EDUCATION WORKSHOP

BLACK VIOLIN

--

All Ages

CHARLESTON GAILLARD CENTER
gaillardcenter.org
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ABOUT THE SHOW

Photo: Rachel Bennett

For nearly two decades, **Black Violin** has been merging string arrangements with modern beats and vocals and building bridges in communities along the way. Members Kev Marcus and Wil Baptiste first met in orchestra class at Dillard High School in Fort Lauderdale, becoming classically trained on the violin and viola through their high school and college careers. Post-college, they reconvened to produce beats for South Florida rappers, and began building an audience in local clubs. They later went on to win Showtime at the Apollo in 2005, and eventually sold out headline performances at venues across the country, including a sold out two-night headline run at The Kennedy Center in 2018. NPR took note and declared “their music will keep classical music alive for the next generation.” Black Violin’s 2019 album release, *Take the Stairs*, earned a Grammy Award nomination for “Best Contemporary Instrumental Album”. The band also received their second ever Grammy Award nomination for the track “The Message” as Best Americana Performance, in collaboration with The Blind Boys of Alabama. Check out Black Violin's latest album, *Full Circle*. **For more information about Black Violin visit: Black Violin**

LISTEN AND WATCH

Impossible is Possible
Dreamer
A Flat

Photo: Meredith Truax

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." His goal as a performer is for people to attend his concerts and return home "to be better people."[1]

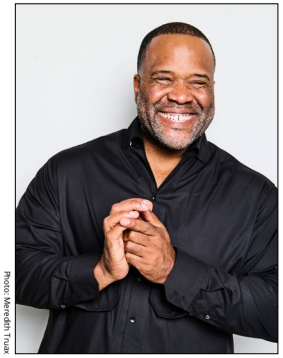


Photo: Meredith Truax

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."[2] 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.”[3]

1 Kev Marcus and Wil B., “Kev Marcus & Wil B. on Black Violin,” November 21, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4u9jcJAop0.
2 “Black Violin,” Wikipedia, updated December 16, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Violin.
3 Kev Marcus and Wil B., “Kev Marcus & Wil B. on Black Violin.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Background
Black Violin is a groundbreaking music group known for their innovative fusion of classical music, hip-hop, R&B, and other genres. The duo consists of Wilner Baptiste (Wil B) on viola and Kevin Sylvester (Kev Marcus) on violin. Both were classically trained musicians who met while attending Dillard High School of Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. After studying their respective instruments at a high level, Wil B and Kev Marcus began experimenting with blending classical music with contemporary styles like hip-hop and R&B. Their unique sound quickly gained attention, and they started performing locally before gaining national and international recognition.

One of Black Violin's defining characteristics is their ability to break down musical barriers and challenge stereotypes about what classical musicians can perform. They infuse their performances with energy, charisma, and a sense of fun that appeals to audiences of all ages and musical tastes. Black Violin has released several albums, including *Stereotypes*, *Classically Trained*, *Take the Stairs,* and *Full Circle*. They have also collaborated with numerous artists across various genres and have performed at prestigious venues and events worldwide, including the White House and the Apollo Theater.

In addition to their musical career, Black Violin is known for their commitment to education and outreach. They frequently visit schools to perform and engage with students, promoting the importance of music education and inspiring young musicians to pursue their passion. Overall, Black Violin's innovative approach to music, dynamic performances, and dedication to education have earned them a unique place in the music industry and made them influential figures in both classical and contemporary music circles.

CONNECT

CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Create Your Own Guitar

Grades 1–4

In this workshop, students will explore sound waves and pitch by making their own guitars using everyday materials. The workshop will conclude with students working together to create their own song on the guitar.

Click Here for the Lesson Plan

Hip-hop Groove

Grades Pre-K–12

In this workshop, students will learn about the history of hip-hop dance through movement. Students will learn foundational hip hop movements and will conclude by creating their own dance.

Click Here for the Lesson Plan

Hip-hop Pop Art

Grades 2–8

In this workshop, students will learn about the hip-hop music movement and combine it with Romero Britto's pop art style. Students will take inspiration from Black Violin's song "Dreamer" and will create a positive affirmation art piece in the style of Keith Haring's artwork.

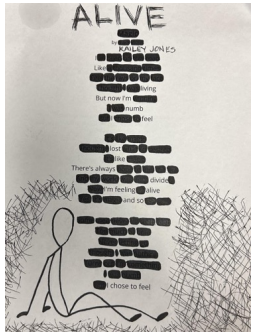
Click Here for the Lesson Plan

Blackout Poetry

Grades 5–12

In this workshop, students will read various Black Violin song lyrics and will redact words to create their own poetry. Students will observe the power of words and their ability to create tones in poetry.

Click Here for the Lesson Plan



EXPLORE

MUSIC GENRES

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 18th century has been referred to as the Classical period because of the strong 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.”[4]

Below are some common characteristics of music from 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 does not 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.
- Classical music usually is not amplified electronically.

LISTEN

The Best of Classical

Hip-hop Music– Hip-hop music emerged as a cultural phenomenon in the 1970s in the South Bronx, New York City, predominantly among African American and Latino youth. Its roots can be traced back to block parties and DJ-driven events, where DJs would use turntables to manipulate records, creating rhythmic beats and loops. These events laid the groundwork for what would become the four foundational elements of hip-hop culture: MCing (rapping), DJing (turntablism), graffiti art, and breakdancing (B-boying).

In the early days, hip-hop music primarily consisted of DJs looping breaks from funk and soul records, while MCs would rhyme over these beats, often improvising lyrics and engaging with the crowd. This improvisational style evolved into rap music, with artists like DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash pioneering the genre.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of recorded hip-hop music with the release of seminal tracks like "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugarhill Gang and "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. These tracks brought hip-hop to a wider audience and laid the foundation for the commercialization of the genre.

WATCH

The Birth of Hip-hop

Rap and Hip-hop: Crash Course Black American History

Hip-hop dance has a rich and dynamic history that reflects the cultural, social, and artistic developments of African American and Latino communities in the United States. It emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s in New York City, particularly in the Bronx, as a form of expression for marginalized urban youth.

[4] “Classical Music,” KidzSearch Encyclopedia, last modified August 21, 2021, https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Classical_music.

CONNECT

HIP-HOP DANCE

Here's a brief overview of the history of hip-hop dance:

1. **Origins:** Hip-hop dance originated alongside hip-hop music in the late 1960s. Its roots can be traced back to African and Afro-Caribbean dance traditions, as well as to the social dances of African American communities, including the Lindy Hop, the Charleston, and tap dance.
2. **1970s - The birth of hip-hop dance culture:** During the 1970s, block parties and community gatherings in the Bronx provided a space for DJs to play music, and dancers to showcase their skills. Breakdancing, or b-boying/b-girling, emerged as a prominent form of hip-hop dance during this time. Breakdancers would perform acrobatic moves, spins, and freezes, often in battles with rival dancers or crews.
3. **1980s - Mainstream recognition:** Hip-hop dance gained mainstream recognition in the 1980s with the rise of music videos and films featuring breakdancing, such as *Beat Street* and *Breakin.'* The emergence of popping, locking, and other funk styles also contributed to the diversity of hip-hop dance forms.
4. **1990s - Commercialization and globalization:** In the 1990s, hip-hop dance became more commercialized, with choreographers like Rennie Harris and Shane Sparks incorporating hip-hop moves into music videos, commercials, and stage performances. Hip-hop dance also spread globally during this time, influencing dance styles and cultures around the world.
5. **2000s - Evolution and fusion:** Hip-hop dance continued to evolve in the 2000s, with dancers incorporating elements of other dance styles such as jazz, contemporary, and ballet into their routines. Dance crews like the Jabbawockeez and Kinjaz gained popularity through television shows like *America's Best Dance Crew*, showcasing the technical skill and creativity of hip-hop dancers.
6. **2010s - Social media and viral trends:** The rise of social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram enabled hip-hop dancers to reach larger audiences and showcase their talent to the world. Viral dance challenges, such as the Harlem Shake and the Dab, became internet sensations, further popularizing hip-hop dance culture.
7. **Present Day - Diversity and innovation:** Hip-hop dance continues to evolve and diversify, with dancers incorporating elements of street dance, urban dance, and contemporary dance into their choreography. Hip-hop dance battles, competitions, and events remain an integral part of the culture, providing a platform for dancers to showcase their skills and creativity.

WATCH

Do you know all 9 Elements of Hip-hop?

How the Bronx Brought Breaking to the World

Charleston's Hip-hop Scene

Dance Moves of Charleston

Dance Lab

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kev Marcus and Wil B., “Kev Marcus & Wil B. on Black Violin,” November 21, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4u9jcJAop0.

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