

EDUCATION  
WORKSHOP

# Black Violin

Grades 2 - 12



CHARLESTON  
**GAILLARD**  
CENTER

Photo by Mark Clennon

# MEET THE ARTISTS

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Photo Credit to Mark Clennon

## WIL B.

Violist Wilner Baptiste uses the stage name Wil B. Wil originally intended to study the saxophone instead of the viola but was put into classes for the latter by mistake. Though initially reluctant, Wil chose to adapt to change. According to a 2012 interview, Wil stated, "I stuck with the viola and it opened a lot of doors for me."<sup>1</sup> His goal as a performer is for people to attend his concerts and return home "to be better people."<sup>2</sup>

Photo Credit to Ron Valle

## KEV MARCUS

Violinist Kevin Sylvester uses the stage name Kev Marcus. Kev explained in a 2012 interview that as a child, "I didn't want to be the violinist in my neighborhood." However, he said when he was in fifth grade, "I got into a little trouble...and my mom said she needed me to get into something, so she took me to Saturday morning violin class."<sup>3</sup> Kev explained that his goal for his audience is to think about "what they would do differently in their lives. We want to make sure they are not just playing the violin or playing other instruments, but we also want to make sure they are thinking about what they can do differently in their lives. So whether they want to be scientists or lawyers or hockey stars or anything — whatever they want to do — just make sure they go about doing it differently than anybody else."<sup>4</sup>



1. "Black Violin," Wikipedia, last modified on December 16, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Violin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Violin).
2. Kev Marcus and Wil B., "Kev Marcus & Wil B. on Black Violin," November 21, 2012, youtube video, 2:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4u9jcAop0>.
3. Wikipedia. "Black Violin." Last modified on December 16, 2021. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Violin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Violin).
4. Marcus, Kev and Wil B. "Kev Marcus & Wil B. on Black Violin." November 21, 2012. Youtube video, 2:20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4u9jcAop0>.



## BACKGROUND

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When the members of Black Violin first learned to play their signature instruments — Wil Baptiste the viola at 14 years old and Kev Marcus the violin at 9 years old — neither could have foreseen that it would become their livelihood though it was already becoming their passion. The two Florida natives first met while attending Dillard High School of Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, a school whose exceptional music programs served to nurture their already budding talents.<sup>5</sup>

After graduating from high school, both Wil and Kev were granted full music scholarships to college, Florida State University and Florida International University respectively. It was at FIU that Kev first encountered the group's future manager, Sam G, with whom he and Wil formed a production company: DKNEX. Now they had a platform for their dream along with the talent and inspiration to back it up. Black Violin was born.<sup>6</sup>

But beyond all the glitz and glamour, the members of Black Violin just want to give children the same opportunities that they had. With school music programs being culled all across the country, Kev and Wil are concerned that urban youth will not have the benefit of music as a positive alternative to other, more destructive pursuits. With this in mind, they have embarked upon a campaign of social change—using youth orchestras and reinvigorated music programs to show children and teens that they are capable of expressing themselves in ways they have never dreamed.<sup>7</sup>

In an age where music is coming to be more and more defined by the labels given to it, Black Violin shows that music does not exist within a box but rather in another space.

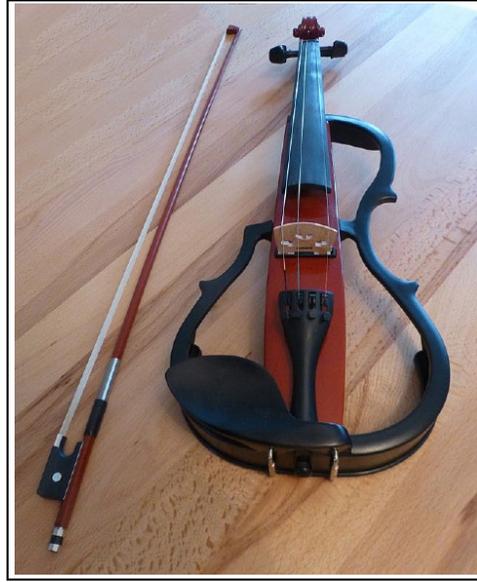
5. Laurie Niles, "From Viola to Hip-Hop: The Story of Black Violin," *Violinist*, November 30, 2016, <https://www.violinist.com/blog/laurie/201611/20879/>.

6. Niles, Laurie. "From Viola to Hip-Hop: The Story of Black Violin."

7. Niles, Laurie. "From Viola to Hip-Hop: The Story of Black Violin."

# ABOUT THE SHOW

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To most people, jazz, hip-hop, funk, and classical are musical genres. But to the revolutionary music group Black Violin, these are nothing but ingredients.

Combining a daunting array of musical styles and influences to produce a signature sound that is not quite maestro and not quite emcee, this group of two classically trained violinists and their DJ is redefining the music world one string at a time.

With influences ranging from Shostakovich and Bach to Nas and Jay-Z, Black Violin breaks all the rules, blending the classical with the modern to create something rare—a sound that nobody has ever heard but that everybody wants to feel.



# CLASSICAL vs. HIP-HOP

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## Classical Music

The word “classic” usually refers to an art that will always be enjoyed because it is exceptional. Something “classic” has become a model for future artists. The Classical period has referred to Ancient Greece and Rome because throughout the centuries, people have admired those civilizations and drawn inspiration from them. More recently, the eighteenth century has been referred to as the Classical period because of the heavy influence the Classical period of Ancient Greece and Rome had on the musicians, artists, writers, and philosophers from this time. By labeling something a “classic,” it means that it “will always be remembered as something great.”<sup>8</sup>

Below are some common characteristics in music of the Classical period:

- It has a clear tune. While Baroque music weaves different tunes together more frequently, most music from the Classical period has a clear tune. Therefore, music from the Classical period doesn’t sound as complex as music from the Baroque period.
- It is loud one second, then quiet the next. Music from the Classical period changes volume frequently. It also changes in mood as a piece progresses.<sup>9</sup>
- Classical music usually isn’t amplified electronically.

## Hip-Hop Music

This is a music genre that consists of a “stylized rhythmic music” which often accompanies rapping, a chanted speech that uses rhyme and rhythm for sound. Hip-hop typically has four stylistic features: MCing/rapping, DJing/scratching with turntables, break dancing, and graffiti writing. It also often uses sampling beats or bass lines from records and rhythmic beatboxing. Hip-hop was developed in the United States by inner-city African Americans in the 1970s.<sup>10</sup>

8. “Classical Music,” KidzSearch Encyclopedia, last modified on August 21, 2021, [https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Classical\\_music](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Classical_music).

9. “The Classical Period,” Kids Music Corner, accessed on December 30, 2021, <https://kidsmusiccorner.co.uk/types/classical/the-classical-period/>.

10. “Hip Hop Music,” Wikipedia, last modified December 22, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hip\\_hop\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hip_hop_music).

## EXPLORE // CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

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### Graffiti Name Art

In this workshop, students will learn about the origins of hip-hop music and the art during this period of time. Students will create their own piece of graffiti art and will use colors and symbols to represent themselves.

[Click Here to View the Workshop](#)

### STEM Instrument Challenge

In this workshop, students will learn about sound frequencies and pitch to design their own musical instruments. Students will use household objects to create an instrument to which sound can be changed or tuned. [Click Here to View the Workshop](#)



Vision Board by Sarah Ruddell Beach

### Vision Boards

In this workshop, students will analyze the lyrics of a Black Violin song and will create their own individual collages of their future dreams. [Click Here to View the Workshop](#)

# CONNECT

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Photo Credit to Henry Chalfant

## Hip-Hop History

Hip-hop is a subculture and an art movement that emerged from the Bronx in New York City during the early 1970s. Its development reflected the negative effects of post-industrial decline, political discourse, and a rapidly changing economy. **Read More:** <https://iconcollective.edu/hip-hop-history/>



Photo Credit to Decca Records

## Ezinma

“Meredith Ezinma Ramsay, professionally known as Ezinma [Eh-zeen-mah], is a violinist, film composer, and educator. Ezinma has worked with renowned artists including Beyoncé, Stevie Wonder, Kendrick Lamar, Joshua Bell, Yo-Yo Ma, and Clean Bandit to name a few. As a composer, Ezinma has scored national advertisements, documentaries, and short films. She was even part of the *Black Panther* (2018) soundtrack. In addition, Ezinma is an advocate for music education. In 2020, she launched her nonprofit foundation, HeartStrings, a music-based youth development program in New York City for children of diverse backgrounds in grades K-5.”<sup>14</sup> **Read More:** <https://www.ezinma.com/bio>

## Listen

[Enzima’s Cover of “Rockstar” by Post Malone](#)

[Enzima’s Cover of “Rockstar” by Dababy ft. Roddy Ricch](#)

12. Chalfant, Henry. “South Bronx Park Jam.” 1984. <https://www.mrporter.com/en-ae/journal/lifestyle/how-the-block-party-invented-hip-hop-665720>.

13. P.Q., Rory. “Hip Hop History: From the Streets to the Mainstream.” Last Modified November 25, 2019. <https://iconcollective.edu/hip-hop-history/>.

14. <https://www.ezinma.com/bio>

## ENHANCE // LISTEN

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### **Lindsey Stirling**

[View Lindsey Stirling's "Master of Tides"](#)



### **The Piano Guys**

[View The Piano Guys Cover of Ed Sheeran's "Perfect" with a La La Land Twist](#)



### **DJ Premier and Berklee Symphony Orchestra**

[Regeneration \(ft. Nas\) by DJ Premier and Berklee Symphony Orchestra](#)

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