RAISING THE VOLUME
with Marcus Amaker & Charlton Singleton

Kellen Gray examines classical conducting.

Sixth Grade and Up
Mastery of core subjects and 21st century themes is essential for all students in the 21st century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history and government, and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21st century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

**Global Awareness**
1. Use 21st century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

**Civic Literacy**
1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Work Creatively with Others**
1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work, and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.
Everyone has a story. It’s our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

Raising the Volume is a series of Black stories. Stories about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. Stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard Center’s Artists-in-Residence, Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, Raising the Volume gives a platform to Black community members and opens us all up to honest discussion.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, “To break down racial barriers, start where you are.” Let’s start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume Episode XI, please email Sterling deVries at sdevries@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XI.
Raising the Volume

Episode XI: Kellen Gray examines classical conducting.

(CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH EPISODE XI)
LESSONS

Kellen Gray is a conductor of classical music. There are a handful of Black conductors in the world.

“According to a 2004 article in the Guardian, ‘black conductors are rare in the classical music world and even in symphony orchestras it is unusual to see more than one or two black musicians.’ Canadian-born black conductor Kwamé Ryan, who studied music at Cambridge University and in Germany, made his professional conducting debut in 2004. Ryan says the ‘...message given to young, black people, particularly in North America, was... that you can be a star athlete; you can be a pop star...[but the] possibility for black children [to become a conductor] is not encouraged in schools or in the media.’ Ryan states that young blacks have a lack of ‘...exposure [to black conductor role models] and it is a deficit that is passed on from generation to generation.’ Ryan said he has ‘...no optimism for the future.’”

Why are there few Black conductors in the world of classical music? What can we do to encourage young students to study classical music?

During his time with the Chicago Sinfonietta, Kellen Gray recalls being asked, “What has your journey been like as a Black conductor?” Kellen reveals he had never thought about his journey from that point of view. He states, “that was the start of reflection on how my path may be different.”

Is Kellen Gray’s path different as a Black conductor compared to that of other conductors that are not considered minorities? How?

As a Project Inclusion Freeman Conducting Fellow, and later as Assistant Conductor at Chicago Sinfonietta, Kellen Gray was a firsthand participant in the impact of the project. Read this quote from the program’s website:

“Project Inclusion is Chicago Sinfonietta’s groundbreaking program where talent and mentorship converge to develop diverse and emerging musicians, conductors, and administrators on and off-stage. What was created by Sinfonietta’s founder Paul Freeman to help eliminate institutional bias due to factors such as ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status has since broadened to tackle matters of diversity and inclusion.”
from every angle. Today, Project Inclusion offers four multifaceted, professional development fellowships to orchestral and ensemble musicians, conductors, and arts administrators. Chicago Sinfonietta is dedicated to changing the face of classical music; Project Inclusion is the program to make this change possible.”

Go to the Project Inclusion website [here](#) and write down three ways it is committed to changing the lack of diversity in the world of classical music. Discuss with your group.

As we have learned, there are only a handful of Black conductors worldwide. Three of these conductors are from the state of South Carolina: Kellen Gray, Joseph Young, and Jonathan Heyward. Read the bios from all three conductors below.

**Kellen Gray Bio**

**Joseph Young Bio**

**Jonathon Heyward Bio**

What do these three men have in common? How are they changing the face of classical conductors?
ABOUT KELLEN GRAY

Kellen Gray has earned a reputation as a versatile and imaginative conductor through his enthusiasm for traditional, experimental, and integrative multimedia art programs. Presently, he serves as Assistant Conductor at the Charleston Symphony Orchestra.

Before his Charleston appointment, Kellen was a Project Inclusion Freeman Conducting Fellow, and later, Assistant Conductor at Chicago Sinfonietta, under Music Director, Mei-Ann Chen. Before leaving Chicago, Kellen made his Chicago Symphony Center debut, which Chicago's Picture This Post described him as having, “...laser-like focus that allowed the entire orchestra to seem to become one organism.” The Classical Voice of North Carolina referred to Kellen’s gestures as “…so smooth and polished they’re almost choreography.”

From 2014-16, Kellen was Assistant Conductor at the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra under Music Director, Howard Hsu; and one of eight Conducting Fellows selected to study at Eastern Music Festival, under Gerard Schwarz, Grant Cooper, and Jose-Luis Novo.

At the 2018 League of American Orchestras conference, Kellen was a discussion panelist on the value of leadership pipelines in classical music based on diversity, inclusion, and equity. At a 2017 festival celebrating the 100th birthday of Georgia-born author, Carson McCullers, he was awarded the honor of guest-conducting a collaboration of the music of David Diamond and the premiere of Karen Allen’s debut film, “A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud.”

ABOUT CHARLTON SINGLETON

A native of Awendaw, SC, Charlton Singleton began his musical studies at the age of three on the piano. He would then go on to study the organ, violin, cello, and the trumpet throughout elementary, middle and high school. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from South Carolina State University. Since that time, he has taught music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as being an adjunct faculty member at the College of Charleston. In 2008 he co-founded and became the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Jazz Orchestra: an 18-piece jazz ensemble of some of the finest professional musicians in the Southeast and the resident big band in Charleston, SC. Mr. Singleton is also the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Charleston, SC. In November of 2016 he was named the inaugural Artist-in-Residence at the recently renovated Gaillard Center in downtown Charleston. He remained in this position until July 2019; at that point he was named Artist-in-Residence Emeritus. In this position he continues to lead the Summer Youth Jazz Orchestra Camp as well as lead the “Jazz Through the Ages” assembly, which attracts a capacity crowd of students at the Gaillard Center.

As a performer, Charlton leads his own ensembles that vary in size and style. He has performed in France, Great Britain, Scotland, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, the Netherlands, as well as many great cities throughout the United States. He is a founding member of a new ensemble called Ranky Tanky. The group is a quintet that interprets the sounds of Gullah from the Southeast Coast of the United States. In 2017 Ranky Tanky reached the top of the Billboard, iTunes, and Amazon Contemporary Jazz charts with their self-titled debut recording. In 2019 they accomplished the same feat with the release of their sophomore effort, “Good Time”, which recently won the 2020 Grammy Award for “Best Regional Roots Music Album”.

In addition to performing, he is in demand as a speaker, clinician, composer, and arranger. He has also shared the stage with and/or worked with some of most talented entertainers in the world, including Bobby McFerrin, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Houston Person, Darius Rucker, Fred Wesley, and Cyrus Chestnut to name a few. Outside of music and entertainment, he and his wife, MaryJo, are the proud parents of Shalamar and D'Marcus, as well as their pets...Sassy, Jango, Mojo, Kota Bear, Pumpkin, and Ginger.
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Episode XI: Kellen Gray examines classical conducting.

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• https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_conductors
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