melody, ask students to consider which notes of the blues scale best express the meaning of specific words in the text.
- Optional: Try adding short call-and-response melodies, performed either on instruments or vocally. *How do these call-and-response melodies add to the dialogue of the song?*

Submit recordings of blues performances for a chance to be part of the Young People’s Concerts (see page 3 for more information).

Unit 3

William Grant Still's *Lenox Avenue*



Carl Van Vechten, *Portrait of William Grant Still*, 1949.

William Grant Still was one of the most important composers and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance. His wide-ranging musical background was a reflection of the varied artistic interests of his generation and encompassed symphony orchestras and operas, as well as the blues and spirituals. In *Lenox Avenue*, Still tells the story of a newcomer arriving in Harlem for the first time. By creating a musical portrait of a vibrant and eclectic community through a series of short evocative scenes, Still captures the diversity and energy of life in the Harlem community.

ACTIVITY 1

Getting to Know William Grant Still

(10 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

William Grant Still was one of the most prominent black composers of his day. Later described as the “Dean of African-American Composers,” he was the first black composer to conduct a major American orchestra and the first to have an opera produced by the New York City Opera.

Still’s early life was full of music. As a child growing up in Kansas City he played many instruments, including the violin, clarinet, oboe, cello, double bass, viola, and saxophone! His stepfather took him to hear operas and bought him recordings of symphonies; at the same time, his grandmother sang African-American spirituals. Still studied composition at Oberlin College, and later took composition lessons with important composers including George Chadwick and Edgard Varèse. Still’s classical music training contrasted with much of the music that he encountered as a young working musician. One of Still’s early jobs was serving as a musician and arranger for W.C. Handy, one of the most famous blues songwriters and bandleaders. He also played in the Broadway show *Shuffle Along* which featured many of the most famous black singers of the time. Still’s diverse personal and musical background brought together many seemingly contrasting styles — like a puzzle made up of many unique, and sometimes surprising, pieces.

Reflect and discuss:

Imagine yourself as a puzzle made up of different pieces. *What are some of the pieces that make the unique puzzle of you? What parts of your background or your life story would be on these pieces? Which pieces in your puzzle might be surprising to someone getting to know you? Are there any pieces that seem very different from, or contrast, one another? How do all these pieces end up fitting together to make you YOU?*

Exploring Lenox Avenue

For William Grant Still, the separation between various musical styles seemed artificial: “For me there is no White music or Black music, there is only music by individual men that is important if it attempts to dignify all men, not just a particular race.”⁷ Many of Still’s works attempt to bridge these differences, creating a universal “American” style that would combine the various musical expressions of all its people. In his radio play and ballet *Lenox Avenue*, Still combined elements of jazz, blues, and spirituals with the instruments and sounds of a classical symphony orchestra. In this piece we hear the story of a new arrival to Harlem, a story that reflected the experience of many black people who left the oppression of the Jim Crow South to start a new life in Northern cities. In a series of evocative musical episodes, the “Traveler from Down South” encounters a variety of people and places, capturing the essence and contradictions of Harlem in the 1920s and ‘30s.

⁷ Still, Judith Anne. *William Grant Still: A Voice High-Sounding*. The Master-Player Library, 1990.

ACTIVITY 2

Syncopation — Creating an “Off-Beat” Feeling

(10 Minutes)

One of the defining characteristics of early jazz music is a special kind of rhythm called syncopation. Syncopation means notes that are “off-the-beat” — literally, sounds that happen after or in between beats. These jazz rhythms would have been instantly recognizable to audiences of the day, and in *Lenox Avenue Still* uses them in an orchestral setting to evoke the sound and spirit of everyday life in Harlem.

Get your class ready to practice creating a syncopated rhythm.

As a class, clap or tap a moderate and continuous steady beat. (If students aren’t familiar with the concept of a beat, you can ask them to imagine a heartbeat or a ticking clock.) Encourage students to move their bodies with the beat, for example by nodding their head with each clap.

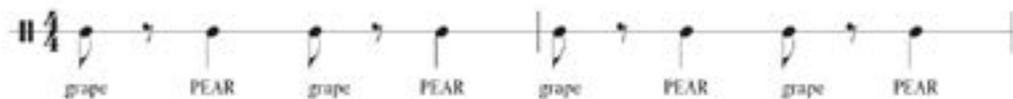
Start to add a simple and short one-syllable word with each clap. For example, “grape grape grape.”



Track 8

Syncopation first step (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

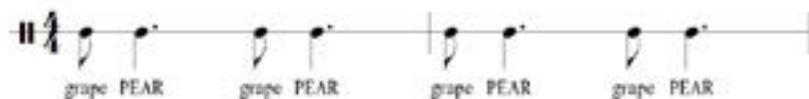
Add a second one-syllable word, now longer: “grape PEAR grape PEAR.”



Track 9

Syncopation second step (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Move the “PEAR” sound so that it happens before the next beat (“off-the-beat”).



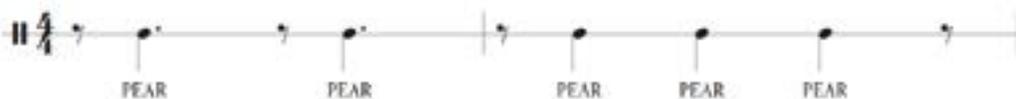
Track 10

Syncopation final step (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Congratulations, you just created syncopation! How does the PEAR sound feel different now that it is “off-the-beat”?

If students have trouble answering this question, try repeating the previous rhythm while students add a short hand or arm gesture. How do our motions reflect the feeling of this “off-beat” rhythm? What does this tell us about the sound?

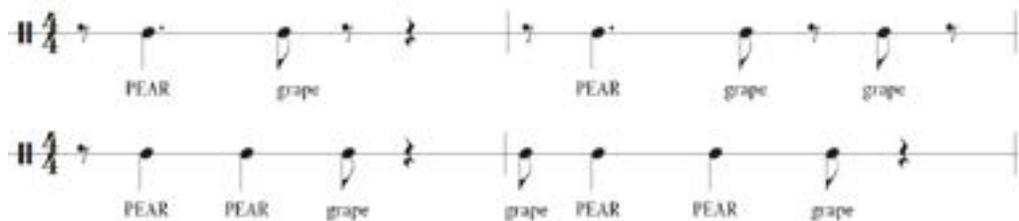
Once you feel comfortable with this basic syncopation, try to get more advanced by taking away the “grape” and repeating several PEAR sounds in between the beats.



Track 11

Advanced syncopation (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

As a class, experiment with different ways of creating syncopations (for example, change the speed, volume, or mix and match on- and off-beat feelings).



Track 12

Syncopation examples (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Go back and review some of the music you heard in units 1 and 2 (for example, Ellington at the Cotton Club, “Good Morning Blues,” and “St. Louis Blues”). How do syncopated rhythms give this music a unique feeling or character? How would you describe the character of music with syncopated rhythms?

ACTIVITY 3

Capturing Character with Syncopations

(20 Minutes)

Many of the artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance were interested in showing the vibrancy of the Harlem community through portraits of the people who lived there. Artists such as Augusta Savage, Charles Alston, and James Van Der Zee created sculptures, paintings, and photographs of Harlem’s residents, while writers such as Langston Hughes told residents’ stories in poems, plays, and novels. In *Lenox Avenue*, Still composed a series of short musical scenes that capture the characteristics of an array of people from Harlem’s community. Each scene has its own distinct and evocative melodic theme, but all use one or more of the syncopated rhythms from Activity 2. The use of these syncopated rhythms throughout the work adds an element of musical unity to the sounds of a diverse community, where rich and poor, educated and non-educated, all meet in a melting pot of black life.

Thinking about your community, make a list of three or four different individuals or groups of people you might encounter and what they could be doing (for example, children playing soccer in the park, people crowding into a subway car, an older couple taking an evening stroll, etc.). These will be the “characters” in a musical scene. Brainstorm a few character traits, qualities, or actions for these characters and add them to your list.

Have students work in small groups to compose rhythms that represent the characters from your class list.

Students can use body percussion or vocal sounds as they compose. Challenge groups to incorporate one or more of the syncopated rhythms from Activity 2.

What do we notice? How do our rhythms reflect something about each of our characters?

Invite groups to imagine how they might develop these rhythms with other musical qualities if they had a full symphony orchestra to create musical portraits of their characters:

- *What instruments would you use?*
- *Would the sounds be loud or soft (or are they changing)?*
- *Would the sounds be slow or fast (or in the middle)?*
- *Would the sounds be short and separated or smooth and connected (or something else)?*

Ask groups to revise their character rhythms by using their voices to imitate the orchestral sound they have just imagined. Have groups perform the new versions of their rhythms for the class. Students may also mime playing along on their chosen instruments.

After all the groups have performed, lead a discussion with your students about creating music with rhythms and syncopations.

Why might a composer want to use an off-beat rhythm to create a musical scene (as opposed to an on-the-beat rhythm)? How does changing other musical qualities — for example, the speed, volume, or instrument — change the mood or character of our rhythms?

ACTIVITY 4

Hearing Syncopation in Scenes from *Lenox Avenue*

(20 Minutes)

Lenox Avenue is a composition for orchestra and narrator, the “Traveler from Down South.” Read the narrator’s short descriptions of the characters in each scene from *Lenox Avenue*:

Opening Street Scene

“The radios are blaring and each window frames somebody leaning out to watch the passing crowd. Along the street pass flashy suits, and also the rags of poverty. Tired people drag themselves from a subway station. They make way for rushing people, anxious to get home. A siren screeches, and the subway rumbles! You hear a Harvard accent and then a Southern dialect. You might find such a motley crowd anywhere...but here in Harlem, folk laugh in the face of tragedy and aching hearts respond to joyous music, a blend of fun and anger, love and laughter and religion — all on *Lenox Avenue*.”

Lovers’ Scene

“My, what a lovely girl crossing the street...she almost takes your breath away. She meets a young man and they exchange affectionate greetings. You can’t blame him for flirting with her...and they sure would make a handsome pair.”

Fight Scene

"Who's that? The brother of the girl? No, it's her husband! He sees the tender scene and rushes to his wife. He seizes her shoulder roughly and she winces with pain. The young man jerks the husband's hand from her shoulder, and they square off to fight."

Boys' Dance

"A man drops some money on the ground. Two boys see it and run over. After a brief dispute, the two boys decide that they will dance for it. Look at them dance! So confident and graceful."

Listen to each example of syncopation in scenes from *Lenox Avenue* a few times.

Use the words in the examples to help your class sing along; you can also try adding an arm movement or gesture to go along with each syncopated figure.

musical score for muted trumpet

Le - nox - Ave Le - nox - Ave
Le - nox - Ave Le - nox - Ave Le - nox - Ave

Track 13 Opening Street Scene example (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

musical score for strings

Love - ly, Oh so love - ly, Oh, what a love - ly boy and girl

Track 14 Lovers' Scene example (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

musical score for orchestra

Har - ry har - ry

Track 15 Fight Scene example (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

musical score for strings

mf Hey fel - las! It's time to dance!
Do a lit - tle dance move. Do a lit - tle dance move with me!

Track 16 Boys' Dance example (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Once your class feels familiar with each example, listen to each scene in its entirety.

Track 17

Opening Street Scene (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 18

Lovers' Scene (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 19

Fight Scene (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 20

Boys' Dance (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

How do these syncopated rhythms help us imagine the characters in each scene? What character traits or qualities might these rhythms be showing? How do all of these syncopated rhythms reflect the unique character of the Harlem community?

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

Using a digital audio workstation (DAW), create a podcast representing something about your life or neighborhood. Who is part of your community? What do you see? What are the important aspects of your community that you would like to represent? What stories do you believe are interesting to tell? Why? What sounds do you hear as part your life? How might these be echoed using instruments?

ACTIVITY 5

The Blues and Spirituals — A Mix of Low and High

(25 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

In addition to combining musical styles as diverse as opera, symphonies, and jazz, William Grant Still was interested in combining styles from within the black community. One of the biggest disagreements in the black artistic community at the time was about the validity of the new and modern blues compared to the more traditional African-American spirituals. For many older black elites and intellectuals, the blues was a “low” art — a vulgar music intended for mass consumption and not on the same artistic level as the “high” art of spirituals. The famous writer Alain de Locke, a friend of Still’s, once wrote, “Whatever the result of the attempt to raise jazz from the mob-level upon which it originated, its true home is still its original cradle, the none too respectable cabaret.”⁸ In contrast, Langston Hughes seemed to find a place for both art forms, “Whereas the Spirituals are often songs about escaping from trouble, going to heaven and living happily ever after, the Blues are songs about being in the midst of trouble, friendless, hungry, disappointed in love, right here on earth.”⁹

Lead a discussion on the concept of “high” versus “low” art.

“What are some examples of “high” art? And “low” art? What makes something “high” art versus “low” art? Who decides, and why? What interests do you or your family have that others might see as “high”? And “low”? (For example, you might like to eat at nice restaurants sometimes, but you might also like to eat hot dogs on the street.)

How do these different interests combine to create your unique character? What places in your community might others describe as “high” or “low”? How do these different places reflect a unique part of life in your community?

Although blues and spirituals were thought to be at different ends of one musical spectrum, in reality many of their features spring from a common musical heritage. African-American theologian James Cone wrote, “...the blues and the spirituals flow from the same bedrock of experience, and neither is an adequate interpretation of black life without the other.”¹⁰

As a class, review what you know about the blues and listen again to some of the blues recordings from Unit 2 (Tracks 6 and 7). Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast these blues examples with the following recordings of spirituals, highlighting both similarities as well as differences:

⁸ Locke, Alain, ed. *The New Negro*. Albert & Charles Boni, 1925.

⁹ Hughes, Langston. *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.

¹⁰ Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. Orbis Books, 2000.

Track 21

“Blow, Gabriel, Blow” (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 22

“Go Down Moses” (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

What are the similarities? Possible answers: solo singer, notes from pentatonic and blues scale, call-and-response patterns, syncopated rhythms, words that express feelings of sadness and hope, etc.

What are the differences? Possible answers: rhythm, texture, use of instruments, solo versus group singing, secular versus sacred subject matter, form, etc.

William Grant Still was one of the younger artists of the time who felt there was a place for both the blues and spirituals. In several sections of *Lenox Avenue*, Still creates contrasting scenes using each style, but by the end the two are combined.

Listen to the following excerpts from *Lenox Avenue* and lead a discussion:

Track 23

Lenox Avenue Blues/Stride Piano (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 24

Spiritual (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 25

Blues/Spiritual Combination (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

How does Still combine the styles of the blues and spirituals? How would you describe the resulting sound? What parts from each does he keep the same, and which parts does he change? What might William Grant Still be trying to express through his combination of these two musical art forms? How might this change the way we think about “high” and “low” art forms in our world today?

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION

Look at examples of other mashups of two musical art forms to learn more about how different artistic styles or ideas can be creatively combined. Some contemporary mashups:



- Fox’s *Glee* features mashups of many different musical styles and performers.
- Kehinde Wiley’s portraits capture contemporary subjects in the iconic styles of the Old Masters.
- Lil Buck choreographs a dance in his signature jookin’ style to Saint-Saëns’s “The Swan.”

Visit nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem for links to the mashups above.

Reflect and discuss:

Why do you think the artist(s) decided to create this particular mashup? How might putting these two styles or ideas together make someone think about each of them in a new or different way? Do these mashups work for you? Why or why not?

Unit 4

Duke Ellington's Harlem



Gaye Ellington, *Painting of Duke Ellington*, 1985.

The historic era of the Harlem Renaissance had come and gone by the time Duke Ellington wrote *Harlem* in 1950, but the Harlem community was still a potent source of inspiration. The composition *Harlem* is a kind of tone poem, or “tone parallel” as Ellington dubbed several of his inventive long-form works from this creative era of his life. He settled on “tone parallels” because he strove to create, in music, a parallel to the history of black Americans. In *Harlem*, we hear a musical parallel of the day-to-day life of Harlem two decades after *Lenox Avenue*. The Harlem community, as Ellington put it, was still “marching onward and upward.”

ACTIVITY 1

Making a Picture in Your Mind

(15 Minutes)

Share some background information with your students:

Growing up in the Ellington family, it was emphasized that one should “do something different. Do something that identifies you as an individual.” As a boy in black, middle-class Washington D.C. in the early 1900s, Edward Kennedy Ellington seemed to take that idea to heart as he enthusiastically pursued his passions, first in sports, then painting, and finally music. Ellington’s individuality also shone through early on in his elegant and fastidious appearance which, as some tell it, is how he earned his famous nickname ‘Duke.’

Ellington was taught — both at home and in his segregated schooling — a tremendous amount about black history with an emphasis on the importance of taking pride in one’s heritage. Some of this, too, may have contributed to what a friend described as “his whole demeanor, the way he held his head, the way he held his shoulders, the way he placed his feet on the ground. He knew who he was. He had great self-esteem...And you could put him with a President, or you could put him with a porter, and he would have the same warmth and ability to communicate.”

Once he decided to pursue music, Ellington quickly emerged as a master of the jazz song and dance tune, becoming a musical icon of the Harlem Renaissance and Big Band era. Always compelled to innovate, Ellington left a 50-year legacy of completely individualistic works that made him one of the most important figures in 20th century American music.

Share the following quote with your students to help them begin thinking about one of the ways Ellington found inspiration as a composer:

“ In my writing there’s always a mental picture. In the old days, when a guy made a lick*, he’d say what it reminded him of...‘It sounds like my old man falling downstairs’ or ‘It sounds like a crazy guy doing this or that.’ I remember [my friend and trumpeter] Bubber Miley taking a lick and saying, ‘That reminds me of Miss Jones singin’ in church.’ That’s the way I was raised up in music. I always have a mental picture.”

(*a “lick” is a short musical idea or phrase)

Warm up your students’ imaginative listening skills using a few of the “licks” from Ellington’s *Harlem*.

Track 26

Trumpet Lick (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 27

Twirly Brass Lick (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 28

Descending Brass Lick (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 29

Clarinet Lick (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 30

Percussion Lick (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

What’s your mental picture for each lick? What do you think Ellington might have been imagining in the neighborhood at this moment? What do you hear that makes you think that?

¹¹Boyer, Richard O. “The Hot Bach,” *The New Yorker*, 1944.

Invite students to compose some licks of their own, inspired by their own mental pictures.

Using specific details from a familiar place and action as inspiration (for example, walking up the stairs to school, your friend tripping in a soccer game, your dog snoring on the couch, etc.), ask students to create a short musical idea that they can sing or play on classroom instruments to represent it. *What was inspiring about this mental picture? How does your musical lick match the picture in your mind?*

ACTIVITY 2

Playing with the Harlem Motive

(20 Minutes)

Ellington was inspired not only by mental pictures, but by words, too. For this piece he wrote a lick (also known as a musical motive) that imitates someone saying or singing the word “Harlem.” Practice singing the Harlem Motive [a falling minor third] with your students. *What do you notice about this motive’s shape and rhythm?*



Track 31

Harlem Motive (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

The Harlem Motive comes back over and over again, but in his typically playful and creative way, Ellington keeps changing how the motive sounds. If it were his jazz band playing, we might think the musicians were making up, or improvising, new versions of the Harlem Motive whenever it was their turn to play it.

Help your class improvise their own new versions of the Harlem Motive.

Lead a brainstorm of different musical ways the motive could be changed. Possibilities might include:

- Stretching or compressing the rhythm
- Repeating the motive
- Repeating one syllable of the motive
- Using a bigger or smaller interval
- Leaping up instead of down
- Changing the register
- Ornamenting a syllable
- Adding slides

Using the Swinging Cymbal Accompaniment track as background, stand in a circle and choose a few of the brainstorming ideas to try out together as a class before inviting students to take turns “soloing” their own newly improvised versions of the Harlem Motive.

Experiment with varying musical choices to emphasize particular moods or feelings as well. *How could we make this motive sound more energized? Content? Mournful? Mysterious? Agitated? What other feelings could we give this motive?*

Track 32

Swinging Cymbal Accompaniment (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Listen to a few versions of the Harlem Motive and compare Ellington’s choices to the improvisations students created.

Track 33

Harlem Motive, example 1 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Growling trumpet.

Track 34

Harlem Motive, example 2 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Growly trombones repeat “Harlem” quickly, with a little slide.

Track 35

Harlem Motive, example 3 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Clarinet with swirling lead-ins to “Harlem.”

Track 36

Harlem Motive, example 4 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Saxophones and strings repeat a decorated “Har” and long “-lem.”

What musical choices did you hear Ellington make in his versions of the Harlem Motive? What did you hear that was similar to some of our own experiments? What was something new you noticed? What kinds of feelings or moods did you hear being expressed?

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Create a class motive using the name of your community or neighborhood. Have students experiment with improvising their own individual versions of the motive while also taking into consideration what kind of mood or feeling they want to convey. *How do we want to portray our neighborhood or community? What musical choices do we need to make to get that feeling or idea across to our listeners?*

ACTIVITY 3

Exploring Rhythmic Accompaniments

(10 Minutes)

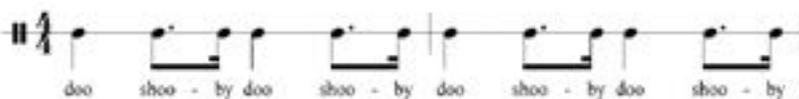
One way Ellington creates the feeling of moving from place-to-place and scene-to-scene in *Harlem* is by using a variety of rhythmic accompaniments. The accompaniments are like the background, or setting for, the rest of the action happening in the music. A change in accompaniment is often a cue that the setting is changing as well.

Listen to three styles of accompaniments that are part of Harlem.

Students may perform the accompaniment rhythms along with the tracks using voices (lyric ideas suggested below), clapping, or playing classroom instruments.

Swinging Cymbal Accompaniment

A traditional jazz accompaniment pattern.



Track 37

Swinging Cymbal Accompaniment (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Tresillo Accompaniment

This rhythm is often used in Afro-Cuban and Latin Jazz.



Track 38

Tresillo Accompaniment (nyphil.org/ygpschools-harlem)

Deep 1, 2 Accompaniment

A bass drum pattern connected to the New Orleans second line sound.



Track 39

Deep 1, 2 Accompaniment (nyphil.org/ygpschools-harlem)

What do you hear that makes each of these accompaniments unique? What kind of feeling do they each create? What kind of background or setting do you imagine as you hear them? What kinds of characters could be part of these scenes?

Without revealing the accompaniment styles, share a few excerpts from *Harlem* with students. Have them work together to identify which kind of accompaniment Ellington is using.

Track 40

Deep 1, 2 example (nyphil.org/ygpschools-harlem)

Track 41

Swinging Cymbal example (nyphil.org/ygpschools-harlem)

Track 42

Tresillo example (nyphil.org/ygpschools-harlem)

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Explore improvising the Harlem Motive from Activity 2 over all three of the different accompaniments and discuss with students how changing the background affects the feel of the motive itself.

Possible Concert Submission

Students may also experiment with performing their new neighborhood or community motives from the Activity 2 Extension along with each rhythmic accompaniment track. Which accompaniment feels like the best match for our motive? Could we create a new rhythmic accompaniment that even better expresses the feeling we're aiming for?

Record your best community motive and submit it for a chance to be part of the Young People's Concerts. For more information, see page 3.

ACTIVITY 4

A Changing Theme, a Changing Community

(15 Minutes)

Not unlike William Grant Still and *Lenox Avenue*, Ellington imagined *Harlem* as a kind of journey through his vibrant community. As the music travels through the neighborhood, Ellington conveys not only scenes and characters, but also focuses on the emotions, ideas, and struggles that were at the heart of life in Harlem in the 1950s. Share and discuss Ellington's description of the piece with your students.

“ We would like now to take you on a tour of this place called Harlem. It has always had more churches than cabarets. It is Sunday morning. We are strolling from 110th Street up Seventh Avenue, heading north through the Spanish and West Indian neighborhood toward the 125th Street business area. Everybody is nicely dressed, and on their way to or from church. Everybody is in a friendly mood. Greetings are polite and pleasant... You may hear a parade go by, or a funeral, or you may recognize the passage of those who are making Civil Rights demands.¹² ”

What do Still and Ellington's descriptions of Harlem have in common? How do you imagine Ellington's journey through Harlem might sound different from Still's?

As referenced in the end of Ellington's description of the piece, the end of *Harlem* is dominated by a musical theme Ellington connected to the Civil Rights activism at work in his community. This Marching Onward Theme has several manifestations, each with its own unique musical and emotional qualities, from staid, to somber, to joyous. These transformations could be heard as representations of the often difficult realities Ellington knew to be part of life in Harlem, as well as the hopes he had for his community and its people's future.

Help your students familiarize themselves with the basic **Marching Onward Theme** by having them sing it (using possible lyrics below) or play it on instruments.



trombone

March-ing on - ward and up - ward, Har - lem you are my home.

Track 43

Marching Onward Theme (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Listen to a few examples of the Marching Onward Theme from the end of *Harlem* and discuss students' observations.

Track 44

Marching Onward Theme, example 1 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 45

Marching Onward Theme, example 2 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 46

Marching Onward Theme, example 3 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

What changes and choices do you hear Ellington making in these different versions of the Marching Onward Theme? What do you think he might have been hoping to show listeners about the challenges people in Harlem were facing? If you were creating a piece about your own community, what kinds of struggles or hopes would be important to include?

¹² Ellington, Duke. *Music Is My Mistress*. Da Capo Press, 1973.

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Have students explore some of the most important figures and defining moments in the struggle for civil rights in America in the following books:

- *The Day Martin Luther King, Jr., Was Shot: A Photo History of the Civil Rights Movement* by Jim Haskins (Scholastic, 1992)
- *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement From 1954 to 1968* by Diane McWhorter (Scholastic, 2004)
- *Mine Eyes Have Seen: Bearing Witness to the Struggle for Civil Rights* by Bob Adelman, Charles Johnson (Liberty Street, 2007)

ACTIVITY 5

Creating a Harlem Listening Map

(30 Minutes)

Have students work in pairs or small groups to create their own Listening Maps by describing and connecting different musical ideas, or listening landmarks, found in *Harlem*. Students will need to use small sheets of paper to make notes about each listening landmark they want to include, as well as a large piece of chart paper on which to organize their landmarks. Possible listening landmark details to include:

- A name or title for the musical landmark
- Descriptions of stand-out musical qualities (for example, specifics of tempo, dynamics, instrumentation, rhythmic accompaniments, motives, themes, etc.)
- An image or sketch of something you're picturing
- Emotion(s) you hear being expressed

Lead the class through multiple listenings of each of the sections of *Harlem*, pausing regularly to help students identify, describe, and document what they feel the listening landmarks are in each track. There is no single correct way to hear this piece, so allow for multiple interpretations!

Track 47

Harlem Listening Landmark 1 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 48

Harlem Listening Landmark 2 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 49

Harlem Listening Landmark 3 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 50

Harlem Listening Landmark 4 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

Track 51

Harlem Listening Landmark 5 (nyphil.org/ypcschoools-harlem)

ELEMENTARY EXTENSION

Compose a musical journey through your own community by creating musical ideas to represent the places, people, struggles, and hopes that matter to you. Incorporate your own Community or Neighborhood Motive from the Activity 2 Extension.

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSIONS

Make a listening map for a song that you know and love. *What is similar between this song and Harlem? What is different? What elements from this song and from Harlem would you incorporate if you were going to create your own music?*

Ellington found Harlem to be a powerful musical inspiration throughout his life. Explore some of his other pieces inspired by this exceptional neighborhood, in his own words:

“Eerie Moan” (1930)

“...You’re lying in bed all by yourself. The window is open. It’s summer...it’s very late and you listen and listen and you hear something out there that comes from millions of people sleeping, from manhole covers that give a double click as a taxi shoots over them, from tugboats far away when they whistle hoarse. You really don’t hear anything single, just a kind of general breathing. You feel very alone. You moan and it seems like that’s the sound you’re hearing from all the city outside in the night. Only place you can hear it is New York City.”

“Harlem Air Shaft” (1940)

“You get the full essence of Harlem in an air shaft. You hear fights, you smell dinner, you hear people... You hear intimate gossip floating down. You hear the radio. An air shaft is one great big loudspeaker. You see your neighbor’s laundry. You hear the janitor’s dogs...The man upstairs’ aerial falls down and breaks your window. You smell coffee. A wonderful thing, that smell. An air shaft has got every contrast. One guy is cooking dried fish with rice and another guy’s got a great big turkey...You hear people praying, fighting, snoring. Jitterbugs are jumping up and down always over you, never below you...I tried to put all that in ‘Harlem Air Shaft.’”

The New York Philharmonic

The New York Philharmonic is by far the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and one of the oldest in the world. It was founded in 1842 by a group of local musicians and currently plays about 180 concerts every year. On May 5, 2010, the Philharmonic gave its 15,000th concert — a record that no other symphony orchestra in the world has reached. The Orchestra currently has 106 members. It performs mostly at David Geffen Hall, at Lincoln Center, but also tours around the world. The Orchestra's first concerts specifically for a younger audience were a series of 24 Young People's Matinees that Theodore Thomas organized for the 1885–86 season. Josef Stransky led the first Young People's Concert in January 1914, and Ernest Schelling established the ongoing series and brought the concerts to national attention in 1924. Leonard Bernstein made the concerts famous in the 1960s with live television broadcasts. Today's New York Philharmonic offers a wide array of educational programs — both live and online — for families, schools, and adults.

How to Have a Great Day at the Philharmonic

Before you come...

- Leave food, drink, candy, and gum behind. Avoid the rush at the trash cans.
- Leave your backpack at school, too. Why be crowded in your seat?
- Use the bathroom at school so you don't miss a moment of the concert.

When you arrive...

- Ushers will show your group where to sit. Your teachers and chaperones will sit with you.
- Settle in and get comfortable. Take off your coat and put it under your seat.
- If you get separated from your group, ask an usher for help.

On stage...

- The orchestra will assemble onstage before your eyes.
- The concertmaster — the violinist who sits at the conductor's left-hand side — is the last person to arrive onstage before the conductor. You can clap for the concertmaster, but then quiet down, because once he arrives, all the musicians tune their instruments together. This creates an exciting sound, signaling the start of the concert.
- When the orchestra is done tuning their instruments, the conductor enters the stage. You can clap for him and the orchestra. Then, get quiet again, and listen for the music to begin.
- How do you know when a piece of music is over? Your best bet is to watch the conductor. When he turns around and faces the audience, that means the piece is over. You can show your appreciation for the performance by clapping.

Listening closely...

- Watch the conductor and try to figure out which instruments are playing based on where he's looking or pointing.
- Try to name which instruments are playing based on the sounds you're hearing.
- Listen for melodies and try to remember one you'll be able to hum later. Then try to remember a second one. Can you try to remember a third one, too?
- If the music was the sound track of a movie, what would the setting of the movie be like? Can you also think of a story that would go well with the music?
- Pick out a favorite moment in the music to tell your family about later, but keep your thoughts to yourself during the concert. Let your classmates listen to the music in their own ways.

