



The Chandler Center for the Arts welcomes you to the virtual performance of Black Violin – a blend of classical, bluegrass, rock, hip-hop, and R&B music that teaches students to bust stereotypes, break boundaries, and be themselves.

## **ABOUT BLACK VIOLIN**

The name “Black Violin” is derived from the influence of a famous jazz violinist, Stuff Smith, who changed Wil-B and Kev Marcus’ perspectives on what the violin is really capable of. Six months before Smith’s death, he recorded his most soulful solo album entitled “Black Violin”. His life’s work was so moving that the duo decided to name their group after the most inspiring violinist they had ever heard. Kev Marcus and Wil-B have created the ultimate synergy between classical and hip-hop music, and with it an incredible opportunity to reach young children. They have been given awards for their outstanding contributions to middle and high school performing arts students. Both graduates of Dillard Performing Arts High School, they used their musical talents to earn full scholarships to college. Now Black Violin wants to make sure that America’s young people get the same exposure to the arts, and therefore the same opportunity that they did.

The duo are also avid producers and writers, which is demonstrated on their debut self-titled album that gives the listener pop music from the violins’ point-of-view. Black Violin’s enthusiasm for music and neo-classical, innovative, urban style of violin mixtures, vocals, and funk has exploded onto the music scene with the consistency of listeners wanting more and more.



**Kev Marcus** is the stage name of Kevin Sylvester. His mother was the person that encouraged him to take violin lessons. He hopes that his performances inspire his audiences to think about how they could do things differently in their lives and how to be unique to themselves and their goals. Kev Marcus studied at Florida International University.



**Wil-B** is the stage name of performer Wilner Baptiste. When he first started out in music, he wanted to study the saxophone. However, a scheduling error put him in classes for the viola, and he decided to stick it out. When he performs, he wants the audience to leave as better people than when they arrived. Wil-B studied at Florida State University.

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## ABOUT VIOLINS

The violin, sometimes called a fiddle, is the smallest member of the string family. An orchestra has more violins than any other single instrument. The violin section is divided into first and second violins, with the first violins playing the highest notes, and the second violins playing the next highest notes. The violin is also one of the most popular solo instruments. A distinctive feature of the violin is its hourglass shape.

## HISTORY

The first violin makers may possibly have borrowed ideas from three types of bowed instruments:

1. The Rebec
2. The Renaissance Fiddle
3. Lira Da Braccio

The violin began as a three string instrument. In 1555, a fourth string was added by Italian violin maker Andrea Amati. However, it was his student, Italian string maker—Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737), who brought the art of the violin making to its height. Stradivari's instruments are regarded as the finest stringed instruments ever built.

## HOW IT'S PLAYED

The violin rests on the left shoulder and is kept in place by the player's chin. The left hand is responsible for fingering notes, while the right hand plucks or bows the strings. Beginning violin players often like to tape the fingerboard, to help remind them of left-hand finger placement.

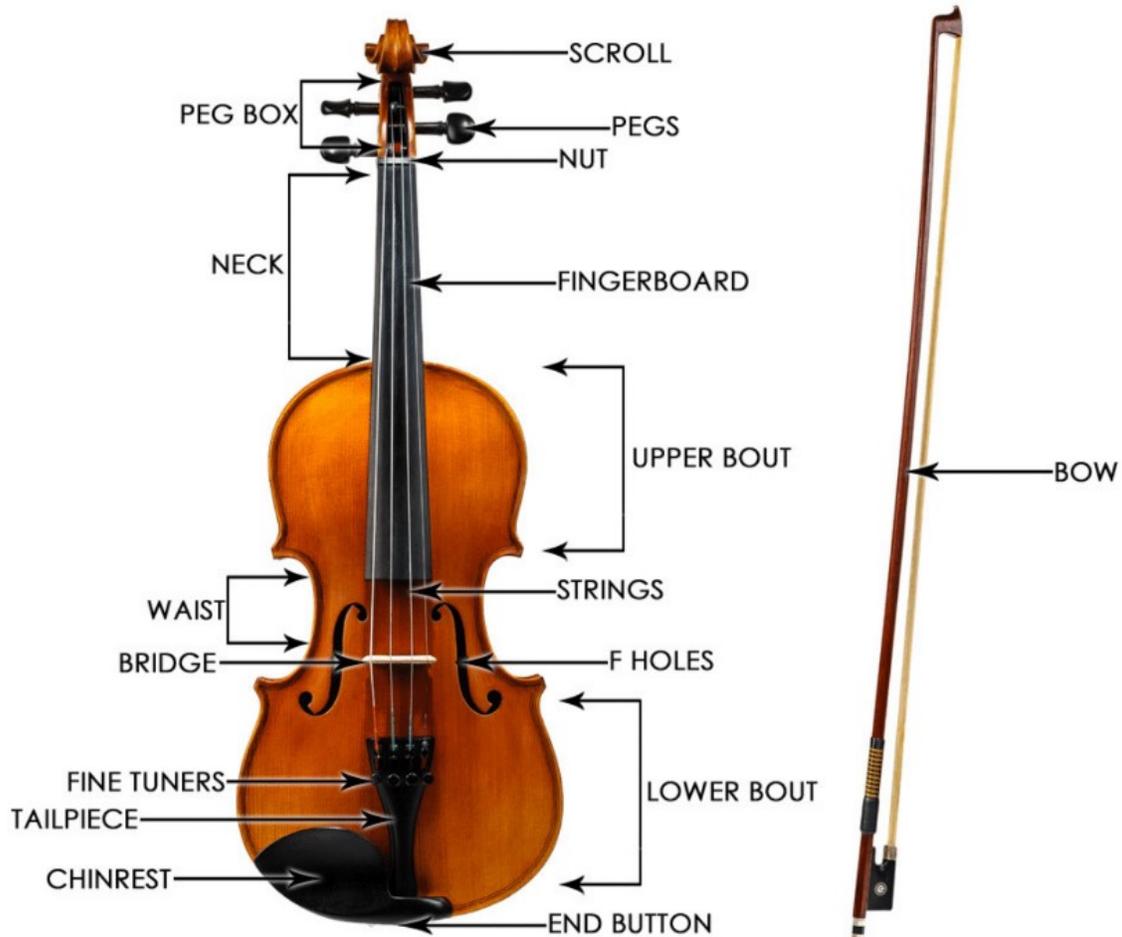
## HOW IT'S MADE

A violin is made of many pieces of wood that are chosen to enhance the performance of the instrument. The top is made of spruce, and the back and ribs are made of maple. The neck is made of maple and ebony, the preferred wood for the fingerboard because of its hardness and beauty. All of these parts are carefully carved and then glued together with a special glue. After the body of the violin is assembled and varnished, the four strings, bridge, tailpiece and various smaller pieces are added. Players can choose to include a chinrest.

The following violin video will offer students a virtual field trip to a musical instrument factory.

How It's Made: Violins: <https://youtu.be/WcJfbjCUDoo>

## ANATOMY OF A VIOLIN



## PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

### 1. INFLUENCES

**GOAL:** To reflect on influences in your life.

**EXPLANATION:** Wil-B and Kev chose to name their group after Stuff Smith, a jazz violinist from the swing era. Smith's final and most soulful album was titled "Black Violin." His work inspired Wil-B and Kev so much that they decided to name their group in honor of him. In this activity, students will think about someone who influences or inspires them.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Paper
- Writing utensil

### ACTIVITY:

1. Each student will need a piece of paper.
2. Ask them to fold it in half and then in half again, so that it is divided into fourths.
3. Ask each student to think about someone who influences or inspires them. They should write this person's name on top of the paper.
4. Let each student know that you will be asking them a series of questions about this person. They will record their thoughts to each question in the separate quadrants on their paper.

*Quadrant 1:* What do you admire about this person?

*Quadrant 2:* In what ways does this person influence or inspire you? Be specific.

*Quadrant 3:* Do you feel that you and this person have similar goals? If so, what are they?

*Quadrant 4:* What are some things you could do to achieve these goals?

### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

1. What qualities make someone admirable?
2. What can we learn from those who inspire us?
3. Why is it good to have someone that you look up to that inspires you?
4. Are our influences always positive? What can you do to make sure that you choose people to admire that have a positive impact on your life?

## PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

### 1. EXPLORE THE VIOLIN

**GOAL:** To research various aspects of the violin instrument and synthesize findings in order to present.

**EXPLANATION:** The members of Black Violin fell in love with the violin instrument as young performers. In this activity, students will work in groups to learn more about this classic yet highly versatile instrument. They will then choose a creative medium to present their findings to the class.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Internet access for research
- Paper, markers, or other art supplies

#### ACTIVITY:

1. Divide students into small breakout groups.
2. Assign each group a topic to research:

- *The history of the violin*
- *An explanation of how violins are made*
- *An explanation of how violins produce sounds*
- *An explanation of how the violin is played*
- *Influential violinists*
- *Acoustic violins versus electric violins*
- *Benefits of playing the violin*
- *Why antique violins are desirable and/or why Stradivarius instruments are highly valued*

3. Invite students to present their findings to the class. Challenge them to present their findings in a creative way. This can include creating a poster, video, or any other form of artistic expression.

#### FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

1. What did you know about the violin prior to your research?
2. What is the most interesting thing you learned researching your topic?
3. What is the most interesting thing you learned from another group's presentation?
4. Which presentation stood out to you the most? Why?

## PRE-SHOW EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

### 1. “TRIUMPH”

**GOAL:** To explore Black Violin’s theme of choice and music’s positive influence on young people’s lives.

**EXPLANATION:** In this activity, students will watch the Black Violin’s music video “Triumph” which depicts a young boy facing the choice between the temptations of the street and picking up a musical instrument at school. They will then write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the characters in the video.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Internet Access
- Critical Response Worksheet
- Paper
- Pencil

#### ACTIVITY PART 1—VIEW THE VIDEO:

1. As a class, watch Black Violin’s music video “Triumph”.  
Black Violin—“Triumph” (2011): <https://youtu.be/0P3So6-O2Xs>
2. As students watch, ask them to fill in the “Critical Response Worksheet”, located on page seven (7). The worksheet asks them to record what they notice in the video, what it reminds them of, what questions they have as they watch, what emotions they feel or see, and what they think the meaning of the piece is.
3. After the video ends, give students additional time to continue to fill in their Critical Response Worksheet.
4. Next, invite students to share one of their top observations, questions, memories, feelings or speculations.

#### ACTIVITY PART 2—JOURNAL WRITING:

1. Next, ask students to think about the different people or characters they saw in the music video (the boy, his mother, the musicians, etc.)
2. Ask them to write a journal entry from the perspective of one of these characters. Provide them with time to free write. The journal entry should include the following:
  - *A problem that the person sees or is facing*
  - *At least one question*
  - *At least one word or phrase from their Critical Response Worksheet*
3. Pair students up and ask them to share their journal entries with one another.

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:**

1. Whose perspective did you choose to write your journal entry from? Why?
2. Did you and your partner choose to write from the same person's perspective? If not, what drew your partner to write about who they chose?
3. What do you think is the relationship between the boy and the musicians?
4. Why do you think this video is called "Triumph"?
5. Why do you think Black Violin chose to tell this particular story in their music video?

**CRITICAL RESPONSE WORKSHEET**

Record your thoughts as you watch the music video "Triumph" by Black Violin.

1. I notice...

*(Describe what you see and hear.)*

2. This reminds me of...

*(This can be something you have done, seen or watched before)*

3. This makes me feel... OR I see these feelings expressed...

4. I wonder....

*(What questions do you have as you watch this?)*

5. I think that...

*(What do you think this piece of art means? Why did the artist make it?)*

# POST-SHOW

## DISCUSSION + ASSESSMENT

1. Which songs did you recognize during the performance?
2. What did you think of the music? Did the different styles mesh effectively and sound harmonious, or was it more jarring and discordant?
3. If you have been to a traditional classical music concert and/or pop/hip-hop concert, how did this compare? What were the differences? What were the similarities?
4. What do you think Black Violin's mission is with their performances? What do they want you to think about after seeing them perform?
5. Black Violin named their group after an album by Stuff Smith, a jazz violinist from the swing era. If you had to give the group a different name, what would it be and why?
6. What did you notice about the different instruments that were played? Were any of them new to you? Or were they played in a way that you had never experienced before?
7. Black Violin was inspired by many distinctly different musicians from different time periods and styles. What types of people influence or inspire you? Have you ever been inspired by someone who is no longer living? If so, who?

### 1. WRITE A REVIEW

Ask students to imagine that they are a critic for the school newspaper. They are going to write a review of Black Violin to inform others about what they experienced. They should describe with detail: what they saw; what they heard; how the performance made them feel; what the performance reminded them of; and what their favorite part was and why. Remind students that they must paint a picture of the experience with their words so that others who did not see the performance can imagine it.

### 2. YOUR ARTISTIC IMPRESSION

Students should create their own artistic impression of the performance. Using shapes, lines, colors, patterns and other artistic elements from their imagination, they should draw or paint a picture that expresses how the music made them feel.

### 3. WRITE TO THE MUSICIANS

Once students have seen the performance and have had a chance to discuss what they saw and heard, write to the Black Violin musicians. Letters may be sent to:

Chandler Center for the Arts  
Attn: Black Violin  
250 N. Arizona Ave.  
Chandler, AZ 85225

### 4. DESIGN A CD COVER

Ask students to imagine that Black Violin has asked them to design a cover and title for their next album. They want the design to celebrate how they fuse different musical styles together. Students should think about important ideas and images that came to mind during the performance and use them to guide their design. When complete, students should present their design to members of Black Violin (played by the teacher). Ask students about the elements they included in their design, why they made those design decisions, the title they gave the album, and what the design communicates about Black Violin's music and message.