



krannert center

YOUTH
SERIES

16-17

BLACK VIOLIN



COLLEGE OF
FINE + APPLIED
ARTS



MEET THE ARTISTS

Classically trained violinist Kevin “Kev Marcus” Sylvester and violist Wil “Wil B.” Baptiste first met up at their Fort Lauderdale performing arts high school before reuniting post-college to form Black Violin, which celebrates the synergy between classical and

hip-hop music. Their name was inspired by an album by famous swing-era African-American jazz violinist Stuff Smith.

The high-energy duo has been named one of South by Southwest’s hottest bands, was awarded a Showtime at the Apollo Legend title, and has performed with Kanye West, Ciara, Lil Wayne, Nas, Alicia Keys, Wu-Tang Clan, and Aerosmith. Backed live by their band featuring turntable ace DJ SPS, they’ve

given rise to a distinct musical voice that is at once “delicate, different and, dare it be said, funky” (OZY Media).

Wil B. attempted to join the school band in an effort to play the saxophone at age 13 but was mistakenly put into the string program. As luck would have it, he mastered the viola and grew to love it. He has participated with local pop orchestras such as the Young Artist Contemporary Orchestra in Palm Beach, Florida, and attended Florida State University. Wil B. also sings and plays piano, drums, trumpet, and bass guitar. His influences include some well-known musical artists such as Stevie Wonder, George Benson, Curtis Mayfield, Chaka Khan, Victor Wooten, Common, AZ, Jill Scott, and Talib Kweli.

Kev Marcus was encouraged by his mother and teachers at the age of nine to learn the violin. From there he grew so intrigued by it that he couldn’t let it go. He began to participate with the local pop orchestras and was also a semi-finalist in the Sphinx National Competition for Blacks and Latinos in 2000. He went to college at Florida International University, where he met their manager Sam G. His musical artist influences are past great pioneers of the music world such as Herbie Hancock, Stuff Smith, Mozart, Bach, Brahms, and Nat King Cole. Kev Marcus also has been influenced by some of today’s artists such as Mos Def, Notorious BIG, Dr. Dre, The Roots, Nas, and Jay-Z.

THE ROLE OF THE DJ

Hip-hop DJs cut and loop beats to recreate phrases of music. They use two identical tracks of music, spinning one track to a place where the music stops but the beat keeps going. This is called the “break” and allows the DJ to go back and forth between the two tracks to create one long beat. DJs can also pause, scratch, backspin, speed up or slow down, and/or delay the music to create other effects.

Special thanks to Alaska Junior Theater and the Lied Center for source materials.



KEV MARCUS

WIL B.

“we studied classical, but we lived rap music”
—KEV MARCUS

TEACHER NOTE

Head to the Youth Series Black Violin page for online resources and classroom activities with curricular connections. You can find that page in the Engage + Learn section of KrannertCenter.com.

ON THE MAP

BLACK VIOLIN GOT ITS START IN . . .

FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA



STEREOTYPES

STEREOTYPE:

An often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about other people or things with a particular characteristic.

Do you have a “number one” stereotype? When people look at you, what stereotypes might they have? Can you think of a time when you have made assumptions about other people based on a stereotype? Where do you think stereotypes come from?

Write down your answers to these questions in a journal.

VIOLIN VS. VIOLA

You will notice that the two string players of Black Violin actually don’t play the same instrument. Look and listen for these subtle differences between violins and violas:

VIOLA

Thicker strings played with a heftier bow

Tuned to ADGC

Bigger both in width and length

Deep sound

Music is read on the alto clef



VIOLIN

Thinner, usually synthetic strings played with a lighter bow

Tuned to EADG (though a fifth string can be added)

Smaller overall

Makes a higher sound

Music is read on the treble clef

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to a track by Black Violin and draw or write what comes to mind while listening. Contrast this by listening to a hip-hop song or the music of a classical composer of your choice.
2. Research one of the following topics and share what you learn:
 - Stuff Smith
 - J.S. Bach
 - How stringed instruments are made
 - Acoustic versus electric violins
3. Go on an Internet treasure hunt. Check out hip-hop songs and videos that have sampled classical music, and listen to the source music as well. For example, listen to “Brandenburg” from Black Violin’s debut album, and the beginning of J. S. Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G Major*. Or, try Nas’s “I Can” and Beethoven’s *Für Elise*. How does the classical music fit into the hip-hop song? Why do you think the artist chose that music to sample or work with?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How would you describe the performance to someone who wasn’t with you?

Which songs did you recognize during the performance?

Did the different musical styles mesh effectively and sound harmonious?

What questions would you like to ask the artists?

What will you keep thinking about after experiencing this concert?

BLACK VIOLIN

Thursday, September 29, 2016, at 10am

Friday, September 30, 2016, at 10am

Tryon Festival Theatre

Approximately 60 minutes

Recommended for grades 3-12

Campaign for Young Audiences

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Black Violin

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Anonymous

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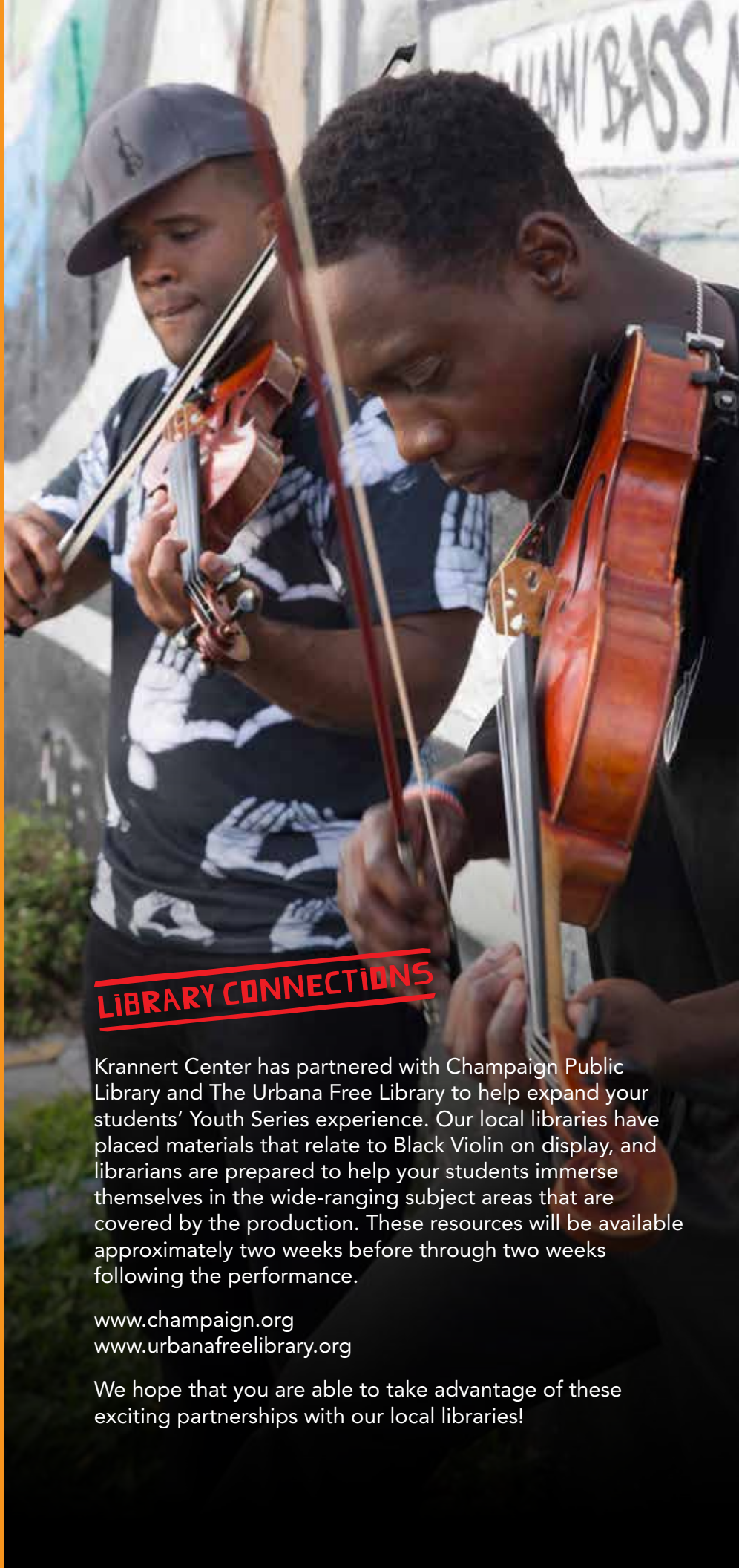
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LIBRARY CONNECTIONS

Krannert Center has partnered with Champaign Public Library and The Urbana Free Library to help expand your students' Youth Series experience. Our local libraries have placed materials that relate to Black Violin on display, and librarians are prepared to help your students immerse themselves in the wide-ranging subject areas that are covered by the production. These resources will be available approximately two weeks before through two weeks following the performance.

www.champaign.org

www.urbanafreelibrary.org

We hope that you are able to take advantage of these exciting partnerships with our local libraries!