

# **Education Program Handbook for Teachers**

## **WELCOME**

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Sheldon Concert Hall for one of our Education Programs. We hope that the perfect acoustics and intimacy of the hall will make this an important and memorable experience.

## **ARRIVAL AND PARKING**

We urge you to arrive at The Sheldon Concert Hall 15 to 30 minutes prior to the program. This will allow you to be seated in time for the performance and will allow a little extra time in case you encounter traffic on the way. Seating will be on a first come-first serve basis as schools arrive. To accommodate school schedules, we will start on time. The Sheldon is located at 3648 Washington Boulevard, just around the corner from the Fox Theatre. Parking is free for school buses and cars and will be available on Washington near The Sheldon. Please enter by the steps leading up to the concert hall front door. If you have a disabled student, please call The Sheldon (314-533-9900) to make arrangement to use our street level entrance and elevator to the concert hall.

## **CONCERT MANNERS**

Please coach your students on good concert manners before coming to The Sheldon Concert Hall. Good audiences love to listen to music and they love to show their appreciation with applause, usually at the end of an entire piece and occasionally after a good solo by one of the musicians. Urge your students to take in and enjoy the great music being performed. Food and drink are prohibited in The Sheldon Concert Hall. Any device (cell-phone, alarm watch or toy) that makes noise is a distraction for both the musicians on stage and your fellow audience members and should be put away prior to the performance. No photos or video are allowed during the performance. Restrooms are located on the same level as the concert hall close to the Art Galleries. Please encourage students to use restrooms at school or to use Sheldon restrooms before the concert begins. If a student does need to use the restroom during the performance, the best time to get up is between musical numbers.

## **ART GALLERIES**

The Sheldon features seven art galleries in the Emerson Galleries building that adjoins the Concert Hall, including the Bellwether Gallery of St. Louis Artists, Gallery of Music, Gallery of Photography, Bernoudy Gallery of Architecture, the AT&T Gallery of Children's Art and on the lower level, The Nancy Spiritas Kranzberg Gallery and Ann Lee and Wilfred Konneker Gallery. You are invited to call The Sheldon and add a 20 or 30-minute visit to the galleries when you attend a Sheldon Education Program.

# Folk Music in the Melting Pot



# A Brief History of American Folk Music

American folk music is a type of music that encompasses a wide variety of genres. These genres include traditional music, traditional folk music, contemporary folk music or roots music. Roots music is a broad category of music including bluegrass, gospel, jug bands, Appalachian folk, gospel, old time music and Cajun and Native American music. As you can see, American folk music took influences from a diverse group of musical genres. It also proved to serve as an influence for genres to come. These include rock n' roll, jazz and rhythm and blues. The American folk song can take many forms, such as ballads, spiritual songs and protest songs; however, most of them share at least one thing in common: they have been passed down orally from generation to generation. Folk Songs range in subject matter from war, civil rights, work and economic hardship to nonsense, satire and, of course, love songs. With this being said, folk songs often changed in meaning, reflecting the changing times.

Perhaps the most important feature of Folk music is its indiscriminate capability to convey the sorrows, hardships and convictions of the ordinary American, regardless of class, gender or race. We can see this through African American spiritual songs, which merged Christianity with traditional African influences in the wake of slavery. Another form of African American folk music is seen through work songs and field hollers. These types of song were a reaction to the fact that slaves were forbidden to speak in the fields, however; they were allowed to sing. In the 1960's, during the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War movement, folk music began to take the form of protest songs. It is through folk music that many disenfranchised individuals were able to voice their struggles as well as find dignity and identity through music. American folk music began within the 13 colonies of the United States (Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island and Providence Plantations) and its legacy continues to live on today.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Folk Music:**

Folk music is the music sung and played by the common folk or people of a particular community or country. The original composer of a folksong is often unknown. Folk music is often not written down, but passed on orally from one musician to another and one generation to another, often being changed as it's passed along. There are many kinds of folksongs, often dealing with daily life – work songs, love songs, cradle songs, drinking songs, patriotic songs, dancing numbers and frolic tunes, mourning songs and epic tales.

### **Ballad:**

A ballad is a song that tells a story. Some ballads deal with legendary characters, miraculous happenings or gruesome deeds, while others tell romantic tales or chronicle an historical event.

### **Work Song:**

Workers to coordinate their efforts and to keep their spirits up in the face of hard physical labor sing work songs. African-American slaves sang work songs as they ploughed and harvested the land of the South, cut down trees and split the logs, worked the mules along muddy rivers and hoisted cotton bales onto Mississippi steamboats. Work songs have been sung by sailors and other workers for centuries.

### **Spiritual:**

African-American slaves who converted to Christianity developed a unique style of religious choral singing called spirituals, which told of redemption and freedom. Spirituals were based on traditional hymns but added syncopation and a freedom of expression. Spirituals became popular at camp meetings and churches throughout the country.

### **Blues:**

The blues evolved musically in part from work songs and spirituals. The blues are sung by an individual, with the accompaniment on guitar or other instrument an important part of the performance. The blues are generally played in a slow tempo and the solo singer is free to add ornamentation and bend notes, including the “blue notes” (lowered third, fifth and seventh notes of the normal scale), to better express the deep feelings of the song.

### **Protest Song:**

From colonial times to the present day, American folk songs were often used to protest social injustice. The targets were kings and corrupt politicians, rich landowners and factory bosses and any system that oppressed the common people.

## **Instruments used in “Folk Music in the Melting Pot”**

(The names of the instruments and definitions can be jumbled and used as a matching exercise for your students.)

### **Guitar:**

A plucked or strummed string instrument originally brought to Spain by the Moors in the Middle Ages. This instrument, usually with six strings and occasionally with twelve strings, became popular with both blues and folk singers to accompany their singing.

### **Mandolin:**

The most recent string instrument developed from the lute family. It is played with a pick and was popular in southern Italy before being taken up by folk and bluegrass musicians.

### **Banjo:**

Originally a gourd strung with one string; this instrument was introduced in this country by West African slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most often it now has four or five strings. It was popularized in minstrel shows, parlor music, musical theater, vaudeville, blues and early jazz. Since World War II it has been used often by folk and bluegrass musicians.

### **Harmonica:**

Sometimes called a mouth organ, this instrument consists of a small metal box with a series of openings along one its long sides. Each slit leads to a small pair of reeds that vibrate when the player either blows or inhales. Because it is so portable, this instrument was carried by pioneers across the country, played by cowboys on the trail and is used today by many folk musicians.

### **Violin/ Fiddle:**

The violin, also known as the fiddle, is a stringed instrument that is most commonly played by drawing a bow made of horse hair over the strings. The violin originated in Italy in the 16 century and was brought to America by immigrants and eventually utilized by American Folk musicians.

### **Homemade instruments used in “Folk Music in the Melting Pot”:**

**Limberjack** – a puppet-like figure made of wood that makes a percussive sound when bounced on a board or the player’s knee.

**Washtub bass** – made with a washtub, a string and a broom or mop handle.

**Washboard** – an actual washboard scraped to make percussive sounds.

**Jaw harp** – a primitive instrument consisting of an elastic strip of metal, one end attached to a small frame of metal or wood that is held between the teeth.

## **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Ask your students the origins of their families and, on a map of the world, find those countries. Include England, Ireland and Africa, which are mentioned in “Folk Music in the Melting Pot.” Do your students know any folk songs from their ancestors’ country?

Discuss the concept of the “melting pot” and the fact that not everyone came willingly to America. Discuss how cultural traditions are preserved to retain a sense of identity and to remind immigrants of their previous homes. Discuss how cultural traditions change and blend with other traditions to create new traditions and help immigrants to connect to their new homeland.

Using the “telephone game,” have your students experience how the lines of a folk song are changed as they are passed from one musician to another. Start with the text of two lines of an unfamiliar folk song and have whispered from one student to the next. Compare the beginning and ending version.

Make a list of all the folk songs that have been taught recently by music teachers in your school, sung by the school chorus or that students have heard on TV or in movies. Where do they fit in the history of folk music? What countries are they from? If they are newly written in the folk style, are they ballads that tell a story?

### **Using encyclopedias, the internet and a map of the United States:**

Name the original 13 colonies and locate them on the map.

Find the Appalachian Mountains and other southern mountains.

Name the states where cotton was grown.

Find the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers – where steamboats worked.

Research cowboys and the songs they sang.

Learn about Woody Guthrie and his son Arlo.

Research the “folk revival” and learn about the musicians who made it happen and which ones are still performing today.

In addition to Bob Dylan whose “Time’s They Are A-Changin’” is on the program, have your students discover other contemporary folk singers.

## MUSICAL SELECTIONS IN “FOLK MUSIC IN THE MELTING POT”

Yankee Doodle

This Train

Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier

Cluck Old Hen

Cuckoo

John Henry

Another Man Done Gone

Sweet Betsy from Pike

The Boll Weevil Holler

Time’s They Are A-Changin’

Stranger Blues

This Land is Your Land

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

## THE MUSICIANS

**John Higgins** currently performs with the folk and bluegrass group “The Flying Mules.” He has played guitar for 35 years and toured throughout the United States. He is an avid student of guitar history and builds custom guitars.

**Charlie Pfeffer** is a guitarist and expert mandolin player who has 19 years experience with folk music programs for Young Audiences. He has toured Europe and currently plays with both “The Flying Mules” and the “Geyer Street Sheiks.”

**Ellen Gomez** is an artist/musician/songwriter. She teaches fine arts full time at Forsyth School, an independent elementary school in Clayton. She was the 2009-2010 recipient of a grant from The Missouri Folk Arts Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program to apprentice with Missouri master fiddler, Vesta Johnson. Ellen is on the board of directors of The Folk School of St. Louis. She has an MFA and an MAT degree from Washington University in St. Louis. Ellen is the mother of two sons, Anthony and Mickey DeFilippo

**Sandy Weltman** is a virtuoso harmonica and banjo player who performs in many settings, including with his own group the “Sandroids.” He has won numerous awards and is one of the St. Louis areas most versatile and innovative musicians.

