

EDUCATION GUIDE

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Shift

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Music

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Meaning

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Context

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Apr 13

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Aug 6, 2023

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Sven Johne, *Wissower Klinken (Cliffs of Wissow)* [still], 2007

This guide serves as a viewer supplement to the exhibition *Shift: Music, Meaning, Context* and can be used for engaging with the exhibition virtually or in person. The guide includes information about the works on view, questions for looking and discussion, classroom activities, and suggested readings. You may learn more about educational programs at Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago [here](#). To schedule a tour of the exhibition or print viewing with your class, please visit [here](#).

MoCP is supported by Columbia College Chicago, the MoCP Advisory Board, the Museum Council, individuals, and private and corporate foundations. The 2022-2023 exhibition season is generously sponsored by the Philip and Edith Leonian Foundation, the Pritzker Traubert Foundation, the Efroymsen Family Fund, and the Illinois Arts Council. This exhibition is curated by Leonhard Emmerling, Director, and Leah Gallant, Program Curator of the Goethe-Institut Chicago, along with Asha Iman Veal, Associate Curator at MoCP. It is produced in collaboration between Goethe-Institut Chicago and The Museum of Contemporary Photography, held on-site at the museum. This Education Guide is authored by Kristin Taylor, Noah Fodor, Hillary Johnson, Giselle Mira-Diaz, Ash Huse, and Kyli Hawks.



# INTRODUCTION

***Shift: Music, Meaning, Context*** explores how music changes in form and interpretation as it moves through time and space. The artists consider how the cultural origins of songs, instruments, and genres can be erased—or reinvested—when entering a new context. This exhibition combines video, sound, and photography to transform the museum’s galleries into a unique choral mélange.

## **Introductory Questions for Looking and Discussion**

- What comes to mind when you read the exhibition title?
- What do you expect to experience in this exhibition?
- What relationships or similarities do you think sound and images have to one another?
- What kind of music or sounds do you think you might encounter in this space?
- Are there certain ethnicities, age groups, or genders that certain types of music “belong” to?



Hassan Hajjaj, *Master Cobra Mansa*, 2012

## **ARTISTS FEATURED**

**BANI ABIDI**  
**LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN**  
**TONY COKES**  
**JEREMY DELLER**  
**HASSAN HAJJAJ**  
**SVEN JOHNE**  
**ANDRÉ LÜTZEN**  
**CECIL MCDONALD, JR.**  
**EMEKA OGBOH**  
**TARYN SIMON**

## KEY THEME

# Music Transformed through Context

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A central theme of this exhibition is how a song can change from its culture of origin into new adaptations over time and place. Some artists amplify the cultural roots of certain musical histories, while celebrating the possibilities of expansion and movement into new realms. Other artists consider how music can transform from an experience of joy to one of loss, exclusion, or violence, depending on the audience, situation, or associations one might have with the song.



Jeremy Deller, *Acid Brass*, 1997

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

# Jeremy Deller

(United Kingdom, b. 1966)

In Jeremy Deller's video *Acid Brass* (1997), we see a large brass band ensemble performing acid house songs that are usually played in clubs by a DJ. Although the two styles of music can be initially thought of as distinctly different, Deller found similarities in the origins of both genres. Acid house music is played on synthesizers and electronic drum machines is an offset of house music, which was born in Black and queer communities in Chicago in the 1980s. Acid house shortly after became a mainstay of youth culture in the UK, acting as a soundtrack for rave dance parties that were collective social activities. Similarly, brass bands were an intrinsic part of working-class coal mining communities in the UK during the 19th and 20th centuries. Around the Industrial Revolution, employers organized company brass bands for their workers to deter them from political organizing in their off hours.

### Questions for Looking and Discussion

- What are your initial responses to Deller's video? Do you find it humorous, disconcerting, confusing, happy, or something else? Why might you feel this way?
- How do you interpret the connection Deller makes between acid house music (born in Black, queer clubs) and brass bands (created by white, male, coal miners)?
- Brass bands were most prominent in the UK during the 19th and 20th centuries, with a brass band present in nearly every coal mine. Yet, in the latter half of the 20th century many coal mines were closed (changing from 174 working mines in 1983 to only six working coal mines in 2009). How might this history of brass band's connection to labor and industry be relevant to the history and spirit of house music? Why else might the artist choose to meld these two forms of music together?

## Compare an original acid house song to a brass band rendition of A Guy Called Gerald's song "Voodoo Ray"



### To learn more on the history of brass bands:

[The history of the brass band: how brass bands began and why they remain popular | Classical Music \(classical-music.com\)](#)

[Britain's Brass Bands: A Working-Class Tradition On The Wane : NPR](#)

### To learn more on the history of house music and the birth of acid house music:

[The Story Of Acid House: As Told By DJ Pierre](#)

[From the Warehouse to the world: Chicago and the birth of house music](#)

[House Music Is Back. Let's Remember Its Roots.](#)

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

# André Lützen

(Germany, b. 1963)



André Lützen, *Die Rapband Carré Rouge in Marseille Generation Boul Fale, Marseille / Dakar, 1997–2001*

André Lützen's series *Generation Boul Fale* documents the rap music scene in Marseilles, France, and Dakar, Senegal. Rap music (also known as hip-hop) was created in the Bronx in New York City in the early 70s by DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa. France has the second largest audience for hip hop outside of the US, and French rappers are regularly the highest selling artists in the album charts. Yet, rap is still seen as an artform that exists on the fringes of French society, largely due to racialized discussions in France about who and what is considered 'legitimately' French. The hip hop scene in Marseille, is comprised of artists that represent the city's diverse immigrant communities, including rap artists of Algerian, Moroccan, Senegalese, and Argentinian descent.

Lützen's images depict artists in both France and the West African country of Senegal, where hip hop arrived in the late 1980s and was influenced by political American rap groups like Public Enemy and KRS-One. Rapping in French, English, and Wolof, socially conscious hip hop artists in Senegal critique the government, encourage listeners to vote, and promote sex education and AIDS activism. In 2012, the hip hop duo Keur Gui were at the forefront of the peaceful resistance movement that ousted then-President Abdoulaye Wade.

### Extended Resources:

['You're not welcome': rap's racial divide in France | Rap | The Guardian](#)

[Rap Stars in Marseille Say Policymakers Are Out of Touch - The Atlantic](#)

[Hip Hop with Harps – The Guardian](#)

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## Questions for Looking and Discussion

- Consider the formal choices the artist makes in creating these images, including ranges in tonality, lighting, composition, and focus. How might these choices mirror the feeling of listening to or playing music broadly, or to rap music more specifically?
- Why might the artist choose to show parts of the image blurred or suspended in motion? How might this visual effect mirror the themes present in the exhibition at large?
- Of the individuals photographed in this series the artist states: “[Rap] music builds bridges between Africa, the continent where their families came from, and France, the country which is now their home, that they know and whose language they speak.” What associations do you have with rap music, particularly as it relates to music in the United States? What about this genre of music makes it specific to American culture or nationality?
- The first Guardian article above includes a quote by Jonathyne Briggs, author of *Sounds French: Globalisation, Cultural Communities and Pop Music*. He states: “Rap has always been seen as something external, imported to France, only exacerbated by its connection to the culture of émigrés...Pop music is about conformity. Rap’s nonconformity is still able to amplify discourse outside of existing structures.” Considering this quote, how might these images relate to the other works you see in the exhibition? Why might the element of nonconformity in rap music be significant?



**André Lützen**, *Aufnahme Studio in Marseille, Generation Boul Fale, Marseille / Dakar, 1997–2001*

## Tony Cokes

(United States, b. 1956),

Torture music  
has a history.

**Tony Cokes**  
*Evil.16 (Torture.Musik)* (still),  
2009–2011

### Questions for Looking and Discussion

- Why might the artist choose to feature only text and no images? What effect does the minimal visual information have on the way you read this artwork?
- What associations do you personally have with the songs featured in this video? What is your reaction to hearing these songs in this context?
- What do you think it means to use American music as “the crudest kind of cultural imperialism,” as the video’s text reads?

Tony Cokes video, *Evil.16 (Torture Musik)*, features text pulled from a 2005 article that details ways the US military used music as a form of torture against people detained during the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. The video outlines how people were forced to listen to songs such as Barney the Dinosaur’s “I Love You,” Metallica’s “Enter Sandman,” and Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S.A.” at excruciating volumes and on repeat. Although any music played at these volumes could have been used in torture, the video outlines how members of the US military chose specifically American songs as a method of cultural imperialism, weaponizing pop, heavy metal, and other popular music genres in the West by converting them into instruments of violence and control.



## The Global War on Terror

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The Iraq and Afghanistan wars were a part of what the largescale US military operation called the Global War on Terror (GWOT). President George W. Bush announced this initiative after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Bush stated: “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.”<sup>1</sup> GWOT garnered participation from over 170 countries and had far reaching and disastrous effects.<sup>2</sup> A 2021 study states that it displaced at least 38 million people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, and caused the deaths of approximately 900,000 people.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, the GWOT popularized widespread Islamophobia, creating harmful and discriminatory conditions Muslim populations around the world. GWOT ended officially in August 2021.

They charged  
that "deafening music"  
was played directly  
into their ears  
while soldiers ordered  
them to dance.

In Afghanistan, Zakim Shah,  
a 20-year-old Afghan farmer,  
was forced to stay awake  
while in American custody  
by soldiers blasting music  
and shouting at him.

**Tony Cokes** *Evil.16 (Torture.Musik)* (still), 2009–2011

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1 National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed April 6, 2023. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

2 National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed April 6, 2023. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/homeland/progress/full.html>.

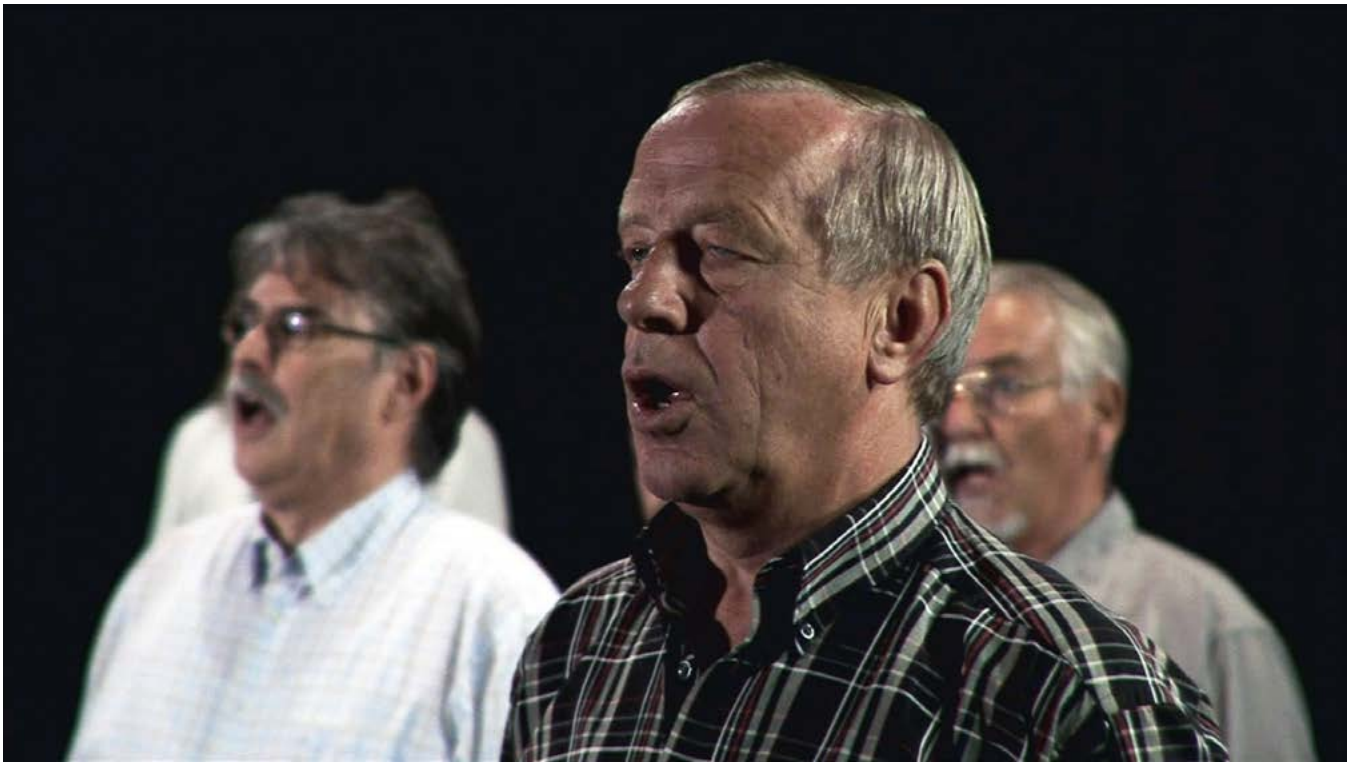
3 “Human Cost of the Post-9/11 Wars: Lethality and the Need for Transparency.” Accessed April 6, 2023. <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Human%20Costs%2C%20Nov%208%202018%20CoW.pdf>.

## KEY THEME

# Music in Relation to Borders, Conflict, and Nationality

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Several artists in this exhibition consider how songs can have profound and symbolic meanings related to national identity. Others explore what happens if musical genres, instruments, or songs are adapted beyond the scope of their places of origin. A key aspect of this theme is the consideration that music can move freely and quickly, whereas musicians themselves must obtain visas and passports, often getting stuck or held up in national bureaucracies.



**Sven Johne**, *Wissower Klinken (Cliffs of Wissow)* [still], 2007

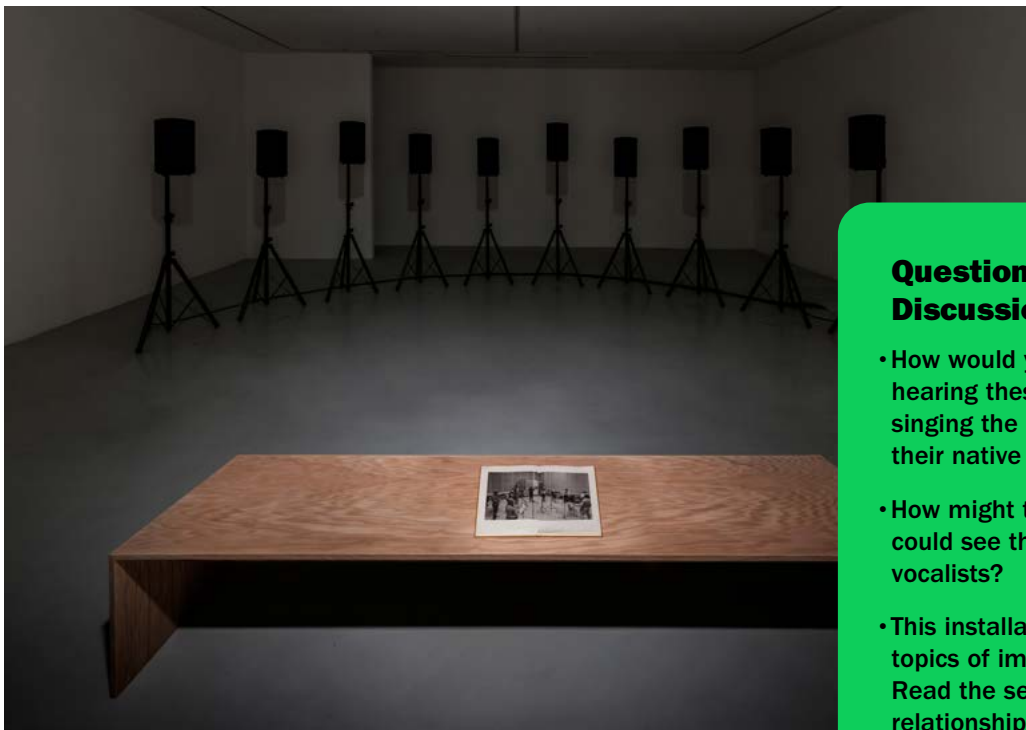
## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

# EMEKA OGBOH

(Nigeria, b. 1977)

The 10-channel audio installation titled *The Song of the Germans* features speakers playing the sound of 10 performers singing the German National Anthem in ten African languages: Igbo, Yoruba, Bamoun, More, Twi, Ewondo, Sango, Douala, Kikongo, and Lingala. Sung by vocalists who moved from their home countries to Germany, one can hear each individual rendition blending into one chorus. Each speaker is positioned in the exhibition to stand at the height of each singer, creating the feeling of a chorus comprised of absent bodies.

Ogboh created this exploration of language and belonging during the 2015 European refugee crisis, when a record 1.3 million migrants applied for asylum in Europe, with Germany a primary destination. Today, more than one in four people in Germany has an immigrant background. This ongoing demographic shift has been accompanied by debates about who and what is considered German, as well as significant anti-immigrant sentiment



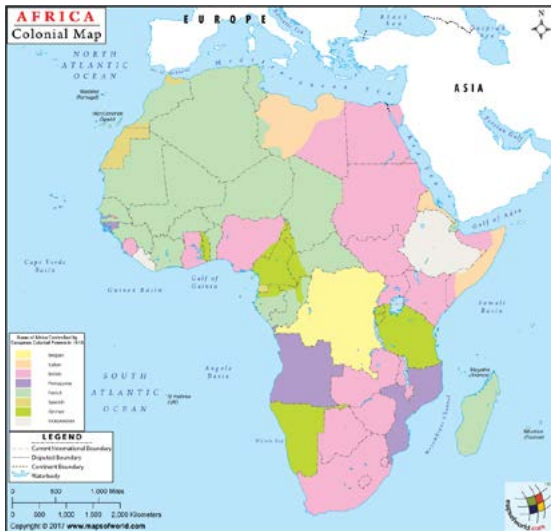
Emeka Ogboh, *The Song of the Germans*, 2015

### Questions for Looking and Discussion

- How would you describe the experience of hearing these various voices of vocalists singing the German National Anthem in their native languages?
- How might this piece be different if you could see the faces of the ten different vocalists?
- This installation allows for discussion around topics of immigration and colonialism. Read the section below about Germany's relationship with the continent of Africa. Then, consider why Ogboh selected this group of vocalists. How might the effects of colonization be reflected in language and music? Where else might the effects be seen, heard, or felt?
- Since Ogboh created this piece, more people from migrant and diasporic backgrounds, including Afro Germans, have gained political offices in Germany. What role should art have in raising awareness of political and social issues of the past and present?

## DEEPER READING

# Germany, Immigration, and the European Colonization of Africa



Areas of Africa controlled by European colonial powers in 1913: German (green), French (teal), Belgian (yellow), British (pink), Italian (beige), Portuguese (purple), and Spanish (orange) Empires. [Source](#)

The *Song of the Germans* speaks to migration in a broad sense, and to the immigrant and refugee populations in Germany specifically—a significant political issue in the country. Presently, a quarter of all Germans were either born in another country or have at least one parent who is non-German. In 2015, at the time of the creation of Ogboh's piece, about half of all immigrants and refugees arrived from Syria, and many other from Iraq and Afghanistan. However, this piece addresses the German population from African countries, and can open up bigger conversations with students on the larger history of the European colonization of Africa.

Europe's involvement in the continent of Africa can be traced to the start of the Slave Trade, followed by the Scramble for Africa from 1833 until 1914. During this time, only Liberia and Ethiopia remained independent, while the remaining 90 percent of the

continent was under European rule. Fourteen European countries and the United States met during The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to prevent warring over African countries. The colonizers each divided how they would pillage resources like gold, silver, rubber, palm oil, and later, cotton. Germany controlled regions including present-day Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania from 1884 to 1914, and these areas were partitioned among Britain, France, and Belgium after Germany lost control during World War I. Most of Africa was decolonized during the mid-1950s through the 1970s during the Cold War, but the presence of colonialism lingers.

### Extended Resources:

[German Imperialism in Africa: The Distorted Images of Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, and Togo.](#) *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 2 (1992): 235–46.

[“European Colonialism in Africa Is Alive: By Stelios Michalopoulos & Elias Papaioannou.”](#) Project Syndicate.

[“For Me, Politics Is An Outlet To Escape From Powerlessness”: Aminata Touré Is The 30-Year-Old Shaking Up German Politics.](#) *Vogue*

[First Black Woman in Bundestag Wants to Change Image of ‘Germanness.’](#) *The New York Times*.

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4 Janjevic, D. (2022, April 12). *Germany: Over 1 in 4 people have 'migrant background'* – DW – 04/12/2022. dw.com. Retrieved April 5, 2023, from <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-over-1-in-4-people-have-migrant-background/a-61452241>

## EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

# Bani Abidi

(b. 1971 Pakistan)

To create this two-channel video, Bani Abidi commissioned the Shan Paip Banded (Pipe Band) of Bhatti Gate, Lahore, Pakistan, to learn and perform the United States National Anthem. The artist states: "This piece is a metaphor for all forms of clumsy and forced cultural and political acquiescence that various individuals and governments have had to display towards the US...The Scottish Pipe Band is a colonial legacy that still exists in Pakistan. Now, unattached to the military, these band musicians play Indian music tunes at weddings."

Sialkot, Pakistan, is the largest producer of bagpipes globally. Pakistani companies supplied bagpipes for the British army during the British Rule over the area starting in 1839 until Pakistan gained independence in 1947. Now, there are numerous bagpipe bands in Pakistan, and bagpipe bands are a very popular part of the country's cultural identity.

### Questions for Looking and Discussion

- How does it feel to see the "The Star-Spangled Banner" performed in a context that is so different from the typical places it is usually played, such as sporting events or political parades?
- Pakistan played a large part in the Global War on Terror, as the US provided the country in 2002 with \$3 billion to "bolster Pakistan's counterterrorism capabilities and alleviate poverty conditions on which terrorists strive." Besides the quote above, what else might the artist be saying about Pakistan and the US, or global power structures at large?
- Why might the artist choose a bagpipe band to perform this song, versus an older musical tradition in Pakistani culture?
- Why might the artist choose to present this piece as a split screen two-channel video? How do the two videos complement one another?



**Bani Abidi**, *Shan Pipe Band Learns the Star-Spangled Banner*, 2004

5 Shuster, Mike. "In Pakistan, Sounds of a Different Kind of Drone." NPR. NPR, July 26, 2012. <https://www.npr.org/2012/07/26/157356034/in-pakistan-sounds-of-a-different-kind-of-drone>.

6 National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed April 6, 2023. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/homeland/progress/full.html>.

# The US National Anthem

The history and significance of national anthems vary country-to-country, but many anthems signify the core values of a country. As such, the act of singing a national anthem can resonate on many political, social, and emotional levels. Several controversies have taken place in the United States around the performance of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” and many Black Americans do not recognize it as their national anthem. The original version of the song, written by slaveholder Frances Scott Key, includes a verse celebrating the murder of enslaved people who joined British forces in hopes of gaining freedom. In 2023, actress Sheryl Lee Ralph sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” which is commonly known as the Black National Anthem, to open the 2023 Super Bowl LVII. This set off a social media controversy with some people arguing over the “true” national anthem, and whether citizens should acknowledge two anthems.

Another controversy surrounding the anthem includes the protests by professional athletes of police killings of Black Americans and Black immigrants to the United States. Starting in 2016, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began to refuse to stand during the singing of the national anthem to open games, and instead knelt on one knee. These protests continued through 2020 and culminating in the majority of NBA players taking a knee during the anthem after the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.



## Questions for Discussion

- What relevance, if any, does the national anthem have for you personally?
- Do you think there should be limitations to how this song is performed, or in what context?

Colin Kaepernick, right, and Eric Reid kneeling during the national anthem before an N.F.L. game. Credit...Marcio Jose Sanchez/Associated Press

## Extended Resources:

[Super Bowl debate around the inclusion of ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’](#)

[Video: Do You Know the Star-Spangled Banner’s 3rd Verse?](#)

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

# Create your own disjointed soundtrack

Ask students to find a short video (under 5-minutes long) that has personal significance to them. The video can be something they made, such as footage they made of friends or family members, or a clip they found online from their favorite television show, sports game, or performance. Then ask students to first watch the video without any sound. How does the imagery change without the normal audio pairing? Does the mood or pace of the video seem to change when watching it silently? Then ask students to imagine their own, new soundtrack for their film considering these questions:

- What do you hope viewers will feel with your new sound and image pairings?
- Should the new soundtrack match the tempo of the imagery, or should it feel disjointed?
- How will your audio choice change the original context? Will the sound also have significance to you personally? If so, how?

If you have access to a computer, pair the video and audio together using this [free editing program](#), or similar software of your choice. Have students present their pieces and discuss their choices in front of the class.



Cecil McDonald, Jr., *1200 Meditation, Things My Mother Gave Me*, 2007

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

# Create a Music Mind Map

Download the [Music Mind Mapping Lesson Plan](#) for students in grades 7-12.



**Cecil McDonald, Jr.,** *Why Scales Matter*, 2008



# Illinois Learning Standards Addressed in this Guide

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## **VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS**

**Anchor Standard 6:** Convert Meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

**Enduring Understanding:** Objects, artifacts, and artworks collected, preserved, or presented either by artists, museums, or other venues communicate meaning and a record of social, cultural, and political experiences resulting in the cultivating of appreciation and understanding.

**Essential Question(s):** What is an art museum? How does the presenting and sharing of objects, artifacts, and artworks influence and shape ideas, beliefs, and experiences? How do objects, artifacts, and artworks collected, preserved, or presented, cultivate appreciation and understanding?

**VA:Re7.2.K–12** Perceive and analyze artistic work. Visual imagery influences understanding of, and responses to, the world.

**VA:Re8.K–12:** Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work. People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.

**VA:Re9.K–12:** Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. People evaluate art based on various criteria.

**VA:Cn11.K–12:** Relate artistic ideas and works with social, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

**VA:Pr6.1.7a:** Compare and contrast viewing and experiencing collections and exhibitions in different venues

**VA:Pr6.1.8a:** Analyze why and how an exhibition or collection may influence ideas, beliefs and experiences

**VA:Pr6.1.1a:** Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.

**VA:Pr6.1.1a:** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.

## **Music Arts Standards**

**MU: Cn10.0.T. Ia/ IIa/ IIIa:** Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing and responding to music.

**MU: Cn11.0.T. Ia/ IIa/IIIa:** Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

**MU:Re8.1.T.IIa:** Connect the influence of the treatment of the elements of music, digital and electronic features, context, purpose, and other art forms to the expressive intent of musical works.

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